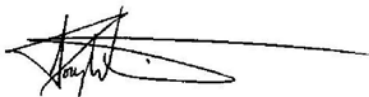


SELF-CONCEPT IN CAMERON'S 2010 TELEVISED
BRITISH PRIME MINISTERIAL DEBATE

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SELF-CONCEPT IN CAMERON'S 2010 TELEVISED
BRITISH PRIME MINISTERIAL DEBATE

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Abstract

SELF-CONCEPT IN CAMERON'S 2010 TELEVISED

BRITISH PRIME MINISTERIAL DEBATE

XIAO FANG

Under the Supervision of Dr. Kory Wein

The 2010 British televised ministerial debate was the first televised debate in English history. In the debate, David Cameron, the leader of UK Conservative Party, debated Gordon Brown, the leader of the Labor Party, and Nick Clegg, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party. Cameron won the debates and went on to become prime minister. This thesis explores self-concept and social identity theory used in Cameron's debates, and analyzes how self-concept and people's communication affect each other and how people improve their self-concept in intercultural communication.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Self-concept is a multi-dimensional construct that refers to an individual's perception of "self" in relation to any number of characteristics (Turner et al. 1987). Since the dawn of time, people have asked themselves the question "Who am I?" The answer to that question is so variable that there is no single answer. In trying to answer that question, people implicitly recognize sex, race, and social class as part of identities. Throughout their entire lives, people are engaged in the process of sculpting and revising their personal identity.

Among the experiences that have the greatest impact on how we see ourselves are interactions with others. In this thesis, I will explore how self-concept affects our communication and how communication affects our self-concept. I will further explore how we improve our self-concept through verbal communication.

Throughout history, humans have always been keen on exploring and learning more about self-concept. Different branches of learning give self-concept different connotations. Researchers from various fields such as philosophy, theology, clinical psychology, humanistic psychology, sociology, and experimental social psychology try to focus on different aspects of self-concept. In the research area of intercultural communication, scholars have used self-concept to discuss the relation between communication and personal identity. They try to figure out how an individual's self-concept and communication interact with each other and how an individual improves his or her self-concept in the intercultural communication.

The Britain televised presidential debates in 2010 was the first televised presidential debates in the English history. In the debates, David Cameron, the leader of UK Conservative Party, debated Gordon Brown, the leader of the Labor Party, and Nick Clegg, the leader of the

Liberal Democratic Party. It was also Cameron's challenge to front 200 live audiences who were selected by the institute of the public opinion survey according to gender, age, race, social class and voting inclination, and the other 9.4 million off-board audiences. This seminar paper starts with Cameron's contentious language in the debates. Social identity theory is used for analyzing Cameron's construal and realization of self-concept by his language.

Statement of the Problems

In 2010 televised British Prime Ministerial debate, Cameron often used "we" and "I" and his personal experiences to make his personal distinctiveness. I think this highlights the importance of self, so in my seminar paper, I want to explore the following problems: How did Cameron use self-concept and social identity theory in his debates? How does self-concept affect our communication? How does our communication affect self-concept? And in the intercultural communication, how can we improve self-concept?

Definition of Terms

Self-concept: refers to the experience of one's own existence. It means a person gradually deepens his or her own understanding through experience, reflection and the feedback of others. Self-concept is an organic cognitive structure, composed of attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and values, throughout the entire experience and action, and organizes the individual's specific habits, ability, thoughts, ideas, etc.

Social Identity Theory: The term was formulated by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and 80s. It describes that how people derive their sense of identity, at least in part, from a group. A person enhances his or her sense of identity by making comparisons with out-groups. Social identity is different from personal identity, which is derived from personal characteristics and individual relationships.

Social Categorization: In the process of social cognition, people will have different characteristics classified into different groups, such as race, gender and nationality, so as to get understood to each other.

Social Comparison Theory: The idea that we learn about our own abilities and attitudes by comparing ourselves to other people.

Positive Distinctiveness: using verbal and nonverbal cues to claim aspects of your identity that are personally and/or socially valued, in an attempt to create a new, more positive meaning for that identity.

Purpose of the Study

In 2010 televised British Prime Ministerial debate, Cameron came up with three kinds of selves: an individual self, a collective self, and a social self, aiming at stressing the importance of the construal of self. The purpose of this seminar paper is to apply the self-concept and social identity theory to Cameron's 2010 televised British prime ministerial debates.

Significance of the Study

David Cameron used self-concept and social identity theory in the Britain televised prime ministerial debate in 2010 and won it. The contentious language in the debates is very typical, which involves different parties and people from different cultural backgrounds. Language is the carrier of identity. Self-concept helps a lot in people's daily social communication, then in the course of communication, people can learn how society regards them when they interact with various other people.

Delimitations of Research

Research will be conducted in the library of Hubei University of Science and Technology and the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Primary searches will be

done via the Internet. Keywords searches will include “self-concept”, “social identity theory”, “social categorization,” “social comparison,” and “positive distinctiveness.”

Methodology

This seminar paper will be conducted by doing a review of literature on self-concept and social identity theory, and the relationship between them. Then it will explore how Cameron used self-concept and social identity theory in his debates.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Self-concept

Self-concept is also called “self-construction” or “self-perspective.” It is a complex process that involves internalizing and acting from social perspectives that we learn as we communicate (Julia T. Wood, 2004). Self-concept arises in the communication with others. Self-concept develops only as we communicate with particular others and participate in social life in general (Julia T. Wood, 2004). When we interact with others, we internalize others’ perspectives and take their perspectives inside ourselves. As soon as we internalize the views of particular others and society, we will engage in internal communication in which we remind ourselves of social perspectives. Communication can shape self-concept by self-enhancement motivation.

Every day, we communicate with our family members, the peers and the society members who have the important influence on how we see ourselves and help establish the foundations of our self-concepts. First of all, family members give us a direct definition by how they describe us and provide direct communication about many aspects of who we are through statements they make. Positive statements enhance our self-concept. On the contrary, negative statements can damage our self-concept. Everyone has identity scripts derived from family and our identity scripts reflect the values and heritage of our family. Also, family members teach us who we and others are and how to approach others and relationships. Secondly, we interact with peers and gain further information about how others see us and how we see ourselves. When we communicate with peers, we engage in social comparison. We will compare ourselves with others to form our self-concept which consists of talents, abilities, leadership skills, and so on. We compare ourselves with others to decide whether we are alike or different and use

comparison to evaluate ourselves in relation to others. Last but not least, as members of a society, our values, judgments and perspectives are inevitably influenced by the community members. In the course of communication, we learn how the society regards us when we interact with a variety of other people.

Self-concept is a multidimensional concept and there are many dimensions of the human self. We have the image of our physical self. We have the perceptions of our cognitive self. We also have the emotional self-concept. And then, we have our social self. In addition, we have the moral self.

According to Turner's Social Identity Theory, a person has many selves that correspond to widening circles of group membership. Different social situations may trigger an individual to think, feel and act on basis of his personal, family or national "level of self" (Turner, 1987). Hogg and Vaughan (2002) believe an individual has multiple "social identities." Social identity is the individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership of social groups.

Brewer's Self-construal Theories (1996) holds that the individual's self-concept contains three parts: individual self, relational self, and collective self, which are the three fundamental self-representations of self-concept. And these three fundamental parts mean three fundamental ways that people seek to achieve their self-concept and self-enhancement: in terms of their unique trait, dyadic relationships, and group membership (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). The individual self is achieved by differentiating from others by his or her traits and characteristics within his or her social context. (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; see also Markus, 1977; Sedikides, 1993). The relational self is achieved by assimilating with significant others and is based on personalized bonds of attachment. (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; see also Hazen & Shaver, 1994; Reis & Shaver, 1988). The collective self is achieved by inclusion in large social groups and

contrasting the group to which one belongs (i.e., the in-group) with relevant out-groups.

Self is a process and develops as time goes by. Symbolic interactionism summarizes that one's self is a significant object and is defined through social interaction with others.

Self-concept is an important concept in Mead's symbolic interactionism theory. Self-concept is achieved by role taking or assuming the perspective of others, influenced by both generalized other which is the collection of rules, roles, and attitudes endorsed by the whole social community in which we live (Mead, 1934) and the significant others who are closest to us and especially important to us. According to Mead (1934), self has two facets and he used the concept of "me" to explain people's socially acceptable and adaptive behavior and the "I" to explain people's creative and unpredictable impulses.

We are influenced by the people we communicate and interact with every day and take these perspectives to define who we are and to guide how we think, act, and feel. Because social views on the self-concept are constructed and variable, the self-concept can be changed. We can enhance our self-concept in the process of communicating with others.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory was formulated by Tajfel (1959) and it is a diffuse but interrelated group of social psychological theories concerned with when and why individuals identify with, and behave as part of, social group, adopting shared attitudes. It is also concerned with what difference it makes when encounters between individuals are perceived as encounters between group members. In the process of communication, an individual could have various identities and various selves as separate from their personal identity. And in different situation, any identity and any self could be very salient, and could therefore become the dominant way of perceiving people, for individuals themselves, and in their views of others. Thus, social identity

is the primary method within social psychology of defining individuals when it is important to distinguish between different levels or types of identity.

Turner (2000) further developed social identity theory by self-categorization theory. It is group memberships that play an important role in shaping a person's self-concept. The development of the theory specially represents in the part of relationship between group behavior and self-concept. The theory describes how people define themselves both at a group level and at an individual level (Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J. Reicher, S. D. & Whetherell, M. S., 1987; Hogg, M. A., Terry, D. J., 2000). In the theory, group and individual identities are considered to be at different levels of self-categorization, and more distinct from each other than social identity theory does. An individual can have several different individual identities depending on contexts, and also several different group identities, for example, gender, occupation, or nationality (Turner, J. C., Oakes, P. J., Haslam, S. A. & McGarty, C. A., 1994; Spears, R., 2001). This concept, a hierarchy of different identities, replaces the continuum in social identity theory, and allows an individual an unlimited range of identities based on contexts (Oakes, P. J., 1987). The salience of a particular group identity is based on how accessible a categorization is to an individual, and how well it fits the social context.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) identify three variables whose contribution to the emergence of in-group favoritism is particularly important. The first one is the extent to which individuals identify with an in-group to internalize that group membership as an aspect of their self-concept. The second one is the extent to which the prevailing context provides ground for comparison between groups. And the last one is the perceived relevance of the comparison group, which itself will be shaped by the relative and absolute status of the in-group. Individuals are likely to display favoritism when an in-group is central to their self-definition and a given comparison is

meaningful or the outcome contestable.

Social Identity Theory has a considerable impact not only on social psychology but also on intercultural communication. It is tested in a wide range of fields and settings and includes prejudice, stereotyping, negotiation and language use. The theory has also implications on the way people deal with social and organizational change.

Self-concept and Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory and Self-categorization theory emphasize the self-concept more than the interpersonal relations within groups: how the self is defined by group membership and how social cognitive processes associated with group membership-based self-definition produce characteristically “groupy” behavior. Tajfel and Turner (1979) emphasized that social identity was part of self-concept and this emphasis was explored more fully by Turner (1982) through the development of self-categorization theory.

In social identity theory, self is reflexive, it can be taken as an objective and also can be categorized, classified, or named by itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classification, which is called self-categorization in social identity theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Whetherell, 1987). Through the process of self-categorization, an identity is formed.

Self-concept is a pervasively social construction. People define themselves mainly in terms of their relations to others, no matter individual others or groups. Everyone has several aspects of self. People’s unique individuals are defined by social comparison. Most of people tend to think of themselves in terms of their distinctiveness from others in the social environment (McGuire & McGuire, 1981).

Three Processes Involved in Self-concept Formation

Social Identity Theory asserts that group membership creates in-group/ self-categorization in ways that favor the in-group at the expense of the out-group. The example (minimal group studies) of Turner and Tajfel (1986) showed that the mere act of individuals categorizing themselves as group members was sufficient to lead them to display in-group favoritism. After being categorized of a group membership, individuals seek to achieve positive self-esteem by positively differentiating their in-group from a comparison out-group on some valued dimension. This quest for positive distinctiveness means that people's sense of who they are is defined in terms of "we" rather than "I".

The three important processes involved in self-concept formation, which are also three processes of Social Identity Theory, social categorization which includes self-categorization, social comparison, and positive distinctiveness, produce different selves. The consequence of those three processes is an accentuation of the perceived similarities between the self and other in-group members, and an accentuation of the perceived differences between the self and out-group members. This accentuation occurs for all the attitudes, beliefs and values, affective reactions, behavioral norms, styles of speech, and properties that are believed to be correlated with the relevant intergroup categorization. The consequence of the social comparison process is the selective application of the accentuation effect, primarily to those dimensions that will result in self-enhancing outcomes for the self. Specially, one's self-esteem is enhanced by evaluating the in-group and the out-group on dimensions that lead the in-group to be judged positively and the out-group to be judged negatively.

Social Categorization

Humans are very capable creatures and we use many tools to compress, utilize, and retain

information and communicate with each other. One of the tools that we use is termed social categorization. Social categorization is an ability to classify ourselves and others, exerts a profound influence on our thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors. It describes a kind organization used by people to remember social interactions and is a very fundamental knowledge practice to serve the purpose of communication between people. By thinking of people as members of a group rather than as individuals, one can simplify and recall information quickly. Social categorization is culturally important to humans because it organizes our perceptions. Our culture is what tells us how to perceive the world and the people in it. Every culture has certain distinctions or categories that are important to them.

Social categorization is based on the core of the social identity approach. Tajfel's original formulation was framed by his work on social categorization and perceptual accentuation (Tajfel, 1959), social categorization and prejudice (Tajfel, 1969), and social categorization and discrimination (Tajfel, Billing, Bundy, & Flament, 1971); social categorization is central to the more recent self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987). In the process of social categorization, people characterize the behavior of members of relevant out-groups and describe and prescribe the behavior of the in-group members including ourselves (Turner, 1991), and then maximize the differences between the two groups by exaggerating the similarities among people within the same group and the distinctions between groups.

Self-categorization is social categorization of self-cognitively assimilates self to the in-group prototype and, thus, depersonalizes self-conception. It further develops social identity theory by noting that self-conception occurs on multiple levels of inclusiveness. It is suggested that there are at least three levels of self-categorization that serve as important factors in the social self-concept. The super ordinate level of the self as human being bases self-categorization

on one's identity as a human being with similarities to other humans versus alternate life forms. The intermediate level of in-group-out-group categorizations is based on social similarities and differences. This intermediate level focuses on the membership in social groups such as classifying oneself as African-American, male, or working class. The subordinate level of personal self-categorizations is based on differences between the person as a unique individual and other in-group members.

Self-categorization theory focuses on the processes that cause people to identify with groups, construe themselves and others in group terms, and manifest group behaviors. It has been central in the development of other conceptual components of the social identity approach, such as those dealing with leadership, social influence, group polarization, social attraction, and group cohesiveness.

It is the categorization of the self as a unique entity, distinct from other individuals. The individual acts in terms of his or her own goals and desires rather than as a member of a group or category. The level of identity that is activated (the personal or the social) depends on the factors in the situation, such as social comparison or normative fits, which make a group identity operative and override the personal identity.

Social Comparison

Self-concept depends not only on the absolute nature of one's accomplishment and performance but also on the way one measures up to relevant peers. Every day people interact with the others and the media influence on them with information about other people's accomplishment, actions, and lifestyles. Furthermore, the comparison process itself often seems relatively automatic. Social comparison processes are highly adaptive to the process of human communication and successful human communication requires people to evaluate the merits of

their views and abilities. Such evaluation necessarily depends on social comparison.

Social comparison process is a term referring the process through which people come to know themselves by evaluating their own attitudes, abilities and beliefs in comparison with others. In most cases, we try to compare ourselves to those in our peer group or with whom we are similar. There are two kinds of social comparison. Upward social comparison is when we compare ourselves with those we believe are better than us. Downward social comparison is when we compare ourselves to those who are worse off than ourselves. Through a social comparison process, persons who differ from the self are categorized as the out-group.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) identify three variables whose contribution to the comparison of intergroup is particularly important. The first one is extent to which individuals identify with an in-group to internalize that group membership as an aspect of their self-concept. The second one is the extent to which the prevailing context provides ground for comparison between groups. And the last one is the perceived relevance of comparison group, which itself will be shaped by the relative and absolute status of the in-group. Individuals are likely to display favoritism when an in-group is central to their self-definition and a given comparison is meaningful or the outcome is contestable.

Social comparison can make one undergo self-derogation (humiliation) if others perform well, but self-enhancement (triumph) if the other performs poorly. Leon Festinger published his original paper on the theory of social comparison in 1954 in the Journal Human Relations. According to this theory, humans possess a drive for self-evaluation. People want to evaluate their opinions and obtain some idea of how skilled they are (Martin, 2001). People always compare themselves with others when unable to evaluate their opinions and abilities on their own (Martin, 2001). Thus, the process of social comparison underlies social evaluation and relates to

self-enhancement processes, which in turn are critical to understanding diverse sociological issues pertaining, for example, to identify interpersonal and intergroup relationships.

In a paper published in French, Tajfel (1972) argued that it might be useful to think about social comparison occurring not only between individuals but also between groups. These ideas were published in a more expanded version in English in 1974 and formed the basis of one of the most influential theories in social psychology, now known as Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Around that time, Lemaine (1974) was also showing how social comparison can lead to differentiation and the creation of new dimensions of comparison in a search for originality. A year later, an important theoretical paper by Turner (1975) was entitled: “Social comparison and social identity: some prospects for intergroup behaviors.” This work, as known by the title, was devoted to an elaborate discussion of social comparison processes. Yet, even superficial references to Tajfel, Lemaine, Turner, or the topic of intergroup social comparison cannot be found in Suls and Miller (1977). One has to read eighteen chapters of the Handbook of social comparison (Suls and Wheeler, 2000) before coming to Part IV of the handbook, entitled “Applications,” to find, in Chapter 19 by Hogg, an analysis of the relations between intergroup social comparison and social identity. This does not reflect the simple fact that social comparison theory and research in and of themselves have nothing to do with social groups. To the contrary, Forsyth (2000) points out that “social comparison theory is as much a theory about group dynamic as it is a theory about individual’s perceptions of their opinions and abilities.” (p. 98)

Positive Distinctiveness

Positive distinctiveness means using verbal and non-verbal cues to claim aspects of your identity that are personally and/or socially valued, in an attempt to create a new, more positive meaning for that identity. Positive distinctiveness usually involves attempts to educate others

about the positive qualities of your identity group, advocate on behalf of members of your identity group, and incorporate, your background and identity-related experiences into your workplace interactions and innovations.

Within Social Identity Theory, a large influence on people's behavior is attributed to the value in having an identity and having a sense of being in a group which is distinct from other groups (positive group distinctiveness). The theory suggests that people distinguishing between in-groups and out-groups allow people to discover the value of their own group. This allows group members to gain positive value from membership of their group. Although this can provide a boost in positive esteem if we can make positive comparisons to other groups, the distinct identity we get from being in a group which is different to other groups is valuable in itself.

Different social situations compel people to attach themselves to different self-identities which may cause some to feel marginalized, thus travelling between different groups and self-identifications. Those different selves lead to constructed self-enhancement and self-concept. Shared goals may promote intergroup conflict in another way when they are combined with shared values. When two groups are pursuing the same goals or outcomes (including nonmaterial goods and positive values such as world peace and democracy), the potential for competition is enhanced. According to social identity theory, in-groups strive not only for differentiation from out-group but also positive distinctiveness (Turner, 1975), seeking in-group-out-group comparisons that favor the in-group over other groups. Thus, groups value those characteristics or achievements with respect to which they see themselves as better than the out-group and also strive to achieve or maintain positive comparisons on dimensions that they value.

Chapter III Self-concept in Cameron's Debates

In the 2010 televised British prime ministerial debate, Cameron's motivation was with no doubt to become the British prime minister. He wanted to bring British a brand-new change. His self-concept was based on his motivation. Gordon Brown and Nick Clegg are Cameron's two opponents in this first-ever televised prime ministerial debate. Gordon Brown is the leader of the Labor Party and Nick Clegg is the leader of the Liberal Democrats. Those three people represent different parties and each party has its own political view.

There are two hundred of representative studio audiences in each debate and 24 of them have asked questions. The total population of the United Kingdom is around 60 million. The largest numbers of people live in England. Because of its long tradition of accommodating immigrants and refugees and because it is part of a multiracial Commonwealth, Britain contains a diversity of peoples. And the London is among the most multiracial in the world. It has been estimated that about 160 languages and dialects are spoken by children in London schools. The first debate mainly focused on domestic affairs, important issues that affect Britain people's everyday life. The eight studio audiences were from different background and of all walks of life. They are Great Oliver, a retired toxicologist from Cheshire, Jacqueline Salmon, an optician and mother of two, Helen Elwood, who runs with her husband a pub, Joel Weiner, a 17-year-old secondary school student from London, Robert Lewis, a senior manager in healthcare, Nick Brimson, a soldier who served in the Territorial Army, Sindhu Naval, a hospital nurse for 12 years, and Alan Shaw, a train driver from Accrington.

In the second debate, the agreed theme for the first half of this debate is international affairs and in the second half the theme moves to general issues. The studio audience and the question vectors mostly come from Bristol.

The large part of the third and final prime ministerial debate of this election is on the state of the country's economy—the recession, the national debt, unemployment, the issue that many people believe will decide this election. Some questioners are selected from thousands of e-mails that are received at the BBC News Website.

Cameron's Three Selves in the Debate

In the 2010 televised prime ministerial debate in England, Cameron built three selves to achieve his self-concept: individual self, collective self and social self. These three selves are interrelated and affect each other in the process of Cameron's self-concept.

Cameron defined and made out his individual self by his own uniqueness, which distinguishes himself from the other. Cameron achieved his individual self through the interpersonal comparison with Gordon Brown and Nick Clegg. This process closely affiliated with the protection of Cameron's self-regard.

Cameron's collective self was realized by his in-group membership as a Conservative Party member. So, the relationship between Cameron and the Conservative Party is very important in his self-concept. In the debate, Cameron classified himself into the Conservative Party and compared the in-group—the Conservative Party—with the out-group—the Labor Party and the Liberal Democratic Party. By means of group comparison, he achieved his collective self. This process was related to the motivation of protecting and enhancing the interest of the Conservative Party.

Cameron's social self was constructed by the two-way relations between him and the Britain voters. It represents the relationship of Cameron and the others. And Cameron tried to gain his social self by the motivation of protecting the others' interest and maintaining the relationship between him and the voters.

Analysis of Cameron's Self-Concept

The analysis of Cameron's self-concept will be divided into three parts: social categorization, social comparison and positive distinctiveness, which are the three processes in self-concept formation.

Social Categorization and Cameron's Self-Concept

As social members, humans come in contact with many people of different colors, shapes, ages and genders. So this categorization, to some extent, is useful. When we discuss the consequences of social categorization in the debate, we note that one of the most important but ubiquitous effect of social categorization is homogenization or assimilation. In this televised presidential debate, Cameron not only saw himself as a group member—the member of the Conservative Party and the member of the society, but also perceive fellow in-group member and perceive the out-group as homogeneous.

“I” Becomes “We”: Social Categorization and the Self

In the televised presidential debate, Cameron always saw himself as a group member and strived for positive self-esteem by seeking a positive group membership, especially when his self-esteem was threatened by the other two competitors. Group membership can satisfy the need for both competition and cooperation. Perceived differences between Cameron and the out-group—Brown and Clegg satisfy the need for competition, while perceived similarities between Cameron and other members of in-group satisfy the need for connectedness and cooperation. People with good communication skills have the best balance in relatively personal or group competition. So, Cameron always put himself at the position of the Britain voters and British people. Cameron considered things in group-typical ways and experienced the British

voters' emotions. He considered the group as part of his self and tried himself to balance his individuality and the other selves.

In the British prime ministerial debate in 2010, there were altogether three debates and twenty-four members who had asked questions. Each debate selected eight audience members asking questions. Those twenty-four audience members accompanying with the twenty-four questions which they had asked involved the British people's interests. The studio audience came from different places of the UK, including Cheshire, Arrington, Saltford, Bristol, and Whitney in Oxfordshire. And the audience differed themselves in their careers: a retired toxicologist, optician, barkeeper, 17-year-old secondary school student, senior manager in healthcare, army man, hospital nurse, train driver, worker in the building trade, retired worker, immigrant, teacher... They asked a lot of questions relating to domestic affairs—important issues that affect the British people's everyday lives, international affairs, general issues, the country's economy—the recession, the national debt, and unemployment. Those questions asked by people from different areas of Britain and with different background represented the matters of interest to their area.

Every time when David Cameron answered the questions and competed with the other two rivals, he tried his best to solve those problems in the interests of both the quizmasters and all the British. Seldom did he use “I” language in his debate. In addition, he used a lot of “We” language such as “we” and “our” to show clearly his mind that he deeply understood the British people's situation and he always stood in the same line as the British people.

Cameron exerted himself in the struggle for self-esteem. He always himself as a group memberships—a group member of the quizmasters and the British people, in order to raises his self-esteem. In the process of debate, Cameron argued with Brown and Clegg. At the same time,

his self-esteem was threatened by them. Cameron used “We” language to express that he is always there with the British people and experiences emotions in response to events that affect the British people which he had already classified as individuals in his group when reminded of their common identity with these individuals. He used “We” language to put forward his good idea and policy. The strategy of “I” becoming “We” narrowed the distance between Cameron and the electorates and built a close connection between Cameron and the British people. Cameron perceived the quizmasters’ and the British people’s unique characteristics, learning about their personalities, passions, and preference, which helped himself find his own place in the UK and achieve his self-enhancement.

“Others” becomes “We”: Social Categorization and the In-Group

Because the group is part of the self, Cameron liked in-group members—the Conservative Party members more than out-group members—the Labor Party members and the Liberal Democratic Party members. This liking depends merely on the knowledge of shared group membership. In the debate, Cameron evaluated the Conservative Party as more positive and desirable than the other two parties.

It is demonstrated that the word “we” has positive connotations and automatically activates positive associations. Cameron gave the Conservative Party members the language advantage. He used linguistic bias to describe actions of the Conservative Party members and negative behavior by the other two party members, he usually used more abstract language to describe the behavior, implicitly casting the behavior as generalizable, and linking the behavior to characteristics. However, when Cameron described negative behavior by the Conservative Party members and positive behavior by out-group members, he used more concrete language,

implicitly casting the behavior as ungeneralizable and an isolated specific occurrence that is an exception to the rule.

Also, in the debate, Cameron showed sharp justice and altruism. He wanted what is best for the British. So he tried his best to advocate the Conservative Party and want to have influence on the British people through advocacy. In this debate, when Cameron used “We” language to beat the drum for his party, he chose to put the sentences such as “we’re going to...”, “we’ve got to...” into the parallel structures to achieve the effective sentences. Cameron used “We” language instead of “the Conservative Party” to represent that the Conservative Party is a united and trustworthy party.

“Others” becomes “They”: Social Categorization and the Out-Group

Cameron assumed two attitudes towards the Labor Party and the Liberal Democratic Party. Sometimes, he tended to perceive his rivals as “they are all alike” compared to himself and the party to which he belongs. On this occasion, he perceived his opponents as homogenous. However, Cameron obviously favored the Conservative Party over the Labor Party and the Liberal Democratic Party even when it costs the in-group in absolute terms. Social identity theory argues preferring the in-group to the out-group is a way of feeling good about ourselves and deriving positive self-esteem. When Cameron competed with Brown and Clegg and perceived threats from his rivals, he discriminate against them and their parties in order to increase his self-esteem.

When mentioning his competitors and other two parties, Cameron used “They” language to produce the diversity of in-group and out-group and characteristics that make him and the Conservative Party different and unique from his rivals and their parties. “They” language is used to status briefly the opposite ruling idea and behavior among the three candidates. And

when Cameron criticized Brown's policy failure, he also used "They" language. For example, he used "They" language to tell his Hull police station experience to condemn the police officers under the leadership of the Labor Party and point out that the police officers should be crime fighters, not form-fillers.

When Cameron perceived threats from Brown and Clegg and their parties, he not only exalted in the Conservative Party symbols and values, but also derogated, hated and attacked the Labor Party and the Liberal Democratic Party. Cameron judged his rivals by the Conservative Party standards with the purpose of his rivals' and the other two parties' failure. Cameron described the discriminatory behavior between the Conservative Party and the other two parties to exclude his rivals. He stated clearly that rules of justice and civility did not apply to the other two parties' members. Cameron tried to make the British people believe that his rivals and their parties were inferior to him and his party.

Social Comparison and Cameron's Self-Concept

Self-concept depends not only on one's own characteristics and performance but also on the way one interacts with relevant people. If there is no available objective standard, one will evaluate his or her opinions, abilities, or emotions in comparison with others. And social comparison theory suggests that people tend to compare themselves with someone similar to themselves rather than with someone different in opinion and ability. Social comparison also serves the goals of self-evaluation, self-improvement and self-enhancement. And contrast effect and assimilation effect are the two opposite effect which are exercised influence over self-evaluation by social comparison.

Social comparison is an active and flexible process. In the 2010 televised prime ministerial debate in England, Cameron carefully selected the dimensions of comparison and

often focused on the dimensions that make him and his party look good. It was clear that his comparison targets were Brown, Clegg and their parties. Cameron used the comparison with the targets for self-enhancement. When his self-evaluation level displaced away the targets, the contrast effect came into being. And the contrast effect included his self-enhancement by upwards social comparison and promoted his self-enhancement by downwards social comparison. And when his self-evaluation level displaced toward the targets, the assimilation effect emerged, which promoted his self-enhancement by upwards social comparison and hindered the achievement of his self-enhancement by downwards social comparison.

Contrast Effect of Social Comparison

To Cameron, the Conservative leader, the televised debates are the opportunities to persuade the voters to have confidence in him and believe in his ability to hold the post of England prime minister. Because the polls showed that there are some people who were still suspicious of the ability of the Conservative Party, these debates provided Cameron a stage to eliminate the doubts of those electors.

Social comparison was the main method which was used by Cameron to establish his prestige and construct his self. The social comparison between Cameron and the other two parties mainly concentrated between Cameron and Brown, Cameron's New Deal and Brown's Old Politics. And Cameron used a lot of downwards social comparison to enhance his self-evaluation, especially with Gordon Brown. James Gordon Brown is a British Labor Party politician, who has been a Member of Parliament (MP) since 1983. He served as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the leader of the Labor Party from 2007 until 2010. Brown became Prime Minister in June 2007, after the resignation of Tony Blair and three days after becoming leader of the governing Labor Party. Immediately before this, he had served as

Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Labor Government from 1997 to 2007. His tenure ended in May 2010, when he resigned as Prime Minister and the leader of the Labor Party.

In the 13 years of Labor control under Prime Minister Brown, Britain has experienced the budget deficits and economic crisis, the scandal over MP's expense, and also the involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq war. In those three debates, Cameron tried his best to make downward social comparison with Brown and set out big differences between them. He called the 13 years of Labor control as a mess and then displayed many different strategies according to Brown's and Labor's administration policies. Cameron blamed Brown and Labor's little action at the helm of the state. That kind of downward social comparison brought Cameron an upward evaluation and Brown a downward evaluation.

Firstly, audience members raised a lot of questions about Britain's economy, which involved the budget deficit, spending cut, tax, the rebuilding of the country's manufacturing industries. Although Brown and his Labor Party have promised that there would be a series of reform measures to create jobs and stimulate business, Cameron seized every opportunity to attack the Labor for their resources waste. He thought the budget deficits as an absolutely vital question and Labor's proposal for job tax as the threat to the economic recovery. Cameron even represented two pretty hideous waste stories to condemn Brown and the Labor's waste. The first is that civil servants have been given credit cards funded by the tax-payer to go out and spend that on food, wine and other things, and that has cost £ 1 billion. The second story was that managers in the National Health Service, many of whom are paid over £ 250,000, have had a 7% pay rise. Then, he offered to save £ 6 billion in the coming current year in order to stop the jobs tax. And it was his economic policy to cut the waste, stop the tax and freeze the public sector salary.

Secondly, the recent scandals of MP's expenses involving all parties and how to re-establish the credibility of MPs are also the burning subject in the eyes of electorate. There were two audience members who had asked the question of the scandals and the each party's plan to restore the faith in the Britain political system in the first prime ministerial debate on 15 April 2010 and the second prime ministerial debate on April 2010. Brown expressed that he was shocked and sickened by the MPs expenses scandals. He wanted to the right of recall to constituents, give people the right to petition parliament so that the people's issues can be raised in parliament and reform the House of Commons and the House of Lords. However, Cameron pointed out that Gordon has had 13years to sort out the House of Lords but he hasn't done something about it. By comparison, Cameron planned to cut the cost of politics. They're going to cut the size of the House of Commons by 10%. They're going to cut minister's pay by 5% and freeze it for the whole of the parliament. They're going to cut the size of Whitehall by a third. They're going to get rid of some of those quangos. They're going to make the politics better value for money as well as cleaner. That's the better job at the same time that Cameron promised to the British people.

Last but not least, two audience members have put questions to the British troops and the involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq war. Brown gave his high pride and admiration for the armed forces and intended to increase the spending on the equipment dramatically. Brown said that he would not send the troops into battle unless he was absolutely sure that they were properly equipped for what they're doing. But Cameron didn't think that the Labor had done enough for the troops. He considered the troops were not well equipped and there weren't enough helicopters. And he indicated that he and his party had to fight a battle in parliament to

stop the government cutting the training for the Territorial Army. Cameron hoped that progress could be made but difficult, difficult time lied ahead.

As for Nick Clegg, he is the British Liberal Democrat politician and his party is a social political party in the United Kingdom. Nick Clegg has been the leader since 2007, leadership contest and the Liberal Democrat party has become the third largest caucus in the House of Commons, behind the Conservatives and Labor at the 2010 general election. The divergent viewpoints between Cameron and Nick were the immigration problem, the money being put into public services and tax cut in each party's manifesto, and so on. Most social comparison between Cameron and Clegg concentrate on their plan and strategies for the British future. Though Nick Clegg also had a good performance in the debates and had caused the Craig effect, Cameron still focused on Gordon Brown. Even some social comparisons with Clegg were interrelated with Brown and Cameron always called it the big differences between him and the other two parties.

Cameron always emphasized that there were big differences between him and the other two parties and there would be a bid change in Britain. By social comparison, he raised his self-concept. He chose his comparison object in a tactical way. He preferred to compare his new plan and strategies with Brown's "old story", which aroused sympathy between him and the electorates. Since Brown was the former prime minister of Britain, what he had done provided a reference for Cameron to make comparisons.

Assimilation Effect of Social Comparison

As a skillful politician, Cameron didn't negate Gordon Brown and Nick Clegg completely. And he admitted that not everything Labor has done in the last 13 years has been wrong and they have done some good things which he would keep. He displaced toward the uplink comparative information to realize his self-enhancement. So, sometimes, Cameron would

support Brown or Clegg. This kind of assimilation of the self to other's characteristics helped to induce self-enhancement.

Sometimes, Cameron would show his agreement with Brown and Clegg on the issues of the strong border controls, the bravery of the British forces, and the NHS. We all know that Cameron's elder son was suffering some serious diseases. Therefore, when Cameron expressed his sincere gratitude to Brown and speak highly of the NHS, it not only engendered the audience members' sympathy, but also construct Cameron's self-concept as objectivity and fairness, and broad-minded.

Positive Distinctiveness and Cameron's Self-Concept

Positive distinctiveness means using verbal and nonverbal cues to claim aspects of your identity that are personally and/or socially valued, in an attempt to create a new, more positive meaning for that identity. Positive distinctiveness usually involves attempts to educate others about the positive qualities of your identity group, advocate of behalf of members of your identity group, and incorporate your background and identity—related experiences into your workplace interactions and innovation.

When people communicate with others, they will have a motivational need for positive distinctiveness in nature which makes inter-group comparisons that favor the in-group. That leads to the self-esteem both in self and in-group. In the televised prime ministerial debate, when Cameron felt a threat to his self-identity and social identity in his party, he usually facilitated the motive for positive distinctiveness mainly displayed in his future plan and strategies. That kind of change met the needs of the voters and the British people and brought self-enhancement to Cameron. In the debates, Cameron differed himself from the other two opponents chiefly from personal perspective and group perspective.

Personal Distinctiveness

Cameron made his personal distinctiveness mainly by his personal experiences, which closed the distance between him and the voters. His self-concept was constructed by the “old stories” in the debates. These “old stories” brought Cameron and the electorates the similar feeling and joint experiences. The shared experiences helped Cameron and the voters find the similarities between them.

Cameron tried to use a lot of his own experiences to answer the audience members’ questions from the point of views of the voters. He was imaginatively placing himself in the dissimilar other’s culture world and experiencing what the electorates were experiencing. It developed empathy between Cameron and the British people.

By answering the questions such as immigration problem, safety in Britain, education improvement, military equipment, healthcare, the involvement in Afghanistan, climate, scandals, state pension, and housing, Cameron gave a large amount of his own experiences. He usually began the sentences with “I even went to...” “I went to...” “I’ve been to...” “I actually once get...” “Everywhere I go...” “I’ve seen...”... to indicate that he was a hands-on and trustworthy person. Cameron has been to Afghanistan in each of the last four years (four times) and he mentioned it four times in the debates. He claimed that he knew the conditions there, such as the bravery and the incredible courage and determination of the soldiers and equipment there. It could generate empathy not only between Cameron and the troops but also arouse sympathy between Cameron and the British people.

As for the education and healthcare problems, Cameron mentioned several times his son. As we all know, Cameron’s eldest son Ivan unfortunately suffering from cerebral palsy and epilepsy. And Ivan’s unfortunate death gave Cameron and his family a sad blow. Those sad

experiences could awaken the British people's sympathy for him. He used the identity of "as a parent of children..." to arouse the voters' enthusiasm. When speaking of the NHS in Britain, he thanked Brown from the bottom of his heart, which made him a confidential and objective person.

Group Distinctiveness

Cameron differentiated his party and the other two parties mostly from the plans and strategies in dealing with the domestic and foreign affairs and national defense. The sentences beginning with "I want us to..." "I think we need to..." "We should..." "We need..." "We start..." "We're going to..." "We could..." "We say..." "We can..." "We expand it, we develop it, we make sure..." "What we can do is..." "We will..." "Let us..." "We have to..." "We are trying to..." stated clearly Cameron and the Conservative Party's idea of change. And the applications of the parallelism sentences intensify the rhetoric.

Cameron also used some negative sentences to criticize Nick and the Liberal Democratic Party's idea and what Brown and Labor have done. These sentences usually began with "We shouldn't..." "We don't have the situation where..." which brought Brown, Nick and the other two parties downward evaluation.

Chapter IV Conclusion

Three Steps for Self-Concept

Self-concept is a very important concept in the research of intercultural communication. It brings to the communication event greatly influences and decides the success or failure of that event. Although the idea of self-concept seems obvious, it is nevertheless a crucial element in becoming a competent intercultural communicator. We are living in a world in which all the inhabitants of each are interconnected. Every one of us has several identities, such as individual identity, group identity and social identity. Social identity theory helps us to improve our intercultural communication skills with some self-analysis, and with many of the suggestions and steps the theory offers, it is easier to construct the self in the communication. In the process of intercultural communication, social categorization, social comparison, and positive distinctiveness are a continuous process. And they are complementary and inseparable. Although those three concepts work in tandem, it might be useful to examine them separately.

Our first step toward self-construal should begin with social categorization. Social categorization is the prerequisite and foundation of social comparison and positive distinctiveness and usually is represented by personal pronoun. Kim has pointed out that “each of us is a product of our cultural background, including gender, ethnicity, family, age, religion, profession, and other life experiences. Our cultural inventory provides us with valuable insights for understanding our beliefs and attitudes, our values and assumptions. Thus, it is critical that we reflect on the various aspects of our own cultural identity and examine their positive and negative impacts on our personal and professional development”. Therefore, in intercultural communication, first and most important we must make some self-analysis and know ourselves. We have to know our culture and figure out how many identities we possess in order to adapt

ourselves to the communicational environmental and the new culture in intercultural communication. We must know our personal attitudes, such as our likes, dislikes, and degrees of personal ethnocentrism. Identifying those attitudes enables us to detect the ways in which those attitudes influence communication. Also, we have to know our communication style and be aware of the manner in which we present ourselves to others. Then we can monitor ourselves and use our unique ways to interact with the others. It is often called “self-monitoring” and is the process of self-observation. Social categorization serves the purpose of self-awareness and of gaining honest and candid insight into our cultural and individual patterns of communication so that we can improve our intercultural skills.

Our second step toward self-concept is social comparison. We must admit that there exist cultural differences among people and between in-group and out-group people. It is a reality and we need to recognize and respect culturally based differences in intercultural communication. We must be aware of the cultural variations and identity differences so that we can know better how speakers present themselves and their ideas and adjust our strategies. This dissertation has spent much time talking about competition and differences that makes a difference in the intercultural setting. But people are both alike and different. The author recognizes the validity of differences and wants to recommend that we become tolerant of cultural differences as a way of establishing a favorable communication environment. By social comparison, we could achieve our self-enhancement by contrast effects. However, the similarities between us and the others can also serve as part of an intercultural ethic. Looking for common ground and sharing a series of more crucial characteristics can link us and the others together and help us to decide how to treat other people regardless of their culture. This assimilation and similarities can unite people and make everyone part of a single “community” in a very real sense.

Last but not least, positive distinctiveness helps self-concept from both individual and social perspectives. After every step of social comparison, there would be the next step of positive distinctiveness, especially in the debate language. By positive distinctiveness, everyone wants to construct his self or her self at the level of respect, dignity and a feeling of worth. Positive distinctiveness involves helping us to maintain a positive image, an image as competent and trustworthy, able and good. For improving the communication skills, seldom do people use “fighting word” to attack the others. People are especially careful to avoid attacks and conflicts. Positive distinctiveness reveals personal information about ourselves that are superior to the others. It is a process of self-presentation and impression management. We want to show our good images and share personal feelings, thoughts, and experiences so as to enhance closeness between us and the others. By this means, we can construct unique selves in intercultural communication. Different people have different selves. In different context and environment, we choose different way to distinct ourselves from others. We usually disclose information that is somewhat private but not likely to make us vulnerable. We are likely to reveal positive information to realize the relationship progress.

Communication is a measure for people to construct their identities. Our self-concept and our identities in the others’ eyes are all constructed in our social interactions with others. The individual self, group self and social self are all constructed in the process of social categorization, social comparison and positive distinctiveness. In the process of intercultural communication, we must develop our communication flexibility when dealing on how to present ourselves to the others. We choose and adjust our communication behavior according to the setting, the other person and ourselves. We must pay our multiple roles reflectively.

Research Limitation and Possible Future Efforts

Although it is well-intended, this study still has limitations. Firstly, the sample of the data is representative but not sufficient and large enough. Since the data is collected from all the three 2010 British televised prime ministerial debates, the data may be too representative as the debate language but not sufficient enough for the current study of intercultural communication research in the whole. The article only discusses the self-concept construal in the debate. However, the intercultural communication research includes many other contexts such as interviews, public speaking, speeches, and so on. The intercultural communication issue in these contexts may be quite different from the one of the debate context. Secondly, the data collection could have been better polished providing time and resources permit.

The author hopes that with the efforts of the researchers in the field of intercultural communication, each context in the intercultural communication area could be thorough in the research and people could communicate with each other harmoniously.

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