Communicating Between Groups, Communicating About Groups

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Abstract

This chapter provides a selective overview of some of the most relevant aspects of intergroup communication. We first introduce the topic by discussing the relationship between intergroup communication and social identity. In the second part, we then cover three language strategies (category labels, language abstraction, and metaphors) that different groups can adopt when communicating between and about groups. Category labels reveal social meaning well beyond mere classification, by triggering affective reactions and stereotyping, whereas language abstraction and metaphors play a central role in establishing and maintaining stereotypes and intergroup relationships. In the third part, we directly address specific social groups, including salient and relatively unambiguous social categories (i.e., gender and race) as well as more fluid categories (i.e., regional and social background as well as sexual orientation). The chapter provides a broad overview of linguistic strategies and of their specific use with selected social categories, together with suggestions for the development of future research and theorizing.

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Building from the introductory chapter, this chapter will elaborate on social identity theory and its intellectual sister theories (e.g., self-categorization theory). Further, we will focus particularly on language strategies used in an intergroup context (i.e., labels, language abstractness, and metaphors) and intergroup communication related to specific social groups (i.e., gender, race, and more fluid categories such as socio-geographical background and sexual orientation).

More specifically this chapter is structured in three parts that follow a brief overview of intergroup communication in relation to social identity, self-categorization, and communication accommodation theory. In the first part, we will discuss three language tools that play a prominent role in communicating within, across, and about social groups. These include group labels, which can create friendly or hostile intergroup relations and can induce stereotype threat in those targeted by the same label. In the second part, we will cover language abstraction and metaphors, both of which can play a very important role in intergroup communication, as they reflect, maintain, and create intergroup bias and aid stereotype dissemination. Whereas in the first part of the chapter we will be referring to groups in general (with some specific examples), in the second part we will address issues related to important social categories. We will address gender and race and, subsequently, more fluid categories such as social class, geographical/regional background, and sexual orientation. The section on gender will cover issues related to grammatical gender (e.g., *actor* vs. *actress*) and the consequences of using masculine forms to represent both females and males. The part on interracial communication will address the issue of race/ethnicity in terms of labels we use to address different groups as well as what we know about interaction between people of different races. In the section on fluid social categories, we will discuss the effect that subtle acoustic cues have on the perception of social groups with malleable

category boundaries such as social class or sexual orientation. In the final section, our concluding remarks about intergroup communication will highlight the most important issues in our current knowledge, and outline possible future directions in which research may move.

Introduction to Intergroup Communication

Intergroup communication is omnipresent and highly important in (almost) all of our everyday interactions. We interact with others continuously and on different levels from personal and individual to group based. Hence, by intergroup communication one does not only refer to situations in which members of different groups communicate with each other, but also to those situations in which two or more individuals *perceive* themselves as belonging to different groups. This means that many interactions that are thought to be interpersonal might actually be intergroup in nature (Giles, 2012).

Social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) are pivotal theories of social psychology and highly relevant for understanding intergroup communication. Social identity is central to humans. We all have a need to belong to meaningful social groups, and those group memberships give us a sense of positive identity defined by shared ideas, beliefs, and practices (see Brown, 2000, for a critical review of social identity theory). Indeed, our social identities are often used when communicating with others. Evidence shows that language mirrors other intergroup biases: we are more likely to engage with sources from our own ingroup and pay closer attention to their messages. This is because we perceive them to share the same psychological frame of reference, which facilitates information processing (Greenaway, Peters, Haslam, & Bingley, 2016). Hence, understanding how we categorize ourselves and others is another main part of social identity, which is covered in self-categorization theory. The SCT postulates that differences in salience impact how likely we are to adopt certain categories over others, both in terms of

self-categorization and categorization of others (Oakes, 1987). Whereas some categories might have high salience due to their chronic accessibility (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity), others are more dependent on the context (e.g., being the only right-handed person in a room). Hence, though the most salient category might change at any given time, the fact remains that a group membership is often more relevant than individual identity in one's self-concept.

Often, we might not even be aware just how much of our everyday interactions and their "success" is determined by social identities (e.g., Harwood, Giles, & Palomares, 2005). Recent evidence suggests that a simple act of naming (labeling) someone as a member of a different group may be enough to negatively impact our understanding of what they say (Greenaway, Wright, Willingham, Reynolds, & Haslam, 2015). Greenway and colleagues used a version of the minimal group paradigm to divide their participants into two groups (inductive vs. deductive processing style). Subsequently, participants were given a set of written instructions on how to assemble a Lego car. The only thing that varied was the information on whether the author of the instructions was either an in-group or out-group member. The results show that participants performed objectively much better when they believed that the instructions came from the in-group member; this was in line with their subjective perception of the quality of the instructions, which was perceived to be superior for in-group members. However, this effect was attenuated when a shared superordinate identity was made salient. Importantly, participants' reported motivation to perform well on the task did not differ based on the source of the instructions. These findings demonstrate the impact social identity has for seemingly unrelated processes such as language comprehension.

Thus far, we have addressed the intergroup communication from a "purely" social psychological point of view, though we cannot fully cover this topic without mentioning

other relevant theories such as ethnolinguistic identity theory (ELIT; Giles & Johnson, 1981; Giles & Johnson, 1987) and communication accommodation theory (CAT; Shepard, Giles, & LePoire, 2001). ELIT was developed as an extension of SIT and SCT, incorporating the central role language plays in terms of positive ethnic identity. ELIT has been crucial in inducing a shift of research focus in social psychology where language in its spoken form has started to play a more prominent role in research. Because it has received more extensive research attention in social psychology and communication, we will focus more on CAT. CAT was developed from speech accommodation theory (Giles, 1973; Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1973) but unlike its predecessor it added other aspects of communications to the model (e.g., nonverbal communication). The main idea of CAT is that in any communication encounter speakers can choose different strategies: approximation, discourse management, interpretability, and interpersonal control. Whereas all of them play an important role, the approximation strategy has received the most attention. This strategy accounts for the change in communication style which may occur either in the direction of the partner (i.e., convergence) or in the opposite direction (i.e., divergence). Additionally, a speaker may opt to maintain their style independent of the partners' attempts to accommodate, or may *complement* the partner by accentuating valued sociolinguistic differences (for example, men adopting more masculine tones of voice when communicating to women than to men: Giles, 1980). Because in our everyday interactions we lack the necessary skills to appropriately assess the actual accommodation of our partner or ourselves we rely on our subjective perception of accommodation. This means that our perception of somebody's lack of accommodation is likely to be used in forming an impression of him or her. The implication of this can be clearly seen in interactions between police and civilians, where if civilians perceive communication accommodation by a police officer they are more likely to comply with the request and perceive police as more trustworthy (Barker et al., 2008).

Thus far, we have seen that the act of communication is complex and highly dependent on the identities of its participants. The implicit or even explicit acknowledgment that social identities take priority over personal identities can have an important impact on the interaction. Those that perceive their personal identities as more important may engage in different communication strategies than those with salient group identities. Therefore, social and/or personal identities shape the communication interaction while at the same time the nature of those identities is being shaped *in* the process of communication (Abrams, O'Connor, & Giles, 2002; Dragojevic & Giles, 2014). From all these examples, it follows that language and different language tools can be seen as echoing other social psychological processes (e.g., the social mobility system belief). Indeed, as we will see in the following section, group members can and often do resort to different strategies based on their belief system to reestablish positive social identities.

Language Strategies

Group members have a large toolbox from which to choose the language tools that best meet their current communication goals, and that they consider most appropriate for a specific intergroup context. Some of these tools (e.g., language abstraction: see below) are apparently benign, have a gentle and non-offensive appearance, and their effects go easily unnoticed (e.g., Douglas, Sutton, & Wilkin, 2008). Others (e.g., derogatory labels and insults) are heavy weapons whose destructive intent is rarely misinterpreted. Most language tools fall somewhere in between these two extremes. Here, we will review three language tools whose role in intergroup relations is well-established, namely group labels, linguistic abstraction, and metaphors (for more extensive overviews of the literature on language and intergroup relations see Dragojevic, & Giles, 2014; Maass, Arcuri, & Suitner, 2014a; Sutton, 2010).

Group labeling. As mentioned in the introduction, labeling is an important aspect of our everyday communication. We use labels to identify and differentiate objects, events, and

people. In early language learning, babies first learn to associate noun labels with "objects" (e.g., Gelman & Roberts, 2017; Waxman & Gelman, 2009). By learning to use the correct meaning for those words, children also learn to differentiate things by grouping them into different clusters. There are more specific terms such as a cat or a giraffe and more inclusive terms such as an animal, and those names or categories can be associated with a specific set of information (characteristics of the category). The same underlying principles guide our social categorizations and interactions—category characteristics emerge, for instance, as stereotypes.

The act of labeling groups seems to be universal across languages, cultures, and historical epochs. Historically these names often include naming one's own group as "people" or "the real people" and consequently implying that the others are not human in quite the same sense (Edwards, 2009). But naming, just like categorizing and identifying, can be done at many different levels of inclusiveness. A nice example for this is Quebec, where fifty different names were used for Francophones and ninety for minority groups (Gagnon, 1994, 1997a, 1997b, as cited in Edwards, 2009). This is just one example demonstrating how language can be used deliberately to define group boundaries. Such boundary marking relates to optimal distinctiveness, or our need to find the right balance between belongingness and individuality (Brewer, 2003). Edwards (2009) also refers to the fact that in many cases names by which some communities are known today were not self-chosen, but imposed, as their stories were told largely by outsiders (e.g., colonizers). For instance, Welsh people call themselves "Cymry" (fellow countrymen), while English people call them Welsh (originating from Anglo-Saxon and Germanic meaning *foreigner* or even *barbarian*). This has important consequences for the issues relating to the interracial communication we will be covering later in this chapter.

When talking about labeling we often, though not always, explicitly refer to nouns. Grammatically, different words fulfill different functions in syntax and communication. These different types of words also differ from a psychological point of view. Semin and Fiedler (1988) developed the Linguistic Category Model (LCM) that distinguishes four levels of abstraction of words used and explains how they impact the perception of an action and the actor. As language abstraction will be covered more in detail later in the chapter, we will only briefly introduce it here. Abstraction ranges from a most concrete form (descriptive action verbs: e.g., *talk*) over gradually more abstract terms (interpretive action verbs and state verbs: e.g., *help* and *like*, respectively), to a fourth category of adjectives (e.g., *helpful*) as the most abstract type of words.

A fifth form that was investigated subsequently is nouns. Already, Allport (1954) in his seminal book "The nature of prejudice," had dedicated an entire chapter to nouns. He argued that, compared to adjectives (e.g., *Laura is Jewish*), nouns (e.g., *Laura is a Jew)* have a much greater power to activate stereotypes and to reveal an essentialistic quality (i.e., perception of an inner essence associated to a given category), an idea that was later confirmed by Carnaghi and colleagues (2008). Sometimes the semantic difference between a noun and an adjective is very subtle (e.g., *a homosexual* vs. *homosexual*), however the implications for the perception of a given category are multifaceted. There is evidence that the noun form results in a more positive ingroup evaluation (Graf, Bilewicz, Finell, & Geschke, 2013). Relatedly, nouns compared to adjectives were found to evoke more famous examples that are considered prototypical for a given category and viewed exclusively in light of that membership (Maass, Carnaghi, & Rakić, 2015). Not only do our perception of others becomes stronger and more stable and reliable when presented in noun compared to adjective form, but more importantly nouns also change the self-perception (Walton & Banaji, 2004).

These findings are not surprising if we consider the strong inductive potential of labels, especially as they relate to essentialism (i.e., the tendency to view a category as having a fundamental and stable essence or character). Interestingly, almost all of the primary social categories, gender, ethnicity, and race, are perceived very high on essentialism (Prentice & Miller, 2007). However, sometimes the negative effects associated with a given group can be attenuated by simply adding a shared identity to the name. For example, in the case of minority members, naming them with double (e.g., Turkish Dutch) instead of single labels (e.g., Turkish) improves perceptions of the group (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2010).

Languages and dialects are constantly evolving and so is the meaning of individual words. Besides their "objective" meaning, labels can evolve and change the social meaning they carry (Edwards, 2009). In the last two decades, immigration has increasingly become prominent in the media. While reporting the news journalists often use different terms for the same group (e.g., asylum seekers, refugees, or illegal immigrants), treating them as synonyms. However, these different terms can elicit very different attitudinal judgments. In the Australian context, the term illegal immigrant was associated with more negative attitudes compared to the other two (Augoustinos & Quinn, 2003). More recently a similar pattern, with illegal immigrants being evaluated most negatively, was found also in USA (Ommundsen, Larsen, Veer, & Eilertsen, 2014). Similar findings have also been found with derogatory labels for gays (e.g., Carnaghi & Maass, 2008). By simply overhearing a derogatory (e.g., *fag*) rather than neutral group label (e.g., *gay*), heterosexuals show more prejudice and even allocate fewer resources to the gay outgroup (Fasoli, Maass, & Carnaghi, 2015). Thus, while both derogatory and neutral labels activate stereotypes to the same degree, the former induce a much more negative reaction and more discriminatory behaviors than the latter.

So far, we have seen that names are not just names, and that they carry much more weight than a mere classification. Indeed, social categories are comprised of individuals who identify themselves with a given group. In some cases, these social categories can be associated with a negative stereotype for a particular domain. Consequently, those that identify with such a group and are asked to perform in this domain are likely to experience stereotype threat (Steele, 1997). Stereotype threat is a psychological phenomenon accounting for a lower performance on tasks that are associated with a negative stereotype about a given group. One of the most prominent examples concerns women and the performance in mathematics (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999). When asked to indicate their gender before taking a math test, women performed significantly worse than when they were not reminded of their gender, presumably because they worried about confirming the negative stereotype. This was especially the case for women who identified strongly with the performance domain (math) and for very difficult tests that posed high cognitive demands. When becoming aware of the negative stereotype that associates their social identity with the domain (i.e., woman and math), they performed in line with this negative stereotype. Ironically a common way to counteract stereotype threat experience is to dis-identify with the domain. Similar findings have also been found for many other groups, including second language speakers and their proficiency in the second language (Paladino et al., 2009), African Americans and verbal tests (Steele & Aronson, 1995) and social class and intellectual ability (Croizet & Claire, 1998). These examples show how the simple action of making others aware of one of their social identities can have detrimental effects on their performance.

Taken together these illustrations show that names are not just names: they carry different social meanings and consequently can trigger different evaluative reactions. We can use names to merely indicate a group of interest, but at the same time related stereotypes are activated and these can make a given group member perform worse. Similarly, sometimes we

can use different terms to refer to the same group with very different results in the evaluations they elicit. All these strategies can be used unwittingly as well as strategically, and they are likely to co-occur with other language strategies as well as other types of information (e.g., physical appearance of a person, their accent, etc.). In the future, we hope to see more studies looking at the influence of labels together with other pieces of information in order to get closer to the full complexity of the communication encounter and to understand how verbal and non-verbal cues are integrated in people's minds. Also, whereas the influence of labels on impressions, attitudes and evaluations is now well documented, relatively little is known about the impact of labels on actual behavior.

Language abstraction: linguistic intergroup bias. A second language tool that has been extensively investigated in intergroup contexts is language abstraction. Derived from Semin and Fiedler's (1988) Linguistic Category Model, the linguistic intergroup bias model (Maass, 1999) had originally hypothesized two distinct and additive roles of language abstraction in intergroup relations (for a recent overview see Beukeboom, 2014). First, group members are motivated to describe positive ingroup behaviors and negative outgroup behaviors in relatively abstract forms (e.g., *ingroup member A is helpful; outgroup member B is aggressive*), as this implies a relatively stable behavior tendency that generalizes across situations, time, and interaction partners. In contrast, they tend to describe negative ingroup behaviors and positive outgroup behaviors in relatively concrete terms (e.g., *ingroup member A hit somebody; outgroup member B helped somebody*) in order to communicate that the action is unique to that particular situation and moment and that generalizations beyond the specific episode are unwarranted. This first bias, generally referred to as Linguistic Intergroup Bias (LIB), is related to valence and believed to serve ingroup-protective needs. Matching what has generally been found in the social identity literature (Brewer, 1999), ingroup favoring language is generally more pronounced than outgroup-derogating language,

confirming the idea that ingroup protection is the primary motivation driving the LIB (Salès-Wuillemin et al., 2014).

The second bias, called Linguistic Expectancy Bias (LEB: Wigboldus, Spears, & Semin, 2005), concerns stereotypic expectancies and occurs independent of valence. Here, expected behaviors of both ingroup and outgroup are described in abstract terms and unexpected behaviors in concrete terms, presumably because expected behaviors are seen to reflect stable behavior tendencies of the actor, whereas unexpected behaviors are, by definition, limited to a specific moment and situation. Stereotype-based LEB effects are particularly likely to emerge when the sender belongs to a different social group than either the recipient or the target (Wigboldus et al., 2005). This occurs because social categories are more salient and stereotypes more accessible in these cases. Although LIB and LEB are logically distinct, the two biases often co-vary in real life given that most people expect ingroup members to behave more positively than outgroup members.

Both LIB and LEB have received considerable empirical support from experimental and archival analyses (for reviews see Wigboldus & Douglas, 2007; Beukeboom, 2014). Originally, LIB/LEB research mainly focused on spontaneous language use that was believed to reflect the speaker's true personal attitudes and that was even thought to serve as an implicit measure of prejudice (Von Hippel, Sekaquaptewa, & Vargas, 1997). In support of this idea, people were found to encounter great difficulty in inhibiting these biases, even when instructed to do so (Douglas et al., 2008). To our knowledge, the only techniques able to reduce LIB/LEB reliably are interventions that induce a state of mindfulness (Tincher, Lebois, & Barsalou, 2016).

Although LIB/LEB are difficult to inhibit intentionally, language abstraction does not always reflect the speaker's personal beliefs and motivations, but can also be used strategically to create specific impressions of others. For instance, prosecution and defense

attorneys choose distinct language patterns when talking about the accused (Schmid & Fiedler, 1998). Similarly, communication goals such as convincing the recipient, signaling positive or negative impressions of a target, or confirming or disconfirming the expectations of the recipient have been shown to affect message framing (Fiedler, Bluemke, Friese, & Hofmann, 2003; Semin, de Montes, & Valencia, 2003). Thus, the extent to which LIB and LEB emerge depends not only on the communicator's beliefs, but also on his/her communication goals and on the type of relation that exists between sender and recipient of a message.

Although seemingly subtle and barely perceptible, language abstraction introduces a remarkable bias in many applied settings, including hiring decisions (Rubini & Menegatti, 2014), student evaluations (Menegatti, Crocetti, & Rubini, 2017) and political media content (e.g., Dragojevic, Sink, & Mastro, 2016; Mastro, Tukachinsky, Behm-Morawitz, & Blecha, 2014). Importantly, listeners exposed to biased language make inferences and attributions that align with the sender's beliefs or communication goals. For instance, concrete language is interpreted as implying that the event is exceptional and driven by the situation, whereas abstract descriptions lead to greater dispositional inferences and are perceived as more stable behavior tendencies. Observers also infer the sender's own group membership from LIB (Porter, Rheinschmidt-Same, & Richeson, 2016) and they perceive senders showing stronger LIB as more valuable group members (Assilaméhou & Testé, 2013). Thus, the degree to which senders show LIB/LEB not only is telling about their beliefs, but also about their group membership and their standing within that group.

Interestingly, language abstraction may even affect the sender him/herself. For instance, Karpinski and Von Hippel (1996) found that people not only use more abstract language to describe expected (rather than unexpected) events, but that this language use feeds back into their original beliefs, strengthening their initial expectations. Extending this

reasoning, Suitner (2017) has recently trained participants to use either abstract or concrete language to describe controversial behaviors of surgeons, some of which constituted serious incidences of incompetence, others minor mistakes. Only after using concrete language to describe these cases were participants able to distinguish correctly between different degrees of malpractice and to press (hypothetical) charges against the surgeon only for major incidences. To our knowledge, this is the only study in which language abstraction training was used to influence the sender's own decision making. Thus, the sender's language use not only affects recipients, but reliably modifies the cognition and decision ability of the sender.

Together, this line of research shows that language abstraction bolsters existing stereotypic beliefs and promotes positive perceptions of the ingroup and negative perceptions of the outgroup. Importantly, it does so in such a subtle way that neither senders nor recipients are usually aware of such biased language use. Unlike more explicit language tools, this makes LIB/LEB a particularly powerful tool for perpetuating or modifying intergroup relations.

Metaphors in intergroup communication. Metaphors have attracted the attention of intergroup researchers only relatively recently. Metaphors are unique language tools for many reasons. First, they allow us to envisage abstract concepts such as *hierarchy, democracy,* or *power* that would otherwise be difficult to grasp because they are not accessible to our senses. Generally, an abstract concept (called the *target domain*) becomes imaginable and comprehensible by comparison to a <u>concrete</u> and <u>familiar</u> concept (called the *source domain;* for overviews see Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 2008; Gibbs, 2008, 2014; Glucksberg & McGlone, 2001). For instance, we refer to social hierarchies as a *ladder*, to wealth inequality as a *scissor,* to social assimilation as a *melting pot,* and to community-based political movements as *grass-root movements*. Although source domains are literally unrelated to their respective targets, they share common elements for which they are

selectively matched (e.g., *sharks* and *lawyers* are matched for being *merciless* but not for having *fins*). In intergroup relations, the target domain is often a social group (*lawyers, sex offenders, Germans*) to which socially shared and often derogatory metaphors (*shark, beast, kraut*) are applied. Second, metaphors are very *efficient* as they delineate a host of qualities in a single word. For instance, the metaphor *shark,* often applied to lawyers, communicates many features (such as vicious, cruel, aggressive, tenacious, unscrupulous, untrustworthy, and merciless), attesting to the "compactness" of metaphors (Ortony, 1975). Third, because metaphors are generally rooted in bodily experiences or in general worldly knowledge, they are more <u>vivid</u> and hence more prone to stimulate our imagination than comparable adjectives (e.g. *shark* vs. *merciless*). Their efficiency and vividness make metaphors a particularly powerful communication tool for describing social groups. As an example, take the metaphor *ants* that provides a vivid and concrete image of the sizable population of Chinese citizens and communicates, in a single expression, a wide range of stereotypical features (numerosity, density, sameness, and industriousness).

A final unique feature of metaphors is that metaphors tend to have a dynamic developmental trajectory. What often starts as an original, thought-provoking metaphor (such as *draining the swamp, rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic*), often turns, by frequent repetition, into a cliché (Mason, 2011; Blatt, 2017) and eventually becomes so highly conventionalized that it is processed much like any regular category name (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005). Conventionalized metaphors constitute about 95% of all metaphors (Steen, 2011) and they are socially shared (i.e., known to the majority of a given language community), which makes them a particularly potent device for communicating about groups.

In intergroup relations, metaphors often appear in the form of non-human entities such as food, plants or animals to describe human groups such as national, racial, or

professional outgroups (for overviews see Haslam, Holland, & Stratemeyer, 2016; Maass, Suitner, & Arcuri, 2014b). Such use of metaphorical language may affect intergroup relations in different ways, including the perceived homogeneity of the outgroup, the tendency to draw stereotypical inferences, and the dehumanization of the outgroup.

First, describing outgroup members with metaphors, rather than with semantically similar non-metaphorical language, may suggest that the group is more *homogenous*. This prediction derives from prior findings that groups are perceived as more homogenous, and hence its members as more similar to each other, when the group is described by a "strong" (e.g., *anorexic*) rather than weak label (e.g., *below average weight*; Foroni & Rothbart, 2011). Assuming that metaphors are indeed stronger labels than their non-metaphorical equivalents, metaphorical language should enhance the perception that group members are similar to each other. In line with this reasoning, Maass et al. (2014b) found that *lawyers* or *politicians* described by metaphors (*sharks* or *foxes,* respectively) were perceived as more homogeneous social categories than when they were described by non-metaphorical language of similar content (*merciless* or *shrewd,* respectively).

Second, metaphorical language may polarize stereotypical inferences. Different from non-metaphorical adjectives of similar meaning (e.g. *merciless*), metaphors (e.g. *shark*) tend to be nouns, which are known to communicate stronger, more stable and more essentialist qualities and to facilitate stereotypical inferences (Walton & Banaji, 2004; Carnaghi et al., 2008). Also, different from adjectives, nouns don't allow differences of degrees. A surgeon may be more or less *incompetent*, but s/he is either a *butcher* or s/he is not. In line with this reasoning specific lawyers and politicians described by metaphors (*shark, fox*) were perceived in more stereotypical ways than when they were described by corresponding adjectives (*merciless, shrewd;* Maass et al., 2014b).

Third, and perhaps most importantly, metaphors are, and have historically been, used to dehumanize individuals and groups, which in turn justifies moral disengagement and maltreatment (for theoretical and historical accounts see Bar-Tal & Hammock, 2012; Haslam, 2006; Haslam et al., 2016; Volpato, Durante, Gabbiadini, Andrighetto, & Mari, 2010). Describing a group of people as *parasites* or as animals such as *rats, pigs,* or *apes* places them outside the human species. This denies them the characteristics typical of humans (intelligence and refined "secondary" emotions such as hope) and the rights generally granted to human beings ("human rights"). The best known example is the association of Blacks with apes, which was recently revived in an irresponsible marketing campaign of the Swedish clothing company H&M portraying a Black boy with a t-shirt with the printing "the coolest monkey in the jungle" (see http://nyti.ms/2mjNMo7).

An increasing body of literature on animal metaphors shows that people associate outgroups more to animality (e.g., *creature, ape*) than ingroups (Boccato, Capozza, Falvo, & Durante, 2008; Goff, Eberhart, William, & Jackson, 2008; Viki, Winchester, Titshall, Chasing, Pina & Tussell, 2006). Common animal comparisons include, on the one side, species that are disgusting, disliked, and associated with impurity and disease threat such as *cockroaches* or *rats*, and on the other side those that fall slightly short of humanness such as *dogs* or *apes* (Haslam, Loughnan & Sun, 2011). The latter is vividly represented by the commonly known "ascent of man" image, representing the development of humankind from ape to homo sapiens. Conceptualizing outgroups in a dehumanized fashion, that is below the human endpoint, is predictive of all kinds of discriminatory behaviors (including torture and pre-emptive bombing; Kteily, Bruneau, Waytz, & Cotterill, 2015).

Together, these and other studies strongly suggest that metaphors play a central role in intergroup rhetoric, especially (but not exclusively) when intergroup relations become tense and conflictual. Although relatively little is known about the specific functions of

metaphors in intergroup communication, it is likely that animalistic dehumanization serves two distinct purposes. On the one side, associating outgroup members with non-human animals (e.g., *apes*) implies their retrocession along the line of evolutionary development and hence the denial of uniquely human characteristics and uniquely human rights. On the other side, the association of outgroups with agents likely to transmit infectious disease (e.g., *rats*) underlines the disease-related threat they are believed to pose to humanity (Schaller & Park, 2011). Whether these different animal metaphors are uniquely associated with groups considered "underdeveloped" versus "posing a health threat", respectively, and whether they activate distinct emotional and behavioral reactions remains an open question for future research.

More generally, the role of metaphors in intergroup relations is still largely unexplored and poses a series of theoretical and methodological challenges, including (a) the test ground (what should metaphors be compared to: single or multiple adjectives of similar meaning, non-metaphorical insults?), (b) the boundary conditions (what types of metaphors are likely to be used in intergroup communication, with which intention, and in which context?) and (c) the "career" stage (at what stage during their "career" will metaphors be most influential: at the initial stage when they are most original and thought provoking, at the cliché stage when they may be most stereotypical, or at the dead end stage when they are completely conventionalized and socially shared?).

Social Players

In the remaining parts of this chapter we will first discuss language and communication concerning two primary social categories: gender and race. Gender and race are considered the two most basic social categories. They are acquired very early, are processed faster and more automatically than most other categories (Ito & Urland, 2003; Tomelleri & Castelli, 2012), and, unsurprisingly, have taken center stage in research on

intergroup communication. Subsequently, we will focus on more fluid social categories, in particular sexual orientation, regional origin, and social class, that are more ambiguous, less visible and that lack well-defined boundaries, but still give rise to stereotyping and discrimination.

Gender. Among the many marginalized social groups, women are undoubtedly the largest group worldwide. According to the World Bank, women's labor force participation has now dropped below 50 percent, significant gender pay-gaps continue to exist even in "advanced" countries, women are subject to physical and sexual violence (including partner violence) at astonishing rates (over 35%), and they hold less than 25% of the seats in parliaments worldwide. Different from any other social group, gender-ingroup and outgroup share an overwhelming practical and affective interdependence, and this is also reflected in the rather complex attitudes towards women that range from clearly hostile sexism to seemingly positive and protective attitudes of paternalistic nature (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Gender also has a very special status in language, both in terms of speech style and grammar. On the one side, men and women show distinct speech patterns and these patterns map onto stereotypical expectations about male and female speech and are used flexibly in intra and intergroup communication (see Palomares, 2012, for an overview). Research conducted mainly in North America has shown that females use a more tentative speech style (characterized by questions, modifiers, justifiers, intensive adverbs, adverbial sentence beginnings, personal pronouns, negations, verbs of cognition, subordinate clauses, oppositions, and the like), especially when talking about masculine topics and when conversation takes place in mixed-sex settings (Palomares, 2009). In contrast, males use a more direct speech style (characterized by interruptions, directives, geographical and spatial references, and the like; e.g., Mulac, Wiemann, Widenmann, & Gibson, 1988). The more sophisticated female speech style is generally perceived as being of greater aesthetic quality

and as indicative of a higher socio-intellectual status, whereas the male speech style appears

more dynamic (Mulac & Lundell, 1986). Interestingly, speakers can easily imitate the

opposite-gender speech style when instructed to do so (Mulac, Giles, Bradac, & Palomares,

2013) and they spontaneously do so when embodying opposite gender avatars, supporting the

idea that speech styles reflect stereotypic expectancies of how men and women ought to

speak (Palomares & Lee, 2010). Thus, gender-congruent or incongruent speech styles reflect

a number of psychological processes, including how speakers self-identify (gender-schematic

individuals, Palomares, 2004), how confident they feel about the topic of conversation,

whether they find themselves in conversation contexts that make gender salient (e.g., mixed

gender groups) and whether they are predominantly interacting with same sex or opposite sex

members (e.g., Bamman, Eisenstein, & Schnoebelen, 2014). Thus, gendered speech styles are

by no means rigid, but can flexibly adapt to interaction partners and situations.

On the other side, gender is grammatically built into many languages around the

globe (Stahlberg, Braun, Irmen, & Sczesny, 2007). Most, if not all, languages provide easy

ways of expressing the general distinction between ingroup and outgroup, for instance

through pronouns describing "us" versus "them". It is less common that specific social

categories are reflected in grammar, although age and social status are denoted grammatically

in some languages such as Japanese, for instance. Gender is the most notable case of

grammatical category marking. Approximately one third of the world's current languages

have grammatical gender systems and others had gender syntax in the past (e.g., English;

Jones, 2015). In languages with grammatical gender marking, articles and/or suffixes

generally divide not only people but also objects and abstract concepts into two or more

genders (Corbett, 2013). Moreover, depending on the language, other elements (verbs,

adjectives, pronouns etc.) follow the gender of the noun. To give the English reader an idea

of the pervasiveness of gender marking in these languages, imagine an Italian speaker

explaining that "the[m] editors[m] and the[f] authors[f] of this[m] chapter[m] were aware[m] of the[m] fact[m] that grammatical[m] gender[m] may create confusion[f] in the[f] minds[f] of our[m] English-speaking readers[m]."

The psychological effects of grammatical gender have been investigated extensively (for recent reviews see Boroditsky, Schmidt, Phillips, 2003; Sczesny, Formanowicz, & Moser, 2016) and most research has focused on two interrelated aspects. First, although grammatical gender is largely arbitrary (for instance, *cat* and *agreement* are masculine in Italian, but feminine in German), people map grammar and semantics systematically (e.g., Cubelli, Paolieri, Lotto & Job, 2011) and assign gender-congruent attributes to animals or objects simply because they happen to have masculine or feminine grammatical gender (Imai, Schalk, Saalbach & Okada, 2014).

Second, and more relevant to intergroup relations, most languages with grammatical gender currently prescribe the masculine "generic" form when referring jointly to male and female exemplars of social categories (e.g., *students[m]*). For instance, although the readers of this chapter are likely to be both men and women, in the example sentence above they were referred to in a "generic" masculine form. Likewise, though women make up the majority of the "editors and authors" in the sentence, their "being aware" was described in masculine form; this applies no matter the relative number of men versus women (e.g., translated from Italian, *Maria, Carl, Anna, Alyson and Olivia went[m] to the movies*). This reflects the rule that "it only takes one man…." in a group to prescribe the masculine form. The consequence of the "generic" masculine is that women tend to become largely invisible (for an overview see Merkel & Menegatti, in press; Sczesny et al., 2016). Decades of psychological research have shown that the masculine form, even when intended in its "generic" meaning, activates primarily masculine images, is mis-interpreted as referring to men only, and inhibits the retrieval of female exemplars in people's minds. Question

formulation in national surveys may serve as an example. When people are asked to indicate their favorite musician or author in response to the typical, "generic" masculine question (*please name you favorite musician[m]?),* they name mainly men. Only when prompted by a dual request (*please name you favorite musician[m] or musician[f]?*), or by other forms inclusive of women, do female exemplars come into people's minds (Stahlberg, Sczesny, & Braun, 2001). Similarly, the use of masculine professional titles (e.g., *open-ranked position for professor[m] in biology*) is often interpreted as inviting mainly male applicants and may discourage women from applying to the job or, if hired, to expect a lower job identification (Merkel, 2013; for similar findings regarding masculine "generic" pronouns in job advertisements see Bem & Bem, 1973; Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). Female applicants are also perceived as less suited for high-level jobs when the job ad is formulated in masculine "generic" rather than gender-inclusive dual forms (Horvath & Sczesny, 2016).

How may the invisibility problem be resolved? The main strategies can roughly be grouped into attempts to "feminize" or to "gender-neutralize" language. "Feminization" strategies remind recipients that a statement is referring to both males and females. Examples are the use of dual masculine/feminine forms (*Studentinnen[f] und Studenten[m])* and artificial markings that signal the inclusion of males and females. The latter include slashes (*s/he*), a capital I inserted in the feminine plural used in German (*StudentInnen*)*,* asterisks used in Italian (*car* collegh**) or @ in Spanish (querid@s coleg@s), all of which, however, are limited to written language (for an overview of other language strategies see Merkel & Menegatti, in press). Similarly, when talking about a specific woman, the use of feminine rather "generic" role names (e.g., *die Professorin, the professor[f])* underlines the fact that the person is female.

The opposite strategy is to "neutralize" language by eliminating any reference to gender. Examples are verbal forms (*those who study* rather than *students*), gender-neutral

nouns (*chair* rather than *chairman*), gender-opaque adjectives *(attraente* rather than *bello/a* in Italian), or gender-neutral pronouns such as the pronoun *hen* recently introduced in Swedish and Norwegian in alternative to the gendered pronouns *han (he)* and *hon (she)*.

Neither strategy is perfect. On the one side, "Feminization" reliably increases the visibility of women and facilitates retrieval of female exemplars, but it often comes at the cost of status loss. When a profession is described with the dual (masculine and feminine) form rather than with the "generic" masculine, adults and children consider the profession as easier, associate it with lower status and pay, and perceive the professionals as less influential (Horvath, Merkel, Maass & Sczesny, 2016; Mucchi-Faina & Barro, 2001; Vervecken & Hannover, 2015; see also Formanowicz, Bedynska, Cisłak, Braun, & Sczesny, 2013). "Neutralization" on the other side removes gender from the agenda, but this does not necessarily create gender equality. Even in the absence of gendered language we often find a pervasive androcentric bias, with males seen as the norm (Bailey & LaFrance, 2017; Hegarty & Buechel, 2006). Similarly, attempts to impose "neutralization" through language reforms have not always been successful in eliminating gender bias (Gabriel, 2008). Generally, the visibility of women is greater when both are mentioned explicitly (*s/he, students[f] and students[m])* than when gender-neutral language is used (Bailey & LaFrance, 2017; Gabriel, 2008). Thus, for the time being there is no ideal and universal language form that simultaneously equalizes visibility and relative status of women and men. To promote gender equality (e.g. in job advertisements and hiring procedures) linguistic choices not only have to match the specific communication goals (e.g. increase the number of female applicants), but necessarily have to operate within the grammatical and lexical constraints of each specific language.

Although gender marking has been studied intensely, a number of questions are still awaiting investigation. First, relatively little is known about the contribution of language to

broader social gender (in-)equality. Prewitt-Freilino, Caswell, and Laakso (2012) have advanced and tested the provocative hypothesis that grammatical gender goes hand in hand with gender inequality in areas such as health, education, economics and political representation (see Global Gender Gap Index). Although informative, cross-cultural comparisons such as this are difficult to perform because of the multitude of cultural differences above and beyond language that need to be controlled for (for instance, grammatically gendered languages are spoken in countries as diverse as Germany and Algeria, whereas genderless languages are spoken in countries as diverse as Finland and Cameroon).

A second question that, to our knowledge, has received little attention is whether the presence of grammatical gender makes gender constantly accessible in people's minds. Gender marking makes gender highly salient and renders gender-free expressions almost impossible. As an example, imagine a speaker who wishes to refer to his/her partner in a gender-neutral way, hence without disclosing his/her own sexual orientation. This is perfectly natural in English (e.g. *I just rented a new apartment together with my partner*), but becomes technically impossible in grammatical-gendered languages, where the "partner" necessarily has to be defined as either male or female. Thus, an interesting question awaiting investigation is whether people with gendered native languages are more likely to think of others in terms of their gender or sex. For instance, would they spontaneously classify ambiguous figures in terms of gender/sex, where people from gender-free languages may activate different social categories?

Closely related to the above point is the third question, namely whether grammatical gender facilitates a binary conception of gender especially in those languages that have only two (rather than three or more) grammatical genders. If so, this may not only impact basic cognitive processes (such as thematic role assignment, see Esaulova & Von Stockhausen,

2015), but also the social perception of gender as two mutually exclusive categories (Zimman, Davis, & Raclaw, 2014).

Finally, it remains to be seen how language affects the development of gender stereotypes and gender roles in children. There is now first indirect evidence that children exposed to "gender-neutral" classrooms in which teachers, among others, refrain from using gendered language, are less likely to develop gender-typical beliefs and behaviors (Shutts, Kenward, Falk, Ivegran, & Fawcett, 2017). We suspect that investigating the developmental trajectories of language use and beliefs during childhood will offer interesting insights into the broader effects of gender marking.

Interracial communication. While on the surface the topic of interracial communication might appear straightforward, it soon becomes clear that in reality it is rather tricky. Instantly, some questions surface: What is race? Is it the same thing as ethnicity or not? How do we define different races and boundaries between them? And consequently, what constitutes interracial communication? It soon becomes clear that answers are by no means simple, and while there is an extensive literature looking at the full complexity of interracial communication (e.g., Orbe & Harris, 2014; Ray, 2009), here, we will endeavor to give only a brief overview of some of the important aspects related to these questions.

As one of the main social categories, race is actually a socio-political construct more than a natural category. Nevertheless, the notion of race has persisted through time primarily in order to justify the differences between races, or more specifically to assure the advantaged position of a White population (Orbe & Harris, 2014). In this section of our chapter, we will be using the definitions of Orbe and Harris in defining race and ethnicity. Race is "a largely social—yet powerful—construction of human difference that has been used to classify human beings into separate value-based categories" (p. 9). In contrast, ethnicity is defined as "a cultural marker that indicates shared traditions, heritage, and ancestral origins… [and] is

defined psychologically and historically" (p. 9). Whether or not everyone will agree with these definitions, or treat the two concepts as exactly the same or completely different, these definitions show just how complex it is sometimes to define concepts that we use without much thinking on an everyday basis.

How do we define the boundaries between different races? This is where it first becomes apparent that language has an immense impact on both on the definitions and the implementations of race and racial policies. The best illustration of this problem is in the example of three brothers (born to the same biological parents) that lived in Louisiana in the middle of the 20th century. Based on the specific regulation applied at the time and place of their birth one was classified as Negro, the other as Indian, and third as White (Orbe & Harris, 2014). Even today, within the UK different ethnic categories, describing a mixture of race and ethnic denominations, are used for census data in England and in Northern Ireland (ONS, 2016).

However, as touched upon in the section on labeling, mentioning a race label in interpersonal discourse or on forms can have both detrimental and identity-strengthening effects. On the one hand, the verbal performance of African Americans is likely to suffer as a function of stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995). On the other hand, race provides a positive social identity (even if associated with negative stereotypes). In fact, identification with one's own racial (or ethnic) minority acts to protect self-esteem in the face of perceived discrimination based on that group membership (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). Thus, the use of racial labels may have both positive and negative effects for those categorized by such labels.

As with other forms of intergroup communication, interracial communication takes place as soon as at least one of the participants perceives race as a salient category. This means that different strategies may be used, and one may enter the interpersonal (interracial)

exchange by being aware of certain stereotypes associated with one's own or the communication partner's group. However, it is impossible to fully understand the complexity of interracial communication without considering the specific historical embeddedness of this relationship (e.g., Ray, 2009). For example, in terms of stereotypes in the USA today, we find that Whites are perceived as ignorant on racial issues and Blacks as experts. Therefore, in a race-relevant conversation, these two groups are likely to adopt a learner and a teacher role, respectively (Tatum & Sekaquaptewa, 2009). Furthermore, racial minorities might be motivated to appear competent and to be respected, whereas Whites might want to be liked and perceived as moral (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010). These divergent strategies are also likely to be visible in pre-existing mixed-race friendships.

These diverging approaches to conversation can have a detrimental effect on the interracial interactions, as they are likely to lead to misunderstandings and more negative attitudes toward the interaction partner. To an extent, all these findings on diverging strategies can be seen fitting the theoretical frame of communication accommodation theory, which looks at convergence and divergence of communication partners (Shepard et al., 2001). Sometimes, true motives or strategies can also be misunderstood, especially in an online interracial communication environment, as demonstrated in a study looking at students' exchange on a diversity forum (McKee, 2002). From online posts it was not always immediately clear which violent messages were intended to limit or close the conversation and which were designed to educate the others. McKee concludes that while it is important to encourage interracial discussion on race and racism, more guidance is needed to facilitate the exchange and avoid misunderstandings. Relatedly, the public media portrayal of, and discussion about race can have an impact on engagement with those media by racial minorities. For example, African Americans avoid TV programs that reflect negatively on their ingroup (Abrams & Giles, 2007), and this is especially true for those who strongly

identify with their racial minority. Taken together, these examples show how complex interracial communication can be, especially when it addresses race-related topics. Not only are different strategies used, but also different interpretations—not always accurate—are made. Factors such as identification or perceived group vitality can predict the level of engagement with certain types of race-related material.

In addition to the content of conversations, the language (variation) used in communication plays an important role in interracial settings. For instance, in North America a language variation known as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is spoken by many African Americans and defined by a variety of unique phonological, grammatical, and stylistic components (Lippi-Green, 1997). These components can be used to different degrees by different groups of African Americans as part of their identity affiliation. Unfortunately, there is also evidence that especially the phonological features (i.e., accent) of AAVE lead listeners to assume that the speaker is less attractive and of lower social status compared to those speaking standard English. Interestingly, similar effects can be found in both Black and non-Black listeners indicating that AAVE speakers have internalized these negative stereotypes (Rodriguez, Cargile, & Rich, 2004). Discrimination on the basis of AAVE accent is, however, limited to specific dimensions. For example, Billings (2005) found that AAVE was downgraded on competence, but not on trustworthiness or likeability. Some authors, rather provocatively, state that in order to counteract such speech-based discrimination, AAVE speakers should undergo dialect modification therapy (Carlson & McHenry, 2006). This approach neglects broader implications of language-based discrimination, which is still not officially recognized, but poses a serious social problem (Dragojevic, Giles, & Watson, 2012; Ng, 2007). In fact, people could use language (proficiency) as an excuse for not hiring someone, when in reality the hiring decision is based on racial or ethnic discrimination.

As described previously, language abstraction can be used strategically to suggest different expectations or to express ingroup bias. Similar findings emerge in interracial contexts with elementary school children (Sales-Wuillemin et al., 2014). Majority White children and minority Black children were presented with photographs of ingroup or outgroup children engaging in either positive or negative behavior, and were asked to describe the behavior in writing. The analyses of their descriptions showed linguistic intergroup bias (ingroup favoritism, but no outgroup derogation) for both White and Black children. This finding reflects the same positive-negative asymmetry that is usually found with adult populations. Importantly, in this experiment children were presented with pictures of in- versus outgroup members whom they did not personally interact with nor did they hear them speak. This methodological choice is relevant as Kinzler and colleagues found that children tend to ignore the race, but to use accents when choosing their friends (Kinzler, Shutts, Dejesus, & Spelke, 2009). In other words, children rely less on race than gender to infer similarities between members of the same group. In fact, this is more in line with the idea of race being a socio-political construct rather than a natural category (Liberman, Woodward, & Kinzler, in press). Another important distinction is the age of children in the two experiments. Children in Kinzler et al.'s study were much younger (5 years) that those in Sales-Wuillemin et al.'s study (7-11 years). This difference in perception of race is related to identity development and how we perceive different groups in terms of being in- versus out-group (e.g., Floccia, Butler, Girard, & Goslin, 2009; Girard, Floccia, & Goslin, 2008), with younger children using mainly the national versus foreign distinction and older starting to make more ingroup differentiations, for example, based on different regions and accents (Giles, Harrison, Creber, Smith, & Freeman, 1983). Additionally, Kinzler and colleagues used accents and appearance, which is more ecologically valid than only appearance. Curiously, when pitting race against accent, younger children thought it more likely that they

would grow into an adult of the same language than an adult of the same race, apparently believing that race was more transformable than language (Kinzler & Dautel, 2012). Even in adults, language may play a greater role when it comes to race or ethnicity than acknowledged thus far in social psychology. This claim is confirmed by the fact that accent is a powerful cue for ethnic categorization, often superior to visual cues (Pietraszewski & Schwartz, 2014; Rakić, Steffens, & Mummendey, 2011a). Further, when it comes to evaluating people with ethnically mismatching appearance and accents, the evaluation outcome goes beyond a mere sum of its parts, with accent playing an overwhelming role (Hansen, Rakić, & Steffens, in press). Together, these studies underline the often-underestimated role of accent in reinforcing, mitigating or overpowering the impact of visual cues. It also opens the interesting (and to our knowledge, under-researched) possibility that the discrimination experienced by members of some races (e.g. Blacks or Asians in the US) may have less to do with their looks than with their ways of speaking.

These findings show how race (ethnicity) is a complex social category and that different factors (e.g., age, type of stimuli used, specific context, accent, etc.) should be considered when looking at the causes and consequences of interracial communication. Whereas most of the literature so far has considered the North American context, we hope to see more of these studies tested and applied across different contexts and cultures. With increased mobility, nations across the globe are changing and more than ever this intergroup context (based on race, ethnicity, and/or culture) is becoming significant as never before.

Fluid categories: regional background, social class, and sexual orientation. As seen so far, language is very powerful in shaping our representations and our perception. But language is rather flexible, and it is present in different forms. Almost any language is likely to have different regional varieties also known as dialects, although the distinction between language and dialect can sometimes be more political or ideological than linguistic

(Dragojevic et al., 2012; Lippi-Green, 1997). For example, the same variation can be classified as an official language in one country (Lëtzebuergesch in Luxemburg) and a dialect in another ("Moselfränkisch" in Germany). By definition, dialects should be mutually intelligible, though that does not always apply. Regardless of the exact definition, mere pronunciation or accent (as seen in case of AAVE) can be used almost instantly in assessing the background as well as the personality of a speaker (Giles, 1970; Ryan & Carranza, 1975).

Accents are generally divided into the two major categories of standard and non-standard (regional and foreign) accents. This distinction is, of course, highly dependent on the context (e.g., the Queen's English or received pronunciation (RP) is standard in UK, but non-standard in USA). Similar to the language-dialect distinction, the notion of standard-ness is not without its problems (Lippi-Green, 1997). The standard variety is often associated with higher status and prestige and it is used almost exclusively in educational settings and to some degree in the media. On the contrary, non-standard speakers are associated with lower status and competence but often, though not always, with higher solidarity and warmth (Fuertes, Gottdiener, Martin, Gilbert, & Giles, 2012). This is also known as *accent prestige theory* (Giles, 1970; Giles & Powesland, 1975), developed in UK when first testing for perceptions of different regional accents against the standard accent (Queen's English or RP). Status and competence are sometimes used as the same dimension in communication studies though there is also evidence that at times the two are perceived differently depending on a particular stereotype associated with a particular group (Rakić, Steffens, & Mummendey, 2011b). The asymmetrical evaluation of standard and non-standard accents can have far-reaching implications for counselling (Fuertes, Potere, & Ramirez, 2002), job seeking (Giles, Wilson, & Conway, 1981), and the self-esteem of non-standard accent speakers (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010).

Explanations as to *why* we find these differences are at the heart of the scientific debate at the present (Giles & Rakić, 2014). On the one hand, there are advocates of processing fluency, indicating that higher cognitive effort is needed to process and understand "accented" speech, resulting in a less positive evaluation. This seems to be supported by evidence that stronger accents are associated with more pronounced negative evaluations (Ryan, Carranza, & Moffie, 1977). In fact, non-standard (i.e., foreign) speakers are more likely to be perceived as untrustworthy (Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010) and unlikeable (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016) because of the difficulty in processing their accent. On the other hand, although low level cognitive processes (e.g., heuristics, biases) are important in guiding our perceptions, these do not occur in a social vacuum. Hence the social meaning assigned to a given group and accent is far more important. Indeed, some evidence suggests that our brains can adapt to a new speech accent very quickly (Floccia, Goslin, Girard, & Konopczynski, 2006). The reader will also no doubt remember the powerful example from the beginning, where mere knowledge of an author's identity had a dramatic effect on the comprehension of a written text and subsequent performance (Greenaway et al., 2015). Further, evidence suggests that the listeners' prejudice can make them "hear" accents that aren't even present (Rubin, 1992). In an attempt to separate speaker and language evaluation School and colleagues (2013) developed Attitudes Towards Languages (AToL) scale comprising three dimensions: value, sound, and structure. Interestingly, they found that both sound and structure of each language were determined by perception of value (i.e., how beautiful, appealing, pleasant, elegant, and graceful a given language was perceived), providing further evidence that evaluation is guided by listeners subjective values and stereotypes associated with a given accent or language.

Regional and social class accents are not the only examples for how pronunciation affects social judgments. Recently, gay and lesbian ways of speaking have been investigated

as a specific form of non-standard language. Whereas listeners are not particularly good at identifying the speaker's actual sexual orientation based on pronunciation, they generally agree on who sounds straight vs. gay or lesbian. Once speakers are perceived as speaking gender-atypically (feminine sounding males and masculine sounding females) they are stereotyped, discriminated against and, for males, also ostracized (Fasoli & Maass, 2018; Fasoli, Maass, Paladino, & Sulpizio, 2017). For instance, feminine sounding males are perceived as having feminine rather than masculine interests, are seen as less suitable for leadership positions, and are less likely to be chosen as interaction partners in experimental tasks, especially by heterosexual male listeners. Thus, people draw a host of inferences from even very small voice samples (such as 6-word sentences, e.g. *the dog runs in the park*). Similar to regional accent, here again the standard or majority pronunciation leads to considerable advantages, whereas the atypical, non-standard pronunciation has detrimental social effects.

In this section, we saw how powerful spoken language is in shaping our perception of others. It provides information about speakers' origins and also (not necessarily correctly) about their personality and social status. And while the reasons behind the differences in evaluation remain part of the scientific debate, these studies unequivocally show the power accents have and how closely they are linked to social hierarchies. Therefore, future studies should consider accent differences more focally to obtain a more complete picture of the underlying processes that contribute to either positive or negative intergroup communication experiences.

Pronunciation seems to be particularly important for fluid social categories that often lack unambiguous visible markers. What remains to be understood are the exact processes underlying voice-based judgments. Do they require that the person be categorized, for instance as non-native speaker or as gay, which then triggers stereotyping, prejudice or

discrimination, or might these effects occur also in the absence of categorization (see Blair, Judd, Sadler, & Jenkins' (2002) dual process model of category- vs. feature-based stereotyping)? Also, the distal motivations behind accent-based discrimination need to be explored further. For instance, Reid et al. (2012) have argued that foreign accents are a proxy for social distance and that the avoidance of people with foreign accents may be driven by the fear of encountering novel health-threatening pathogens. Social class or regional accents may well be driven by very different motivations. Thus, it remains to be seen which motivations are driving the different forms of voice-based discriminations.

Conclusions and Theoretical Challenges

This necessarily partial and selective review of the literature shows that intergroup communication is a complex phenomenon, in which expectations, biases and speech styles of all social players intersect. Most studies artificially reduce this complexity by isolating specific components in order to be able to draw clear and preferably causal conclusions. In the absence of simple methodological and statistical tools that would allow researchers to analyze communication as a mutual feedback process as it evolves over time, we are stuck with puzzle-like evidence for specific components. The literature reviewed here also suggests that there are many different layers, with some language features (such as grammatical gender) built into the language and others (e.g., the use of derogatory labels or dehumanizing metaphors) reflecting the personal choices of the sender. However, so far relatively little theorizing and research has addressed the way in which these different layers interact, for instance by posing grammatical and syntactic constraints on the sender's choices. Therefore, to make integrative sense of the known pieces of the puzzle is, we believe, the main theoretical challenge of intergroup communication research. This implies, for instance, the need to understand whether the communication processes reviewed above are universal or specific to some social groups, whether they are driven by similar or distinct motivations, and

whether different language tools are used for specific goals. Luckily, the increasing technical possibilities to explore large data sets and to understand the linguistic fingerprints left on Facebook, Twitter and other social networking platforms now make it easier to investigate spontaneous language use in the real world, including its intergroup component.

Looking at the literature as a whole, one may also notice a certain asymmetry, with most studies focusing on the contribution of language in creating and maintaining conflictual intergroup relations. By comparison, little has been done to understand how language can be used to improve intergroup relations. Specifically, studies on language training (such as the one by Suitner, 2017, in which people learned to use concrete vs. abstract language) are rare. The few existing studies are promising as language training may not only positively affect the recipient but also the speaker's own attitudes and decisions. Relatedly, language as a communication tool is never used in a social vacuum; other pieces of information often co-occur or precede the communication exchange. Hence for example, learning someone's nationality during or before a communication exchange can potentially change the course of the interaction. Similarly, some recent evidence suggests that the mismatch of perceived ethnic background based on appearance and accent has an impact on the evaluation that goes beyond the sum of its parts. All these examples indicate that different methodologies, together with a multidisciplinary approach, are needed in order to tackle intergroup communication in its full complexity. Considering the encouraging shifts in research on intergroup communication we remain optimistic about future advances.

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