

DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC (IN ENGLISH)

(State the objective of the project, describe the research to be carried out, and present reasons for choosing the research topic - max. 1 page)

Does threat to fundamental psychological motives necessarily lead to worsened relations between one's own group and outgroups? Or, perhaps experienced lack of control over the socio-economic surroundings can, in certain conditions, mobilize humans to cooperate with members of outgroups and to enhance a more positive perception and evaluation of outgroup members? Naive observation of the social world suggests that such situations often take place, however, socio-psychological factors favoring positive influence of negative experiences related to the loss of personal control on intergroup relations are not fully defined and explored. The aim of this project is to identify and investigate those conditions in which threat to a personal sense of control can turn into constructive tendencies to cooperate with outgroups, solidarize with their members and reveal a more positive perception and evaluation. In this project, we focus on two processes that independently can lead to more beneficial intergroup relations - one concerns search and formation of coalitions with members of outgroups, and the other concerns identification with a superordinate social category. We assume that formation of a coalition takes place when two groups have common goals and cooperation can help to regain the group's own control over the environment. Recategorization, on the other hand, can occur when the restoration of group control requires identification with a different, broader social category, including both, its own group and the outgroup. The function of both processes is to rebuild a reduced sense of control over the environment.

In order to empirically verify the theoretical model adopted by us, we have planned a series of ten studies, including experiments carried out in laboratories, as well as on-line correlational research. We plan to carry out three lines of research, in which firstly measurement tools will be developed and the influence of threat of control on the tendency to cooperate will be tested. Next, we will focus on the role of coalition formation and recategorization processes as a form of coping with loss of control, to finally test the entire theoretical model in a more complex research design. Most of the planned research will be conducted in the context of real national groups within Europe. This will allow us, in addition to testing the psychological mechanisms underlying the impact of personal control threats on intergroup relations, to gain knowledge about conditions favoring perception of coalitions within Europe or identification with overarching social categories (e.g. countries belonging to or not to the European Union).

The main reason for undertaking this research topic is firstly to cover a gap in existing social psychological literature, that is the absence of precise knowledge about motivational and cognitive determinants of constructive (and not defensive) ways of dealing with a sense of lack of control. For example, by consisting cooperating with members of outgroups who share common goals or socio-economic conditions with the ingroup. Secondly, the project is application-oriented, by involving the search for ways to reduce social conflicts, which intensify in conditions of crises that reduce the sense of control of individuals. The aim of this research topic is therefore also to provide reliable knowledge in the domain of motivational psychology and intergroup relations, which could be helpful in developing constructive, collaborative, ways of solving social problems.