

You Are “My People”: A Gamified, Experiential Exercise Illustrating Social Identity Theory and Group Dynamics

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Abstract

Forming teams, developing relationships, and building trust can be challenging when dealing with increasingly socially anxious, disconnected, and diverse student cohorts. We describe an icebreaker that, through low-risk classroom interactions, allows students to socially identify with an in-group and compete with out-groups in a classroom environment. The activities provide abundant opportunities to relate in-class experiences to Social Identity Theory and other relevant management and OB theories.

Keywords

social identity theory, icebreaker, experiential learning, media, organizational socialization

Designed for use in an Organizational Behavior (OB) classroom, and grounded in Social Identity Theory (SIT), this series of activities demonstrates how existing identities can be subsumed by fresh ones and how new social identities can be elicited and constructed. This process strengthens group bonding, particularly with diverse student groups who sometimes struggle to gel.

Icebreakers are designed to encourage students to share personal information and build connections. However, prompts like “share one interesting thing about yourself”

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cause anxiety, increasing fears of negative evaluation (Dijkstra et al., 2008; Weeks & Howell, 2012). Students may worry about saying something too boring or standing out inappropriately, heightening feelings of vulnerability (Derlega et al., 1993). In contrast to exercises centering diversity and differences (e.g., Lo, 2023), this activity helps students find commonalities and shows how new social identities can, temporarily, become more salient than those students bring into the classroom. This icebreaker should be conducted early in the semester, when students are still getting to know each other. In this context, the activities serve as an engaging, non-threatening way to build group bonds while introducing and applying key management and OB theories.

Pedagogy and Theory

This icebreaker involves activities which utilize both experiential learning (D. A. Kolb, 1984, 2013; A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2005) and gamification. Gamification takes the enjoyable aspects of games (challenge, play, and competition) and applies them to work or education (Dale, 2014). Gamification requires problem-solving, collaboration, and communication (Dicheva et al., 2015). These activities employ game design principles, including competition, cooperation, prizes, and time limits.

While these activities primarily connect to SIT (Karasawa, 1991; Tajfel, 1982), they also provide abundant opportunities to discuss other concepts, including organizational socialization, cohesion, and team dynamics. Each is described below.

Social Identity Theory

Within SIT, one's social identity is the element of one's self-concept, "Who am I?," which stems from membership in a salient group, "*Who are we?*" (Karasawa, 1991; Tajfel, 1982). Social identity is a perception of oneness with a group and occurs when perspective shifts from "you vs. me" to "us vs. them."

People tend to favor in-group members, offering more support, effort, rewards, and resources (Cikara, 2021). Social identification drives behaviors aligned with that identity, such as in-group support, stereotypical self/other perceptions (e.g., competence or likability), and shifts in team dynamics, such as increased cohesion, competition, and cooperation (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). In-group identification arises from factors that are relatively easy to influence, including self/other categorization, the distinctiveness and desirability of the in-group, and the salience of out-groups.

Research on "minimal groups" (Diehl, 1990) reveals that even random group assignments trigger social identity and in-group–outgroup evaluations, a phenomenon called the "mere categorization effect." Once they've identified with a group, people show in-group favoritism even when they know the assignment was simply arbitrary (Brewer, 1979; Otten & Moskowitz, 2000). Thus, the identity-eliciting activities in this icebreaker powerfully evoke social identification with students' new in-groups.

Organizational Socialization

The transition from newcomer to organizational insider is profoundly influenced by social identification (Ashforth et al., 2018; Ibarra, 1999). Social identities are a

significant component of workers' organizational self-definitions and evolve over time, often triggered by cues such as organizational change, promotions, or disruptive events (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). Identification typically strengthens as employees gain experience and develop work-relevant skills (Ashforth et al., 2018).

Team Dynamics

Relationships *within* teams strengthen when members identify with one another. Strong social identification increases cohesion and motivation, especially when teams share a perceived out-group, and leads members to favor their own group members (Cikara, 2021; Evans et al., 2024; Haslam et al., 2000). Identifying strongly with one's team also shapes intergroup dynamics (relationships *between* teams) by increasing competition, conflict, and negative evaluations of out-groups, often resulting in stereotyping and depersonalization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Van Knippenberg, 2000). SIT also explains how commitment to one's team strengthens, as shared identities foster greater effort, cooperation, and reduced turnover.

Learning Objectives

This set of activities works simultaneously as an icebreaker and a demonstration of social identities and group dynamics. It is especially when applied to theory and workplace experiences. Media clips (Table B1) can reinforce the concepts, followed by discussion of social identity-related OB topics. After completing the exercise, students will be able to:

- Recognize how social identity perceptions can be elicited and constructed (LO1).
- Describe in-group / out-group effects on team dynamics (LO2).
- Apply concepts from SIT to OB topics, including student diversity, organizational socialization, and group dynamics (LO3).
- (Optional) Apply concepts from SIT to employee experiences using media clips (LO4).

Instructions for Running the Exercise

Students engage in a series of activities designed to break the ice, encourage connection and cohesion, elicit social identity evaluations and ingroup–outgroup perceptions. Competitive activities and the opportunity to win small prizes reinforce team dynamics within the class. The experiences are then related to several OB theories.

Logistics and Preparation

This activity can be done with anywhere from three to seven groups of three to six students. Students can be organized into groups based on where they happen to sit on

arrival or some other, more coordinated, method (see Note 1). For the Kahoot, a computer and a projector are needed, and one internet-connected student device per table. Small prizes can be provided for the eventual winning team (see Note 2). Instructors can modify the time allocated to group bonding, debriefing, and applying theory. The session takes between 30 and 70 min (see Table 1), or up to 2 hr if media clips are utilized to further illustrate SIT.

Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1—Finding Common Ground as a Basis for a Common Social Identity. Ask students to identify something they have in common with all others in their group. This request works well as an icebreaker because, to find what they have in common, students disclose low-risk information that they assume other students may share, such as owning pets or their favorite music genre. Students need only interact with their own tablemates (not with the whole class), further avoiding the discomfort many people feel when speaking to a large audience. Thus, social identities form through commonalities with peers rather than visible differences, such as ethnicity or gender. After each group finishes, either a group member or the facilitator should write each group's common feature on the board.

Step 2—Emphasizing in-Group Social Identity Through Naming. Building on the previous step, ask each group to come up with a humorous, accurate, or clever team name that specifically relates to their group's common feature. This elicits social identification and in-group perceptions. For example, a group of MMA fans called themselves "Ultimate fighters" (see Table 2, Note 1 for more examples). The facilitator should make it clear that this is a competition in which the "best" name will win.

Step 3—Making Out-Groups More Salient Through Competition. Inter-group competition reinforces social identification and strengthens team cohesion. Rank the group names in a light-hearted competition. Award points from one to the total number of groups (i.e., if four groups, give four points for the best name). As above, instructors can use a variety of criteria that best suit their teaching style and the student cohort; any or all of speed (how quickly groups agreed on a name), humor, linguistics (puns and rhymes), accuracy, etc. Experienced facilitators can more easily gauge which groups might enjoy some banter about their choice and elicit laughter from the class. Less experienced TAs may prefer to have more objective criteria, such as accuracy.

Step 4—In-Group/Out-Group Competition. A Kahoot! works well in this context. A Kahoot! competition is an interactive quiz game hosted on www.kahoot.com, where questions are presented, and participants join using a device shared by the group and a game PIN. Players answer questions as a team within a set time limit, earning points for correct and faster responses. Scores are updated after each question to create an ongoing leaderboard, and the competition concludes with a winner based on the highest total score (see Appendix A). Further points should be awarded to the top three teams. The students in the group with the most points then receive a small prize (see Note 2).

Table 1. Step-by-Step Summary.

Step of the exercise	Description	Learning objective	Timing
Step 1: Finding common ground as a basis for a common social identity	Students identify a “thing they have in common” with others in their newly assigned group (forming groups)	LO1	5–10 min
Step 2: Emphasizing in-group social identity through naming	Students must come up with a group name relating to their commonality (differentiating groups).	LO1 and LO2	5–10 min
Step 3: Making out-groups more salient through competition	Names are written on the board, points are awarded for the “best name”, relating to the commonality (triggering competition).	LO1 and LO2	5 min
Step 4: In-group/out-group competition	Online Kahoot, where groups compete with each other. Kahoot questions should be on to SIT and related OB topic (increasing competition). More points (and prizes) awarded.	LO1, LO2 and LO3	10–15 min
Step 5: Highlighting the power of social identification	Give students the opportunity to swap groups (making social identity and in-groups salient)	LO1, LO2 and LO3	2 min
Step 6: Debrief	With or without media examples, debrief and relate to theory and worker experiences.	LO3 and LO4	10–30 min
		Total	30–70 min

Table 2. Examples of groups and group names.

What the group had in common	Group name	Number of students	Ethnicities	Gender proportions
All from the Computer Science dept., taking this paper as an elective	ComNerds	5	Korean and Chinese	3 male, 2 female
MMA (mixed martial arts) fans. They identified this commonality as one person was wearing an MMA logo on his shirt	Ultimate fighters	4	Pacifica, NZ European and Russian	4 male
They all wore glasses	Blurry but brilliant	5	Chinese, Malaysian, NZ European	2 male, 3 female
Car enthusiasts, one of whom had a small car detailing business with the same name as their chosen group name	Attention to Detail	4	NZ European and Chinese	4 male
K-Pop fans	K-popsicles	3	Korean and Chinese	3 female
All could also speak more than one language fluently. From this activity, the group also connected in other classes they had together.	Bilingual Baddies	3	Philippines, Indian, and Samoan	3 female
All eldest sisters, which they bonded over and hence the name. They also bonded over coming from immigrant/minority families.	Born Tired	4	Egyptian, Indian, Tongan/ NZ Samoan	4 female

Step 5—Highlighting the Power of Social Identification. Ask if anyone in the room would like to swap groups. We have asked this question numerous times to student groups over several years, and have not yet had a student volunteer to switch (see Note 3). However, if a student does want to move, this scenario can also be related to other group processes (see Notes 4 and 5).

Step 6—Debrief. Appendix C provides specific discussion questions and conversation starters to promote reflection, critical thinking, and application of theory. Below, we outline opportunities to address various learning outcomes.

Eliciting Social Identification

Relating to LO1, students see how simply finding a shared trait (and naming their group after it) strongly evokes social identification (Karasawa, 1991; Tajfel, 1982). For diverse groups of relative strangers, this process, followed by intergroup competition, makes group membership more salient than individual characteristics, such as ethnicity, gender, or age. Facilitators can link this phenomenon to broader discussions on social and organizational roles, unconscious bias, and diversity (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016).

In-Group Versus Out-Group Behavior

Relating to LOs 1 and 2, discuss how ingroup versus outgroup perceptions are experienced and magnified. Throughout the session, the facilitator should be noting competitive behaviors, such as outbursts of joy at winning or comments revealing frustration while losing the Kahoot. These examples can then be used to initiate in-class discussions of how people felt, behaved and interpreted others' actions (Kuppens et al., 2013). This discussion can then be extended to examples of being competitive with other groups and encouraging fellow team members.

Members of a group become more cohesive and cooperative when the group share a “common enemy” (an out-group). People prefer in-group members and provide them with more resources (Voci, 2006). This links to motivation, work experiences and organizational norms around nepotism, equity, and fairness. Facilitators might also discuss the causes and effects of in-group biases in organizations, including negative stereotypes of out-groups (Evans et al., 2024).

Swapping Groups

Also relating to LO2, students being offered the chance to move groups, but preferring to remain, relates to social identification and the minimal group paradigm (Brewer, 1979; Diehl, 1990; Otten & Moskowitz, 2000). The facilitator can describe research showing that ingroup preferences can emerge even in randomly assigned, arbitrary groups, and even in the absence of similarity, conflict, competition, or meaningful distinction. Thus, it is almost inevitable that in-group evaluations and the desire to stay in one's group will emerge after the class activities (see Note 3). It is also worth

discussing the implications of wanting to switch groups, even if this doesn't happen in the class (see Note 4).

Linking to Organizational Socialization

Relating to LO3, instructors can explore how social identities develop as employees become integrated into their organizations (He & Brown, 2013). Social identity forms a significant component of organizational self-definition and evolves as workers construct their identities as organizational insiders over time (Ashforth et al., 2018). Students benefit from discussing the positive outcomes when employees strongly identify with their organization or profession; "I'm on the McDonald's team" versus "I flip burgers."

Variations

Relating to LO4, facilitators can extend this activity by using selected media from Appendix B to relate SIT to employee experiences. Preliminary work might include asking students to view films or TV episodes that exemplify social identity, exclusion, role conflict, and organizational socialization.

Conclusion

In addition to breaking ice, when students participate in these activities, they experience a new, salient social identity. They can reflect on in-groups and out-groups and will be introduced to a range of key OB concepts, which can be expanded upon as the semester progresses. For courses that involve group discussions or group projects, this experience fosters functional and cohesive work groups, facilitating genuine friendships in the classroom.

Appendix A

Friendly Intergroup Competition

Kahoot! Kahoots are games that turn learning into a competition with a live leaderboard based on both correct answers and speed. They can be created at Kahoot.com, where users create and play interactive quizzes and trivia games. For the purposes of this icebreaker, Kahoot questions can focus on SIT, group dynamics, or other OB topics in the course. Instructors can create custom questions and multiple-choice answers that connect to upcoming content, tailored to their preferred level of difficulty, content, or theme. It is fine to introduce novel concepts here, as wrong answers are useful, creating opportunities to clarify terms and introduce new ideas. For first-year students, instructors could also include general orientation questions (see Table A1 for additional questions that could be used for this competition). Winning teams should earn points to be added to their previous tally. See below for a Kahoot related to SIT.

Table A1. Alternate Kahoot! Questions.

Theme/topic of Kahoot	Example Kahoot question	Choices (these may vary depending on the institution)	Answer
First-year student orientation questions	Where on campus is Student Services located?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) WF Building b) Library building c) Admin block 	University specific
	How do you find your end-of-semester exam timetable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) On the University website b) Within CANVAS c) Ask your lecturer 	University specific
	How do you apply for an extension?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Use the SCA tab within CANVAS b) Email your lecturer directly c) Visit the course information desk on campus 	University specific
Course-specific questions	To conduct the literature review for your assignment, it is acceptable to get information from:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Free access sites on the www (world wide web) b) Newspapers c) Academic journal articles d) all of the above 	C
	Academic Integrity guidelines prohibit the submission of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Cut and paste of published material b) Copying of other students c) Relying on AI to answer assessment questions d) All of the above 	D
	What is the due date of your first assessment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) May 8 b) May 15 c) June 1... 	Course specific
General introduction to OB questions	Organizational Behavior is:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The study of groups and individuals within organizations b) The study of how organizations behave c) The study of how people get organized 	A
	Ethical behavior is . . .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) that which results in more profits for the company b) that which avoids loss for the company c) morally good or right d) that which motivates employees 	C
Group dynamics questions	Rewarding individual results tends to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) decrease cohesiveness. b) increase performance norms. c) decrease performance norms. d) increase cohesiveness. 	A
	The least desirable situation for a manager or team leader is:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) positive performance norms, low cohesiveness. b) negative performance norms, high cohesiveness. c) low cohesiveness, negative performance norms. d) positive performance norms, high cohesiveness. 	B
	The way in which every member of a team is expected to behave is known as:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) group cohesion. b) role expectations. c) a team norm. d) role negotiation. 	C

Who developed social identity theory?

- Albert Bandura
- Tajfel and Turner
- Zimbardo
- Skinner and Taylor

SIT is a theory that attempts to explain...

- intergroup conflict
- discrimination
- prejudice
- All of the above

The process of thinking about people as belonging to in-groups and out-groups is...

- Social Categorization
- Social Identity
- Positive Distinctiveness
- Social Comparison

An in-group is...

- The group one belongs to
- The popular group
- The group that one does not belong to
- The most important group in an organisation

Social categorization is the process of comparing the in-group with the out-group

- True
- False

Stereotypes are...

- often based on a characteristic like age, gender, or ethnicity
- "mental shortcuts" the brain uses to process information
- fixed, often oversimplified beliefs about a groups of people
- All of the above

The minimal group paradigm is a...


- psychology experiment demonstrating how people prefer their own group
- cognitive test showing how people boost self-esteem
- stereotype, attributing positive characteristics to specific ethnic groups
- a type of discrimination against members of small groups

The out-group homogeneity effect is...

- a cognitive bias
- due to less frequent contact with out-group members
- when members of an outgroup are seen as similar to one another
- all of the above


If readers wish to use this Kahoot, it can be accessed at the link below: <https://create.kahoot.it/share/social-identity-theory-for-mtr/4a9252a5-a454-4b96-b5f5-ad1349fa410b>

NYT Games. Another competitive game option is for students to log in to the NYT games site, using a preprepared QR code handed out or shown on PowerPoint. Connections (www.nytimes.com/games/connections), Pips (www.nytimes.com/games/pips), and Wordle (www.nytimes.com/games/wordle) work well and (again) should be solved as a team. The team that completes its assigned task fastest and with the fewest errors should receive the most points. Below is an example PowerPoint slide for the activity.



Prize task number two

- Ok now... EVERYONE scan this QR code
- Go to “connections”
- If you haven’t done this before, please read the instructions!
- Let’s see which group is the best lateral thinker, go go go!



Appendix B

Optional Follow-Up Reflective Postexercise Assignments—Application From Film and TV

Because traditional lecture formats can hinder discussion and interaction (Stratton et al., 2011), this postexercise assignment provides an alternative avenue to engage students. Students with limited work experience often struggle to connect theory with real-world practice. Watching a short film and hearing how others experience organizational life can help bridge that gap. Scholars report that case studies have value in this regard, but can be incomplete in providing context (Stratton et al., 2011; Tregear et al., 2007). Film and television have been used to teach numerous topics within OB and management, including diversity (Bumpus, 2005) leadership (Comer, 2001), emotions (Stratton et al., 2011) and attitudes, teamwork, bias, change, and organizational politics (Smith, 2009). The activity described in this paper can be followed up with the use of media clips to display and deconstruct elements of work-life (Stratton et al., 2011). By observing film and TV characters’ interactions and interpreting those experiences, students can understand and apply OB and management concepts and theories. Using humorous but relatable media in this way presents an excellent opportunity for observational learning for an increasingly media-savvy, attention-limited generation of students (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018; Singh & Dangmei, 2016).

Interestingly, social identity—a fundamental part of OB and organizational psychology—is not included in the comprehensive list of OB topics and related films in Smith (2009). In Table A1, we provide a range of examples of media that may be used to illustrate SIT and in-group and out-group perceptions and behaviors.

Table B1. Media Clips That Illustrate Applications of SIT and Related Concepts.

Film or TV episode	Link (YouTube)	Analysis
The IT crowd S1E1: "Yesterday's Jam" (Linehan, 2006)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNRQaDKQ7F8	<p>Social identity research explores the dynamics of acceptance and integration within the workplace, linking organizational socialization and individual social identity.</p> <p>In this episode, Jen Barber is hired as the new head of the IT department at Reynholm Industries, despite having no technical knowledge.</p> <p>Perceived animosity and exaggerated differences of outgroup members are other outcomes of social identity perceptions demonstrated in the episode.</p> <p>This episode may also be applied to "role conflict". Jen is part of the IT department but rejects aspects of this role, believing herself to be better or more social than the others. Her role as an IT worker conflicts with other aspects of her identity.</p> <p>The existing IT staff (Roy and Moss) form an in-group and initially view Jen as an out-group member. The division between the IT dept. and the "upstairs" workers is also evident.</p> <p>Roy—"They've no respect for us up there, no respect whatsoever!"</p> <p>Moss—"Once their computers are fixed, they toss us away like yesterday's jam!"</p>
The IT Crowd, S4E5: "Bad Boys" (Linehan, 2012)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9cLK55v-dQ	<p>Social identity predicts negative perceptions of those from groups with lower perceived status. The salience of the social identity "computer geek" is exemplified in the first few minutes of the episode with Moss being mocked by "the people upstairs", and it results in Moss and Roy identifying even more strongly with the IT department.</p> <p>Moss—"I don't like the people upstairs"</p> <p>Jen (on the other hand) is resisting this label, holding herself separate and rejecting the identity of "geek" or "herd".</p> <p>Jen—"I'm not a stupid geeky-geek. Before you know it, you are painting figurines from the lord of the Rings."</p>
The Office (US), S5E20: "Dream Team" (Gervais, Carell, & Feig, 2009a)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=io7Xa68rchg	<p>Social identity theory predicts increased cohesion and motivation to achieve group goals (within groups) as well as increased competition between groups.</p>
The Office (US) S5E21: "Michael Scott Paper Company" (Gervais, Carell, & Feig, 2009b)		<p>Michael Scott leaves Dunder Mifflin to start his own paper company. The employees who join him (Pam and Ryan) form a new in-group, while Dwight and others who remain at Dunder Mifflin become the out-group. The dynamics between these groups highlight loyalty, competition, and identity within the workplace. The two companies are in direct conflict with one another.</p> <p>Dwight—"This is war and that is what happens"</p>

(continued)

Table B1. (continued)

Film or TV episode	Link (YouTube)	Analysis
The Devil Wears Prada (Frankel, 2006)	https://www.youtube.com/shorts/aPEvUroD9XA	Organizational socialization stems, in part, from social identity formation and individual identities changing over time to align with organizational norms and roles. This film demonstrates role conflict and organizational socialization, relating to social identity. Andy Sachs starts working at a high-fashion magazine and initially struggles to fit in with the in-group of fashion-savvy employees who are dismissive of her as she is not part of their in-group. Over time, she adapts to the culture but also faces conflicts with her original values and out-group friends.
Parks and Recreation, S4, E22: "Win, Lose, or Draw" (Schur, 2012)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZWgM5qQ06k&t=1072s	Social Identity theory predicts increased cohesion and motivation to achieve group goals (within groups) as well as increased competition between groups. Leslie Knope runs for city council, and the Parks Department employees rally around her campaign. The episodes relating to this story arc showcase the strong loyalty and in-group cohesion among Leslie's team as they face the out-group represented by her political opponents.
Suits		The series and the long character arc of Louis Litt demonstrate the dynamics of in-group favoritism and out-group exclusion within the firm. Throughout the series, Louis Litt starts as a somewhat isolated and often ridiculed character at Pearson Hardman. His journey involves numerous attempts to be accepted into the firm's inner circle (in-group). Over time, he gains respect and becomes a key partner, but his insecurities and need for validation often lead to conflict. In many episodes, Louis feels excluded from the firm's inner circle and seeks validation from his colleagues.
Suits, S3E7, "She's mine" (Korsh & Cropper, 2013)	https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Zc6zQe9CtX0	Louis Litt—"I just want to be a part of the team." Louis Litt finds a salient characteristic in common (love of cats) and bonding with a colleague.

Activities and Discussion Starters. In-class activities or discussion prompts related to selected media clips (relating to TableA1).

The IT Crowd S1E1: “Yesterday’s Jam”. *Focus:* Organizational socialization, role conflict, in-group/out-group dynamics.

Discussion Prompt: How does Jen’s rejection of the IT identity reflect role conflict? What are the consequences of this for team cohesion?

Activity: In small groups, identify a time when someone in a workplace, school or university resisted a social group, role or identity. What were the outcomes?

Link to LO1 & LO3: Explore how social identity can be shaped or resisted by newcomers during organizational entry.

The IT Crowd S4E5: “Bad Boys”. *Focus:* Status-based identity, stereotype reinforcement, identity salience.

Discussion Prompt: How do perceptions of status influence how Moss and Jen relate to the “upstairs” employees?

Activity: A team member wants to ask their supervisor for a raise and/or a new role with more responsibilities. Create a role-play scenario where a low-status group must negotiate acceptance or resources with a high-status group.

Link to LO1 & LO2: Analyze how identity salience and stereotypes affect inter-group relations.

The Office (US) S5E20–21: “Dream Team” & “Michael Scott Paper Company”. *Focus:* Group loyalty, competition, identity formation.

Discussion Prompt: What motivates Pam and Ryan to join Michael’s new company? How can SIT be used to explain their loyalty?

Activity: Discuss the in-group/out-group dynamics between the two companies. What behaviors reinforce these identities?

Link to LO2 & LO3: Apply SIT to organizational restructuring and team formation.

The Devil Wears Prada. *Focus:* Organizational socialization, role conflict, identity transformation.

Discussion Prompt: How does Andy’s identity shift over time? What conflicts arise between her personal and professional identities?

Activity: Reflective writing: Describe a time when your values conflicted with a group or organizational identity. How did you respond?

Link to LO1 & LO3: Discuss how social identity evolves and the tension between personal values and organizational norms.

Parks and Recreation S4E22: “Win, Lose, or Draw”. *Focus:* Group cohesion, goal alignment, political identity.

Discussion Prompt: What behaviors show strong in-group loyalty among Leslie’s team? How does competition affect their cohesion?

Activity: Debate: Is strong in-group loyalty always beneficial in organizations? What are the risks?

Link to LO2 & LO3: Connect SIT to motivation and team performance in political or goal-driven environments.

Suits S3E7: “She’s Mine.”. Focus: In-group favoritism, exclusion, identity validation

Discussion Prompt: How does Louis Litt’s desire for inclusion reflect SIT principles? What role does shared interest (cats) play?

Activity: Case study analysis: Examine Louis’s journey across the series. Identify key moments of identity shift and group acceptance.

Link to LO1 & LO2: Explore how individuals seek validation and belonging in professional settings.

Appendix C

Discussion Questions and Conversation Starters for the Debrief

Below are discussion questions and conversation starters aligned with each debrief topic and linked to the learning outcomes (LO1–LO3). These are designed to encourage reflection, critical thinking, and application to theory and organizational experiences.

I would encourage instructors to select a few and conduct a class-wide discussion, or (if time allows) to assign different conversation starters to groups or pairs in a “think-pair-share” type activity. The smaller groups can then share their reflections with the rest of the class.

Eliciting Social Identification (LO1). How quickly did your group form a sense of identity? What contributed to that?

Did naming your group affect how you saw yourselves and others? Were you happy with your group name (why/why not)?

Can you think of a time in a university, school, workplace or team setting where a shared trait or symbol (e.g., uniform, slogan, location) created a strong sense of belonging?

How might organizations use identity cues (e.g., uniform, slogan, common name, location) to foster team cohesion or change behavior?

Did you feel more connected to your group than to the wider class during the activity? Why might that be important (or problematic) in diverse workplaces?

In-Group vs. Out-Group Behavior (LO1 & LO2). How did your group react to winning or losing during the prize tasks (team name and Kahoot)? What emotions or behaviors stood out?

Did you notice any competitive or negative attitudes toward other groups? What might this antipathy tell us about in-group bias?

Think about how in-group/out-group dynamics affect workers in organizations, especially during restructuring, promotions, or team-based projects?

Have you ever experienced or seen others experience favoritism, nepotism, or exclusion in a school/university/workplace setting? How might SIT help explain those experiences?

What are the risks of strong in-group identification in terms of fairness, equity, or stereotyping others?

Swapping Groups (LO2). Why do you think no one chose to switch groups, even when given the option? What does that suggest about group loyalty?

If someone had switched, what might that have said about their experience or perception of their original group?

How does the minimal group paradigm help explain why people stay loyal to even arbitrarily formed groups?

Can you think of a time in an organization when a colleague (fellow student) changed teams or departments? Or perhaps this happened at school, where someone changed friend groups. What were the social or emotional consequences?

What factors might lead someone to leave a group in a workplace, even if they initially felt connected?

Linking to Organizational Socialization (LO3). How do you think social identity develops over time in a workplace? What role do rituals, language, or shared experiences play?

What is the difference between saying, “I do [Company] work” vs “I work at [Company]” vs “I am part of the [Company] team”? Why does that matter?

How might strong organizational identification affect employee motivation, performance, or retention?

Can you think of examples where someone’s professional identity (e.g., “I’m a nurse” or “I’m a teacher”) shaped how they behaved or were treated at work?

What are the benefits and drawbacks of strong organizational identity in terms of innovation, loyalty, or change?


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