Theories on intergroup relations and emotions: A theoretical overview

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Abstract

The present manuscript is a theoretical revision of the major theories about intergroup relations and emotions, developed over the last decades in the field of social psychology. Following a general chronological order, we first revise the first individualistic approaches to the field of intergroup relations and social conflict. Afterwards, we revise the realistic group conflict theory and relative deprivation theory. Next, we discuss the social identity and the self-categorization theories and highlight some of the most studied dimensions of intergroup relations within this framework. To conclude, we present some of the most influential appraisal theories of emotions and the theory of intergroup emotions. We claim for an integration of several different approaches when studying intergroup relations and, more specifically, the role of different emotions in explaining instances of intergroup conflict.

Keywords: theoretical revision; social identity; intergroup relations; emotions

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Teorias de relações entre grupos e emoções: Uma revisão teórica

Resumo

O presente artigo consiste numa revisão teórica das teorias mais influentes na área das relações entre grupos e das emoções, desenvolvidas ao longo das últimas décadas no campo da psicologia social. Seguindo uma ordem cronológica, primeiro apresentamos as abordagens individualistas no campo das relações entre grupos e do conflito social. Depois, revemos a teoria do conflito realista entre grupos e a teoria de privação relativa para, seguidamente, discutirmos as teorias da identidade social e da autocategorização e destacar algumas das dimensões das relações entre grupos mais estudadas dentro desta abordagem. Para concluir, apresentamos também algumas das teorias de avaliação (i.e. appraisals) das emoções e a teoria das emoções intergrupais. No presente artigo, defendemos a integração de várias abordagens e perspetivas diferentes ao estudar as relações intergrupais e, mais especificamente, ao analisar o papel das emoções na compreensão das relações entre grupos e do conflito social.

Palavras-chave: revisão teórica; identidade social; relações entre grupos; emoções

The social psychology of intergroup relations has a very long and rich history. Given its special attention, since the beginning, to phenomena such as racism (e.g. Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Vala, Brito, & Lopes, 1999), prejudice (e.g. Mackie & Smith, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 1996), stereotyping (e.g. Deschamps, 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Turner, 1999), discrimination (e.g. Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Mackie & Smith, 2003) and conflict, it is thus understandable how it became such a prolific area of research and theorizing.

Independently of the focus on societal groups, such as racial or ethnic groups, national groups, religious groups, work groups, or even, artificial groups, just to name a few, the focus on the interactions of people belonging to groups and perceiving, thinking about and acting towards other individuals who are also part of groups (be them ingroups or outgroups) presently sets the framework of analysis in intergroup relations.

One of the most widely known definitions of intergroup relations was provided by Sherif (1962) and states that

Intergroup relations refer to relations between two or more groups and their respective members. Whenever individuals belonging to one group interact,