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Simultaneous ingroup and outgroup favoritism in implicit social cognition

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ABSTRACT

People like their own groups, producing ingroup favoritism, a hallmark finding of social identity theory. However, as predicted by system justification or cultural learning perspectives, outgroup favoritism among non-dominant groups is occasionally observed, particularly implicitly. The present research found that non-dominant group members displayed simultaneous ingroup *and* dominant group implicit favoritism. On indirect measures focusing on positive valence, members of non-dominant racial (Studies 1 and 4), religious (Study 2), and sexual (Study 3) groups showed ingroup favoritism. On indirect measures focusing on negative valence, members of non-dominant groups showed diminished ingroup favoritism, and sometimes favoritism towards the culturally dominant group. These results may indicate that positive self-regard forms associations between the ingroup and *positive*, whereas cultural learning and system justification form associations between non-dominant groups and *negative*. A cross-cultural design (Study 5) also found results compatible with these assumptions.

1. Introduction

Across social dimensions, people tend to have more positive attitudes towards members of their own groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and towards anything associated with the self (Greenwald, 1980). Ingroup favoritism is frequently displayed by both dominant and non-dominant group members. For instance, both Latinos in America and Arabs in Israel reported greater levels of ingroup identification and equal levels of ingroup positivity compared to White and Jewish counterparts (Levin & Sidanius, 1999). Likewise, racial and religious minorities report explicit preferences for their own group at levels greater than or equal to those of Whites and Christians (Axt, Ebersole, & Nosek, 2014).

Although ingroup favoritism is pervasive, weaker ingroup favoritism or even outgroup favoritism is sometimes observed among members of socially stigmatized or non-dominant groups, particularly when using indirect measures of implicit evaluations (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). For example, Asian-American participants exhibited weaker preferences for Asians over Whites on indirect versus direct measures of explicit evaluations (Rudman, Feinberg, & Fairchild, 2002). Similarly, a sample of Hispanic-Americans exhibited no implicit preference for Hispanics versus Whites (Uhlmann, Dasgupta, Elgueta, Greenwald, & Swanson, 2002). In other studies, African Americans showed strong ingroup preferences with direct measures, but no ingroup preference or slight outgroup preference on a Black-White Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998; Cohen's $d = 0.04$ in Jost et al., 2004; $d = 0.05$ in Nosek et al., 2007; $d = -0.16$; Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002).

Diminished implicit ingroup favoritism is not limited to racial minorities. Gay participants revealed much weaker ingroup preference on a Gay-Straight IAT ($d = 0.11$) compared to straight participants ($d = 1.10$; Jost et al., 2004). Jewish participants also exhibited a weaker preference for Jews relative to Christians implicitly than explicitly, while overweight and low-income participants held no explicit preference for their own group but strong implicit preferences for thin and rich people, respectively (Rudman et al., 2002). Older adults showed no explicit ingroup preference between young and old people, and strongly preferred younger to older people implicitly (Gonsalkorale, Sherman, & Klauer, 2014; Nosek et al., 2002; Nosek et al., 2007). Finally, overweight and obese participants held preferences for thin over fat people explicitly ($d = 0.54$) and especially implicitly ($d = 0.91$; Schwartz, Vartanian, Nosek, & Brownell, 2006).

Such results have often been interpreted as evidence that implicit attitudes are partly shaped by culturally-based information that participants may be unaware of or explicitly disavow (e.g., Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002). From a cultural learning approach, individuals' implicit attitudes are sensitive to the stereotypes and values provided by their social context (Dasgupta, 2013). For example, women's implicit stereotypes associating men with leadership increased during time spent at a co-ed college but decreased during time spent at a women's

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Fig. 1. Sample trials for an IAT (left) and a good-focal MC-IAT or BIAT (right).

college (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004). According to system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), individuals have a need to view the world as fair and preserve the status quo, even when one's group possesses lower standing than other groups. However, due to social pressure and personal interest to express ingroup favoritism, the influence of system justification is believed to be most evident on indirect measures of implicit attitudes (Jost et al., 2004). As a result, non-dominant group members may consciously reject certain cultural values and stereotypes explicitly but retain them implicitly. In both cases, cultural learning and system justification perspectives argue that individuals' implicit attitudes should be partly shaped by the cultural values and stereotypes provided by the social context.

These two forces – group identity and cultural learning – lead to differing influences for dominant versus non-dominant group members (e.g., Blodorn, O'Brien, Cheryan, & Vick, 2016). For members of dominant groups, group identity concerns align with system justification and cultural learning influences, as both support one's ingroup. However, for non-dominant group members, group identity and system justification concerns are in opposition, with the former supporting one's own group and the latter supporting culturally dominant groups. In the present research, we report findings that non-dominant group members simultaneously show cognitions compatible with both forces in two different aspects of implicit attitudes: their implicit attitudes were compatible with the influence of group identity more than with cultural norms when measured with a focus on positive valence, but were often more compatible with cultural norms than with group identity when measured with a focus on negative valence.

1.1. The present work

The present research began with an unexpected discovery of ingroup favoritism among non-dominant group members, countering prior evidence. In Axt et al. (2014), racial (Asian, Black, Hispanic; $N = 9668$) and religious (Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim; $N = 11{,}994$) non-dominant participants showed robust implicit ingroup favoritism towards their own group relative to the dominant group (Whites and Christians). The magnitude of the implicit ingroup favoritism was slightly weaker than the dominant group's for race ($d = 0.25$ for non-dominant group members; $d = 0.30$ for Whites) and moderately weaker for religion ($d = 0.62$ for non-dominant group members; $d = 0.95$ for Christians).

The difference between these results and prior research (Jost et al., 2004; Nosek et al., 2002, 2007) is surprising because similar populations were examined. The main difference, however, was the indirect measure – the IAT in previous research and the Multi-Category Implicit Association Test (MC-IAT, Sriram & Greenwald, 2009) in Axt et al. (2014). Both measures compare two conditions in which participants categorize stimuli into groups as fast as possible with two keys. In one condition, participants categorize stimuli representing two categories (e.g., Black faces and Bad words) with one key and stimuli representing complementary categories (i.e., White faces and Good words) with the other key. In the other condition, the key assignments change for two categories such that Black faces and Good words are categorized with one key and White faces and Bad words with the other key. For both measures, the effect is assessed as the relative difficulty in categorizing items in one condition compared to the other.

The IAT versus the MC-IAT differ in one key respect. In the IAT, all four categories (e.g., Black, White, Good, Bad) are identified explicitly with category labels during all blocks to facilitate categorization. In contrast, the MC-IAT uses an innovation first presented in the Brief Implicit Association (BIAT; Sriram & Greenwald, 2009): only two categories are named explicitly (e.g., Black and Good) for categorizing with one key, and the other key is labeled “all else”. In each block, the MC-IAT/BIAT encourages participants to focus on two “focal” categories rather than all categories simultaneously. This structural change affects participants' focus; Sriram and Greenwald (2009) observed faster responses to stimuli assigned to the focal category, indicating that participants selectively attended to the focal categories in each block. See Fig. 1 for sample trials of an IAT and MC-IAT.

Axt et al. (2014) used a “Good-focal” MC-IAT: for instance, the focal category labels were “Black and Good” in one block and “White and Good” in another block. The “Bad” stimuli were always in the “Everything else” category. We surmise that this procedural difference may have activated associations showing ingroup favoritism, unlike the typical IAT results among minorities. Perhaps a focus on good valence elicits stronger ingroup preferences and a focus on bad valence elicits stronger dominant group preferences. These distinct effects may be masked on the IAT, which explicitly refers to the concepts *good* and *bad* simultaneously. Indeed, an initial study reported fully in the online supplement (Study S1; $N = 200$) found that an IAT measuring implicit evaluations of White versus Black people was related with parallel good-focal and bad-focal BIATs, sharing unique variance with each. These results are compatible with the hypothesis that the IAT reflects a combination of the associations measured with the bad-focal and good-focal BIATs.

If the good-focal and bad-focal BIATs measure different constructs, confounded in the IAT, what are these constructs? In a second supplemental study (Study S2; see online supplement), we tested one hypothesis – that positive information is more impactful on good-focal BIATs and negative information more impactful on bad-focal BIATs. Participants ($N = 195$) read either 10 positive or 10 negative pieces of information about a target person, then completed good-focal and bad-