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Las discrepancias entre los modelos deseados y el uso real relacionales como predictores de los conflictos intergrupales

Discrepancies between desired and actual used relational models as predictors of intergroup conflict

Discrepâncias entre os modelos desejados e utilização efectiva relacionais como preditores de conflitos intergrupais

Les écarts entre les modèles souhaités et l'utilisation réelle relationnelles comme facteurs prédictifs de conflits intergroupes

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The social psychology of intergroup relations has been dominated during several decades by theories that use the categorization of people into ingroups and outgroups as a central psychological process that explains large part of people's behavior towards others (Park & Judd, 2005). The distinction between ingroup and outgroup defines what are people's interests and goals as compared to other people's interests and goals (Realistic conflict theory, Campbell, 1965; Sherif, 1966), it provides meaning to people's standing in the social world as compared to others (Social Identity Approach, Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and it defines what one deserves and what not (Relative Deprivation Theory, Crosby, 1976; Gurr, 1970). Research inspired by these approaches has accumulated an incredible body of knowledge about determinants of and remedies for prejudice and intergroup conflict. In accordance with the dominant idea of ingroup versus outgroup categorization, the majority of attempts to reduce prejudice and of approaches to explain the success of some interventions aiming to improve intergroup relations (such as intergroup contact)

has focused on changing individuals' categorization, that is, the way in which they represent a certain intergroup situation. For instance, it has been suggested that one can improve intergroup attitudes by encouraging people to see each other rather as individuals than as group members (Brewer & Miller, 1984) or by recategorizing previous outgroup members as ingroup members of a more inclusive common ingroup including both former ingroup and former outgroup members (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Empirical evidence supports the idea that changing such categorical cognition has the potential to improve attitudes towards outgroup members and there is no doubt about the theoretical and practical contribution of these results.

Nevertheless, with its focus on prejudice and prejudice reduction, intergroup relations research has neglected some aspects of intergroup relations that are equally important and that have to do with more differentiated questions of intergroup relations. In the globalized world of today, for instance, groups are interdependent from each other in very complex ways. Several important questions such as: Why should German taxpayers agree with the idea of lending the Greek state billions of Euros? Why should member states of the European Union agree on a proportional redistribution of refugees from Syria? Or how should the burden of fighting global warming be distributed between rich and poor countries? Such questions cannot easily be answered by the classical categorical approach. Many of these questions have to do with usually positive intergroup relations – an issue that is understudied, probably because it has attracted less attention. Moreover, they also often refer to morally, politically and/or emotionally regulated contexts in which relations have a history shaping group members expectations towards outgroup members and other ingroup members.

Moreover, whereas the ingroup-outgroup categorization has been relatively fruitful in predicting rather benign forms of intergroup conflict, it falls short in the explanation of more extreme and more hostile forms of intergroup conflict. For example, the support of one's local football team in a stadium can be explained as a classical form of ingroup favouritism. If fans of one team, however, set the stadium of the rival team on fire, such an interpretation is less plausible.

In order to pave a theoretical path to address these questions we will present a complementary theoretical approach to intergroup relations that is based on

Alan Fiske's Relational Models Theory (RMT). Fiske (1991, 1992) proposes first that people think qualitatively different about other people and other agents to whom they have a relationship (pets, spirits, ancestors, gods) than they think about non-relational objects. Second, RMT proposes that humans manage to successfully cooperate in the world because they rely on a limited set of basic, universal cognitive models, the so called relational models, to coordinate their behavior. As a result, all relations are thought of as exemplars of one or a combination of some of these fundamental and universal relational models. The relational models have a universal structure which is shared across cultures and humans have evolved to be particularly well prepared to learn and to understand these relational models. Cultural specificities can be found in the particular rules and customs of the implementation of these relational models, that is, in the questions of when, under which circumstances and with whom a certain relational model should be used.

Third, RMT assumes that there are only four of these universal relational models that people use to coordinate their relations: Communal sharing (CS), Authority ranking (AR), Equality matching (EM) and Market pricing. The organizing principle in CS is unity and sharing, that is, people see participants in this relation to be equivalent to themselves. What affects the CS partner affects oneself, in the good and in the bad. In these relations people share resources without limit and they contribute as much as they can and without counting or monitoring the contributions of each other. Very often people have these relations in their families or with close friends, but CS is also the basis of certain types of nationalism and ethnic identities.

The organizing principle in AR is hierarchy. That is, AR relations are asymmetric relations in which some participants have more privileges, influence, normative and decision power and higher status than others, who are inclined to obey to their superiors and to follow their orders. Superiors on the other hand have some paternal responsibility to their inferiors and have to protect them and to stand up for them. Note that AR is not a model that is based solely on coercive power. On the contrary, what it describes are asymmetric status relations that are seen by their participants as mostly legitimate as long as each part treats the other according to the norms of the model. Such relations can often be found between professors and students, parents and their children, doctors and

patients, in the military or between professionals with different qualification levels.

The organizing principle of EM is – as the name says – equality. That is, the relation is expected to be organized in a tit-for-tat manner, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. This kind of relation can often be found between friends and acquaintances, for instance if they split the bill for the dinner into equal parts, notwithstanding that everybody might have consumed different amounts of food and drinks. EM is the point of departure in most sports, but also an important organizing principle in large-scale societal institutions such as elections (one vote for each person). If people cannot split a commodity into equal parts, they may take turns and by this keep the dynamic balance that is characteristic for EM.

Finally, the organizing principle of MP is proportionality. The fact that the name of this model includes the word market does not imply that it is limited to commercial transactions. Of course, because the principle of proportionality allows to calculate comparable ratios of costs and benefits even if people's input and outcome are different, it is the ideal principle to organize the exchange of qualitatively different commodities, such as bread for cloths or transport. However, the proportionality principle is also applied in many other domains of the society, such as the juridical system (the punishment for a crime should be proportional) or in schools (the grades a student receives should correspond to the student's performance).

These four relational models are so universal that they are assumed by RMT to organize all inter-human relations, between individuals, between and within groups and in the set up of large-scale society. Moreover, they are not just cognitive models organizing the interpretation of the social world. They also determine people's moral intuitions, their emotional reactions to other people's acts and their attribution of motivation to other people.

In our new approach to intergroup relations we propose that intergroup relations can be better understood if one studies which relational models group members apply to the relation their group has with other groups. We assume that the relation that the ingroup has to the outgroup determines how members of one group are expected to behave towards members of the other group (e.g., to pay or not to pay back one's debts under extraordinary circumstances).

In a first rather exploratory study we tested this idea in the context of the European debts crisis. As part of a multi-country questionnaires measuring responses to austerity measures in three southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal) we assessed participants understanding of between-nation relations within the European Union. All three of these countries were affected by the European debts crisis. In April 2010, the greek government asked the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the EU to put together a rescue package. In 2011, the portuguese government asked for an EU-IMF bailout. Both of these actions resulted in the application of strong austerity measures in exchange for the provided support by these international institutions. Italy did not ask for a bail out, but in 2011 the that time prime minister Berlusconi pushed for an austerity package as well.

In all three countries people suffered from the austerity politics and many engaged in collective action such as protest themselves or at least sympathized with it. In this context, we measured participants tendency to support normative and non-normative (e.g., destructive) protest against austerity measures as dependent variable and asked participant how much they apply each of the four relational models to the actual but also to the ideal (desired) relations of their country to other nations within the European Union. We hypothesized that discrepancies between the use of a relational model in the ideal relation and the use of the same relational model in the actual (perceived) relation with other nations should predict support of protest, and particularly support of non-normative protest. The reasoning behind this hypothesis is that deviation from the desired relational model should be seen as a relational transgression, something that according to RMT motivates people to either correct the relation (for instance, by punishing the transgressor) or to end it.

Methods

Participants filled in a questionnaire either online or in paper pencil format. The questionnaire was translated into all three languages (Greece, Italian, Portuguese) so that participants received the questions in their mother tongue.

Participants

Participants were recruited in Greece (N = 216), Portugal (N= 323) and Italy (N 211). About half of the sample in each country (between 47.1 and 61.1 %) were students, the other halve were other adults. The majority of participants were

female (between 62.2 and 75.4%) and the mean age varied between 29.1 years in Greece (SD = 12.1) and 32.5 years in Italy (SD = 13.9).

Measures

Among several measures, the questionnaire asked for people's support of normative or non-normative collective action (protest) and for people's perceived actual and ideal relations to other European countries.

Support of normative collective action was measured with the following question: "please indicate how willing you are to participate in the following in order to show your opinion about the current situation in your country:" followed by the following actions: Demonstrations, Strikes, Discussions at a local level, Blocking of highways, Writing of flyers, "Indignados" movement, Buying Greek [Italian; Portuguese] products, Supporting local shops. Each of the listed action was followed by a 7-point likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much). Responses to all items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$) were averaged to an index of support of normative collective action.

Because we expected some problems with social desirability, the measure of support of destructive (non-normative) collective action was introduced by the following sentence: "Sometimes people engage in unusual actions that are considered by others as destructive because they violate important norms, or even break the law." Moreover, the measure was a bit more indirect than the measure of normative collective action. The question was framed as "If some people in Greece [Italy; Portugal] respond with such destructive actions to the austerity that is imposed to the country by the European Union, how much do the following sentences express what you feel?" followed by the items: "To a certain degree I can understand such destructive actions", "I consider such destructive actions as legitimate" and "I strongly condemn such destructive actions" (reversed coded). Each item was followed by a 7-Item Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much). Responses to all three items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .74$) were averaged to an index of support of destructive collective action.

The perceived actual relation of participants' nation to other nations within the European Union was introduced by the following instruction:

“When thinking of the relation between Greece [Italy, Portugal] and the other countries of the European Union, which of the following five descriptions describes best how it actually is?”

Then the following items followed, each one describing one of the relational models and each one followed by a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much):

EM:

“Greece [Italy; Portugal] and the other countries are distinct, but equal in terms of rights and obligations”

CS:

“Greece [Italy; Portugal] and the other countries are parts of a united Europe, like one family, and if one country is in need the others help and show solidarity”

AR (ingroup in lower status position):

“Greece [Italy; Portugal] follows the guidance that it receives from other countries, like a good student following his/her professor’s requests and advices”

AR (ingroup in higher status position)

“Other countries follow the guidance they receive from Greece[Italy; Portugal], like good students following their professor’s requests and advices”

MP:

“Greece [Italy; Portugal] and the other countries relate to each other like business partners, in the sense that each side tries to optimize investments and gains in mutual exchanges”

Thus, for each relational model (AR twice because of the asymmetric positions) there was a one-item measure. Note that this limitation to one-item measures was chosen merely for technical reasons, not for conceptual reasons, because otherwise the questionnaire would have been too long.

Participants’ ideal relation of their country with other nations in the European Union used the same items, but replacing the factual statement by a normative one:

“When thinking of relation between Greece [Italy, Portugal] and the other countries of the European Union, which of the following five descriptions describes best how it should be?”

EM:

“Greece [Italy; Portugal] and the other countries should be distinct, but equal in terms of rights and obligations”

CS:

“Greece [Italy; Portugal] and the other countries should be parts of a united Europe, like one family, and if one country is in need the others should help and show solidarity”

AR (ingroup in lower status position):

“Greece [Italy; Portugal] should follow the guidance that it receives from other countries, like a good student following his/her professor’s requests and advices”

AR (ingroup in higher status position)

“Other countries should follow the guidance they receive from Greece [Italy; Portugal], like good students following their professor’s requests and advices”

MP:

“Greece [Italy; Portugal] and the other countries should relate to each other like business partners, in the sense that each side can optimize investments and gains in mutual exchanges”

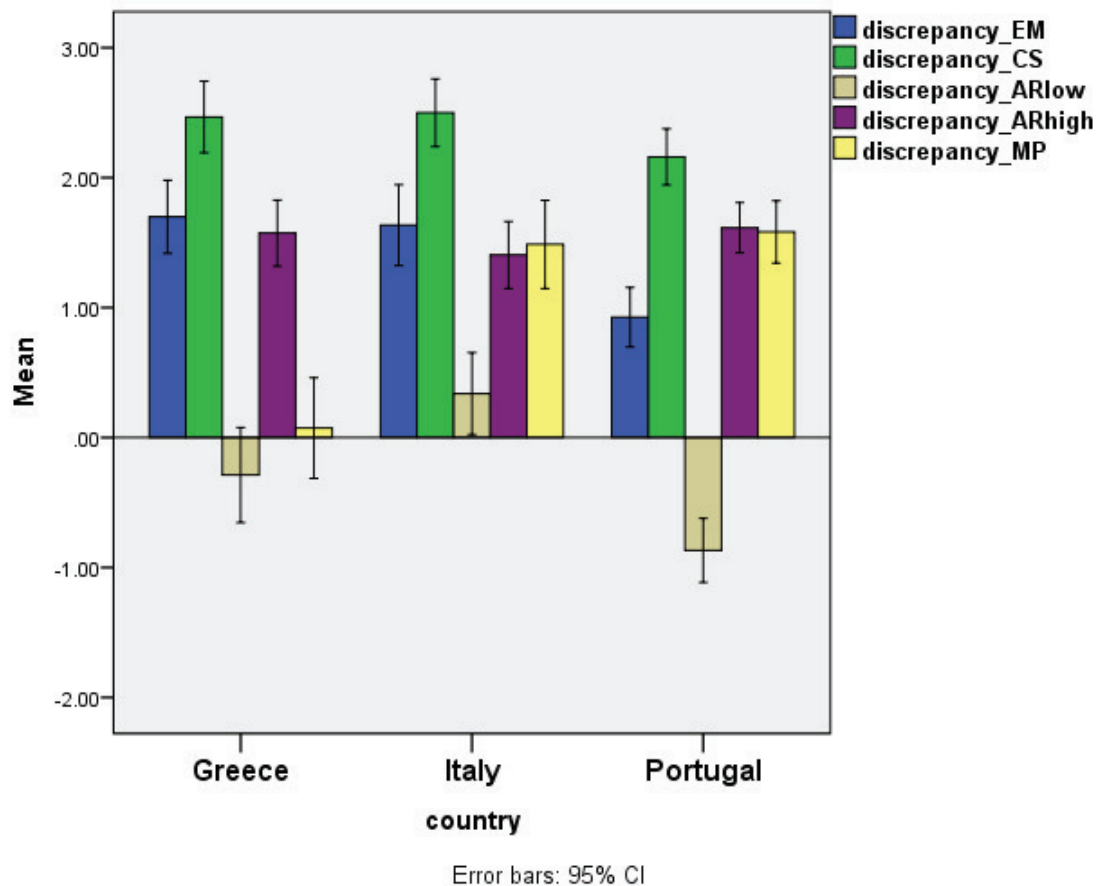
Discrepancies between ideal and actual perceived application of each relational model was calculated as a difference score between the amount in which the model is applied to the ideal relation and the amount to which it is applied to the actual relation. That is, positive values of this index mean that participants feel that the respective relational model should be applied more than it actually is, negative values indicate that participants perceive too much of a relational model in the relation.

We also measured participants political orientation as a covariate ranging from 1 (“Extremely left wing”), via 2 (“Left wing”), 3 (“Centre”), 4 (“Right wing”) to 5 (“Extreme right wing”).

Results

As expected, participants in all three countries expressed strong discrepancies between the application of the relational models in their ideal and their actual relations to other EU countries. Figure 1 shows the discrepancies for each of the countries.

Figure 1: Discrepancies between ideal and actual relations in Greece, Italy and Portugal



As can be seen in Figure 1, there are some similarities between the three countries, but also some differences. In all three countries participants would like to have in average more EM, CS and AR with the ingroup in the higher status position than they have and in none of the countries participants would like to have more AR with the ingroup in the lower status position. However, only participants from Italy and Portugal, but not from Greece, would like to have more MP than they actually have. Moreover, only Portuguese participants indicated in average that they have too much of AR with the ingroup in the lower status position. These two specificities are important for the understanding of the subsequent results.

In order to assess the predictive power of the relational discrepancy on each of the relational models in the different countries, we run multiple regressions for each country separately. We also run the regression for the overall sample. First we regressed the support of normative action on the five different

discrepancy scores, including support for destructive action and political orientation as covariates. Results can be found in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Standardized regression coefficients of the discrepancies on each relational models predicting support of normative collective action.

Predicting Normative Collective Action

	Greece N = 216	Italy N = 211	Portugal N = 323	Total N = 750
Discrepancy				
EM	.14+	-.05	-.02	.02
CS	-.04	.001	.14*	.06
AR low	-.09	-.09	-.06	-.08*
AR high	.08	.05	-.04	.04
MP	.04	.03	.01	-.04
Political orientation	-.20**	-.30***	-.15**	-.19***
Destructive action	.29***	.16*	.32***	.27***

The only significant effect was found for discrepancy in the application of CS for Portuguese participants: The more they missed CS in the relation to other EU nations, the more they support normative collective action. An effect of the same effect size, but only marginal due to smaller sample size, was found for Greek participants discrepancy in EM. The more they miss equality in the relations to other EU nations, the more they support normative collective action. More important, however, is the potential of relational discrepancy to predict destructive, non-normative collective action. We therefore run the same regression model again, but this time predicting support of destructive collective action and including political orientation and support of normative collective action as covariates. Results can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 3. Standardized regression coefficients of the discrepancies on each relational models predicting support of destructive collective action.

Predicting Destructive Collective Action

	Greece N = 216	Italy N = 211	Portugal N = 323	Total N = 750
Discrepancy				
EM	-.03	.01	.10+	.02
CS	.01	-.01	.07	.05
AR low	-.09	-.12	.12*	-.04
AR high	-.05	.20*	.04	.07
MP	-.15*	-.07	-.07	-.08*
Political orientation	-.15*	-.03	-.11*	-.10**
Normative action	.28***	.17*	.32***	.27***

As hypothesized, relational discrepancy predicted support of destructive action in all three countries. However, in each country it was a different relational discrepancy that counted: In Italy the significant positive predictor was a discrepancy in AR relations with Italy in the higher status position, in Greece the discrepancy in MP was a negative predictor and finally, and somewhat surprising, in Portugal the significant positive predictor is discrepancy on AR with Portugal in the lower status position.

Discussion

Results support our hypothesis that relational discrepancy in intergroup relations is a key factor to understand destructive and conflictual intergroup behavior. However, the results also show clearly that it is not relational discrepancy per se that predicts support of destructive collective action. What matters are specific discrepancies that are different in each intergroup context. For Italians it seems that the more they feel that their country is not enough recognized as a higher status partner in AR relations the more they support destructive collective action. This corresponds to the specificity of the Italian position within the EU, namely that Italy is one of the biggest and oldest members of the EU, yet it does not play a similarly dominant role as countries like Germany, France or the UK.

In Greece the major predictor of support for destructive collective action is a “too much” of market pricing. This pattern is interesting as it corresponds to the result that the Greek sample was more ambivalent towards MP than the other two samples: In Greece the number of people missing MP in the relation does not outnumber the people that see too much of MP in the relations between EU nations. Thus, support of destructive action seems partially motivated by skepticism against capitalist and neoliberal politics. In hindsight these results seem somehow to foreshadow the success of the rather left-wing Syriza movement. Note, however, that political orientation on the left-right spectrum was statistically controlled in these analyses and that such post-hoc interpretations do not imply that such specific effects can be predicted.

Finally, an unexpected pattern can be found in Portugal: It seems that destructive action is less supported by participants who express a “too much” of lower status for their country, that is, by those participants who disagree with the politics of Portugal acting as a “good student”. This metaphor was actually wide spread in the political discourse during the management of the debt crisis and described largely the official policy of the centre-right government under the instructions of the so called Troika (International monetary fund, European commission and European central bank). We can only speculate about the reasons for this result. For instance, destructive collective action might be seen by participants as a means to communicate dissatisfaction to the higher status parties in the relation. For instance, experimental research has shown that members of disadvantaged groups show particularly hostile behavior towards powerful outgroups if they have the feeling that they have “nothing to lose”, that is, if they are in a stable lower status position (Scheepers, Spears, Doosje & Manstead, 2006). Thus, if one seeks to escape from the dependency from those powerful, higher status AR partners (thus, striving for less AR with the ingroup in the lower status position), one might strongly disagree with such destructive attempts to attract the attention of higher status institutions.

Overall the results of this research convey a two-fold message. They are evidence for the relevance of relational discrepancy in the explanation of destructive intergroup conflict. Thereby they support our approach to study group members’ use of relational models in intergroup relations. However, the results also illustrate the theoretical limitations of this approach so far, as the

specific relevance of particular relational models in each context cannot yet be predicted based on general theorizing, at least not without considering local context information. For instance, merely on the specific pattern of the Portuguese sample on the AR (ingroup lower status) discrepancy one could have predicted that this discrepancy might play a particular role in this national context. However, one would not be able to predict the direction of the effect on destructive collective action. One could have easily predicted the opposite effect to the one that was actually found. Even if post-hoc interpretations make sense in the light of previous research, as social psychology seeks to generate general theoretical models that can be applied across contexts, this state of affairs is unsatisfying. The next theoretical step should therefore aim at specifying the most important context parameters that have to be built into the theoretical framework in order to be able to generate – based on the general theoretical approach - context-specific and falsifiable hypotheses on the effects of relational model use in intergroup relations.

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