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Interethnic Prejudice as a Function of Identity and Perceived Conflict
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Introduction

According to social identity theory, intergroup attitudes are partly determined by group identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Group conflict theory proposes that intergroup attitudes are largely determined by goal incompatibilities (Sherif, 1966).

Integrating these two perspectives, we predicted that the relationship between ethnic identity and prejudice would be stronger for majority-group members than minority-group members. Our rationale is that identification with a minority group is determined by several factors, while identification with a majority group is determined primarily by perceived conflict (Jackson, 2006). We also predicted that ethnic identity would mediate the relationship between perceived conflict and prejudice for majority group members, but not for minority group members.

H1: The relationship between ethnic identity and prejudice will be stronger for majority-group members than minority group members.
H2: Ethnic identity will mediate the relationship between perceived conflict and prejudice for the majority group members, but not for minority group members.

Methods

Participants and Procedure
A sample of White Americans (N=101), African Americans (N=98), and Asian Americans (N=60) from a midwestern university completed a survey. They answered questions regarding their own group, and their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences with members of the other two groups (order counterbalanced).

Measures

- **Ethnic Identity** (Jackson, Miller, Frew, Gilbreath & Dillman, 2011; modified for the present study): 7 items, Cronbach’s α = .85 (e.g., “When I am with [African Americans/Asian Americans/White Americans], I have a special sense of belonging.”)

- **Intergroup Conflict** (Jackson, 2002): 5 items, average Cronbach’s α = .74 (e.g., “To succeed, [African Americans/Asian Americans/White Americans] must compete against [African Americans/Asian Americans/White Americans].”)

- **Ethnic Prejudice** (Jackson, 2002; modified for the present study): 12 items, average Cronbach’s α = .81 (e.g., “I don’t really like [African Americans/Asian Americans/White Americans] as a group.”)

Results

**H1:** The relationship between ethnic identity and ethnic prejudice was moderated by ethnic group membership, β = .434, p = .001. As predicted, the relationship was:
- Positive for White Americans (β = .382 with African Americans as outgroup, and β = .244 with Asian Americans as outgroup, both p < .001)
- Negative for African Americans (β = -.071 African Americans outgroup, and β = -.124 White Americans outgroup, neither significant),
- Negative for African Americans (β = -.117 Asian Americans outgroup, and β = -.110 White Americans outgroup, neither significant).

**H2:** To test this hypotheses we conducted mediation analysis based on 10,000 bootstrap samples using 95% bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals (Hayes, 2013). As predicted, the relationship between perceived conflict and prejudice was mediated by ethnic identity for Whites (Figure 1), but not for Asian Americans (Figure 2) or African Americans (Figure 3).

- For White American participants, perceived conflict between White Americans and African Americans predicted greater prejudice toward African Americans, and this effect was significantly mediated by ethnic identity (indirect effect = .045, SE = .025, ULCI = -.025, ULCI = .091). The significant relationship between perceived conflict with Asian Americans and prejudice was also mediated by ethnic identity (indirect effect = .042, SE = .020, ULCI = .010, ULCI = .092).

Results Continued

For Asian American participants, perceived conflict between Asian Americans and African Americans predicted greater prejudice toward African Americans, but this effect was not mediated by ethnic identity (indirect effect = .005, SE = .022, ULCI = -.020, ULCI = .029). The significant relationship between perceived conflict with White Americans and prejudice was also not mediated by ethnic identity (indirect effect = .020, SE = .030, ULCI = -.019, ULCI = .116). The results supported our hypotheses. The relationship between ethnic identity and prejudice was stronger for majority-group members than minority group members, and ethnic identity mediated the relationship between perceived conflict and prejudice for majority group members, but not for minority group members. This research has several limitations. For example, because the data is correlational, the flow of causality is indeterminable. Therefore, future studies should examine the relationships using experimental methods that could help establish causality. It is important to continue to examine how ethnic identity, ethnic conflict, prejudice, and related variables are moderated by ethnic group membership so that we can have a greater understanding of how to prevent negative intergroup relations and promote positive ones.