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Prolegomena toward integrating social psychological and communicative parameters of intergroup relations

This prologue to a special issue on social psychological processes and intergroup communication begins by outlining the constituents of the field of intergroup communication. This includes many of the major publications, disciplines and orientations involved, the methods, social groups, and communicative features studied together with selected research paradigms, applied and social domains, and theories featured. The empirical articles that follow are discussed with respect to two fundamental issues. The first refers to a seminal distinction manifest in social identity theory, namely, how social interactions can be distinguished, conceptually and operationally, as either interindividual or intergroup. Consequently, the articles are discussed in terms how they are variably manifest as intergroup encounters. The second issue relates to past principles of intergroup communication that are articulated, refined, and elaborated further by recourse, in the main, to the emergent concepts in this special issue.

Key words: communication accommodation theory, workplace violence, de-escalation, healthcare, intervention

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Over the last 35 years, the study of intergroup communication has appeared in an array of edited books (e.g., Gudykunst, 1986; Giles & Maass, 2016) and journal special issues (e.g., Clément, 1996; Giles & Gardikiotis, 2018), and been bolstered further by a Handbook (Giles, 2012a) and a two-volume Encyclopedia (Giles & Harwood, 2018). Furthermore, there have been many other overviews, introductions, or critiques of this academic arena that, in and of themselves, demonstrate its burgeoning spirit (e.g., Abeyta & Giles, 2017; Gallois et al., 2018; Keblusek et al., 2017; Kienzle & Soliz, 2017; Maass et al., 2014; Rakić & Maass, 2019).

Within and across these outlets, the field is very eclectic, and this is manifest in a rich variety of ways, including the following:

- Disciplines and orientations, including ethnographic (Carbaugh et al., 2012), evolutionary (Reid et al., 2010), neuroscientific (Clément et al., 2016), and sociolinguistic (Stubbe, 2012) perspectives as well as the exploration of bridges between them (see, e.g., Krauss & Pardo, 2006).
- Methods, with an eclectic array of quantitative and qualitative procedures within each (see, e.g., Augoustinos & Goodman, 2018; Gallois et al., 2021).
- Social groups, from the well-trodden classic ones of between-nations/cultures, -ethnicities, -generations, and -genders (see, e.g., Giles & Harwood, 2018) as well as many others, including encounters between gangs (Goldman et al., 2014), sports teams (Giles & Stohl, 2016), and religious (Morgan et al., 2020), political (Nau, 2016), and military groupings (Wilson & Chernichky, 2016).
- Communicative features, as manifest in choices concerning, for example, languages, accents, vocabulary, syntax, and metaphor (e.g., Cervone et al., 2021), nonverbal behaviors in terms of personal space, smiling, and eye contact (Dovidio & Gluszek, 2012), culturally-unique architecture and written histories (Giles, 2012b), dress style & appearance (Keblusek & Giles, 2018), music (Harwood, 2017), and dance (Pines & Giles, 2018).
- Research paradigms, including but far from limited to language attitudes (e.g., Dragojevic et al., 2021), linguistic biases (e.g., Maass, 1999), bilingualism (Al-Hoorie et al., 2021), language, identity, and power (e.g., Wakslak et al., 2014), media portrayals and effects (e.g., Hartmann & Tanis, 2013), intergroup contact and communication, group labeling (e.g., Fasoli et al., 2015), language and stereotyping (e.g., Lyons & Kashima, 2003), and hate speech (e.g., Waltman & Haas, 2011).
- Applied and social domains, such as the family (e.g., Harwood et al., 2017), health care and medical specialties (e.g., Watson et al., 2012), educational groups of students and teachers (Nussbaum et al., 2012), organizations and institutions (e.g., Suzuki, 1998) such as law enforcement agencies and the court (Watson & Soliz, 2019, see also Giles et al., 2021), and the media (e.g., Ortiz & Harwood, 2007; Tukachinsky et al., 2015).

Our focus in this special issue is on the social psychological underpinnings of intergroup communication which, as evident herein, reflects much of the diversity of the foregoing. Again, there is no monolithic approach even within this perspective, as a wide variety of theories have been invoked in the broader field of intergroup relations (see Brown & Gaertner, 2008; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Jost & Major, 2001; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). This is evident, arguably to a lesser extent, in the distinct area of intergroup communication, with its main foci – even hegemony - being social identity and social categorization theories (for a critique of this orientation and the need to broaden it, see Taylor et al., 2010; the uncertainty-identity theory, Belavadi et al., this issue). Relatedly, other intergroup models have played lasting and distinctive roles including, but not restricted to, anxiety uncertainty-management (e.g., Gudykunst, 2005), communication accommodation (e.g., Palomares et al., 2016), vitality (e.g., Clément & Norton, 2021), communication theory of identity (e.g., Jung & Hecht, 2004), identity negotiation (e.g., Ting-Toomey, 2005), intergroup contact (Paolini et al., 2021) theories as well as the linguistic category model (e.g., Maass et al., 1989).

The Collection

Readers are encouraged to consult Harwood and Gim's (this issue) splendid conceptual model (or map) overviewing the contributions to this special issue that also suggests innovative ways of their being mutually interlocking in future works. In this prologue, selective features of the (admittedly quantitatively-skewed) papers that follow are introduced. This is accomplished by recourse to two issues. First, by depicting variable features of what constitutes an intergroup scenario in each article and, second, moving second to their cumulative contribution to extending the current principles of intergroup communication.

Inter-Individual versus Intergroup Interactions

Related to the first issue, it is important to highlight an early distinction proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) when introducing their social identity theory (for reviews and critiques, see Demirden, 2021; Reicher et al., 2010) between social interactions that are – at their extremes – interindividual versus intergroup. The former was originally termed thusly to distinguish it from so-called interpersonal communication which can actually be intergroup in nature (see Dragojevic & Giles, 2014). As the distinction implies, interindividual communication is shaped primarily by the individual characteristics (their personal identities) of the people involved – their unique personalities and temperaments – such as when spouses respond in a sensitive and caring manner, accommodating each other's unique concerns.

In contrast, intergroup communication is considered as such when people's perceptions of (and stereotypes about) their own and others' group affiliations

(their social identities) are situationally salient (see Palomares et al., 2016). It is important to underscore that once people categorize others as members of a contrastive outgroup, they depersonalize their mental representations of such people by viewing them as an embodiment of a salient group prototype rather than as idiosyncratic individuals (Hogg & Reid, 2006; see also Lee, 2006). Moreover, just as people categorize others, they can also categorize themselves (see Fasoli et al., this issue). In this way, self-categorization has the same depersonalizing effect on self-perception so that people internalize an ingroup prototype and begin to think, feel, and behave in collectively normative ways (Turner et al., 1987). Indeed, people can construe not only whether they themselves are prototypical members of their own group, but also the prototypicality of outgroup members and their messages (see Gaffney et al., this issue). In other words, both personal and social identities can have a differentially powerful impacts on how people communicate. For instance, when a police officer stops a vehicle, the driver's behavior toward the officer can be heavily influenced by the officer's status, appearance, and as an authority figure, not the officer's novel personal identity. Converging to another's attributes as a prototypical member of an outgroup is called group identity-based accommodation (Soliz et al., 2019; see also Bernhold & Giles, 2020, 2021).

This distinction is important, as whereas individuals' communication practices can be driven by group identities being salient in an interaction, many people are unaware as to the extent their social category memberships dictate the verbal and nonverbal features they enact. For instance, Tajfel estimated in (admittedly undocumented) everyday casual conversations with some scholars that 70% of interpersonal interactions are actually intergroup in nature. Although the above is introduced conceptually in almost dichotomous terms, it is not nearly as straightforward, as both identities can be operating simultaneously (referred to as high interpersonal plus high intergroup situations, see Giles and Hewstone, 1982). Interestingly also, Gangi and Soliz, 2016 (p. 40) argued, almost paradoxically, that "communicatively recognizing and affirming differences in multi-ethnic-racial families can actually decrease group salience and increase relational closeness." Given the notion of intersectionality (see, e.g., Crenshaw, 1990; Harwood & Gim, this issue) and the fact that we belong to a range of social groups, the importance of conceding others' multiple identities can be communicatively important (see Belavadi et al., and Fasoli, this issue) as well as others co-present (Gaffney et al., this issue).

For instance, in one study, Bernhold and Giles (2021) found that relational closeness remained consistently high when older adults perceived that their romantic partners engaged in high levels of accommodation based on their partner's third-most important group. These findings suggest that romantic partners who "dig deeper" into their loved one's lives by learning about their perhaps less obvious and less important groups, and accommodating accordingly, can enhance relational well-being. Whatever the intrigue surrounding these complexities (see

Giles & Walther, 2022), this backdrop is significant for understanding the articles that follow, in that they relate to communicative practices when situations are intergroup in character. In Table 1 below, and control experimental conditions notwithstanding (see Collins et al., this issue) where participants may well see the situational task as more inter-individual, the different ways in which studies in this special issue are constituted in intergroup terms are outlined.

The Table also reflects the variety of social groupings, nationalities, and media platforms depicted in this volume. Furthermore, the valued and infrequent attention in intergroup communication studies to macro-societal issues and contexts, such as national crises (see Belavadi et al., and Kioumi et al.) and other social dramas notwithstanding, the above intergroup features therein are, necessarily, just an academic tip-of-the-iceberg of how ingroup-outgroup situations unfold in real life. Nonetheless, Table 1 also shows how the group identities of participants are only one piece of the intergroup puzzle in the context of the sequence and flow of events unfold in real time (see Collins et al., this issue).

Refining Principles of Intergroup Communication

A decade ago, and with the intent of elucidating major communicative dimensions that underlie the different ways that people's social identities can be expressed, questioned, and reinforced, Giles (2012) introduced a set of fundamental Principles of Intergroup Communication alongside Hogg and Giles (2012; see also Abeyta & Giles, 2017). These are articulated below and have been refined and elaborated into six principles in accord with the articles in this special issue. More specifically, they now appeal to ingroup members' self-perceptions of their own communicative practices and others' perceived stigmatization (see Fasoli et al., this issue), social networks and social media (Kioumi et al., this

Table 1. *Intergroup Elements of the Studies in the Current Special Issue*

Empirical articles in this special issue	Participants' levels of ingroup salience	Selective study foci
Fasoli et al.	Self-categorization of UK national, foreign and sexual orientation identities	Group identities as cued by own perceptions of voice and expectations of stigmatization
Belavadi et al.	Self-ratings of Greek national and 7 political identities	Greek opinions on a national crisis
Collins et al.	Self-categorization as white, Canadian-English language speakers	Subjected to cultural threat from Chinese and opportunity to derogate the outgroup
Kioumi and Gardikiotis	Self-categorizations as Greeks and Germans	Social media as network cites to discuss intergroup relations and attitudes
Moscattelli	Self-categorization as Italian young people	Assessing morality praise from younger or older people
Gaffney et al.	Self-categorization into American Republican & Democratic parties and self-rated prototypicality	Agreement with an outgroup's ideological position in the presence of more or less extreme members of it

issue), intergroup anxiety, outgroup threat, and biosocial processes (Collins et al., this issue), certain forms of positive messages from outgroup members (Moscatelli, this issue), intergroup identity-uncertainty (Belavadi, this issue), and the co-presence of others in intergroup arguments (Gaffney et al., this issue). Their presentation here provides, especially for the novice to intergroup communication, a complementary backdrop to the preceding interindividual-intergroup discussion for digesting and interpreting the subsequent articles that appear in this special issue:

I: Language and other diverse modes of communication (e.g., nonverbal and appearance) can serve as markers of—and sometimes criteria for—the multiple categories to which group members belong and with which they are perceived by self and others, sometimes stereotypically, to affiliate.

II: Outgroup rhetorical positions and messages – even morality praise – can be biasedly-interpreted by ingroup members, often fostering within them anxieties and uncertainties, and even harmful psychochemical reactions.

III: Groups' messages about their intergroup histories and demographics, along with other ingroup communicative practices, can signify distinctive cultures (in terms of normative routines, values, and world views) that coexist with comparative others from whom they can differentiate, even denigrate and stigmatize, and beyond that, dehumanize, particularly under conditions of perceived social threat.

IV: The communicative practices and boundaries that differentiate social groups are malleable, and when they evolve or change to better meet prevailing social identity needs, can be responsible for reconstituting the dynamics of the intergroup setting at hand.

V: Group members will strive, and sometimes be strategically encouraged, to acquire the communicative practices of dominant outgroups who can, ironically in reactance, move linguistically away from such identity-threatening tactics. Such intergroup dynamics of a dialectic tension (or “accommodative chase”) can be prolonged, and oftentimes ultimately abandoned, because of their deleterious effect on the former maintaining a positive social identity.

VI: Through the expression of intergroup norms in their social networks and social media platforms, individuals control and negotiate normativity in everyday life, enabling them to recognize any ingroup deviancies that can lead to publically discrediting and marginalizing offenders. Consequently, group leaders who more prototypically manifest the values and communicative practices of the ingroup emerge and/or are elected over influential others.

Conclusion

By means of this content-diverse special issue, we have sought to promote further the value of current and future work on intergroup communication and we are indebted to this journal's editors for their patience and generous assistance

in allowing us this exciting opportunity. The guest co-editors are also grateful to the authors of the seven papers in this special issue for their due forbearance and willingness to accommodate our feedback in a professional and collegial fashion. Hopefully, this prologue will provide a modest step in provoking theoretical advances in unpacking when, how, and why situations are deemed intergroup by social actors who may be positioning themselves with other ongoing societal and legal changes (while also being shaped by them) and, finally, how these interlocking dynamics can be transformed through interventions and social policies to be optimally positive.

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