New directions in research on well-being: psychological process in everyday contexts

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Henri Tajfel (1919 – 1982) was a Polish social psychologist, best known for his pioneering work on the cognitive aspects of prejudice and social identity theory, as well as being one of the founders of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology.

- He believed that the cognitive processes of categorization contributed strongly to the psychological dimensions of prejudice, which went against the prevailing views of the time.
Many psychologists assumed that extreme prejudice was the result of personality factors, such as authoritarianism.

According to this perspective, only those with personalities that predisposed them to prejudice were likely to become bigots.

Tajfel believed this was mistaken.

He had seen how large numbers of Germans — not just those with particular personalities — had given their support to Nazism and had held extreme views about Jews.

Nazism would not have been successful without the support of "ordinary" Germans.

Tajfel sought to discover whether the roots of prejudice might be found in "ordinary" processes of thinking, rather than in "extraordinary" personality types.
**Konrad Lorenz** (zoologist and ethologist): humans have an aggressive **instinct**

“The competition between human beings destroys with cold and diabolic brutality... Under the pressure of this competitive fury we have not only forgotten what is useful to humanity as a whole, but even that which is good and advantageous to the individual”.

Vs

**Henri Tajfel:**

a common rational humanity

**Categorization**, not instinct, was the key to understanding prejudice and the conflict that often arose from it.

People are readily influenced by category labels.

Categories provide a way of arranging our perception of the world to simplify it, making it manageable and meaningful.

Simplifying and thinking in terms of generalized category attributes, we also distort the world.
INTERGROUP RELATIONS
THE EFFECTS OF CATEGORIZATION

- ACCENTUATED INTRACATEGORIAL SIMILARITY. Increased similarity between people in the same group.
- HIGHER INTERCATEGORIAL DIFFERENCE. Increase in the difference of subjects or objects belonging to different categories.
- HOMOGENEITY EFFECT OF THE OUTGROUP. They are all the same and different from us who are from a different group.

Caused by **familiarity**: there is more contact with the members of the same group, so more detailed descriptions of them are known. Instead with the members of other groups there are no relationships and therefore we tend to typify.
COGNITIVE BASES OF STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES. 
EFFECTS OF CATEGORIZATION:

- FAVORITISM FOR YOUR OWN GROUP. Once the separation into groups has occurred - ingroups to which the person belongs and outgroups to which there is no belonging - according to Tajfel an evaluation asymmetry arises: encourage the behavior of the ingroup and discriminate against those of the outgroup.

Outgroup behaviors are judged in a more polarized way

Causal attribution:
The positive behaviors of the ingroup are judged according to internal causes; while if they are of an outgroup they are evaluated following external causes.

Fundamental attribution error (Heider, 1958; Ross, 1977) which contributes significantly to the formation of distorted stereotypes.
Tajfel and colleagues (1971) clarified this aspect of categorization by means of an important experiment called the "minimal group paradigm", which showed that categorization provides those basic motivations - differentiation and comparison with the outgroup - that lead people to establish a positive group specificity and a better self-concept.

These perceptions cause a diversity of judgment in assessing the behavior of the ingroup or outgroup.

Thus there is a tendency towards a sort of "ethnocentric" judgment that allows you to maintain a positive image of yourself and your group.
• People mentally represent social categories and groups as prototypes.

• A prototype is a set of attributes (perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, behaviors) that describes a group and distinguishes it from other relevant groups.

• Prototypes obey the metacontrast principle: a contrast between contrasts.
Hopkins and Moore (2001) found that the Scots considered themselves different from the British, but that this perceptual difference diminished when compared to the Germans; although this may not have pleased them, the Scots considered their prototype a little closer to the English prototype.

When we categorize people we see them through the lenses of the relevant prototype, ingroup or outgroup.

We see them as members of a group rather than unique people and this leads to depersonalization.

Based on our group stereotypes, we judge them more similar to the relevant prototype than they probably are and in the case of the outgroups, we fall prey to ethnocentrism.

**Ethnocentrism**: evaluation of other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture.
**Prejudice** is a group phenomenon.

Prejudice is an unjustified or incorrect attitude (usually negative) towards an individual based solely on the individual's membership of a social group. For example, a person may hold prejudiced views towards a certain race or gender etc. (e.g. sexist).

- If interests between groups come into conflict, competition arises against the outgroup.
- If the interests coincide, cooperation is created between the groups to reach the same goal.
People tend to maintain a positive social identity, and therefore try to be part of groups evaluated positively on the basis of social comparison.

*(Tajfel e Turner, 1979)*

The key hypothesis is that intergroup discrimination and the activation of negative stereotypes derive from the desire to achieve and maintain a positive social identity.
Muzafer Sherif, a Turkish social psychologist (1906-1988), helped to develop social judgment theory and realistic conflict theory. He was a founder of modern social psychology who developed several unique and powerful techniques for understanding social processes, particularly social norms (autokinetic effect experiments) and social conflict.
Robbers Cave Experiment

- The 1954 Robbers Cave Experiment by Muzafar Sherif and Carolyn Wood Sherif represents one of the most widely known demonstrations of Realistic conflict theory.

- The Sherifs' study was conducted over 3 weeks in a summer camp in Robbers Cave State Park, Oklahoma, focusing on intergroup behavior.

- In this study, researchers posed as camp personnel, observing 22 eleven- and twelve-year-old boys who had never previously met and had comparable backgrounds.
The experiment was divided into 3 stages:

- **Ingroup formation**: the boys were split into 2 approximately equal groups based on similarities. Each group was unaware of the other group's presence.

- **Friction phase**: wherein the groups were entered in competition with one another in various camp games. Valued prizes were awarded to the winners. This caused both groups to develop negative attitudes and behaviors towards the outgroup.

- **Integration stage**: during this stage, tensions between the groups were reduced through teamwork-driven tasks that required intergroup cooperation.
Conclusions

- Sherif determined that because the groups were created to be approximately equal, individual differences are not necessary or responsible for intergroup conflict to occur.

- As seen in the study when the boys were competing in camp games for valued prizes, Sherif noted that hostile and aggressive attitudes toward an outgroup arise when groups compete for resources that only one group can attain.

- Sherif also establishes that contact with an outgroup is insufficient, by itself, to reduce negative attitudes.

- Finally, he concludes that friction between groups can be reduced along with positive intergroup relations maintained, only in the presence of superordinate goals that promote united, cooperative action.
Video

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PRuxMprSDQ
The tensions between intergroup cooperation and competition are similar to the tensions between fusion and interpersonal individuation.

In certain relationships between groups, a large intra-group homogeneity corresponds to an equally large homogeneity between different groups, as well as a differentiated differentiation between groups corresponding to a high intra-group differentiation.

Many theories about intergroup relationships argue that solidarity within the group increases when intergroup conflicts are ongoing.

Sigmund Freud's social psychology argues for the need to locate an enemy outside your group because this is free from conflict.
Kurt Lewin (1951) states that it is typical of dictators to invent an external enemy to convey the aggression generated within the social group they govern over it.

Sherif stressed that the defeat in competitive play during research on summer camps produces an increase in tension and conflict within the group up to disorganization.

The black sheep effect (Marques, 1986) illustrates a more general process of intra-group differentiation in situations of encounter between groups. In order to demonstrate the superiority of their group in relation to other significant outgroups, the social actors devalue the marginal deviant members of the ingroup, however those who do not have the positive characteristics of the more prototypical members; only these are considered important to define a positive identity in comparison with the outgroup.
Feelings and emotions that cannot be managed lead to conflicting relationships; but also factors such as ignorance, cognitive rigidity, bad communication or opposite interests.

**Social identity:** If a social situation approaches the extreme intergroups, the greater the uniformity shown by the members of the ingroup towards the members of the outgroup and the tendency to consider them as undifferentiated elements, to which to then attach value judgments. If we are at the extreme interpersonal, we recognize the individual characteristics of the members of the outgroup, without generalizing.
EXTREME SOCIAL CONFLICTS

**Solvable conflicts**
They have a relatively short duration, with unimportant objectives for which it is possible that the two sides may find a shared solution.

**Intractable conflicts**
Prolonging over time, with no possibility of compromise between the parties and with an extreme use of violence. Religious, ethnic causes, etc.

- Totalizing effect, perceived as very serious
- They are zero-sum: if one wins the other loses everything
- They touch important parts of the lives of the people involved
- The violence used is justified by basic ideology
- Entirely stereotyped and distorted image of the enemy
Delegitimization

Extremely negative categories are attributed to some groups, so as to be systematically excluded from social life, since they are not congruent with current regulations. It occurs especially where a group feels threatened and therefore tries to eliminate the source of this perception: the outgroup.

Dehumanization

Process that takes away from people the two qualities that define them as such: Identity and the Community. The exclusion is total, since human feelings or other faculties are not attributed to this group.
Social dominance theory = 
postindustrial society is conceived as a system of hierarchies based on groups and social attitudes determined by people's beliefs about how groups should relate to each other.

It is the tendency to consider existence as a continuous competition between groups, supporting the domination of higher groups over other inferior ones.

The bias and the prejudice are evident in such dominance. Furthermore, the benefits are believed to be only from the dominant groups.
How to improve intergroup relationships

Realistic conflict theory

- According to the theory of realistic conflict, one solution is to identify higher-level targets for groups, which are more easily achieved by cooperating and avoid mutually exclusive goals.
How to improve intergroup relationships

Contact between groups

The chronic insufficiency of intergroup contact and the poor opportunity to meet real members of another opposite group facilitates the development of the prejudice of conflict between groups.

Anxiety about the negative consequences that contact with opposing groups can have on people is one of the most significant obstacles to intergroup contact and arises for several reasons:

- realistic threat, sense of danger for the very existence of your group;
- symbolic threat, problems posed by an outgroup for the norms, values and morals of the person;
- intergroup anxiety, preoccupation experienced during intergroup interactions;
- negative stereotypes that lead to fear imagined or expected intergroup anxiety.
Contact between groups

- **Contact Theory** – Gordon Allport (1954)

- the decisive element must be a common purpose on the horizon that leads to cooperation.
Contact between groups

According to Allport, the conditions under which contact can have positive effects are:

- Prolonged contact
- Contact that implies cooperative activities, rather than a casual and aimless interaction (it was precisely this type of contact that improved relationships in the studies conducted by Sherif on summer camps)
- Contact within an official institutional support framework for integration
- Contact that reunites people or groups of equal social status

Prolonged contact between members of two groups that are different in status and power is likely to strengthen prejudice and superiority attitudes in the predominant group.

MUTUAL INTERDEPENDENCE AND SHARING OF A COMMON PURPOSE
Contact between groups

- If these conditions are met, the quality of contact between members of different groups allows people to discover the similarity of many values and attitudes, which leads to greater mutual understanding and sympathy and a reduction in anxiety, often caused by concerns about the negative consequences of contact with other groups.

- Furthermore, after various contact experiences, the negative relationship that previously existed between the two groups can be neutralized.

- However, there is the problem of the generalization of the positive experience: often more positive attitudes develop towards the real participants in the contact situation, but there are very limited changes towards the other members of the outgroup in general.
The role of empathy

- In 1978 Aronson and colleagues applied the jigsaw classroom technique in an American school context, which allows ethnic integration between various social groups, promoting an atmosphere of interdependence (sharing a common purpose of Allport).

- Daily lesson divided into six parts and entrusted to as many groups: each group has a unique and indispensable piece of information which must be recomposed together with the others.

- Everyone learns their own part and teaches it to others who have no access to this material: in this way, the members are interdependent and if someone wants to have the necessary information, s/he will have to be patient, respect the times - and sometimes even the difficulties - of others.

- The members of the jigsaw classroom live in a climate of greater calm and relaxation, improve communication and empathic skills, show less prejudices and stereotypes and are more tied to their companions (of their own or different ethnicity).

- The cooperation process has positive effects because it breaks the dichotomous perception of Us / Them and allows us to develop the cognitive category of the "single group" (the whole class).
The role of empathy

In this perspective, Batson and Ahmad (2009) argue that the activation of empathy would act directly on the emotional component of prejudice, contrasting the defensive and selfish motivations that are often linked to discrimination («I defend myself from external groups, because they threaten me»).

In this case we are talking about taking perspective, an interesting concept presented in a "stepped" model, according to which:

- the assumption of perspective of a person in difficulty, belonging to a stigmatized group, produces an increase of empathetic feelings towards him/her;

- empathy thus increases the importance attributed to the well-being of the person;

- if it is assumed that the group membership of the person is relevant for his/her discomfort, it is possible that the importance attributed to well-being will be generalized to the whole group to which the person belongs, activating positive opinions, emotions and behaviors towards the whole group.
MODELS OF CHANGE OF PREJUDICE

**CONTACT BETWEEN GROUPS**
Promote relationships between groups in order to ease the tension between them. It is essential that they have common goals and cooperate.

**EMPATHY**
Understanding the other: perceiving the difficulties of a person and his/her group, recognizing the right to well-being. Allows the break us vs them.

**DECATEGORIZATION**
Emphasize interpersonal perception during contact, more than comparison / collision between groups.

- **Recategorize:** create larger superordinate categories (not Italian vs French, but European)

- **Education:** an educational system that counteracts ignorance and discrimination, promotes everyone's tolerance, critical thinking and responsibility.
How to manage conflicts?

- **Bargaining**: intergroup conflict resolution process in which representatives reach an agreement through direct negotiation.
- **Mediation**: intergroup conflict resolution process in which a neutral third party intervenes in the negotiation to facilitate the reaching of an agreement.
- **Arbitration**: intergroup conflict resolution process in which a neutral third party is invited to impose a binding agreement for both contenders.

- **PSYCHOLOGY OF RECONCILIATION**: reconciliation is a preventive tool because it changes the nature of social relations by experiencing different conditions between the parties such as coexistence or cooperation.

Possibility of intervention