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# ETHNOCULTURAL GROUP IDENTIFICATION AND ATTITUDES TO ETHNIC OUTGROUPS

John Duckitt

## INTRODUCTION

The idea that strong group attachment or identification is necessarily associated with being less favourable to outgroups has been widely held in the social sciences. William Sumner (1906) originally coined the term ethnocentrism to describe this phenomenon, which he believed was an inevitable and universal consequence of the existence of social groups. While Sumner himself developed this thesis at a group level, others, such as Adorno and his colleagues (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950), extended it to individual differences. They argued that individuals characterised by strong, intense, uncritical ingroup attachment and glorification would also be more prejudiced to outgroups and minorities.

The ethnocentrism hypothesis has not been universally accepted. Allport (1954), for example, suggested that ingroup attachment and outgroup attitudes might be completely unrelated. Berry (1984) has argued that ethnocentrism, characterized by ingroup attachment and outgroup hostility, was merely one pattern of intergroup relations, and that a multicultural pattern, in which ingroup attachment was associated with outgroup acceptance, was also possible. However, as Brewer (1999) has noted, “despite Allport’s critique ... most contemporary research on intergroup relations, prejudice and discrimination appears to accept, at least implicitly, the idea that ingroup favoritism and outgroup negativity are reciprocally related” (p. 2).

Brewer (1999) pointed out that an important reason why the idea of ethnocentrism has been so widely accepted in the social sciences is that it is either directly implied or seems to be implied by influential theoretical approaches to intergroup relations. Functionalist approaches to intergroup relations such as Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT) (Sherif & Sherif, 1953) and Sumner’s (1906) own structural-functionalist approach have assumed that intergroup relations are often competitive and this negative interdependence between groups generates ingroup cohesion and attachment. A similar implication has often been derived from Social Identity Theory (SIT), which proposes that identification with an ingroup activates a motivated desire to positively differentiate that group from outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Whereas this intergroup bias need not necessarily involve outgroup negativity, and could be achieved by ingroup positivity or other strategies, the overall implication of the theory seems to be that intergroup relations are competitive. This seems to imply that greater ingroup identification should most typically be associated with a tendency to be less favourable to outgroups (Brewer, 1999; Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001; but, for a contrary view, see Reynolds & Turner, 2001).

The earliest and probably most influential individual-level investigation of ethnocentrism also seemed to support this hypothesis. Adorno et al's (1950) research found such powerful positive correlations between uncritical patriotism and anti-minority and anti-Black attitudes that all three aspects were included in a single ethnocentrism scale, which in turn correlated powerfully with anti-Semitism and other measures of prejudice. Subsequent research, however, has suggested a more complex picture and has not provided unequivocal support for the ethnocentrism hypothesis. Many studies have found that identification with national, ethnic and other important social groups and attitudes was significantly correlated with less positive attitudes to outgroups, though the correlations have typically been lower than those reported in Adorno et al's (1950) original research (e.g., Berry, 1984; McFarland, 1998; Pettigrew, Jackson, Brika, Lemaine, Meertens, Wagner, & Zick, 1998; Rutenberg, Zea, & Sigelman, 1996).

Other studies, however, have found nonsignificant or weak correlations. In a classic study of 30 ethnic groups in East Africa, Brewer and Campbell (1976) found that the correlation between positive ingroup regard and social distance to outgroups was essentially .00 across groups. Hinkle and Brown (1990) reviewed 14 studies and found that the correlations between strength of group identification and degree of bias in favour of the ingroup against the outgroup ranged from significantly positive to significantly negative with the overall correlation close to zero (+.08).

A possible explanation for the inconsistent findings concerning the relationship between ethnocultural group identification and outgroup attitudes is that group identification might not be unidimensional, as social psychological theories have typically assumed, but multidimensional. People might identify with groups in quite different ways, and different dimensions of identification may relate differently to outgroup attitudes. Some evidence does suggest that group identification may indeed be multidimensional. For example, Phinney (1990) comprehensively reviewed studies of ethnic identification and concluded that there seemed to be four distinct dimensions of ethnic identification:

- ethnic self-labelling or self-categorization
- attachment to the ethnocultural group
- evaluation of the ethnic group (positive or negative ingroup attitudes)
- involvement with the group and its cultural practices, ways and customs.

More recently, Jackson and Smith (1999) factor analysed a number of identification related measures typically used in social identity and cross-cultural research. They found three factors that were very similar to three of Phinney's dimensions, that is, ingroup attachment or loyalty, group self-esteem or ingroup evaluation, and involvement with the culture and customs of the group ("allocentrism").

Only two studies have investigated how different group identification dimensions might relate to intergroup bias and reported somewhat different findings. Jackson and Smith's (1999) study found that stronger group identification on all three their dimensions (attachment, group self-esteem, allocentrism) seemed to be similarly associated with greater intergroup bias. Ellemers and her colleagues (1999), on the other hand, found that only one of the three ingroup identification dimensions they investigated, the ingroup commitment or attachment dimension, was associated with greater intergroup bias. However, the findings from both these studies are difficult to interpret because their dependent variable, intergroup bias, combined ingroup and

outgroup attitudes. Thus any association obtained between identification and intergroup bias could be with ingroup attitudes, or outgroup attitudes, or both.

The research reported here set out to investigate if there are factorially distinct dimensions of ethnocultural identification, and if they predict attitudes to ethnic outgroups differentially. In order to do this, the research used samples from four ethnocultural groups in South Africa: Africans, Indians, White Afrikaans speakers and White English speakers. Africans who constitute the majority of the population (approximately 80%) are today the politically dominant group in South Africa and largely support the ruling African National Congress (ANC). Indians are an important minority (approximately 5% of the population) who during the Apartheid era were classified as Black, but subsequently have tended to give electoral support to opposition (non-ANC) parties. South African Whites who still dominate the economy comprise approximately 13% of the population with Afrikaners the majority and English speakers in the minority. During the Apartheid era of White rule, Afrikaners had been politically dominant through the then ruling National Party, while most English Whites had supported opposition "White" political parties with more liberal and moderately anti-apartheid policies.

While the primary research question was whether the four dimensions of ethnocultural group identification suggested by Phinney (1990) would differentially predict outgroup attitudes in the four ethnocultural groups being investigated, a secondary research question was to examine the nature of the relationship between ethnocultural group identification and negative outgroup attitudes in the four groups. The classic ethnocentrism hypothesis originally proposed by Sumner (1906) would expect these relationships to be primarily negative, with stronger ethnocultural identification associated with more negative outgroup attitudes. As Brewer (1999) has noted this "ethnocentric" pattern of relations between group identification and outgroup attitudes also seems to be implied by the two major psychological theories of intergroup relations (RCT and SIT). However, Allport's (1954) hypothesis of independence between ingroup and outgroup attitudes would expect these relationships to be primarily nonsignificant, while Berry (1984) would predict that the relationships would vary, but most commonly be characterized by multiculturalism, with stronger ethnocultural identification associated with more positive outgroup attitudes.

## METHOD

### Participants and procedure

Questionnaires were administered in 1998 to introductory psychology students at three South African universities, specially selected to provide adequate samples of the four ethnocultural groups. There were:

- 211 Indians (75% female, mean age 18.7 years) from the University of Durban
- 333 Africans (74% female, mean age 21.8), also from the University of Durban
- 350 White Afrikaners (70% female, mean age 18.7 years) from the University of Pretoria
- 165 White English speakers (66% female, mean age 19.0) from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

## Measures of ethnocultural group identification

The following four measures were used to assess the four hypothesized dimensions of ethnocultural group identification suggested by Phinney (1990), i.e., involvement, attachment, salience, and evaluation or ingroup attitude (see the Appendix):

1. Ethnocultural Involvement was measured by eight items balanced to control for direction of wording effects (i.e., with four positively formulated or protrait items and four negatively formulated or contrait items) adapted from existing acculturation measures or specially written to assess the degree to which individuals felt a sense of involvement in, affinity for, and connection to the customs, traditions, norms, and social practices of their ethnocultural group (e.g., "I have a good knowledge of the customs and rituals of my culture or ethnic group"). The alpha coefficients in the four ethnic samples ranged from .72 to .78.
2. Ethnocultural Attachment was measured using the ten items (five protrait and five contrait) of Brown, Condor, Matthews, Wade, & Williams (1986) widely used group identification scale, which Jackson and Smith's (1999) factor analysis of group identification scales had found to be the strongest loading scale on their group attraction or attachment factor. These items assess the degree to which people affirm or deny a sense of belonging to, membership in, and having strong affective ties with their ethnocultural group (e.g., "I am a person who feels strong ties with my ethnic/cultural group"). The alphas in the four samples ranged from .72 to .88.
3. Salience of Ethnocultural Identity was defined as how aware individuals were of their ethnic categorization and identity and how important this ethnic differentiation was to them and measured by eight items (four protrait and four contrait) (e.g., "In most situations I'm very aware of my ethnic/cultural identity"). One protrait item had nonsignificant item-total correlations in most samples and was discarded leaving seven items. The alphas obtained were satisfactory for White Afrikaners (.70), Indians (.60), and White English (.77) but rather low for Africans (.44). However, the mean inter-item correlation in the African sample ( $r = .11$ ) did not suggest a level of unidimensionality too low for the scale to be useable in this sample. For example, with 24 items this scale would have had an internal consistency reliability of .72. Nevertheless, it did mean results for this scale in this sample would have to be interpreted very carefully.
4. A generalized Group Attitude scale, which was used to assess ingroup attitudes in the main analyses, consisted of eight Likert items (four protrait and four contrait) that were exactly the same for the four target groups (i.e., Africans, Indians, White Afrikaans speakers, White English speakers) with only the name of the target group varied (e.g., "I have a very positive attitude to the ... people"). This scale had been previously used to assess group attitudes in South Africa with good reliability and validity (Duckitt & Mphuthing, 1998). The alphas in the four samples for Attitudes to White Afrikaners ranged from .70 to .84, those for Attitudes to White English ranged from .71 to .79, those for Attitudes to Africans from .60 to .85, and those for Attitudes to Indians from .70 to .82. This research used the same generalised

items to evaluate all groups in this study because the use of different sets of items or scales to measure attitudes to different groups, as is typical in the research on intergroup attitudes, might influence the magnitude of correlations between ingroup-outgroup attitudes for the different sample and target groups.

### Measures of outgroup evaluation

In each of the four ethnocultural samples, outgroup evaluation or attitudes were assessed to the other three ethnocultural groups. In order to assess outgroup attitudes, it was necessary to use a different measure of group evaluation or attitude to the generalized group attitude scale used to assess ingroup evaluation. The reason for this was so that content overlap would not spuriously inflate correlations between ingroup and outgroup attitudes. A generalized Group Trait Evaluation measure was therefore used to assess outgroup attitudes in the analyses, which consisted of four positive ("good", "kind", "honest", "trustworthy") and four negative ("bad mannered", "unpleasant", "dishonest", "bad") evaluative trait adjectives on which participants were asked to rate the target groups. The alphas for these Group Evaluation scales for evaluation of White Afrikaners in the four samples ranged from .84 to .91, those for White English ranged from .81 to .87, those for Africans from .78 to .89, and those for Indians from .81 to .91.

## RESULTS

Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were used to assess whether the four measures of identification (group attachment, group involvement, group salience, and group attitude) were factorially distinct. Four-factor models were tested in each sample group and compared to one-factor models, in which the items of each of the four identification scales loaded only on one factor, and all possible two- or three-factor models in which all possible combinations of items from two or three of the four scales loaded on one factor and the remaining scale or scales on the other factor or factors. The fit indices for the four factor models were all within the criteria for good fit proposed by Hu and Bentler's (1999), being:

- Africans,  $\chi^2 = 168.2$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.72$ , RMSEA = .044, SRMR = .046, GFI = .98
- Indians,  $\chi^2 = 156.3$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.60$ , RMSEA = .050, SRMR = .050, GFI = .97
- White Afrikaners,  $\chi^2 = 168.6$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.72$ , RMSEA = .046, SRMR = .034, GFI = .98
- White English,  $\chi^2 = 156.8$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.60$ , RMSEA = .057, SRMR = .057, GFI = .96

The fit indices for all the one, two, and three factor models in contrast showed poor fit throughout. These analyses therefore indicated that the four components of group identification did indeed comprise four distinct dimensions.

### **Relationships between ingroup identification and outgroup evaluation**

Because of the four ethnocultural group identification measures were generally positively correlated, simultaneous multiple regression was used to examine the degree to which each of these four identification measures (Attachment, Involvement, Salience, Ingroup Attitudes) predicted evaluation of each of the three ethnocultural outgroups, controlling for the effect of the other identification measures, for each of the four ethnocultural sample groups. Table 1 shows that none of the beta coefficients for the Involvement and Attachment measures on outgroup evaluation were significant. For the Salience measures there was only one (out of 12) significant negative beta. Because of the number of betas being computed for each identification dimension (12), the single significant beta for Salience seemed highly likely to have been a chance effect. In contrast the betas for Ingroup Attitudes on Outgroup Evaluation were significant in 8 out of 12 instances, with 2 of these betas being negative and 6 positive. Thus, more positive ingroup attitudes were significantly associated with either more positive outgroup evaluations, more negative outgroup evaluations, or were unrelated to outgroup evaluation. More specifically, these effects in the four ethnocultural groups sampled were as follows:

- For Africans more positive ingroup attitudes were significantly associated with negative evaluations of Afrikaners, positive evaluation of Indians, but unrelated to evaluation of English Whites.
- For Indians more positive ingroup attitudes were significantly associated with positive evaluations of English Whites and Africans, and unrelated to evaluation of Afrikaners.
- For Afrikaners, more positive ingroup attitudes were significantly associated with positive evaluations of English Whites, negative evaluations of Africans, and unrelated to evaluation of Indians.
- For English Whites, more positive ingroup attitudes were significantly associated with positive evaluations of both Indians and Afrikaners, and unrelated to evaluation of Africans.
- 

A striking feature of the findings was the intergroup reciprocity in the relationship between ingroup attitudes and outgroup evaluation. First, there was a reciprocally negative relationship between ingroup and outgroup attitudes for Afrikaners and Africans with more positive ingroup attitudes associated with more negative outgroup evaluation for both. Second, there was a reciprocally positive relationship for English and Afrikaans Whites, for English Whites and Indians, and for Africans and Indians, with more positive ingroup attitudes associated with more positive outgroup evaluation in all three cases. And third, there was reciprocal independence for Indians and Afrikaners, and for Africans and English Whites, with ingroup attitudes unrelated to outgroup evaluation for both.

**Table 1**  
**Betas from the Simultaneous Multiple Regressions of Four Ethnocultural Identification Measures on Evaluation of Three Ethnic Outgroups for Four South African Samples**

Sample groups and outgroups	Ethnocultural identification dimensions:			
	Involvement	Attachment	Salience	Attitude
<i>Africans (N = 333)</i>				
Evaluation Afrikaners	-.04	.03	-.01	-.17**
Evaluation English	.03	-.02	-.10	.01
Evaluation Indians	-.01	.04	-.08	.16*
<i>Indians (N = 211)</i>				
Evaluation Afrikaners	.16	-.07	-.09	.09
Evaluation English	.12	-.01	-.09	.27***
Evaluation Africans	-.02	.06	-.19*	.17*
<i>White Afrikaners (N = 350)</i>				
Evaluation English	.13	.02	-.08	.22***
Evaluation Africans	.07	.11	-.07	-.19**
Evaluation Indians	.08	.03	-.03	-.04
<i>White English (N = 165)</i>				
Evaluation Afrikaners	.16	.04	-.12	.27**
Evaluation Africans	.07	.13	-.15	-.00
Evaluation Indians	.10	.02	-.07	.29***

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Finally, there was also the possibility of interactions between the indices of ethnocultural identification and outgroup attitudes. In order to investigate this, moderated multiple regression was used to investigate all possible interactions between the four indices of ethnocultural identification on each of the three outgroup attitude measures for all four ethnocultural samples. These analyses did not reveal any consistent, systematic pattern of significant effects. The few significant effects obtained formed a random pattern and were entirely consistent with what would be expected by chance at a 5% significance level for the number of analyses conducted.

## DISCUSSION

The findings raise two main questions: why was only the evaluative dimension of group identification related to outgroup attitudes, and second, how could the variation in the relationship between ingroup-outgroup attitudes for the four ethnic groups be explained? A possible answer to the first question might be that the evaluative or ingroup attitude dimension is directly comparative, while the other three dimensions (Attachment, Involvement, Salience) are not. Social Comparison theory proposes that evaluative judgements are made primarily through comparisons with others (Suls & Wills, 1991) and intergroup comparisons may sensitise people to the degree of competition or cooperation in relations between groups, or the similarities and differences between groups. This could result in the evaluative dimension of ingroup identification, rather than the other three dimensions, being related to outgroup attitudes with greater negativity to competing or dissimilar groups, and greater positivity to cooperating (friendly) or similar groups.

The second question was how to explain the patterns of ingroup-outgroup attitude association observed in this research? Both RCT and similarity-dissimilarity (e.g., Belief Congruence Theory, Terror Management Theory, Self-Categorization Theory)



perspectives appear relevant. RCT would expect the association between group identification and outgroup attitudes to depend on the kind of functional interdependence between ingroup and particular outgroups. When outgroups are negatively interdependent or competitive with the ingroup (“enemies” or “rivals”) then stronger ingroup identification will be associated with more negative outgroup attitudes, when outgroups are positively interdependent or cooperative with the ingroup (“allies” or “friendly”) then stronger ingroup identification will be associated with more positive outgroup attitudes, and when there is no particular interdependence between groups, then ingroup identification should be unrelated to outgroup attitudes.

This would explain the reciprocal ethnocentrism (ingroup attitudes negatively related to outgroup attitudes) between Afrikaner and African in terms of the history of conflict between these two groups over Apartheid and political dominance in South Africa (Thompson, 1995). The three cases where there was a reciprocally positive relationship between ingroup and outgroup attitudes appear consistent with a pattern of positive intergroup interdependence where the groups involved would tend to view each other as “allies” or “friendly”. This would be the case for the two White groups, Afrikaners and White English, and for the two Black groups, Indians and Africans. White English and Indians would also seem likely to perceive each other as allies in post-Apartheid South Africa, with these two groups sharing a common language (English), both heavily involved in business and commerce, and both now politically allied minorities in post-Apartheid South Africa (Thompson, 1995). Finally RCT would account for the reciprocal independence between ingroup and outgroup attitudes for Afrikaners and Indians, and between Africans and White English, because the relations between these groups do not seem to have been characterised by either conflict or competition on the one hand, or by any particular common interests or cooperative endeavours on the other, sufficient to create intergroup perceptions of each other as either “enemies” or “allies”.

Similarity-dissimilarity approaches to intergroup relations could also fit these findings. Both Belief Congruence Theory (Rokeach, Smith, & Evans, 1960) and Terror Management Theory (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991) suggest that persons more highly identified with their ethnocultural group would have more favourable attitudes to ethnic outgroups with similar basic beliefs or cultural worldviews to the ethnic ingroup, more unfavourable attitudes to clearly dissimilar outgroups, and would be neither positive or negative to outgroups that were neither particularly similar or dissimilar. Thus, those groups similar on race (English and Afrikaans, or Indians and Africans) or language (English and Indians) evidenced reciprocal multiculturalism in ingroup-outgroup evaluation. Where there was no similarity on either, the pattern was reciprocal independence (Afrikaners and Indians, and Africans and English). And finally, there was marked dissimilarity on race and language accentuated by conflicting interests, the pattern was one of reciprocal ethnocentrism, such as between African and Afrikaners.

Essentially the same reasoning could follow from self or group categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Intergroup similarities would cause group members to form superordinate categorizations with similar outgroups generating more positive evaluations of those similar outgroups. Dissimilar outgroups would not share any superordinate categorizations and this would accentuate intergroup differentiation so that ingroup identification would be associated with less favourable outgroup attitudes. This could account for the negative relationship between ingroup and outgroup attitudes for African and Afrikaner, with these two groups

categorizing themselves as different on the two highly salient social categorization cues of race and language. Conversely superordinate categorizations could weaken other group boundaries through creating shared superordinate identities (e.g., English and Afrikaners as Whites or Africans and Indians as Blacks) so that ingroup identification was associated with more positive outgroup attitudes.

These findings have theoretical and methodological implications. First, they indicated that the four dimensions of ethnocultural group identification proposed by Phinney (1990) were factorially distinct with only one of these dimensions, ingroup attitudes, consistently related to outgroup attitudes. They therefore emphasize the need to conceptualise and measure ethnocultural identification multidimensionally in order to fully understand and represent its relationships and effects. Second, they indicate that contrary to Sumner's (1906) ethnocentrism hypothesis, the relationship between ethnocultural identification and outgroup attitudes was not consistently negative (ethnocentric), but could also be positive (multiculturalist) or one of independence, as Berry (1984) has suggested. This implies that the relationship between ingroup and outgroup attitudes varies as a function of intergroup context, possibly either due to intergroup similarity or dissimilarity, superordinate patterns of group categorization, or relations of functional interdependence between groups. New research will be needed to test between these competing explanations.

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## APPENDIX

### Measures of Ethnocultural Group Identification

#### Ethnocultural Involvement

1. I have a good knowledge of the customs and rituals of my culture or ethnic group.
2. I avoid functions involving customs or rituals typical of my culture or ethnic group.

3. I would NOT care if children of mine never learned anything about my culture or ethnic group.
4. I am NOT interested in learning about my culture or ethnic group.
5. I enjoy attending functions involving customs and rituals of my culture or ethnic group.
6. I enjoy the sense of humour that people of my culture or ethnic group have.
7. I prefer NOT to eat the food typical of my culture or ethnic group.
8. I would teach my children to respect and enjoy my culture and ethnic heritage.

### **Ethnocultural Attachment (Brown et al., 1986)**

1. I am a person who is glad to belong to my ethnic/cultural group.
2. I am a person who sees myself as belonging to my ethnic/cultural group.
3. I am a person who would make excuses for belonging to my ethnic/cultural group.
4. I am a person who would try to hide belonging to my ethnic/cultural group.
5. I am a person who feels strong ties with my ethnic/cultural group.
6. I am a person who feels held back by my ethnic/cultural group.
7. I am a person who is annoyed to say that I am a member of my ethnic/cultural group.
8. I am a person who considers the people of my ethnic/cultural group important.
9. I am a person who identifies with my ethnic/cultural group.
10. I am a person who criticises my ethnic/cultural group.

### **Salience of Ethnocultural Identity Scale**

1. In most situations I'm very aware of my ethnic/cultural identity.
2. My ethnic/cultural identity is very important to me.
3. I hardly ever think about my ethnic/cultural identity.
4. Most people I know just don't seem to care about ethnic/cultural differences.
5. For me ethnic/cultural differences seem completely unimportant.
6. Most of the time, I don't see myself as a "real" member of my ethnic/cultural group.
7. Ethnic or cultural differences seem to be very important to most people I know.
8. Most people seem to me to be very conscious of ethnic/cultural differences.\*  
(\*Item discarded due to poor item-total correlations.)

### **Generalized Group Attitude Scale**

1. It really upsets me to hear anyone say anything negative about the (target group) people.
2. The (target group) people have some very bad characteristics.
3. I have a very positive attitude to the (target group) people.
4. There is little to admire about the (target group) people.
5. The (target group) people have done a great deal to make this country successful.

6. Sometimes I think this country would be better off without so many (target group) people.
7. The (target group) people should get much more recognition for what they have done for this country.
8. I can understand people having a negative attitude to the (target group) people.

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