HENRI TAJFEL’S SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

- Individuals strive to improve their self-image by trying to enhance their self-esteem, based on:
  - personal identity
    - Personal achievement
  - or various social identities
    - Affiliation with a successful group.
- Cognitive Process = Social Categorizing
In-group favoritism: When an individual gets self-esteem from being a member of a group and sees his/her group as superior to others. Actions taken tend to benefit the group.

Level of self esteem is maintained by Social Comparison

Cialdini et al., (1976) after a successful football match college supporters were more likely to be wearing logo/insignia than after the team lost a game.

Tajfel “the establishment of positive distinctiveness”
Out-group homogeneity: A result of social categorization, this is when all members of the out-group are seen to have the same characteristics. They are all cheaters or rich or snobby or fashion unaware.
TAJFEL ET AL. (1971)
KANDINSKY VS. KLEE EXPERIMENT
Boys were randomly assigned groups based supposedly on their preference in art were more likely to identify with the boys in their group and were willing to give higher awards to members of their group.

The out-group was ranked as less likable, but was never actually disliked.

**Conclusion:** group identity alone does not account for intergroup conflict. In the absence of competition, social comparison does not necessarily produce negative outcome.
Downward comparison: In a study by Taylor, Wood & Lichtman (1983), they found that breast cancer patients who engaged in downward comparison (comparing themselves to someone worse off than themselves) had better recovery times and more positive self-esteem; those who engage in upward comparison (comparing themselves to someone better off than themselves) tended to have longer recovery times and were more likely to suffer from depression.
STRENGTHS AND LIMITATION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

- Good way of understanding human behavior, i.e. ethnocentrism, favoritism, conformity, serotyping.
- Assumes intergroup conflict is not required for discrimination to occur (Tajfel, 1970)
- Established + of in-group by establishing the – of the out-group.

- Describes, but does not accurately predict human behavior.
  - Why is our personal identity stronger than our group identity at times?
- It fails to take into account the environment
  - Cultural expectations
  - Rewards
  - Social constraints (poverty)
SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

- Moscovici (1973) – group theory (p. 107)
- Social Representations – shared beliefs and explanations held by the society in which we live.
- Social Representations create the foundation for Social Cognition
- Cultural Schemas that are fundamental to identity of the group
- Howarth (2002) Brixton focus group study
How effective are these group based activities? Why or Why not?
- Fall Fling/Spring Fling?
- Pep-rallies
- Group therapy
EXPLAIN THE FORMATION OF STEREOTYPES AND THEIR EFFECT ON BEHAVIOR

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STEREOTYPING

- **Stereotype** – a social perception of an individual in terms of group membership or physical attributions.
  - Positive/negative
  - A form of social categorizing that affects the behavior of those who hold the stereotype and those that are labelled.
  - A form of schema processing.
Stereotype threat: the effect of the stereotypes on an individual's performance

- Steele and Aronson (1995)
- **Aim**: to determine the affects stereotype has on performance
- **Method**: lab experiment
- **Procedure**: Minority Group and European American Group. When both were told it was a test for ability, the minority group did poorly. When both were told it was a ‘lab test to study how certain problems were solved’ the performance were not significantly different.
- **Conclusion**: Stereotype threat can affect the members of just about any social or cultural groups, if the members believe in the stereotype.
SPOTLIGHT ANXIETY

- Steele (1997) argues, stereotype threat triggers **spotlight anxiety**, emotional distress and pressure that may undermine performance.

- Spencer et al., (1977)
  - Assessed mathematical performance and literary performance of men and women (both of which were highly skilled in both areas).
  - Women scored high on literary but not in the math.
  - Spencer attributes this to stereotype threat and spotlight anxiety.
In 1994, a controversial book, *The Bell Curve* (by Richard J. Hernstein) was published, discussing the IQs of different ethnic groups. One stereotype it perpetuated was that all Asians are very intelligent. In spite of this being a rather “positive” stereotype, how could this also be an example of stereotype threat?

What are the negative effects of such stereotype?
FORMATION OF STEREOTYPES

- **Social categorization**: The cognitive process of allocating people to groups - either as an "in-group" to which one belongs, or an "out-group." This process helps us to describe and predict the world more efficiently.

- **Social comparison**: Individuals evaluate their own opinions and abilities by comparing themselves to others in order to reduce uncertainty in these domains, and learn how to define the self. It is a way to build self-esteem and a way to resolve ambiguity.
HOW STEREOTYPES DEVELOP

- **Campbell (1967):** There are two key sources to stereotypes
  - **Personal experience**
    - Individuals and groups
  - **Gatekeepers**
    - media, parents other members of culture
- **Grain of Truth hypothesis:** an experience with an individual from a group will then be generalized to the whole group.
ILLUSORY CORRELATION

- Hamilton and Gifford (1976): **Illusory correlation**
  - People see a relationship between two variable even when there is none.
  - Gender and culturally based prejudice about social groups
- Illusory correlation is an example of cognitive bias.
- *Attribution errors are also examples of cognitive bias.
- Once Illusory correlations are made, individuals will seek information to remember/support = conformational bias
Conformational Bias:
- People seek information to support their bias
- Overlook information that contradicts the belief
- Results in rigidity – resistance to change.

Research on stereotype prejudice is very difficult due to social desirability effect.
Key evaluation strategies

- Many of the early studies lacked ecological validity, but there are many studies that have been done in a naturalistic environment.
- The theory does not look at dispositional factors. Some people may be more competitive.
- The theory does not look at cultural factors. Collectivistic societies tend to be less consistent in this behavior.
- Has high heuristic validity – that is, it can be used to explain a lot of things.
Key evaluation strategies cont.,

- Overly theoretical and difficult to refute. For example, Bem’s theory of sexuality.
- Cannot predict when someone’s individual identity will supercede that of the group.
- Why does some out-group discrimination lead to violence? Sherif said it was about limited resources. Is this a valid claim?
- Environmental factors, such as war or poverty, may play a greater role.
- Self-esteem may not play as great a role as once thought. It may be an initial reason for identifying with a group, but it does not appear to be sustainable.
STUDIES

- Abram’s et al on the role of SIT in conformity
- Bem’s theory on the origin of sexuality and SIT
- Cialdini on reaction to university sports team wins
- Howarth’s study of the Brixton girls
- LeVine’s research on crowd control
- Reicher & Haslam’s replication of the Stanford Prison Experiment
- Sherif’s Robbers’ Cave experiment
- Tajfel & Turner’s Klee & Kandinsky study
In **groups vs out group**

**Football hooliganism.** What does this have to do with Social Identity Theory?
Explain the formation of stereotypes and their effect and behaviour
Key Concepts

- **Factors that are involved in social learning**
  - Attention
  - Retention
  - Motor reproduction
  - Motivation

- **Factors that influence whether social learning will take place**
  - Consistency
  - Identification with the model
  - Rewards/punishment
  - Liking the model