

Key ideas

Question: What are the three primary mechanisms of social identity theory?

Answer: (1) *categorization*: we categorize the world into different groups (e.g., by nationality); (2) *identification*: as part of our self-concept, we categorize ourselves as belonging to some groups but not others; and (3) *comparison*: we highlight aspects of our group membership relative to features of other groups.

Question: What are some of the conditions under which “in-group love” turn to “out-group hate”?

Answer: (a) *moral superiority*: when there is a strong belief that one’s in-group is more virtuous than the out-group, the comparison process is activated; whereas one may have been indifferent about the out-group, one may now resort to discrimination and degradation; (b) *threat perception*: when there is some dispute with the out-group, one is more likely to see the out-group as threat; and (c) *status competition*: competition renders social comparisons salient (desire to maximize differences so one’s position is not threatened).

Question: What are two major pathways to reducing out-group hate, and what is the significance for supranational identification?

Answer: (1) *decategorization*: the process of converting intergroup interactions to interpersonal ones; and (2) *recategorization*: the process of making a more inclusive “superordinate group.” Supranational identification would be an attempt at recategorization—such a process would increase cooperation by broadening one’s interest and enhancing trust among this broader group.

Question: How are nationalism and historical memory interrelated?

Answer: Nationalism is something that can emerge over time and is a political project. The political development of national identity relies upon the construction of a shared historical memory. In the words of Renan (1882), “the essence of a nation is that all of its individual members have a great deal in common and also that they have forgotten many things.”

Question: What is the significance of BIRG and CORF for the construction of historical memory?

Answer: BIRG refers to “basking in reflective glory,” and CORF refers to “cutting off reflective failures.” “BIRG”-ing and “CORF”-ing shape the content of historical memory. It is perhaps little surprise that leaders of groups try to teach their members about their history by emphasizing triumphs and overlooking failures or transgressions.

Question: Why do leaders spend so much time avoiding apologizing or, in some cases, refuting past wrongs?

Answer: There are many possible reasons, but the broad one is that intergroup apologies are more complicated, relative to interpersonal apologies. Not only are the offenses of a nation more severe, but often the facts are contested. Moreover, the individual leader might not have been the actual perpetrator, so why identify themselves with the wrong? There is also the problem of managing the problem of domestic and transnational backlash. Will audiences punish the leader for apologizing?

Discussion questions

- What goes into a nation’s “historical memory”? What is left out?
- How do “lay people” explain the Holocaust, and what are the different types of attributions they might make? Why might there be systematic differences in attributions across individuals?
- What implications do differing attribution tendencies have for inter-group relations? (e.g., in the case of Imhoff et al., the attitude towards Germany and support for *Schlussstrich*)
- What is inter-group competitive victimhood, and what are its consequence for inter-group relations?