



## To be or not to be (ethnic): Public vs. private expressions of ethnic identification differentially impact national inclusion of White and non-White groups

Kumar Yogeeswaran\*, Nilanjana Dasgupta, Levi Adelman, Alison Eccleston, Michael T. Parker

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 18 November 2010

Revised 28 February 2011

Available online 13 April 2011

#### Keywords:

Ethnic identity  
National inclusion  
Multiculturalism  
American identity

### ABSTRACT

Many pluralistic nations are witnessing vigorous debate about multiculturalism. In the U.S., Americans generally embrace principles of ethnic diversity but dislike minorities who express strong ethnic identification. Two experiments examined this seeming contradiction by differentiating between ethnic identity expressed in private vs. public by non-White and White individuals. Then we tested whether individuals' identity expressions differentially affected perceivers' construal of their entire ethnic group as legitimately American. Results indicated that at a conscious level, White and non-White ethnic groups were held to the same standard and construed as significantly less American when members expressed their ethnic identity publicly vs. privately. However, at an unconscious level, a double standard emerged: non-White ethnic groups were implicitly rejected as less American if members expressed ethnic identity publicly, while White ethnics were implicitly accepted as legitimate Americans regardless of where they expressed ethnic identity.

© 2011 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

The 20th century witnessed mass migration of people across the globe making many countries, especially those in North America and Western Europe, substantially more pluralistic than ever before. Such patterns of global migration have continued unabated into the 21st century. On the heels of increased pluralism have come debates about how to preserve the national character of one's country and achieve national unity in the face of diversity. The popularity of "English-only" movements in many parts of the U.S. (Baron, 1990; Schildkraut, 2003, 2005), laws banning women from wearing head scarves and burqas in parts of Europe (Byrd, 2010; Ruitenberg, 2008), and the importance placed on language proficiency tests in many Western nations (Etzioni, 2007; McNamara & Shohamy, 2008) are contemporary attempts to preserve national character and reduce the influence of ethnic cultures that are not in the national majority. In this debate, two sociopolitical ideologies—assimilation and multiculturalism—attempt to promote national unity in very different ways.

Assimilation proposes that the best method to ensure the peaceful coexistence of diverse groups within a nation is by dissolving intergroup differences and emphasizing shared values and cultural practices (Hirschman, 1983; Schmidt, 1997). According to this ideology immigrants should adopt the values, norms, and ethnocultural practices of the host country and give up (or at least relegate to secondary status) values, norms and ethnic practices of the "old country" as a way of reducing their difference from the majority

culture. This ideology finds support in the similarity–attraction hypothesis, which proposes that people prefer individuals who are similar to themselves compared to others who are different (Byrne, 1971). Historically, assimilation had been a dominant ideology in the U.S. when generations of immigrants migrated and assimilated into American society. As a result, non-English languages disappeared from the collective memory of immigrant families as did many ethnocultural norms, practices, and values (Alba, 1990; Birman & Trickett, 2001).

In contrast, multiculturalism proposes that national unity is best achieved by encouraging ethnic groups to maintain unique ethnic identities while simultaneously identifying with the larger national group (Foster & Herzog, 1994; Moghaddam, 2008; Taylor, 1991; Wolsko, Park, & Judd, 2006). This ideology is supported by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and related theories (e.g. Hornsey & Hogg, 2000) which argue that membership in various social groups are essential to one's self-concept and identification with such groups may satisfy a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), provide purpose and meaning to individuals' lives (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2000), and reduce feelings of uncertainty about one's place in the social world (Hogg, 2007). Furthermore, individuals prefer to identify with smaller rather than larger groups (see optimal distinctiveness theory; Brewer, 1991, 1993), which partially explains why ethnic identity is not easily erased (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004). In the U.S., multiculturalism became a popular ideology in the 1960s as the country evolved from being one that emphasized cultural assimilation to one that was more accepting of cultural diversity (Downey, 1999; Moghaddam, 2008; Plaut, 2010;

\* Corresponding author. Department of Psychology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003, USA.

E-mail address: [kumar@psych.umass.edu](mailto:kumar@psych.umass.edu) (K. Yogeeswaran).

Wolsko et al., 2006). Today, Americans tend to embrace principles of ethnic diversity and believe that people should be allowed to maintain distinctive cultural identities as well as an American identity (Schildkraut, 2003, 2007; Tsai, Mortensen, Wong, & Hess, 2002).

However, endorsement of multicultural principles does not fit with recent evidence which shows that people dislike ethnic minorities who express their ethnic identity compared to others who downplay it (Dovidio, Gaertner, Schnabel, Saguy, & Johnson, 2010; Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009; Yogeeswaran, Dasgupta, & Gomez, 2011). For example, Kaiser and Pratt-Hyatt (2009) demonstrated that Whites exhibit greater prejudice toward ethnic minorities who are strongly identified with their ethnic group compared to their weakly identified counterparts. Similarly, Whites are more likely to empathize with and help a Black individual who emphasizes his university identity and de-emphasizes his racial identity compared to an equivalent person who emphasizes his racial identity only or both racial and university identities (Dovidio et al., 2010). These findings suggest that strong ethnic identity is negatively evaluated even though it is a central tenet of multiculturalism. How can one resolve these discrepant findings?

### **Under what conditions do perceivers accept or reject expressions of ethnic identification?**

We propose that perceivers draw a bright psychological line separating public from private expressions of ethnic identity. Strong ethnic identity is likely to be accepted when it is practiced in the privacy of one's home but rejected when it is practiced in public life because public expressions threaten the positive distinctiveness of the national group by overtly violating the national prototype (see Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Marques & Paez, 1994). In support of this prediction, previous research has shown that group members who deviate from mainstream norms, values, and practices elicit harsh penalties for threatening the positive social identity of their ingroup (i.e., black sheep effect; Marques & Paez, 1994; Marques & Yzerbyt, 1988). Moreover, exposure to ethnic minorities who embrace their ethnic heritage has been found to elicit perceptions of threat to national distinctiveness which, in turn, exacerbates the rejection of their entire ethnic group from the nation state (Yogeeswaran et al., 2011). Public displays of ethnic identity that sharply deviate from the national prototype are, therefore, particularly likely to elicit distinctiveness threat compared to private displays of ethnic identity that one does not have to see. Consider for example, situations in which ethnic identity is maintained and expressed through languages other than English. People may speak their ethnic language with co-ethnics only in the privacy of their home or also in public spheres such as workplaces, schools, etc (see Hitlan, Kelly, Schepman, Schneider & Zarate, 2006). We propose that when perceivers learn that ethnic minorities speak a language other than English in public spaces they are more likely to see this group as un-American because it more noticeably challenges mainstream norms and practices compared to when they learn that ethnic minorities speak their language at home.

### **Are White and non-White ethnic groups held to the same standard regarding the acceptability of expressing ethnic identification in private but not in public?**

Since Americans tend to endorse egalitarian values (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Sears, Henry, & Kosterman, 2000), they may explicitly hold White and non-White ethnic groups to the same standard in terms of which expressions of ethnic identity are considered acceptable. That is, people may report that private expressions of ethnic identity are acceptable for any group of Americans while public expressions are not acceptable for any Americans. An alternative hypothesis comes from several studies which have found that Americans of all races implicitly perceive Whites

to be more authentically American than any ethnic minority group (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Devos, Gavin, & Quintana, 2010; Devos & Ma, 2008; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). These studies suggest that the prototypical “true” American is automatically envisioned to be White rather than of any other race. Based on these findings, it is possible that White ethnic groups may be implicitly regarded as American no matter how they express ethnic identity—publicly or privately; but non-White ethnic groups may be implicitly regarded as American *only* if they limit ethnic identity expressions to the home.

### **Goals of the current research**

Two experiments investigated whether and how different types of ethnic identity expressions influence perceivers' construals of White vs. non-White ethnic groups as legitimate citizens of their superordinate nation. We made the following predictions. First, we predicted that people will accept private expressions of ethnic identity confined to one's home but reject public expressions of ethnic identity that spill over into the public domain.

Second, we predicted a divergence between perceivers' conscious standards compared to their unconscious standards. At a conscious level people will hold White and non-White ethnic groups to the same standard; private expressions of ethnic identity will be explicitly evaluated as acceptable for everybody while public expressions will be viewed as unacceptable for everybody. However, at an unconscious level, we predict a double standard such that White ethnic groups will be implicitly accepted as American regardless of how they express ethnic identity while non-White ethnic groups will be implicitly accepted as American *only* if they express ethnic identity in private and rejected as un-American if they express ethnic identity in public.

We used language as a marker of ethnic identity in the current research. Language is a fundamental way in which ethnic identity is experienced, expressed, and transmitted through generations. It is a powerful carrier of culture and knowledge of a culture's language allows people to become immersed in the group's norms, practices, and religion (Fishman, 1999; Haarman, 1986). In some cases, language is the only distinctive characteristic that identifies an ethnic group and moving away from one's ethnic language is perceived as distancing oneself from one's ethnic group (Bailey, 2000; Fought, 2006). The importance of language as a carrier of culture is starkly illustrated by historical events of forced acculturation in which special emphasis was placed on destroying ethnic languages. For example, in the 19th century, a U.S. government sponsored program placed Native-American children in boarding schools where they were forbidden to speak Native languages as part of a systematic attempt to “civilize” native tribes by stripping them of their ethnic culture (Lomawaima, 1993; Reyhner & Eder, 2004). For all these reasons, we elected to use language as the marker of ethnic identity in the present research.

### **Experiment 1**

Experiment 1 focused on the ethnic identity of Native-Americans as the target group of interest because as the original inhabitants of the land one cannot doubt that they are truly American. Yet, we expected that Native-Americans who express their ethnic identity in public would be construed as less American compared to the same individuals who express their ethnic identity in private and also compared to a control condition.

#### *Method*

##### *Participants*

A total of 108 (96 females and 12 males) American undergraduates received course credit for participation. The sample comprised 90 Whites (83%), 10 Asians (9%), 3 Blacks (3%), 2 Hispanics (2%), 1

Biracial (1%), and 2 participants who identified as 'Other' (2%).<sup>1</sup> None self-identified as Native-American.

### Design

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions in which they saw pictures and read biographies about: (a) six Native-Americans who expressed ethnic identity by speaking native languages in public and private spheres (3 male and 3 female); (b) six Native-Americans who expressed ethnic identity by speaking native languages in private spheres only (3 male and 3 female); or (c) six nature reserves (the control condition). In the first two conditions, the biographies of Native-American individuals were identical, except that in the public identification condition individuals were described as speaking their native language with family and friends in *both* private and public spheres (e.g. "To this day, Thomas continues speaking Lakota Sioux both at home and in public with his family and friends"), whereas in the private ethnic identification condition the same individuals were described as speaking their native language in private spheres *only* (e.g. "Although Thomas continues speaking in Lakota Sioux at home with his family and friends, he only speaks English when he is out in public.") Individuals in both conditions were described as being proud and strongly connected to their ethnic heritage. In the control condition, participants read descriptions of national parks and nature reserves in the U.S. with no mention of ethnicity (e.g. "Yellowstone National Park is located in the states of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho").

### Measures

**Explicit construals of Natives as American.** We assessed the degree to which participants construed Native-Americans as a group as legitimately American using 7 items adapted from previous research (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Yogeewaran et al., 2011). Specifically, these items assessed the extent to which participants believed that Native-Americans "belong in the U.S.," "are patriotic to the U.S.," "feel loyal to the U.S.," "respect America's political institutions and laws," "defend the U.S. when criticized," "work for the country's best interests," "identify with the U.S.," and "are truly American" ( $\alpha = .85$ ). These items were anchored by 1 (Not at All) and 7 (Very Much) such that higher numbers on this scale indicated more inclusion of Native-Americans within the national group.

**Implicit construals of Natives as American.** A Go/No-Go Association Task (GNAT; Nosek & Banaji, 2001) was used to assess participants' implicit construals of Natives as legitimately American. The GNAT is a speeded search task where stimuli appear one at a time on the screen and participants are told to categorize stimuli that fall into one of two categories by giving a "go" response while ignoring all other distracter stimuli ("no-go"). Therefore, the GNAT captures the extent to which participants are able to distinguish some stimuli ("signal") from irrelevant distracters ("noise").

Participants were exposed to 4 types of stimuli randomly displayed one at a time on a computer screen: six Native-American faces (3 male and 3 female), six White-American faces (3 male and 3 female), six American symbols (e.g. Statue of Liberty), and six foreign symbols (e.g. Eiffel Tower). White and Native-American faces were matched on age and gender. Images were cropped to reveal just the face of the individual in color with a white background in  $240 \times 300$  pixels or less. After 48 practice trials, participants completed 2 critical blocks of 60 trials each. In one block they were asked to give a "go" response to pictures of Native-Americans and American symbols (Native + American) while ignoring all other stimuli ("no-go"); in another block they were asked to give a "go" response to pictures of

White-Americans and American symbols (White + American) while ignoring all other stimuli ("no-go"). The order of these blocks was counterbalanced. An important strength of the GNAT is that it allows us to examine the degree to which Native-Americans are implicitly perceived as American *independent* of their perception of Whites; this allows us to test whether implicit construals of Natives as legitimately American varies as a function of manipulated ethnic identity separate from participants' perception of the White majority group.

### Procedure

Participants first completed a demographic survey with questions about gender, age, and race/ethnicity. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions in which they read about Native-Americans who either expressed their ethnic identity privately only or expressed it both publicly and privately, or they read about nature reserves (control condition). All participants then completed dependent measures (in counterbalanced order) assessing their implicit and explicit construal of Natives and Whites as American. Finally, participants were thanked and debriefed.

### Results and discussion

#### Explicit construals of Natives as American

A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of manipulated Ethnic Identity on the explicit national inclusion of Native-Americans,  $F(2, 104) = 5.00, p = .008, \eta^2 = .09$  (see Fig. 1). Tukey post-hoc tests revealed that participants in the public ethnic identity condition were significantly less likely to construe Natives as truly American ( $M = 4.61$ ) relative to others who saw targets express their ethnic identity privately ( $M = 5.29$ ),  $t(104) = 2.98, p = .01, d = .72$ , and relative to the control condition ( $M = 5.18$ ),  $t(104) = 2.44, p = .04, d = .60$ . There was no difference between the private ethnic identification condition and the control condition,  $t < 1$ . Not surprisingly, manipulating ethnic identification of Native-Americans had no effect on the construal of Whites as American,  $F < 1$ .

#### Implicit construals of Natives as American

Signal detection analysis was used to analyze data from the GNAT. Participants' ability to differentiate signal from noise was captured by  $d'$  (prime  $d'$ ). When stimuli designated as signal are strongly associated in participants' mind (e.g., White + American) the task should be subjectively easier, participants should make fewer errors, and the  $d'$  should be large. In contrast, when stimuli designated as signal are weakly associated in participants' mind (e.g., Native American) the task should be subjectively more difficult, participants should make more errors, and  $d'$  should be smaller. In sum, larger  $d'$  indicates that participants implicitly construe a given ethnic group as American.

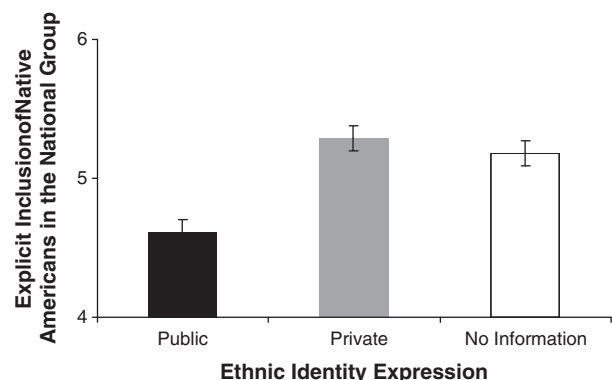


Fig. 1. Explicit inclusion of Native-Americans in the national group.

<sup>1</sup> The number of ethnic minorities in this study ( $n = 15$ ) was too small to test if their responses were different from that of their White peers ( $n = 90$ ).

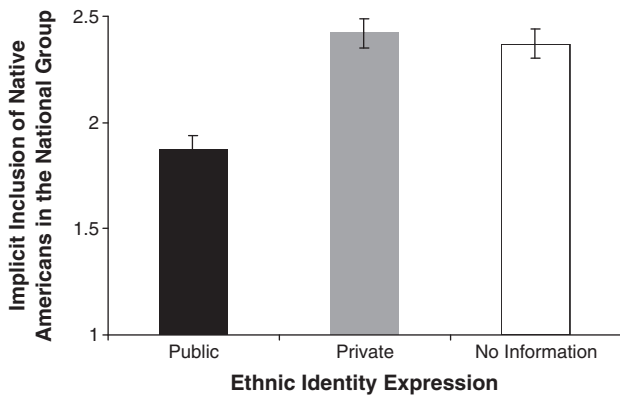


Fig. 2. Implicit inclusion of Native-Americans in the national group.

A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of Ethnic Identity on implicit construals of Natives as American,  $F(2, 105) = 4.88$ ,  $p = .009$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$  (see Fig. 2). Tukey post-hoc tests revealed that participants exposed to Native-Americans who expressed their ethnic identity publicly were significantly less likely to construe this group as American ( $d' = 1.87$ ) relative to when ethnic identity was expressed privately ( $d' = 2.42$ ),  $t(105) = 2.89$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $d = .82$ , and relative to the control condition ( $d' = 2.37$ ),  $t(105) = 2.53$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $d = .74$ . The private identification condition did not differ from the control condition,  $t < 1$ . Implicit construals of Whites as American also did not vary significantly across the three conditions,  $F < 1$ .

Taken together, both implicit and explicit measures provide converging evidence that even for the Natives of the U.S., embracing their ethnic heritage by speaking a language other than English with friends and family in public made others view their entire group as less American compared to when people saw identical individuals who spoke the same language but only in privacy of their home and also compared to controls.

## Experiment 2

Experiment 2 sought to extend the previous findings by testing whether people hold White and non-White ethnic groups to the same standard regarding the acceptability of public and private ethnic identity expressions. To test this, we chose two ethnic groups that immigrated to the U.S. in similar large numbers within the last 100 years (Daniels, 1990): Chinese-Americans (non-White ethnic group) and Polish-Americans (White ethnic group). Like Experiment 1, we manipulated whether individual members of each group expressed their ethnic identity publicly or privately and then measured participants' construal of each ethnic group as American using implicit and explicit measures.

### Method

#### Participants

A total of 268 (190 female and 78 male) American undergraduates received course credit for participation. The sample comprised 227 non-Polish Whites (85%), 8 Blacks (3%), 19 non-Chinese Asians (7%), 3 Hispanics (1%), 8 Multiracial (3%), and 3 identified as 'Other' (1%).<sup>2</sup>

#### Design

The design of this study was 2 (Target Group: Chinese, Polish)  $\times$  2 (Ethnic Identification: Private, Public) + 1 Control. Participants in the four experimental conditions received biographical descriptions of 6 individuals (3 males and 3 females) who were either Chinese-

American or Polish-American. Similar to the previous experiment, these individuals either expressed their ethnic identity both publicly and privately (by speaking Chinese or Polish with family and friends at home and in public) or only privately (by speaking Chinese or Polish with family and friends only at home). All targets were described as being proud and strongly connected to their ethnic heritage. Participants in the control condition read descriptions of nature reserves similar to Experiment 1.

### Measures

*Explicit construals of Chinese and Polish as American.* The same 7 items used in Experiment 1 assessed participants' explicit construal of Chinese ( $\alpha = .94$ ) and Polish ( $\alpha = .94$ ) people as American.

*Implicit construals of Chinese and Polish as American.* A GNAT similar to the one utilized in Experiment 1 assessed implicit construals of each ethnic group as American. However, instead of using pictures to represent target groups as in the previous experiment, we utilized Chinese and Polish last names to indicate ethnic group (e.g., Chung, Zhao, Borowski, Czerwinski). Therefore, participants were exposed to 4 types of stimuli including six Chinese last names, six Polish last names, six American symbols, and six foreign symbols. Each Chinese and Polish last name was flashed on the screen twice for 1500 ms to familiarize participants with the names associated with each ethnic group. Participants then completed 48 practice trials and 2 critical blocks of 60 trials each. In one block they were asked to give a "go" response to Chinese names and American symbols (Chinese + American) and ignore all other types of trials; in another block they were asked to give a "go" response to Polish names and American symbols (Polish + American) while ignoring all other stimuli. The order of these blocks was counterbalanced.

### Procedure

The procedure for this experiment was virtually identical to Experiment 1. Participants completed a demographic survey after which they were randomly assigned to one of five conditions in which they read the biographies described earlier or descriptions of nature reserves. Participants then completed measures assessing their implicit and explicit construal of Chinese and Polish ethnic groups as American. The order of these tasks was counterbalanced.

### Results and discussion

#### Explicit construals of Chinese and Polish as American

A series of 2  $\times$  2 ANOVAs using Target Group and Ethnic Identification as between-subject factors examined participants' construal of each group as American. First, when explicit national inclusion of Chinese-Americans was the dependent measure, a significant 2-way interaction between Target Group and Ethnic Identification emerged,  $F(1, 209) = 7.20$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$  (see Fig. 3 panel A). Specifically, t-tests confirmed that Chinese-Americans as an ethnic group were explicitly construed as less American after participants saw individual members express their ethnic identity publicly ( $M = 3.90$ ) compared to when those same members expressed ethnic identity privately ( $M = 4.54$ ),  $t(209) = 2.39$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $d = .46$ , and also compared to the control condition ( $M = 4.49$ ),  $t(107) = 2.23$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $d = .44$ . As expected, explicit construals of Chinese-Americans did not vary among participants who read biographies of Polish individuals who identified publicly ( $M = 4.57$ ) or privately ( $M = 4.27$ ) with their ethnic group,  $t(209) = 1.08$ ,  $p = .28$ ,  $d = .21$ .

A similar ANOVA using explicit national inclusion of Polish-Americans as the dependent measure also revealed a significant interaction between Target Group and Ethnic Identification,  $F(1, 210) = 4.05$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$  (see Fig. 3 panel B). Analogous to the previous

<sup>2</sup> The number of ethnic minorities in this study ( $n = 30$ ) was too small to test if their responses were different from that of their White peers ( $n = 227$ ).

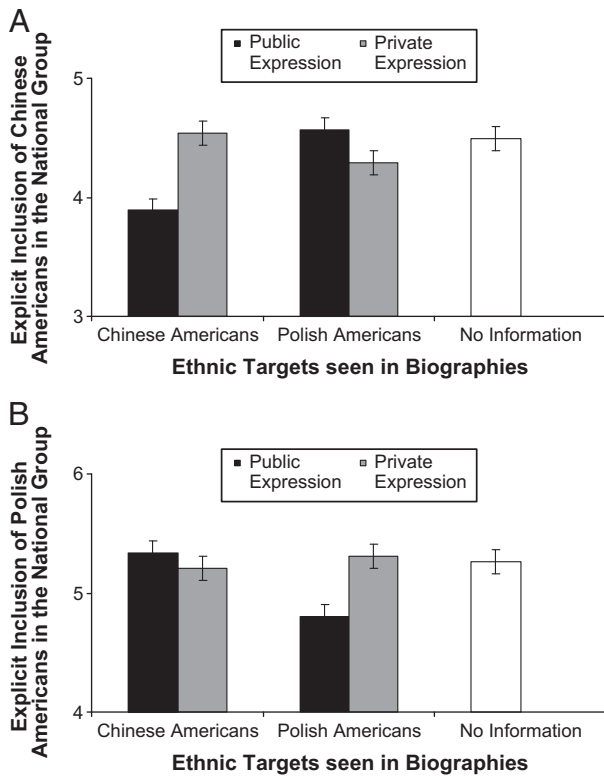


Fig. 3. Panel A. Explicit inclusion of Chinese-Americans in the national group. Panel B. Explicit inclusion of Polish-Americans in the national group.

ANOVA, Polish-Americans as a group were construed as less American after people saw some members express ethnic identity publicly ( $M = 4.80$ ) compared to when the same members expressed ethnic identity privately ( $M = 5.31$ ),  $t(210) = 2.25$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $d = .44$ , and compared to the control condition ( $M = 5.26$ ),  $t(104) = 2.33$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $d = .46$ . As before, explicit construals of Polish-Americans as a group did not vary among participants who read biographies of Chinese targets who were either publicly ( $M = 5.34$ ) or privately identified ( $M = 5.21$ ) with their ethnic group,  $t < 1$ .

#### Implicit construals of Chinese and Polish as American

Recall that we predicted a double standard for White and non-White ethnic groups in terms of how overtly each group is allowed to express their ethnic identity and yet remain legitimately American. Examining implicit construals of Chinese-Americans revealed a significant two-way interaction between the Target Group and Ethnic Identification,  $F(1, 208) = 5.03$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$  (see Fig. 4 panel A). Participants exposed to Chinese-Americans who were ethnically identified in public implicitly construed this entire group as less American ( $d' = 2.10$ ) relative to others exposed to identical individuals whose ethnic identification was expressed privately ( $d' = 2.53$ ),  $t(208) = 2.46$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $d = .48$ , and also relative to controls ( $d' = 2.59$ ),  $t(107) = 2.90$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $d = .60$ . As expected, seeing Polish targets who were publicly vs. privately identified had no effect on implicit construals of Chinese-Americans ( $d' = 2.73$  and  $2.60$  respectively),  $t < 1$ .

However, the pattern of data looked very different when the same ANOVA was conducted using implicit construals of Polish as the dependent measure. A  $2 \times 2$  ANOVA where Target Group and Ethnic Identification were independent variables revealed no significant effects ( $ps > .20$ ) on implicit construals of Polish as American. In other words, Polish-Americans were not penalized for expressing ethnic identification publicly or privately (see Fig. 4 panel B).

In sum, Experiment 2 revealed that at a conscious level, people held White and non-White ethnic groups to the same standard. Expressions

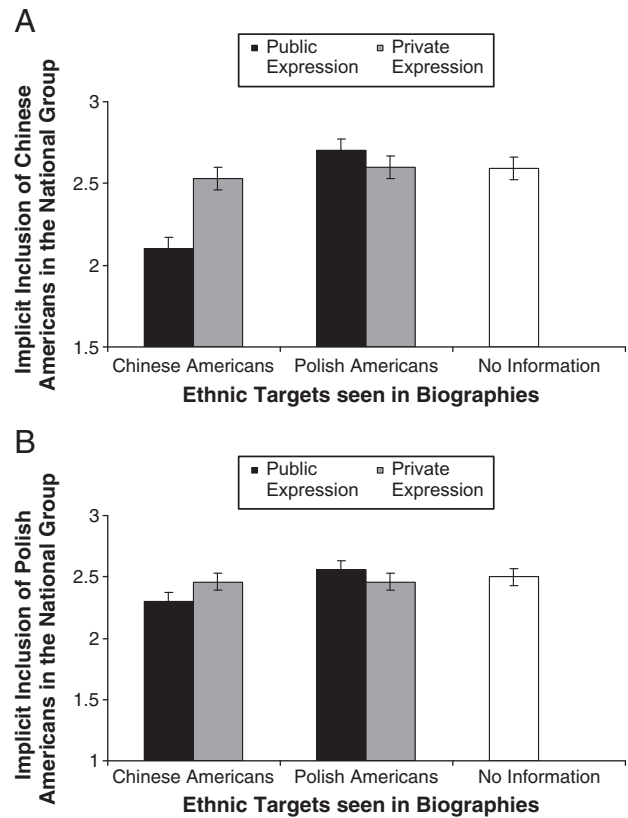


Fig. 4. Panel A. Implicit inclusion of Chinese-Americans in the national group. Panel B. Implicit inclusion of Polish-Americans in the national group.

of ethnic identification in public by both White and non-White individuals made their entire ethnic group appear less American compared to private ethnic identification and the control group. However, at an unconscious level, people's responses revealed a double standard for White vs. non-White groups—public expressions of ethnic identity made non-White ethnic groups appear less American but carried no penalty for White ethnic groups.

#### General discussion

Two experiments provide converging evidence that seeing White and non-White individuals express their ethnic identification in public leads perceivers to construe their entire ethnic group as less authentically American compared to when perceivers see identical individuals express the same ethnic identification in the privacy of their home. Importantly, while White and non-White ethnic groups are held to the same standard consciously these standards diverge considerably at an unconscious level. Knowing that non-White individuals identify with their ethnic group publicly and that they sometimes speak a language other than English in public leads their entire group to be implicitly construed as less American compared to knowing that the same individuals maintain their ethnic identity privately by speaking a non-English language at home. However, this public vs. private distinction in ethnic identity had no detrimental effect on the implicit inclusion of a White ethnic group in the nation.

These findings suggest that at a conscious level, people are motivated to hold White and non-White ethnic groups to the same standard regarding the acceptability of ethnic identity expressions. However, at an unconscious level, the standards shift; when minorities express their ethnic identification in public spheres, it unconsciously reduces the extent to which their group is construed as American. However, when Whites express their ethnic identification

in public spheres, it does not appear to change perceivers' construal of the ethnic group as a whole.

These findings help explain seemingly discrepant findings: i.e., how Americans might simultaneously endorse principles of ethnic diversity (e.g., Schildkraut, 2003, 2007; Tsai et al., 2002), while at the same time responding negatively to fellow citizens who identify strongly with their ethnocultural roots (Dovidio et al., 2010; Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009; Yogeeswaran et al., 2010). The current data suggest that people accept private expressions of ethnocultural identity but reject public expressions—especially for non-White ethnic groups. While a central tenet of multiculturalism is the proposition that members of diverse social groups ought to be able to maintain their unique subgroup identities (Moghaddam, 2008; Plaut, 2010), this ideology does not specify the contexts in which ethnic identity expressions are allowed. These data suggest that Americans are accepting of a “weak” form of multiculturalism that limits the free expression and practice of ethnicity to the private domain, and expect assimilation to mainstream cultural practices in the public domain. Put simply, Americans (at least White Americans in the U.S.) prefer that people (especially ethnic minorities) limit their ethnic identity to the confines of their home.

While our research used language as the marker of ethnic identification, it is important for future work to examine whether these findings generalize to other markers of ethnic identity such as clothing or cultural events. Although language is a particularly powerful carrier of ethnic identity (Fishman, 1999; Haarman, 1986), manipulating the type of clothing one wears in public versus private may also yield similar effects. The strong opposition to women wearing *chadors* (head scarves) or *burqas* in parts of Europe (Byrd, 2010; Ruitenberg, 2008) suggests that clothing as a public marker of ethnic identity may elicit similar reactions as language. However, a different pattern of results may emerge when ethnic identification is expressed through the celebration of cultural events, especially if cultural events are perceived as inclusive of people from different backgrounds or as benefiting the nation as a whole.

A related question of interest is whether these findings would generalize to all White ethnic groups or whether it is specific to certain White ethnics. On the one hand, since people have a strong racial prototype of American nationality (Devos & Banaji, 2005), one might find that most if not all White ethnic groups are unconsciously perceived as American regardless of their type of ethnic identification. On the other hand, if people use characteristics other than race to define the American prototype (e.g. secular clothing) then some types of White ethnic groups might also be seen as less American to the extent that their ethnic characteristics are visible in public (e.g. Orthodox Jews wearing traditional clothes). A third possibility is that seeing White individuals express nonprototypical ethnic identity may influence perceivers' construals of them as *individuals*; but those opinions may not generalize to their entire ethnic group as a whole. The present research provides a starting point in a longer investigation of the balance between ethnic and national allegiance that is considered acceptable in pluralistic nations.

## Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Christopher Beaton, Alyssa Gaudet, Elizabeth Gentile, Kyle Jerdan, Chelsey Karb, Brianna Le Beau and Carly Stanton for serving as experimenters. Thanks to Thierry Devos for experimental stimuli and Brian Lickel for helpful feedback on these studies.

## References

Alba, D. (1990). *Ethnic identity: The transformation of White America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Bailey, B. (2000). Language and negotiation of ethnic/racial identity among Dominican Americans. *Language in Society*, 29, 555–582.

Baron, D. (1990). *The English-only question*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Baumeister, R., & Leary, M. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497–529.

Birman, D., & Trickett, E. J. (2001). Cultural transitions in first-generation immigrants: Acculturation of Soviet Jewish refugee adolescents and parents. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 32, 456–477.

Branscombe, N., Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (1999). The context and content of social identity threat. *Social identity: Context, commitment, content* (pp. 35–58). Oxford England: Blackwell Science.

Brewer, M. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 475–482.

Brewer, M. (1993). The role of distinctiveness in social identity and group behaviour. In M. Hogg & D. Abrams (Eds.), *Group motivation: Social psychological perspectives* (pp. 1–16). New York: Harvester-Wheatsheaf.

Byrd, D. (2010, July 16). French burqa vote stirs strong reaction. *YaleGlobal Online*. <http://www.yoanews.com/english/news/europe/French-Burqa-Vote-Stirs-Strong-Reaction-98602469.html> Retrieved from.

Byrne, D. (1971). *The attraction paradigm*. New York: Academic Press.

Daniels, R. (1990). *Coming to America: A history of immigration and ethnicity in American life*. New York: Harper Collins.

Devos, T., & Banaji, M. R. (2005). American = White? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88, 447–466.

Devos, T., Gavin, K., & Quintana, F. (2010). Say 'adios' to the American dream? The interplay between ethnic and national identity among Latino and Caucasian Americans. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 16, 37–49.

Devos, T., & Ma, D. (2008). Is Kate Winslet more American than Lucy Liu? The impact of construal processes on the implicit ascription of a national identity. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 47, 191–215.

Dovidio, J., Gaertner, S., Schnabel, N., Saguy, T., & Johnson, J. (2010). Recategorization and prosocial behavior. In S. Stürmer & M. Snyder (Eds.), *The psychology of prosocial behavior: Group processes, intergroup relations, and helping* (pp. 289–309). Oxford: Blackwell.

Downey, D. (1999). From Americanization to multiculturalism: Political symbols and struggles for cultural diversity in twentieth-century American race relations. *Sociological Perspectives*, 42, 249–278.

Etzioni, A. (2007). Citizenship tests: A comparative, communitarian perspective. *The Political Quarterly*, 78, 353–363.

Fishman, J. (1999). *Handbook of language & ethnic identity*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Foster, L., & Herzog, P. (1994). *Defending diversity: Contemporary philosophical perspectives on pluralism and multiculturalism*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

Fought, C. (2006). *Language and ethnicity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Haarman, H. (1986). *Language in ethnicity*. Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.

Hitlan, R., Kelly, K., Schepman, S., Schneider, K., & Zarate, M. (2006). Language exclusion and the consequences of perceived ostracism in the workplace. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 10, 56–70.

Hirschman, C. (1983). America's melting pot reconsidered. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9, 393–423.

Hornsey, M., & Jetten, J. (2004). The individual within the group: Balancing the need to belong and the need to be different. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8, 248–264.

Hornsey, M., & Hogg, M. (2000). Assimilation and diversity: An integrative model of subgroup relations. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4, 143–156.

Hogg, M. (2007). Uncertainty-identity theory. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol. 39. (pp. 69–126) San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Kaiser, C., & Pratt-Hyatt, J. (2009). Distributing prejudice unequally: Do Whites direct their prejudice toward strongly identified minorities? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96, 432–445.

Lomawaima, K. (1993). Domesticity in the federal Indian schools. *American Ethnologist*, 20, 227–240.

Marques, J., & Paez, D. (1994). The black sheep effect: Social categorization, rejection of ingroup deviants, and perception of group variability. In W. Stroebe & M. Hewstone (Eds.), *European review of social psychology* (Vol. 5). (pp. 37–68) Chichester, England: Wiley.

Marques, J., & Yzerbyt, V. (1988). The black sheep effect: Judgmental extremity towards ingroup members in inter- and intra-group situations. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 18, 287–292.

McNamara, T., & Shohamy, E. (2008). Viewpoint: Language tests and human rights. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 18, 89–95.

Moghaddam, F. (2008). *Multiculturalism and intergroup relations: Psychological implications for democracy in global context*. Washington, DC US: American Psychological Association.

Nosek, B., & Banaji, M. (2001). The go/no-go association task. *Social Cognition*, 19, 625–666.

Plaut, V. (2010). Diversity science: Why and how difference makes a difference. *Psychological Inquiry*, 21, 77–99.

Reyhner, J., & Eder, J. (2004). *American Indian education*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Ruitenberg, C. (2008). B is for burqa, C is for censorship: The miseducative effects of censoring Muslim girls and women's sartorial discourse. *Educational Studies*, 43, 17–28.

Schildkraut, D. (2003). American identity and attitudes toward official-English policies. *Political Psychology*, 24, 469–499.

Schildkraut, D. (2005). *Press one for English*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Schildkraut, D. (2007). Defining American identity in the twenty-first century: How much “there” is there? *Journal of Politics*, 69, 597–615.

Schmidt, A. (1997). *The menace of multiculturalism: Trojan horse in America*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

- Sears, D., Henry, P., & Kosterman, R. (2000). Egalitarian values and contemporary racial politics. In D. O. Sears, J. Sidanius, & L. Bobo (Eds.), *Racialized politics: The debate about racism in America* (pp. 75–117). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Solomon, S., Greenberg, J., & Pyszczynski, T. (2000). Pride and prejudice: Fear of death and social behavior. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 6, 200–204.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W.G. Austin (Eds.), *The psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–25). Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.
- Taylor, D. (1991). The social psychology of racial and cultural diversity: Issues of assimilation and multiculturalism. In A. Reynolds (Ed.), *Bilingualism, multiculturalism, and second language learning* (pp. 1–19). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Tsai, J., Mortensen, H., Wong, Y., & Hess, D. (2002). What does "being American" mean? A comparison of Asian American and European American young adults. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 8, 257–273.
- Wolsko, C., Park, B., & Judd, C. (2006). Considering the tower of Babel: Correlates of assimilation and multiculturalism among ethnic minority and majority groups in the United States. *Social Justice Research*, 19, 277–306.
- Yogeeswaran, K., & Dasgupta, N. (2010). Will the 'real' American please stand up? The effect of implicit national prototypes on discriminatory behavior and judgments. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36, 1332–1345.
- Yogeeswaran, K., Dasgupta, N., & Gomez, C. (2011). A new American dilemma? *The effect of ethnic identification and public service on the national inclusion of ethnic groups*. Manuscript under review.