

Dimensions of Diversity

Diversity and Social Dominance

According to the "Theory of Social Dominance" (SDT Social Dominance Theory, Sidanius/Pratto 1999) all societies are built as systems of group-based social hierarchies. Thereby, the dominant group in a society is identified with a disproportionately large number of positively evaluated characteristics and symbolic values.

For the authors three hierarchy systems are sufficient in order to describe societal structures:

- 1 a system of age grouping (age system), in which adults and middle-aged people have disproportionately more social power over children, teenagers and younger adults
- 2 a system of gender roles (gender-system), in which men have disproportionately more social and political power than women
- 3 a system that consists of influential groups specific to each different society, that is derived, for example, from affiliation to a particular nationality, ethnic group, caste, clan, religious, political or economic group or regional groupings (arbitrary-set system).

The three key messages of the SDT:

- 1 "Whilst age and gender-based hierarchies exist in almost all social systems, the "arbitrary-set system" occurs, without exception, in systems that exhibit long-lasting economic growth."
- 2 "Most forms of group conflict and oppression can be understood as being different manifestations of the same underlying human predisposition to create group-based hierarchies."
- 3 "Human systems are subject to compensatory influences: on the one hand hierarchy-enhancing (HE) forces that constantly produce increasing levels of group-based social inequalities, whilst on the other hand hierarchy-attenuating (HA) forces that increasingly produce greater social equality."

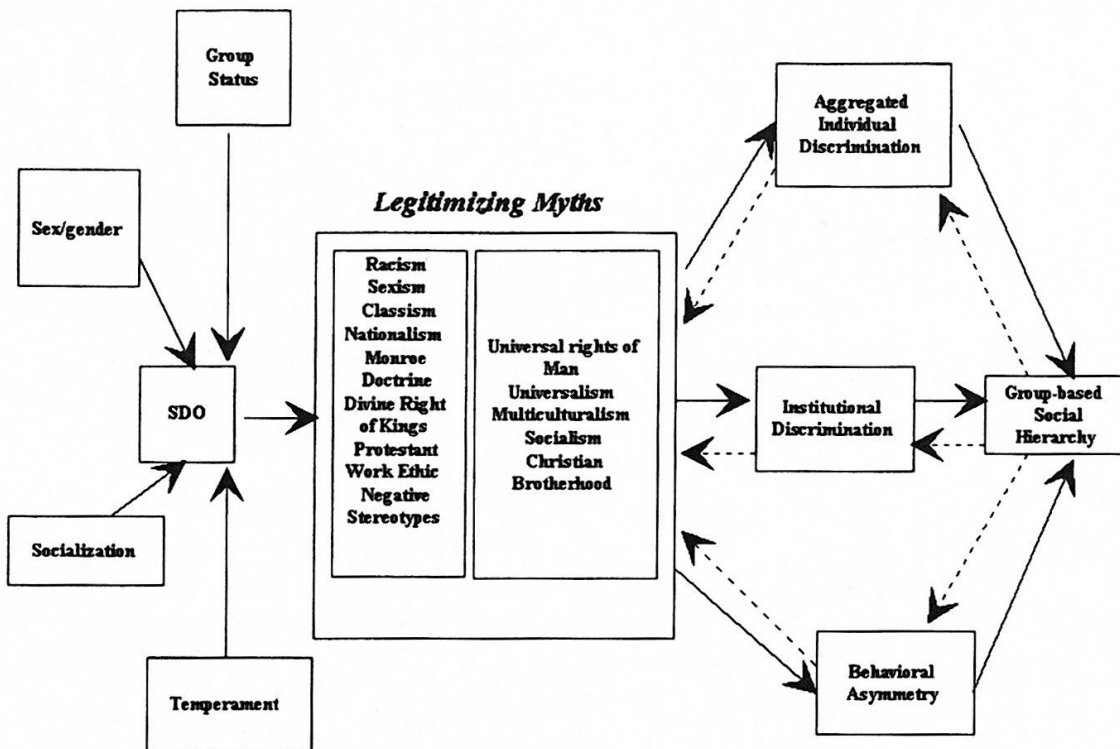
Building blocks:

Concept of group based social hierarchy

Concept of social dominance orientation

Concept of legitimate myths

Thematic Presentation of SDT (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, S. 40)



A Criticism:

The concept of the Social Dominance Theory does not sufficiently address the fact that there apparently appears to be a general motive to accept and justify existing societal power structures. This justification also occurs amongst those who do not enjoy a dominant position in a given society.

(Jost/Banaji/Nosek 2004)

Exercise:

In groups discuss and explore this criticism further!