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**PATNA UNIVERSITY, PATNA**  
**M.A SEMESTER-III**  
**COURSE CODE-Phil CC- 12**  
**PAPER – HUMAN RIGHTS & FEMINISM**  
**TOPIC : CONCEPT OF SOCIAL IDENTITY**  
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Social identity theory was proposed in social psychology by Tajfel and his colleagues (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity refers to the ways that people's self-concepts are based on their membership in social groups. Examples include sports teams, religions, nationalities, occupations, sexual orientation, ethnic groups, and gender. Social identity is the portion of an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group.

Social identity theory is described as a theory that predicts certain intergroup behaviours on the basis of perceived group status differences, the perceived legitimacy and stability of those status differences, and the perceived ability to move from one group to another. This contrasts with occasions where the term "social identity theory" is used to refer to general theorizing about human social selves. Moreover, and although some researchers have treated it as such, social identity theory was never intended to be a general theory of social categorization. It was

awareness of the limited scope of social identity theory that led John Turner and colleagues to develop a cousin theory in the form of self-categorization theory, which built on the insights of social identity theory to produce a more general account of self and group processes.

The term social identity approach, or social identity perspective, is suggested for describing the joint contributions of both social identity theory and self-categorization theory. Social identity theory suggests that an organization can change individual behaviors if it can modify their self-identity or part of their self-concept that derives from the knowledge of, and emotional attachment to the group.

## **SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY DEPENDS ON CERTAIN FACTORS**

**Interpersonal and Intergroup Continuum:-** Social identity theory states that social behavior will want a person to change his/her behavior while in a group. It varies along a continuum between interpersonal behavior and intergroup behaviour. Completely interpersonal behaviour would be behaviour determined solely by the individual characteristics and interpersonal relationships that exists between only two people. Completely intergroup behaviour would be behaviour determined solely by the social category memberships that apply to more than two people. The authors of social identity theory state that purely interpersonal or purely intergroup behaviour is unlikely to be found in realistic social situations. Rather,

behaviour is expected to be driven by a compromise between the two extremes. The cognitive nature of personal vs. social identities, and the relationship between them, is more fully developed in self-categorization theory. Social identity theory instead focuses on the social structural factors that will predict which end of the spectrum will most influence an individual's behaviour, along with the forms that that behavior may take.

**Positive distinctiveness:-** A key assumption in social identity theory is that individuals are intrinsically motivated to achieve positive distinctiveness. That is, individuals "strive for a positive self-concept". As individuals to varying degrees may be defined and informed by their respective social identities (as per the interpersonal-intergroup continuum) it is further derived in social identity theory that "individuals strive to achieve or to maintain positive social identity". Both the interpersonal-intergroup continuum and the assumption of positive distinctiveness motivation arose as outcomes of the findings of minimal group studies. In particular, it was found that under certain conditions individuals would endorse resource distributions that would maximize the positive distinctiveness of an ingroup in contrast to an outgroup at the expense of personal self-interest.

**Individual mobility:-** It is predicted that under conditions where the group boundaries are considered permeable

individuals are more likely to engage in individual mobility strategies. That is, individuals "disassociate from the group and pursue individual goals designed to improve their personal lot rather than that of their ingroup".

**Social creativity:-** Where group boundaries are considered impermeable, and where status relations are considered reasonably stable, individuals are predicted to engage in social creativity behaviours. Here, low-status ingroup members are still able to increase their positive distinctiveness without necessarily changing the objective resources of the ingroup or the outgroup. This may be achieved by comparing the ingroup to the outgroup on some new dimension, changing the values assigned to the attributes of the group, and choosing an alternative outgroup by which to compare the ingroup.

**Social competition:-** Here an ingroup seeks positive distinctiveness and requires positive differentiation via direct competition with the outgroup in the form of ingroup favoritism. It is considered competitive in that in this case favoritism for the ingroup occurs on a value dimension that is shared by all relevant social groups (in contrast to social creativity scenarios).

**In-group favoritism:-** In-group favoritism (also known as "ingroup bias", despite Turner's objections to the term) is an effect where people give preferential treatment to others when they are perceived to be in the same ingroup. Social

identity attributes the cause of ingroup favoritism to a psychological need for positive distinctiveness and describes the situations where ingroup favoritism is likely to occur function of perceived group status, legitimacy, stability, It has been shown via the minimal group studies that ingroup favoritism may occur for both arbitrary ingroups (e.g. a coin toss may split participants into a 'heads' group and a 'tails' group) as well as non-arbitrary ingroups (e.g. ingroups based on cultures, genders, sexual orientation, and first languages).

Continued study into the relationship between social categorization and ingroup favoritism has explored the relative prevalences of the ingroup favoritism vs. outgroup discrimination, explored different manifestations of ingroup favoritism, and has explored the relationship between ingroup favoritism and other psychological constraints (e.g., existential threat).

**Prosocial Behaviors:-** Social identification can lead individuals to engage in prosocial behaviors towards others. Examples include contexts such as food drives or even shared purchasing patterns, as might occur for motorcycle riders. Interestingly, consumers may have sub-identities that are nested into a larger identity. As a result, "when consumers identify with the overall community, they assist other consumers. However, consumers are less likely to help consumers in the overall community when identifying with a subgroup".

**Self-esteem hypothesis:-** Social identity theory proposes that people are motivated to achieve and maintain positive concepts of themselves. Some researchers, including Michael Hogg and Dominic Abrams, thus propose a fairly direct relationship between positive social identity and self-esteem. In what has become known as the "self-esteem hypothesis", self-esteem is predicted to relate to in-group bias in two ways. Firstly, successful intergroup discrimination elevates self-esteem. Secondly, depressed or threatened self-esteem promotes intergroup discrimination. Empirical support for these predictions has been mixed.

Thus, some social identity theorists, including John Turner, consider the self-esteem hypothesis as not canonical to social identity theory. In fact, the self-esteem hypothesis is argued to be conflictual with the tenets of the theory.