

**INTERGROUP MEMORY BIAS,
SOCIAL IDENTITY AND STEREOTYPE**

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INTERGROUP MEMORY BIAS, SOCIAL IDENTITY AND STEREOTYPE

by

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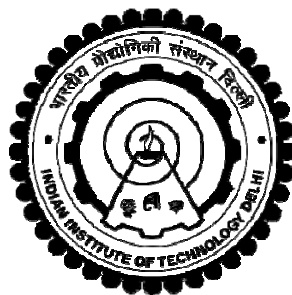
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Submitted

in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

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to the



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Dedicated to
My Parents
Rommela and Jitendra Kohli



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled '**Intergroup Memory Bias, Social Identity and Stereotype**', submitted by **Ms. Bhavana Kohli** to the **Indian Institute of Technology Delhi**, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is a record of original bona-fide research carried out by her under our supervision. We are satisfied that the thesis is worthy of consideration for award of the degree.

The results contained in the thesis have not been submitted, in part or full, to any other institute or university for award of any degree or diploma.



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Notwithstanding the preoccupation and stress that precedes a doctoral thesis submission, the realisation of being close to culmination of this journey triggered a surge of memories. I went back in time over the events and experiences, peaks and troughs, which these years encompassed. Some unexpected, unusual challenges happened to be a part, and overcoming each one was a strengthening and maturing experience. PhD has been an extremely fulfilling phase of my life, with myriad meaningful experiences. I am grateful to those who contributed towards my attainment of this milestone.

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(Bhavana Kohli)

ABSTRACT

The present thesis examines intergroup bias using memory as an implicit measure of bias, and tests a bias-reduction method based on the Common Ingroup Identity (CII) model with dual identity. It investigates memory of traits of persons belonging to the ingroup (own-group) versus the outgroup (other-group). Such memories are known to influence social functioning in intergroup contexts. Memory is examined as an implicit measure, with the expectation that it would tap unintentional and subconscious levels of bias. Social psychological literature points out that subconscious bias is untapped by self-report explicit measures, especially in sensitive intergroup contexts in contemporary times. The thesis also assesses the role of ingroup identification and perceived outgroup variability. The Social Identity Theory provides a foundation to conceptualise the present research, in addition to theoretical frameworks of implicit social cognition and social memory. The thesis examines intergroup phenomena in the context of caste-based categorization (i.e. General category and the Scheduled Castes (SC) category) in higher-education institutions (HEIs) in India. It consists of five studies that are conducted with students belonging to General and SC categories at the selected HEI. The thesis begins with an empirical investigation ($N = 254$) of social identity content of students at the selected HEI. Apart from providing an insight into a wide range of social identity content, Study-1 is used to obtain a salient superordinate social identity, which is subsequently employed as the CII for reduction of caste-based intergroup bias, if any. The second study ($N = 93$) empirically assesses stereotypic characteristics ascribed to the target caste-based social categories. The obtained stereotypes are used to develop ingroup and outgroup person information for subsequent intergroup memory experiments. The first experiment ($N = 122$) studies intergroup memory bias when the target persons are stereotypic members of their caste categories. The second experiment ($N = 113$) examines intergroup memory bias when the target persons have a few counterstereotypic

traits, i.e. they are partly-atypical members of their caste categories. Both intergroup experimental studies reveal striking evidence of bias in the way ingroup and outgroup persons are remembered. Intergroup bias is revealed with respect to both types of memory errors, i.e. errors of omission as well as errors of commission (false memories). Provision of traits that are inconsistent with prevalent stereotypes is found to reduce some forms of bias. The present thesis provides strong evidence in favour of using memory as an implicit measure of intergroup bias. While intergroup research using explicit measures predominantly documents evidence of ingroup favouritism rather than outgroup derogation, it is outgroup derogation that emerges as the most robust form of bias in person memory. Subconscious levels of intergroup bias are not only robust and unrelated to explicit attitude measures, many forms are also unrelated to theoretically-studied predictors such as level of ingroup identification. The research substantiates the argument that bias-reduction methods must be tested with implicit measures, for a truer estimate of their effectiveness beyond the conscious level. Although the bias-reduction benefits of highlighting a salient superordinate common ingroup are found to be limited, the results are promising. Further, the intergroup experiments reveal unexpected indications of possible ingroup projection and subtyping processes in the research setting. A post-hoc study is conducted ($N = 75$) to test the hypothesis that the General category is perceived as a prototypical subcategory of the superordinate HEI whereas the SC category is perceived as a subtype. Evidence obtained is in support of the hypothesis. For future research and application, selection of a superordinate category for bias-reduction must be done with caution, by checking not only the salience and level of identification with it, but also the possibility of ingroup projection and subtyping processes with respect to nested ingroup and outgroup subcategories.

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