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Common Ingroup Identity Model

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Abstract

This entry introduces the Common Ingroup Identity Model. In intergroup interactions, it is possible for ingroup members to make biased judgments toward both ingroup and outgroup members. People tend to evaluate ingroup members positively and outgroup members negatively. The Common Ingroup Identity Model proposes that intergroup bias can be reduced by transforming the group boundaries from “us” versus “them” into a more general “we” that include all the original in- and outgroup members.

Keywords: common ingroup identity; theory; recategorization; social group; aversive racism

The Common Ingroup Identity Model adopted components from the social categorization approach to explain intergroup behavior (Brewer 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). According to the self-categorization theory, when categorizing oneself as a member of the social group, individuals overlook their idiosyncratic characteristics and start to think and act like a group member. Self-categorization leads to a number of cognitive and behavioral outcomes. One of them lies in the positive evaluation of the ingroup membership and downward social comparison with outgroup members (i.e., ingroup favoritism). As a result, after categorizing oneself as a member of the group, individuals treat other ingroup members with favorable thoughts and acts, while reacting to members of the immediate outgroup with prejudicial evaluation and discriminative behaviors. For example, in the gaming context, when individual gamers categorize themselves by gender, male gamers are expected to apply ingroup favoritism to other male gamers and engage in outgroup discrimination toward female gamers.

However, ingroup favoritism and outgroup discrimination may not be as simple. For example, many male gamers, on the conscious level, agree with the gender equity message and consider themselves to be nonprejudiced toward female gamers. These people do not explicitly perceive female gamers as a devalued group, and as a result do not discriminate against female gamers in an obvious way. However, on the unconscious level, because female gamers belong to an immediate outgroup to male gamers, individual male gamers may have negative feelings toward female gamers when engaging with them in gaming. Research has demonstrated that this less obvious discriminative behavior may not necessarily reflect direct prejudice and discrimination against the outgroup (for example, see, Gaertner, Dovidio, Banker, Rust, Nier, Mottola, & Ward, 1997). Instead, this kind of discrimination lies in a strong ingroup favoritism that they are motivated to treat the ingroup members especially favorably.

The Common Ingroup Identity Model

The Common Ingroup Identity Model was developed to address intergroup bias with the strategy of recategorization (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner, Dovidio, Nier, Banker, Ward, Houlette & Loux, 2000). The model suggests that the different environmental, cognitive, perceptual, and affective factors can alter individuals' cognitive representations of perceived group membership. These cognitive representations involve categorizing people as members of two separate groups (e.g., male gamers and female gamers), as members of one group (e.g., male gamers and female gamers are all gamers), or as distinct individuals instead of as members of a group. According to the theory, these recategorization processes will have cognitive, affective, and behavioral consequences. When categorizing people into two separate groups, individuals have favorable thoughts and behavior to their ingroup members, but engage in negative evaluations of the outgroup due to intergroup bias. However, when individuals recategorize their ingroup (e.g., male gamers) and the immediate outgroup (e.g., female gamers) as one more inclusive ingroup (i.e., the common ingroup; e.g., gamers), the original in- and outgroup members all become the individual's ingroup members, and ingroup favoritism is expected to extend to all members of the new, more inclusive ingroup. For example, after interacting with a female gamer, the male gamer may recognize the similarities he or she shares as an individual who play video games and recategorize members of both the male gamer and female gamer groups as gamers (which includes all male and female gamers). In this way, the male gamer will treat female gamers as part of his ingroup and change his perceptions of the female gamer he encountered.

Once the outgroup members are recategorized as members of the new, higher-hierarchical ingroup, it is said that a common ingroup identity is formed. The Common Ingroup

Identity Model proposed that a strong common ingroup identity changes individuals' negative perceptions of the original outgroup members on group stereotypes, prejudicial attitudes, and discriminative behavior. The former ingroup members are likely to cast more positive feelings and reactions toward all former outgroup members by the virtue of recategorizing them now as their own ingroup members. Additionally, because the salient more inclusive ingroup membership produces ingroup favoritism to all ingroup members, open communication and greater self-disclosing interaction are encouraged between former in- and outgroup members. As a result, the identification with a common ingroup identity will lead to former ingroup members' more elaborated and personalized impressions of individual former outgroup members.

Pointing out the negative outcomes of gender discrimination among gamers may be less effective at reducing gender bias in this context for male gamers who already recognize the harm of sexism and regard themselves as an egalitarian. Instead of seeking ways to reduce the negative feelings from male gamers to female gamers, the Common Ingroup Identity Model proposes a recategorization approach which highlights ingroup favoritism. Through the formation of a higher-level identity within the hierarchy of identities, it is unnecessary for male gamers to become aware that their behavior could be in fact not egalitarian but sexist. Rather, sexism against female gamers can be reduced merely by male gamers' identification with a social category that includes both male and female gamers (e.g., gamers). Through the formation of a common ingroup identity (e.g., gamers), male gamers who hold sexist beliefs unconsciously may reduce their discriminative behavior by identifying all male and female gamers as part of their own ingroup and in turn treating all of them in a favorable manner.

Overall, the Common Ingroup Identity Model proposes the common ingroup identity as a mediator between a number of potential antecedents and consequences (Gaertner & Dovidio,

2000). The antecedents that contribute to form a common ingroup identity includes intergroup interdependence (e.g., “Male gamers and female gamers need to work together as a team to win a game”), group differentiation (e.g., “Male gamers and female gamers share many similarities”), environment context (e.g., “In our society, it is a good thing to be an egalitarian”), and pre-contact experience (e.g., imagination of an affective intergroup interaction before the actual intergroup contact). Consequences of the common ingroup identity happen in the cognitive dimension (e.g., perceived homogeneity of more inclusive ingroup), affective dimension (e.g., empathic concerns toward the former outgroup), and behavioral dimension (e.g., cooperation between the former in- and outgroup).

Current research

Much research has used the categorization approach in the field of media psychology, but a handful studies have directly applied the Common Ingroup Identity Model in the mediated context. Ellithorpe, Ewoldsen, and Porreca (2018) used the supernatural genre to test how emphasizing on different levels of similarities between the viewer (i.e., the ingroup) and the villain (i.e., the outgroup) influenced the strength of the common ingroup identity. The results showed that, when presenting the villain as a non-human (i.e., a supernatural creature), White participants identified more with the human identity compared to the White identity and attributed less prejudice to the Black group. Additionally, consistent with the Common Ingroup Identity Model, when White viewers were presented with a diversity cue (i.e., a Black character), they felt more strongly identified with the human category when the villain was non-human. Another study looked at the Common Ingroup Identity Model in the context of gaming (Yao, Ewoldsen, & Ellithorpe, in preparation). By presenting the example female gamer either as a stereotypical gamer or a stereotypical female gamer through a picture and a description, the

study found that male gamers identified with the common ingroup identity (i.e., gamer) the most when the example female gamer's picture and description both presented her with gamer identity.

Conclusion

The present chapter outlined the core aspects the Common Ingroup Identity Model as well as its association with media psychology research. Through recategorizing oneself as a member of the more inclusive group, individuals may reduce intergroup biases by attributing ingroup favoritism to both the former ingroup and former outgroup. The Common Ingroup Identity Model offers parsimonious understanding of the processes that involved the nature and development of prejudice. Thus, the theory is a useful tool for research which seeks effective interventions to change both traditional and contemporary forms of prejudice.

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Further readings:

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