

National identification, type and specificity of comparison and their effects on descriptions of national character

DENNIS NIGBUR^{1*}
AND MARCO CINNIRELLA²

¹*University of Sussex, Brighton, UK*

²*Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey, UK*

Abstract

Studies conducted in Britain (n = 88) and Germany (n = 128) used a questionnaire with an experimental manipulation to examine the effects of national identification, type of comparison (intergroup or temporal) and specificity of comparison (specific or non-specific) on trait descriptions of national identity. Both differentiation between the subject and object of comparison and the absolute stereotype of the national ingroup (i.e. the national autostereotype) were measured. Regression analyses found that high identification was associated with greater ingroup bias and an overall more positive autostereotype; that specific temporal comparison with a shameful past (slavery for the British and the Nazi era for the German sample) predicted greater differentiation from the present than non-specific comparisons with 'the past' in general; and that specific comparisons with the Americans or a shameful history precipitated greater differentiation and (in the British sample) a departure of the autostereotype from a control condition that entailed no comparison. We argue that our approach can contribute to a more holistic social identity analysis of nationality. Future research should distinguish the effects of context from those of identification, show an awareness of the potential differences between specific and non-specific comparisons, and examine a greater variety of temporal comparison targets. Copyright © 2006 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

There is considerable challenge in explaining national identity in social-psychological terms (see Billig, 1995). This appears odd, considering that a preoccupation with national and ethnic identities was influential to Tajfel's early theorising on social groups (Tajfel, 1969b, 1970) and that the notion of collective uniqueness, often discussed in relation to national identity (see Kedourie, 1993), features prominently in both social identity (SIT: Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and self-categorisation theory (SCT: Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). But in practice, there has been a lag between

*Correspondence to: Dr Dennis Nigbur, Department of Psychology, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9QH, UK.
E-mail: d.nigbur@sussex.ac.uk

academic theory and evidence on the one hand, and everyday experience of national identity on the other. Where social identity and national identity have met in social-psychological work, nationality has variously been used uncritically as just one more example of a social identity, or portrayed as a phenomenon that cannot be explained within the confines of social identity theory. Such criticisms have usually focused on a neglect of content, tradition and ideology in social identity accounts— aspects which set nations apart from ad hoc experimental groups (e.g. Billig, 1995; Gallenmüller & Wakenhut, 1992).

The research described here aimed to contribute to a reconciliation of questions concerning national identity with the social identity tradition by paying special attention to the identity content, the intergroup and temporal dimensions of comparison, the specific comparison contexts and more general sense of uniqueness, and the degree of identification with the nation, all of which we consider to be important elements of national identity. Recent developments in the social identity tradition of research appear to provide social psychologists with the necessary equipment for a renewed attempt at tackling these crucial issues. These developments and their implications for the present work are outlined below. Our own focus was to examine the impact of national identification and a variety of comparison contexts (specific and non-specific, intergroup and temporal) on trait differentiation and overall descriptions of national character.

IDENTIFICATION AND DIFFERENTIATION IN SPECIFIC INTERGROUP COMPARISONS

Although social identity theory and self-categorisation theory are closely related, their treatments of distinctiveness are subtly different: SCT suggests that perceived differences between groups arise from a perceptual sub-division of the social setting (Haslam & Turner, 1992; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994: ch. 6; Turner et al., 1987), whereas the SIT approach takes identification with an existing group as its starting point and emphasises instead the ‘competitive response’ (Tajfel & Turner, 1986: p. 13) of trying to achieve a distinctive and positive image of one’s ingroup. Because of this interpretive difference, studies on perceptions of national identity using these paradigms have concentrated on somewhat dissimilar phenomena: the variability in descriptions of national character arising from the contextual accentuation of intergroup differences (SCT), and the discrepancies between high and low national identifiers in the way they describe their national groups (SIT).

Self-categorisation theory concentrates on how individuals come to accept group membership and act accordingly (Turner et al., 1987: ch. 3). Much of this work has focused on nascent self-categorisations across a variety of contexts, which are supposed to follow the ‘meta-contrast’ between (a) the similarities and differences between those individuals who may share social group membership and (b) the similarities and differences between this group of people and others in the psychological setting. This process produces an emergent ‘group prototype’, which abstractly embodies the relevant differences between the groups (Oakes, Haslam, & Reynolds, 1998; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1998). Perceived ingroup members are assimilated to that group prototype, whilst perceived outgroup members are contrasted from it—in short, intergroup differences are accentuated (Oakes et al., 1994: ch. 6). As a result, descriptions of a social group will reflect the intergroup setting on which they are based and will often not be stable across different contexts (Hopkins, Regan, & Abell, 1997: p. 554), unless these contexts themselves manifest consistency.

There is indeed evidence suggesting that descriptions of national character can be context-dependent. Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, and Hayes (1992) famously demonstrated during the 1991 Gulf War how Australian participants’ descriptions of the Americans were affected by the frame of reference within which they were made. Nor is this context-sensitivity limited to descriptions of

outgroups. Cinnirella (1998) found that his respondents gave higher ratings to the British ingroup on trait dimensions of industriousness and reserve when they were judged in comparison with the Italians than in isolation. Similarly, Hopkins and Murdoch's (1999) British participants accentuated images of the British as 'conventional' and 'reserved' in a context that included the Americans, while 'materialistic' was only seen as typically British when the British were judged on their own. Finally, Hopkins et al.'s (1997) Scottish respondents rated their nation as more hard-working, efficient, organised, stable and aloof but less warm when the Greeks were included as a reference group, and as warmer and less aloof when the comparison was with the English.

Whilst these findings show that the perceived content of national identity can vary according to the comparison made, less empirical attention has—somewhat surprisingly—been given to whether individual differences in national identification may have similar effects. In general, social identity theory assumes that group members will strive to create or maintain a positive image of their group, even when this stretches the limits of the evidence. Tajfel's early writings on national identity (Tajfel, 1969a,b, 1970) suggest that a positive image of the national ingroup and a sense of distinctiveness from relevant others are created through the ascription of characteristics to the group that allow differentiation from others. From the early minimal-group experiments onwards (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel & Billig, 1974; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971), there has been robust evidence that these differentials tend to manifest ingroup bias. Group members usually favour their own group in terms of resource allocations, interpersonal indices such as liking, and the attribution of characteristics or behaviours (e.g. Bennett et al., 2004; Perdue, Dovidio, Gurtman, & Tyler, 1990; Rabbie & Horwitz, 1969; Schaller & Maass, 1989; for meta-analytic reviews, see Bettencourt, Charlton, Dorr, & Hume, 2001; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992).

However, whilst there is convincing support for a general ingroup preference, some controversy exists about whether the degree of bias varies with the strength of group identification in the individual (for a discussion, see Brown, 2000; Turner, 1999). Some evidence for this relationship comes from minimal-group studies on intergroup evaluations (Jetten, Spears, Hogg, & Manstead, 2000: experiment 1) and resource allocations (Perreault & Bourhis, 1998). Real-life groups also appear to give rise to increased bias (or at least increased ingroup positivity) among high identifiers—a finding replicated on monetary allocations to different universities (Jetten et al., 2000: experiment 2), negative attitudes towards an ethnic outgroup (Duckitt & Mphuthing, 1998) and, most pertinently, descriptions of national groups (Feather, 1996; Lalonde, 2002; Smith, Giannini, Helkama, Maczynski, & Stumpf, 2005). Feather (1996) found that national favouritism in judgements of Australian products and achievements was significantly predicted by the degree of national identification in his Australian participants and Lalonde (2002) demonstrated that national identification with Canada was related to intergroup differentiation when the comparative outgroup was relevant and the prescribed dimensions of differentiation were meaningful in the intergroup context. Meanwhile, Smith et al. (2005) report a significant correlation between national identification and the positivity of the national autostereotype (i.e. the stereotype held by individuals of their own group) in a cross-national study. We would thus generally expect highly identified nationals to display greater descriptive bias in favour of their national ingroup in intergroup comparison (see also Aberson, Healy, & Romero, 2000), and generally portray it in a more positive light than individuals with low levels of national identity (as found by Smith et al., 2005).

NON-SPECIFIC COMPARISONS AND NATIONAL UNIQUENESS

Tajfel's early work on category perception (e.g. Tajfel, 1959; Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963), classic minimal-group experiments on social identity (e.g. Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel & Billig, 1974; Tajfel et al.,

1971) and more recent investigations on stereotypic accentuation (e.g. Haslam & Turner, 1992; Hopkins et al., 1997) have all been concerned with the effects of specific intergroup discontinuities—usually among a relatively small number of groups—on judgements of, or behaviour towards, group members. As previously pointed out by Billig (1995), these findings may account at least in part for phenomena of ‘hot’ nationalism (including war, prejudice and political disputes), but do not say much about the more stable and diffuse sense of uniqueness that informs a more banal, quotidian sense of national identity. The fact that meaningful impressions of national character could be elicited from participants in the ‘control’ conditions of experiments on stereotypic accentuation, where no comparison target was specified at all, shows that there must be a sense of national character that exists outside perpetual, context-dependent flux. For example, these data suggest that there is a general self-image of the Scots as warm and fairly hard-working but not aloof (Hopkins et al., 1997; Rutland & Cinnirella, 2000). Although necessarily comparative in nature, such notions of uniqueness need not rely on comparison with specific others; it is possible to base the conviction that one’s own national group is different from (or better than) others on a non-specific comparison with ‘other nations’ in general (see Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001).

Moreover, although contextual fluctuation in self-categorisation and identity has understandably received much attention in the literature, we must recall that the social identity approach does not assume complete variability (see Tajfel, 1969a): the perceived characteristics of social groups are not mere epiphenomena of situational factors, but show degrees of stability *and* variability across contexts, rather like ‘variations on a theme’ (Cinnirella, 1997). This seems to be especially true for national groups, where a great degree of consensus on nationally shared traits of character (e.g. Koomen & Bähler, 1996; Peabody, 1985) coexists with the compelling body of evidence for context-sensitivity.

To our knowledge, the effects of specific and non-specific comparisons have not yet been compared empirically. It appears likely that respondents asked to make a non-specific comparison with ‘other countries’ would describe generally what sets their nation apart from others—the ‘theme’ in Cinnirella’s (1997) analogy. Meanwhile, specific comparisons and their more clearly defined frame of reference are needed to provoke the ‘variations’—the context-sensitive accentuation of intergroup differences as variously found in the self-categorisation literature. Tentative predictions about the nature of national characteristics foregrounded by non-specific comparisons can also be made: if specific comparisons carry the motivation for positive distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1986: p. 16) whilst non-specific comparisons are concerned with establishing national uniqueness, the desire for a positive ingroup image may be weaker in the latter case. Specific comparisons should thus be associated with positive differentiation and generally more complimentary images of one’s own group.

INTERGROUP AND TEMPORAL COMPARISON: THE OUTGROUP WITHIN

Especially in the case of a large-scale social category with its own history and customs, intergroup comparisons may not be the only relevant ones. Work by Albert (1977), recently rediscovered by social psychologists researching about national groups (Brown & Haeger, 1999; Mummendey et al., 2001; Mummendey & Simon, 1997), puts forward the idea that *temporal comparisons* between past and present operate in a manner analogous to social comparisons. Albert argues that temporal comparison serves mainly to ensure a consistent sense of self and continuity over time, whilst Salazar (1998), similarly, suggests that the cultivation of national history implies a motivation for temporal transcendence. The preferred outcome of temporal comparison will be evidence of maturation, progress or growth, as opposed to evidence of decline or decay.

Mummendey et al. (2001) extrapolate from these theoretical points that a sense that the national ingroup is 'better' now than in the past should have similar implications for a positive national identity as the more frequently studied perception that the ingroup is 'better' than relevant national outgroups. Indeed, their British and German participants, instructed to produce a positive statement about the national ingroup before completing a set of quantitative scales, displayed similar levels of national identification and professed similarly positive evaluations of national achievements, regardless of whether they had been asked to base their statements on intergroup or temporal comparisons.

Sometimes, the motivation to differentiate positively between the national ingroup now and in the past is even more urgent. In Germany, for example, the country's national socialist past continues to be a source of negative social identity, and present attitudes and institutions reflect the desire to be as different from the Nazi era as possible (Heimannsberg & Schmidt, 1993; Mutterlose & Belz, 2004; Weidenfeld, 2002). This motivation can be assumed as universal: Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, and Manstead (1998) show in an experiment on Dutch colonial history that high and low identifiers did not differ in the magnitude of guilt experienced when the description of colonialism to which they were exposed was unequivocally negative in tone. Even without explicitly measuring guilt, we can therefore expect that respondents will strive to preserve a positive national self-image by emphasising how the nation has changed and moved on since the shameful era of the past—in analogy to the positive social distinctiveness stipulated by Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986).

By contrast, high and low national identifiers may well have different views on non-specific temporal comparisons with 'the past' in general. In analogy to non-specific intergroup comparison, the individual has greater freedom to select periods in the past or to work on the basis of some more diffuse image of national 'history' (see Condor, 1997). As a result, there will be no generic imperative to differentiate the present nation positively from the past. Patriots may instead refer to the nation's history as a source of pride and differentiate the past somewhat positively from the present—a display of nostalgia (see Condor, 1996; Uzzell, 1996). Conversely, it is likely that low identifiers will perceive the present national group as more positively distinct from 'the past'. This is in line with suggestions that there exist competing social representations of the nation (Billig, 1995; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001), some of which will glorify the national past while others appraise it more critically. Our argument is that high identifiers will often be drawn to the former, while low identifiers will tend towards the latter.

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

Our investigation used a questionnaire about descriptions of nationality with an experimental manipulation in the instructions, in order to assess the effects of national identification and of specific and non-specific intergroup and temporal comparison on these accounts. British and German students based at educational institutions in their respective homelands served as our sample. In addition to the 2×2 design of specific and non-specific intergroup and temporal comparison conditions, a control condition recorded the national self-image in the absence of any comparison and enabled an assessment of whether descriptions of nationality differed from this baseline under any of our comparison instructions.

The inclusion of non-specific comparisons required a departure from the usual practice of taking ratings of ingroup and outgroup separately, and then analysing the differences for a measure of differentiation—it is simply not meaningful to ask respondents for a description in absolute terms of 'other countries' or 'the past'. Instead, relative rating scales (see Riketta, 2002) were used to record judgements of the degree to which statements were more or less applicable to the ingroup (or, in temporal comparison, the ingroup now) than the outgroup (or the ingroup in the past). Whilst these

scales, ranging from -3 to $+3$, do not in themselves hold any information about the perceived absolute preponderance of a trait in the subject or object of comparison, they do allow for an analysis of *differentiation* even from non-specific objects. A more conventional set of scales ranging from 1 to 7 was additionally included to assess the absolute applicability of the same statements to the subject of comparison (i.e. the national ingroup now) and examine whether this national self-image would be subject to context-dependent variability.

Based on the considerations outlined above, we expected these absolute and relative descriptions of national identity to vary according to the type of comparison (intergroup or temporal), the specificity of the comparison (specific or non-specific) and the level of national identification in the participant. We hypothesised that specific comparisons with other nations or a shameful past would engender greater motivation for positive distinctiveness and lead to more positive relative ratings of the ingroup or the ingroup now than in non-specific comparisons (H_1). By contrast, we expected the type of comparison to influence trait ratings interactively with other variables: high identifiers should display stronger ingroup bias and see the ingroup in relatively more positive terms than low identifiers in intergroup comparison (H_2). Also on the relative rating scales, we expected (extrapolating from Doosje et al., 1998) that temporal comparison with a 'guilty' period of national history would elicit relatively more positive judgements of the present nation than the non-specific comparison with 'the past' in general, regardless of identification (H_3). In the non-specific temporal comparison condition, we expected a negative relationship between national identification and relative trait ratings, with higher identifiers displaying evidence of nostalgia by rating the nation now as relatively less positive than the nation in 'the past', compared to low identifiers (H_4).

There were also two hypotheses relating to the absolute ratings of national character. High identifiers should generally describe the nation more positively than low identifiers in all conditions (H_5). Finally, assuming that specific comparisons are required for the on-the-spot adjustments of the autostereotype witnessed in research on context-effects, the national self-image should differ from the 'control' condition only in the case of *specific* intergroup or temporal comparisons, probably in a positive direction (H_6).

STUDY 1

Our first study was conducted with the participation of British A-level students and undergraduates in the south-east of England. A small-scale pilot study at one of the educational institutions involved had identified the Americans as a salient national outgroup and the involvement in slavery as a shameful episode in national history. These targets were therefore used in this sample for specific intergroup and temporal comparison, respectively.

Method

Design and Materials

A between-subjects design was used. The independent variables of comparison *type* (intergroup or temporal) and *specificity* (specific or non-specific) were crossed to form a 2×2 design, and an additional control condition added (see Dunnett, 1955) to enable an analysis of context-sensitive changes in the ingroup descriptions recorded on the absolute rating scales.

Trait items were drawn from a wide range of previous studies concerned with stereotypes of the English or British, the Germans, or the Americans (Bochenska, 1995; Bronfenbrenner, 1961; Cinnirella, 1998; Condor, 1996; Haslam, Oakes, Turner, & McGarty, 1995; Haslam et al., 1992; Hewstone, 1986; Hopkins & Cable, 2001; Hopkins & Murdoch, 1999; Hopkins et al., 1997; Jonas & Hewstone, 1986; Koomen & Bähler, 1996; Linssen & Hagendoorn, 1994; Meyer, 1961; Peabody, 1985; Poppe & Linssen, 1999). Individual items were selected to create a relevant and balanced, but appropriately brief catalogue. The traits included were *cultured*, *hard-working*, *honest*, *reliable*, *sense of humour* and *tolerant* (positive traits) and *aggressive*, *conceited*, *loud*, *materialistic*, *selfish* and *xenophobic* (negative traits).

The scale used to measure national identification was identical to that used by Mummendey et al. (2001). It consisted of six items, one of which was used as a pre-manipulation measure in order to check for sampling bias and not used again as part of the scale. Items included statements such as 'Being British is important to me', rated by respondents on seven-point agreement scales.

Five different questionnaires were created, corresponding to the five conditions. The study was introduced as being 'concerned with the manner in which individuals see their national identities'. After some general instructions on the use of agreement scales, participants received an open-ended task to describe their nation in a few brief bullet points. The instructions, depending on the experimental condition, asked for a description of the national ingroup 'as a whole' (control), 'compared with America and the Americans' (specific intergroup comparison), 'compared with other countries and their nationals' (non-specific intergroup comparison), 'compared with the 16th century, when Britain became heavily involved in the slave trade' (specific temporal comparison), or 'compared with Britain and the British of the past' (non-specific temporal comparison). This open-ended task was intended merely to provide sufficient opportunity for rehearsal of the comparison instructions, and to serve as a manipulation check for the absolute trait ratings, which followed. No further analysis of these qualitative data was undertaken.

Participants were asked to rate the applicability of a series of traits (as outlined above) using a set of 1–7 scales. Traits were presented in random order and in the form of a general claim with which respondents could agree or disagree (e.g. 'The British, on the whole, have a rather good sense of humour'). The reference category for comparison was only mentioned in the instructions to these scales—individual scales focused only on the subject of comparison (the ingroup or the ingroup now).

The next section consisted of a 'filler' task, in which participants were asked some open-ended questions about tourism in order to avoid carry-over effects on the relative rating scales that followed in the four comparison conditions—participants in the control condition did not receive these scales since their instructions did not involve a comparison object against which ratings could be made. The relative rating scales invited participants to record the extent to which they considered the traits outlined above to be more or less applicable to the ingroup (or the ingroup now) than to the object of comparison. Scales ranged from –3 to +3, with an answer of '0' indicating no perceived difference. National identification was measured towards the end of the questionnaire using the scales from Mummendey et al. (2001). Finally, after providing some demographic information, respondents received thanks for their participation, and the promise of a full debriefing.

Participants and Procedure

After the exclusion of respondents whose manipulation checks left some doubt over whether they had understood or followed the instructions ($n = 30$) and those from ethnic minorities whose relationship with national identity may be considerably different and complex ($n = 15$), the sample consisted of 88 English students working towards an A-level or undergraduate degree. Twenty-three respondents

were male and 65 female. Their average age was 19.35 years, with a range of 16–55 years. Participants were approached in their lectures and seminars with the permission of teaching staff and randomly allocated to the five conditions. Care was taken to keep roughly twice as many respondents in the control condition than there were in each of the comparison conditions (see Dunnett, 1955).

Results

The scale for national identification had good internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$) and scale scores were calculated by taking the arithmetic mean of items. To determine whether the comparison manipulation itself had had any effect on the level of identification reported by participants, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on identification scores with comparison type and specificity as independent variables. As expected, the analysis returned a non-significant result ($F_s < 1$), making it appropriate to use identification as a predictor variable in subsequent analyses.

In order to test our hypotheses, we conducted hierarchical linear regression analyses with the relative trait ratings (for hypotheses 1–4) and the absolute trait ratings (for hypotheses 5 and 6) as outcome variables. Predictors included the type and specificity of comparison as well as the measured level of national identification. Contrasts were used to examine specific hypotheses and will be described where appropriate. Preliminary analyses showed that age and gender did not independently contribute to the model, and controlling for their effects made no substantial difference to the results. Therefore collapsed statistics are reported here for the sake of parsimony.

Relative Trait Ratings

The proverbial British sense of humour received a remarkably high mean rating on the relative scales overall ($M = 1.35$, $SD = 1.16$). All other ratings remained within one unit of the scale mid-point. For the purposes of our main analysis, a single index of trait ratings was calculated by taking the mean of all positive trait ratings and reversed negative ratings (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.73$). Table 1 shows that this score was, on average, slightly positive. National identification was, on average, somewhat higher than the scale mid-point.

The regression analysis on relative ratings included national identification, type of comparison and specificity of comparison in the first block of predictors, followed by all two-way interaction terms in the second block and the three-way interaction in the third. Scores on the three original scales had been mean-centred before calculating the multiplicative terms, as suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), in order to prevent multicollinearity problems. Table 2 summarises the regression. As outlined above, we expected from this main analysis a linear effect of comparison specificity (H_1) and an interaction between type of comparison and national identification (H_2).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations, Study 1

	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	r_1	r_2	r_3
1. Relative trait evaluation	–1.25	1.75	0.29	0.74	1	0.524 ^a	0.213
2. Absolute trait evaluation	1.92	5.33	4.01	0.63	0.524 ^a	1	0.404 ^a
3. National identification	2.00	7.00	4.75	1.38	0.213	0.404 ^a	1

^aCorrelation significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 2. Regression analysis on relative trait ratings, Study 1

Step	Predictors	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	ΔF	df
1	National identification ($\beta = 0.173$) Type of comparison ($\beta = -0.063$) Specificity of comparison ($\beta = -0.392^*$)	0.458	0.210	0.210	4.510	3, 51
2	National identification ($\beta = 0.186$) Type of comparison ($\beta = -0.063$) Specificity of comparison ($\beta = -0.422^*$) Identification* type ($\beta = -0.306^*$) Identification* specificity ($\beta = 0.161$) Type* specificity ($\beta = 0.042$)	0.565	0.319	0.110	2.578	3, 48
3	National identification ($\beta = 0.177$) Type of comparison ($\beta = -0.055$) Specificity of comparison ($\beta = -0.419^*$) Identification* type ($\beta = -0.304^*$) Identification* specificity ($\beta = 0.161$) Type* specificity ($\beta = 0.047$) Identification* type* specificity ($\beta = 0.090$)	0.572	0.327	0.008	0.557	1, 47

*standardised regression coefficient significant at $p < 0.05$.

The analysis demonstrated the expected effect of comparison specificity (H_1). In the final model (including all predictors), comparison specificity was a strong predictor of relative trait ratings ($\beta = -0.42$, $t = -3.40$, $p < 0.01$). Specific comparisons were associated with more positive relative ratings.

The expected type \times identification interaction (H_2) also seemed to be present in the data ($\beta = -0.30$, $t = -2.48$, $p < 0.05$). To follow up this finding, separate analyses on the prediction of relative trait ratings by national identification were conducted for both levels of the comparison type variable. Identification significantly predicted ratings in intergroup ($\beta = 0.49$, $t = 3.15$, $p < 0.01$) but not in temporal comparison ($\beta = -0.13$, $t = -0.68$, *ns*).

The comparison between specific and non-specific temporal comparison (H_3) was achieved by means of an appropriate contrast, with the former condition recoded as 1, the latter as -1 and all others as zero. These contrast weights were entered into a new regression analysis, along with national identification. This approach yielded a marginally significant model ($R = 0.32$, $R^2 = 0.10$, $F(2, 52) = 3.03$, $p < 0.06$), in which the contrast was the better predictor of ratings ($\beta = 0.25$, $t = 1.85$, $p < 0.07$). Relative trait ratings were thus, marginally, more positive in specific than in non-specific temporal comparison.

In order to analyse the relationship between national identification and relative traits ratings specifically in the non-specific temporal comparison condition (H_4), it was sufficient to look at their bivariate correlations among those participants who had been primed to make comparisons with 'the past'. The hypothesis was not supported: the correlation was against the predicted direction and not of significant magnitude ($r = 0.13$, *ns*).

Absolute Trait Ratings

Among the absolute trait ratings, a good sense of humour was again seen as particularly typical of the British ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.04$), but so was the negative trait of materialism ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.02$). None of the selected traits was seen as atypical, with all mean scores at least around the scale mid-point. As

had been done for relative ratings, positive and negative traits were combined into a single index (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.72$). Table 1 shows that the British ingroup was overall seen in very balanced terms, practically on the mid-point of the scale.

It had been hypothesised that there would be a positive relationship between national identification and the absolute trait evaluation regardless of the comparison made (H_5). Indeed, as shown in Table 1, the bivariate correlation between identification and absolute trait ratings for the whole sample was strong and positive ($r = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$). However, in order to control for the effects of comparison context, it was necessary to enter national identification, type and specificity of comparison into a hierarchical linear regression analysis identical to that employed for relative trait ratings and excluding the control condition, where no comparison had been made. The final model, which included all interaction terms ($R = 0.58$, $R^2 = 0.34$, $F(7, 47) = 3.43$, $p < 0.01$), still identified the linear effect of national identification as highly influential of absolute trait ratings ($\beta = 0.39$, $t = 3.19$, $p < 0.01$) and thus supported the hypothesis.

In line with expectations (H_6), the specificity of comparison also had significant predictive value in this model ($\beta = -0.38$, $t = -3.07$, $p < 0.01$). However, the hypothesis stated specifically that ratings in specific comparisons would be more positive than in the absence of *any* comparison, whilst ratings in non-specific comparison would not. We therefore computed two contrasts involving the control condition: one that compared the conditions involving specific comparisons with control (for which the specific intergroup and specific temporal comparison conditions were both coded as 1 and the control condition as -2), and one that compared non-specific comparison conditions with control (for which both non-specific comparison conditions were coded as 1 and control as -2). Entering these contrast weights into two separate regressions alongside the national identification variable, we expected the former contrast, but not the latter, to be a significant predictor of absolute trait ratings. Both regression analyses also included a multiplicative term for the interaction between the contrast and national identification, which we did not expect to be significant in either case.

The regression including the first contrast ($R = 0.47$, $R^2 = 0.22$, $F(3, 84) = 7.88$, $p < 0.001$) identified it as a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.24$, $t = 2.46$, $p < 0.05$). National identification also predicted trait ratings significantly ($\beta = 0.43$, $t = 4.39$, $p < 0.001$), but the interaction did not ($\beta = -0.01$, $t = -0.10$, *ns*); the effect of specific comparisons on absolute ratings was thus not dependent on national identification. Meanwhile, the regression involving the contrast between non-specific comparisons and control ($R = 0.41$, $R^2 = 0.17$, $F(3, 84) = 5.70$, $p < 0.01$) only yielded national identification as a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.41$, $t = 4.04$, $p < 0.001$). The contrast term ($\beta = 0.06$, $t = 0.62$, *ns*) and the interaction ($\beta = 0.04$, $t = 0.43$, *ns*) remained non-significant as expected.

Discussion

Our study aimed to show how trait descriptions of national ingroups can vary—whether framed in absolute terms or in relation to a comparison target—according to the type and specificity of comparison made, and the level of national identification in the individual. Our data provide broad support for the importance of these three variables. Unsurprisingly, high identifiers were generally more complimentary of their national ingroup, but there was also evidence for an impact on descriptions of whether comparisons were made with other nations or over time, and whether or not these comparisons involved specific targets.

First, we expected that specific comparisons (with the Americans or a shameful period in national history) would motivate people to differentiate more strongly between the subject and object of comparison than would be the case in non-specific comparison (with 'other nations' or 'the past'). Specific comparisons were indeed associated with more positive relative trait ratings, confirming the

principle of positive differentiation from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and suggesting that it can be meaningfully translated to the domain of temporal comparison—at least when, as in our example, the temporal comparison target engenders the motivation to differentiate the group now from its past.

Second, we tested the relationship between identification and bias currently being debated in social identity theory (see Brown, 2000; Turner, 1999). There was a strong relationship in our intergroup comparison conditions between national identification and the positivity of relative trait ratings, suggesting that high identifiers did indeed consider their nation to be ‘better’ than others to a greater degree than low identifiers. However, this relationship was not observed under temporal comparison conditions, highlighting a potential difference in differentiation processes between intergroup and temporal comparison and a limitation to the transferability of social comparison principles to the temporal dimension (cf. Albert, 1977).

Third, we expected that temporal comparison with a shameful episode of national history (here the slave trade) would cause overall greater positive differentiation than non-specific temporal comparison with the past, following a sense that the nation has developed and ‘moved on’ in the meantime. This was expected to be the case regardless of national identification (see Doosje et al., 1998). The results of our analysis were marginal, but suggested that relative trait ratings were indeed slightly more positive in specific than in non-specific temporal comparison.

There was no support for our fourth hypothesis, which had predicted that non-specific temporal comparisons with ‘the past’ would foster a *negative* relationship between national identification and the positivity of relative trait ratings, witnessing a nostalgic tendency among high identifiers. Although we would still maintain that nostalgia is an important phenomenon to study in the context of temporal comparison, the present study cannot make a contribution to this end.

Two hypotheses related to the absolute trait ratings, which characterised the national group in a more conventional way. Our fifth prediction was thus of a positive relationship between national identification and the positivity of the national autostereotype regardless of comparison context—an intuitive, but seldom studied phenomenon (but see Smith et al., 2005). This hypothesis was supported: the more strongly participants identified with Britain and the British, the more positively they described their compatriots.

Finally, we expected that the national autostereotype would only differ from that obtained in the control condition (i.e. in the absence of any comparison) if the comparison made was specific. This was indeed the case: specific comparisons engendered an autostereotype that was more positive than control, independently of the effect due to identification; in the non-specific comparison conditions, no such effect was observed. This finding underlines the potential significance of distinguishing between specific and non-specific comparisons inasmuch as the sensitivity of the autostereotype to the comparison context (e.g. Cinnirella, 1998) may be limited to certain specific contexts and could be seen as variations on a more stable core theme (Cinnirella, 1997). Although specific comparisons also caused more differentiation by relative trait ratings (see above), it is clearly still meaningful to ask what makes a nation distinct from other nations or the present from the past—our respondents here, for example clearly considered the British sense of humour to be a typical feature no matter what the comparison context. Our results on absolute trait ratings suggest that such non-specific comparisons are, however, not sufficient to bring forth any on-the-spot variation in the autostereotype.

On the whole, these results provide ample evidence for the significance of both individual identification with the nation and the comparison context for descriptions of national character. However, we wished to replicate these findings in a different national group and enable some clarification of those that had been marginal or non-significant in the present sample. This replication is described below.

STUDY 2

The second study reported here was an exact replication of the first and had, in fact, been prepared concurrently. Germany was chosen as the research site, partly for the availability of a sample and partly for the special relationship with the past that characterises German national identity. The horrors of the national socialist regime remain prominent features in German education, media and political discourse and colour perceptions of German history and patriotism in general (e.g. Heimannsberg & Schmidt, 1993). It therefore appeared likely that a German sample would find the Nazi era a more salient temporal comparison target and hence show a stronger psychological reaction than our British sample did to comparison with the 16th-century slave trade. The phenomenon of positive differentiation in specific temporal comparison (H_3), which had been marginal in the British sample, was thus again hypothesised. By contrast, it is sometimes argued that the past in general holds no nostalgia for Germans precisely because it is tainted by the Nazi regime (Weidenfeld, 2002). Although we included a check on our hypothesis of nostalgia (H_4), we were therefore less certain to find a significant result here. All other predictions were unchanged from Study 1.

Method

Design and Materials

With the exception of the different target for specific temporal comparison, the questionnaire used in this study was an identical translated version of that used in Britain. A bilingual researcher had designed the English and German versions of the questionnaire concurrently in order to avoid highly idiomatic and potentially non-equivalent phrases in the two versions. Additionally, the translation was checked by another bilingual associate. The comparison instructions for the specific temporal comparison condition asked respondents to give an account of German national identity 'compared with the time of national socialism and the Second World War' (translated from the German only for the purposes of this report).

Participants and Procedure

Student participants attending educational institutions in the west of Germany were recruited in their lectures and seminars with the permission of teaching staff. After the exclusion of a small number of participants who were not in fact German ($n = 15$) and of those whose manipulation checks gave cause for concern ($n = 34$), the sample consisted of 128 individuals (79 male and 49 female). Their average age was 18.73 years, with a range of 16–30.

Results

Our analytic procedure mirrored that of Study 1. Again, the items measuring national identification formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$), and the ANOVA to test for any effects of comparison on national identification itself returned a negative result ($F_s < 1$), justifying the use of identification as a predictor variable in the subsequent regression analyses. As had been the case in Study 1, results were

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations, Study 2

	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i> ₁	<i>r</i> ₂	<i>r</i> ₃
1. Relative trait evaluation	-2.17	1.83	0.45	0.74	1	0.461 ^a	0.206
2. Absolute trait evaluation	2.42	5.50	4.11	0.69	0.461 ^a	1	0.545 ^a
3. National identification	1.00	7.00	4.43	1.35	0.206	0.545 ^a	1

^aCorrelation significant at $p < 0.05$.

very similar when controlling for age and gender, and the calculations presented here are collapsed across these variables.

Relative Trait Ratings

In contrast to the results obtained for the British sample, no trait stood out as attracting a particularly high mean rating. Positive and negative traits were again summarised into a single index (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.71$). Both this overall relative trait rating and the national identification index were somewhat above the scale mid-point on average (see Table 3).

Several of our hypotheses could again be tested on the basis of a single hierarchical linear regression analysis including national identification, type and specificity of comparison in the first step, all two-way interactions in the second, and the three-way interaction in the third. The analysis is summarised in Table 4.

As before, we expected a linear effect of comparison specificity (H_1) and an interactive effect of comparison type and national identification (H_2) from this main analysis. The former effect was again obtained ($\beta = -0.36$, $t = -3.54$, $p < 0.01$). Specific comparisons were associated with more positive relative trait ratings, as had been the case in Study 1. Meanwhile, the interaction between national identification and type of comparison, whereby identification and positive relative trait ratings had been

Table 4. Regression analysis on relative trait ratings, Study 2

Step	Predictors	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	ΔF	df
1	National identification ($\beta = 0.204^*$) Type of comparison ($\beta = 0.084$) Specificity of comparison ($\beta = -0.362^*$)	0.421	0.177	0.177	5.823	3, 81
2	National identification ($\beta = 0.172$) Type of comparison ($\beta = 0.095$) Specificity of comparison ($\beta = -0.367^*$) Identification* type ($\beta = -0.100$) Identification* specificity ($\beta = 0.136$) Type* specificity ($\beta = 0.018$)	0.455	0.207	0.030	0.978	3, 78
3	National identification ($\beta = 0.166$) Type of comparison ($\beta = 0.094$) Specificity of comparison ($\beta = -0.355^*$) Identification* type ($\beta = -0.074$) Identification* specificity ($\beta = 0.115$) Type* specificity ($\beta = 0.016$) Identification* type specificity ($\beta = -0.181$)	0.488	0.238	0.031	3.157	1, 77

*Standardised regression coefficient significant at $p < 0.05$.

expected to be more closely related in intergroup comparison (H_2) was not significant in this sample ($\beta = -0.07$, $t = -0.73$, *ns*). Instead, the three-way interaction term was a marginally significant predictor ($\beta = -0.18$, $t = -1.78$, $p < 0.09$). Follow-up analyses were conducted in the shape of separate regressions of relative ratings onto national identification for the four comparison conditions. Only under conditions of non-specific intergroup comparison was the model reliable ($R = 0.67$, $R^2 = 0.45$, $F(1, 17) = 13.87$, $p < 0.01$) and the predictor significant in the expected direction ($\beta = 0.67$, $t = 3.72$, $p < 0.01$).

As had been the case in Study 1, a contrast was used to compare the positivity of relative trait ratings in specific and non-specific temporal comparison and establish whether specific comparison with a guilty past would indeed bring forth increased positive differentiation (H_3). Contrast weights (coded as 1 for specific temporal comparison, -1 for non-specific temporal comparison and 0 for all others) and national identification were entered into a new regression analysis, which produced a reliable model ($R = 0.31$, $R^2 = 0.10$, $F(2, 82) = 4.39$, $p < 0.05$). The contrast term was a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.23$, $t = 2.22$, $p < 0.05$), whilst national identification was marginal ($\beta = 0.20$, $t = 1.86$, $p < 0.07$). Specific temporal comparison was thus indeed associated with more positive relative trait ratings than non-specific temporal comparison.

Finally, the data again did not provide any support for the notion of nostalgia (H_4): ratings in the non-specific temporal comparison condition did not correlate with national identification ($r = 0.001$, *ns*).

Absolute Trait Ratings

In terms of absolute ratings, the German ingroup was characterised as reliable ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.20$) but also materialistic ($M = 5.52$, $SD = 0.98$). Xenophobia, by contrast, attracted a comparatively low mean rating ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.36$). A single index for positive and negative traits was again computed (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$) and used for further analysis. Descriptive statistics are given in Table 3.

Across the whole sample, greater national identification was again strongly associated with more positive absolute trait ratings of the national group ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$; see Table 3). To establish whether this was indeed the case regardless of comparison condition (H_5), absolute ratings were used as the outcome variable in a hierarchical linear regression analysis identical to that used for relative ratings (and hence not including the control condition, where no comparison applied). The final model was significant ($R = 0.63$, $R^2 = 0.40$, $F(7, 77) = 7.25$, $p < 0.001$), and national identification did indeed strongly predict ratings ($\beta = 0.54$, $t = 5.89$, $p < 0.001$). However, complexity was added by the unexpected significance of two interaction terms: national identification \times type of comparison ($\beta = 0.24$, $t = 2.67$, $p < 0.01$) and national identification \times specificity of comparison ($\beta = 0.18$, $t = 2.03$, $p < 0.05$).

These interactions were followed up with separate regression analyses for those participants who had received intergroup and temporal comparison instructions, respectively (for the first interaction), and for those who had been asked to make specific or non-specific comparisons, respectively (for the second). National identification and the condition variable not involved in the interaction were entered as predictors.

In examining the national identification \times type of comparison interaction, we found that the regression model for temporal comparison was significant ($R = 0.72$, $R^2 = 0.52$, $F(2, 37) = 19.63$, $p < 0.001$) and identified national identification as the sole reliable predictor ($\beta = 0.70$, $t = 6.11$, $p < 0.001$). By contrast, the regression for intergroup comparison was marginal ($R = 0.36$, $R^2 = 0.13$, $F(2, 42) = 3.17$, $p < 0.06$), with national identification again being a positive predictor of absolute trait ratings ($\beta = 0.36$, $t = 2.52$, $p < 0.05$). These analyses show that identification was even more predictive of absolute trait ratings under instructions of temporal comparison than intergroup comparison.

The same procedure was followed to explore the interaction between national identification and specificity of comparison. For non-specific comparison conditions, the obtained model was reliable ($R = 0.71$, $R^2 = 0.51$, $F(2, 35) = 18.12$, $p < 0.001$) and national identification a strong positive predictor of ratings ($\beta = 0.71$, $t = 6.01$, $p < 0.001$). For specific comparisons, the regression was marginal ($R = 0.33$, $R^2 = 0.11$, $F(2, 44) = 2.69$, $p < 0.08$) and identification again positively associated with trait ratings ($\beta = 0.31$, $t = 2.16$, $p < 0.05$). Once again it seems as if identification was capable of predicting absolute trait ratings in both conditions, but more strongly so in non-specific comparison.

A linear effect of comparison specificity on absolute ratings was not obtained this time ($\beta = -0.05$, $t = -0.59$, *ns*). We nevertheless calculated the contrasts used in Study 1 to compare specific and non-specific comparisons with the control condition and test whether ratings in specific comparisons differed from control as expected (H_6). The regression involving the former contrast, national identification and their interaction yielded a reliable model ($R = 0.56$, $R^2 = 0.31$, $F(3, 124) = 18.47$, $p < 0.001$), but only the linear effect of national identification was significant ($\beta = 0.55$, $t = 7.36$, $p < 0.001$) whilst the contrast term, against our expectations, was not ($\beta = 0.02$, $t = 0.27$, *ns*). Similarly (and expectedly), the regression including the contrast between non-specific comparisons and control was significant ($R = 0.55$, $R^2 = 0.30$, $F(3, 124) = 17.54$, $p < 0.001$), but national identification represented the only significant predictor ($\beta = 0.54$, $t = 7.17$, $p < 0.001$). There was thus no support in the German data for this hypothesis.

Discussion

Findings from this study confirmed many of those obtained with a British sample in Study 1. Specific comparisons, whether along intergroup or temporal lines, were again associated with greater positive differentiation from the object of comparison (H_1), suggesting that distinctiveness motivations may be particularly strong in such settings. However, in contrast to findings from our British study, no change in the absolute autostereotype ratings was observed in the specific comparison conditions (H_6). So whilst our German participants clearly engaged in positive differentiation, as proposed by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), an accentuation of the autostereotype to achieve this differentiation was not in evidence here.

The expected positive relationship between national identification and the positivity of relative trait ratings in intergroup comparison (H_2) was only observed in non-specific comparisons with 'other nations' in general. Higher identifiers were thus more complimentary of their ingroup than lower identifiers when its uniqueness in comparison with others was at issue, but did not differ reliably from lower identifiers in how they differentiated the Germans from the Americans. This illustrates how both the frame of reference and a more stable sense of identification play their part in determining descriptions of the ingroup.

The finding that nostalgia again seemed to be absent (H_4) may reflect Germany's continued preoccupation with its Nazi history, which leaves Germans largely without such a sense of affection for the past (Weidenfeld, 2002). Still, the relative positivity of the description of present-day Germans in specific temporal comparison to those of the national socialist era was significantly greater than in non-specific comparison with the past in general (H_3), whereas the corresponding finding in the British sample (Study 1) had been marginal. The difference between the two samples is likely due to the greater salience of the Nazi past as a shameful period of national history for the Germans than the era of slavery had had for the British respondents. Both findings, however, corroborate the point that differentiation from a stigmatised past can happen along the same lines as the differentiation from other groups more commonly studied in social identity.

Although the German sample displayed the expected overall association between national identification and positivity of the national autostereotype (H_5), this relationship seemed stronger in temporal than in intergroup comparison, and also in non-specific as opposed to specific comparisons. Whilst unexpected, these interactions appear to support the general notion that there is a dynamic relationship between identification and context in determining characterisation of the national group: higher identifiers diverged from less patriotic individuals when the comparison target was non-specific or temporal (and thus, in fact, the ingroup), whereas differences due to identification were reduced when comparisons were made with specific targets or with other nations.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Some general conclusions can be drawn from these hypothesis tests. The first concerns the operation of temporal comparisons. Whilst a growing body of literature examines the significance of temporal comparisons in national identity (Brown & Haeger, 1999; Cinnirella, 1996; Condor, 2001; Mummeny et al., 2001), there has so far been little consideration of how such temporal comparisons could impact on the perceived *content* of national identity. Our results show that nationals engaged in temporal comparisons may differentiate themselves from the comparison target in a similar way as they do in intergroup comparison (as shown by the relative trait scales), especially when the motivation for such differentiation is boosted by comparison with a shameful period of the past. There is also evidence that such temporal comparisons can even precipitate accentuation in descriptions of nationality (as shown by the absolute scales in the British sample); this phenomenon had only been observed in intergroup comparison before (e.g. Haslam et al., 1995; Haslam & Turner, 1992; Hopkins et al., 1997; Oakes et al., 1998; Rutland & Cinnirella, 2000). Like intergroup comparisons, temporal comparisons thus seem to have implications for the way individuals characterise their national group.

Second, the distinction between specific and non-specific comparisons received support. There was evidence in our data that specific comparisons bear the motivation for positive distinctiveness as predicted by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986); our British sample in Study 1 even amended their national autostereotype itself in such specific comparisons. Conversely, non-specific comparisons provoked no context-sensitivity of the autostereotype and may be more concerned with a general sense of uniqueness, which can be seen as more or less positive by individuals with different degrees of national identification (see below). Investigations of collective (and, in particular, national) identity could thus benefit from assuming a relatively stable notion of uniqueness with a degree of context-sensitive fluctuation—the ‘theme’ and its ‘variations’ (Cinnirella, 1997). Concomitantly, it may be worthwhile to distinguish in social identity between the apparently universal motivation for uniqueness and the more contextually bound desire to be positively distinct. Brewer’s optimal distinctiveness theory may provide a useful avenue for pursuing this issue (Brewer, 1991), as might perspectives which have attempted to broaden SIT and SCT’s treatment of motivation (e.g. Deaux, 2000).

Finally, our data provide some evidence for differences between high and low national identifiers in their views of the nation. As expected on the basis of Smith et al.’s (2005) findings, high national identifiers were generally more complimentary (in absolute terms) of their compatriots than less identified individuals. There was also evidence in the relative scales that the identification-bias hypothesis (see Brown, 2000; Hinkle & Brown, 1990) holds for trait descriptions of national identity: high national identifiers differentiated the ingroup more strongly from others than low identifiers did. Interestingly, our German sample (Study 2) displayed the relationship between identification and bias only in non-specific intergroup comparison and showed a strengthened association between

identification and overall autostereotype positivity in temporal (as opposed to intergroup) and non-specific (as opposed to specific) comparisons. It is possible, albeit speculative, that these differences between the two studies are due to the different specific comparison contexts: elements of national identity that are internally contested (see Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) may provide more scope for a differentiation between high and low identifiers than those about which there is relative consensus. Whatever the reasons for these unexpected findings, they corroborate our general contention that *both* context and identification are important contributors to images of national identity.

We found no evidence of nostalgia in our two studies. On the one hand, this is surprising given the significance of constructions of the national past in national entitativity (Condor, 1997, 2001), which could be assumed to represent a significant area of debate between patriots and critics. On the other hand, it seems plausible that our limited catalogue of traits just did not capture the relevant dimensions of nostalgic past–present differentiation. Future research should therefore not abandon the idea of nostalgia as an important phenomenon to study in temporal comparisons on the national level, but work towards establishing these dimensions, for example through the use of qualitative data.

A related weakness of our design is that the range of specific comparison targets was restricted through necessity to one outgroup and one (negative) period of national history. Especially the impact of different targets for temporal comparison deserves more attention in future research: will differences between high and low national identifiers be especially pronounced when the target is ambiguous, as suggested by Doosje et al. (1998)? Will highly valued targets, such as victory in the Second World War for the British and the ‘economic miracle’ of the 1950s for the Germans, inspire nostalgia for the past or pride in the present? And what role is played by the salience of such historical periods in people’s minds, which may have contributed to the somewhat different findings obtained from our British and German samples in temporal comparison? Reicher and Hopkins (2001) advance the argument that different social representations and discourses of the nation wax and wane in popularity, which may have implications also for the psychological outcomes of temporal comparisons informed by these discourses.

In summary, our findings strongly support the notion that national identification, comparison type and comparison specificity all make important contributions to what is perceived as national character. This implies that approaches which examine exclusively the impact of identification or the significance of context risk overlooking a more dynamic interplay between external situation and internal contestation. We argue that a social identity approach willing to include these factors *is* capable of capturing many aspects of national identity and may be able to address Billig’s (1995) concerns about a narrow social-psychological focus on ‘hot’ nationalism and neglect of more holistic approaches to the complex everyday edifice of nationhood.

REFERENCES

- Aberson, C. L., Healy, M., & Romero, V. (2000). Ingroup bias and self-esteem: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *4*, 157–173.
- Albert, S. (1977). Temporal comparison theory. *Psychological Review*, *84*, 485–503.
- Bennett, M., Barrett, M., Karakozov, R., Kipiani, G., Lyons, E., Pavlenko, V., & Riazanova, T. (2004). Young children’s evaluations of the ingroup and of outgroups: A multi-national study. *Social Development*, *13*, 124–141.
- Bettencourt, B. A., Charlton, K., Dorr, N., & Hume, D. L. (2001). Status differences and ingroup bias: A meta-analytic examination of the effects of status stability, status legitimacy, and group permeability. *Psychological Bulletin*, *127*, 520–542.
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. London: Sage.

- Billig, M., & Tajfel, H. (1973). Social categorisation and similarity in intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 3, 27–52.
- Bochenska, D. (1995). A case of international perception: Selected data from a Polish-American study. *Polish Psychological Bulletin*, 26, 128–144.
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 475–482.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1961). The mirror image in Soviet-American relations: A social psychologist's report. *Journal of Social Issues*, 17, 45–46.
- Brown, R. (2000). Social Identity Theory: Past achievements, current problems and future challenges. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 30, 745–778.
- Brown, R., & Haeger, G. (1999). 'Compared to what?': Comparison choice in an inter-nation context. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 29, 31–42.
- Cinnirella, M. (1996). A social identity perspective on European integration. In G. M. Breakwell, & E. Lyons (Eds.), *Changing European identities: Social psychological analyses of social change* (pp. 253–274). Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Cinnirella, M. (1997). Ethnic and national stereotypes: A social identity perspective. In C. C. Barfoot (Ed.), *Beyond Pug's Tour: National and ethnic stereotyping in theory and literary practice* (pp. 37–51). Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi.
- Cinnirella, M. (1998). Manipulating stereotype rating tasks: Understanding questionnaire context effects on measures of attitudes, social identity and stereotypes. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 8, 345–362.
- Condor, S. (1996). Unimagined community? Some social psychological issues concerning English national identity. In G. M. Breakwell, & E. Lyons (Eds.), *Changing European identities: Social psychological analyses of social change* (pp. 41–68). Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Condor, S. (1997). "Having history": A social psychological exploration of Anglo-British autostereotypes. In C. C. Barfoot (Ed.), *Beyond Pug's Tour: National and ethnic stereotyping in theory and literary practice* (pp. 213–253). Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi.
- Condor, S. (2001). Commentary: Nations and nationalisms: Particular cases and impossible myths. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 177–181.
- Deaux, K. (2000). Models, meanings and motivations. In D. Capozza, & R. Brown (Eds.), *Social identity processes: Trends in theory and research* (pp. 1–14). London: Sage.
- Doosje, B., Branscombe, N. R., Spears, R., & Manstead, A. S. R. (1998). Guilty by association: When one's group has a negative history. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 872–886.
- Duckitt, J., & Mphuthing, T. (1998). Group identification and intergroup attitudes: A longitudinal analysis in South Africa. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 80–85.
- Dunnett, C. W. (1955). A multiple comparison procedure for comparing several treatments with a control. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 50, 1096–1121.
- Feather, N. T. (1996). Social comparisons across nations: Variables relating to the subjective evaluation of national achievement and collective self-esteem. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 48, 53–63.
- Gallenmüller, J., & Wakenhut, R. (1992). The conceptualisation and development of a questionnaire for analysing consciousness of national affiliation. *Ricerche di Psicologia*, 16, 9–28.
- Haslam, S. A., Oakes, P. J., Turner, J. C., & McGarty, C. (1995). Social categorisation and group homogeneity: Changes in the perceived applicability of stereotype content as a function of comparative context and trait favourableness. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 34, 139–160.
- Haslam, S. A., & Turner, J. C. (1992). Context-dependent variation in social stereotyping 2: The relationship between frame of reference, self-categorisation and accentuation. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 22, 251–277.
- Haslam, S. A., Turner, J. C., Oakes, P. J., McGarty, C., & Hayes, B. K. (1992). Context-dependent variation in social stereotyping 1: The effects of intergroup relations as mediated by social change and frame of reference. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 22, 3–20.
- Heimannsberg, B., & Schmidt, C. J. (Eds.) (1993). *The collective silence: German identity and the legacy of shame*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass.
- Hewstone, M. (1986). *Understanding attitudes to the European community: A social psychological study in four member states*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hinkle, S., & Brown, R. (1990). Intergroup comparisons and social identity: Some links and lacunae. In D. Abrams, & M. A. Hogg (Eds.), *Social identity theory: Constructive and critical advances* (pp. 48–70). Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

- Hopkins, N., & Cable, I. (2001). Group variability judgements: Investigating the context-dependence of stereotypicality and dispersal judgements. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 40*, 455–470.
- Hopkins, N., & Murdoch, N. (1999). The role of the 'other' in national identity: Exploring the context-dependence of the national ingroup stereotype. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 9*, 321–338.
- Hopkins, N., Regan, M., & Abell, J. (1997). On the context dependence of national stereotypes: Some Scottish data. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 36*, 553–563.
- Jetten, J., Spears, R., Hogg, M. A., & Manstead, A. S. R. (2000). Discrimination constrained and justified: Variable effects of group variability and ingroup identification. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 36*, 329–356.
- Jonas, K., & Hewstone, M. (1986). The assessment of national stereotypes: A methodological study. *Journal of Social Psychology, 126*, 745–754.
- Kedourie, E. (1993). *Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Koomen, W., & Bähler, M. (1996). National stereotypes: Common representations and ingroup favouritism. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 26*, 325–331.
- Lalonde, R. N. (2002). Testing the social identity-intergroup differentiation hypothesis: 'We're not American eh'! *British Journal of Social Psychology, 41*, 611–630.
- Linssen, H., & Hagendoorn, L. (1994). Social and geographical factors in the explanation of the content of European nationality stereotypes. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 33*, 165–182.
- Meyer, W. (1961). Deutsches Autostereotyp und Heterostereotyp von Amerikanern und Persern. *Zeitschrift für Experimentelle und Angewandte Psychologie, 8*, 122–135.
- Mullen, B., Brown, R., & Smith, C. (1992). Ingroup bias as a function of salience, relevance, and status: An integration. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 22*, 103–122.
- Mummendey, A., Klink, A., & Brown, R. (2001). Nationalism and patriotism: National identification and outgroup rejection. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 40*, 159–172.
- Mummendey, A., & Simon, B. (1997). Nationale Identifikation und die Abwertung von Fremdgruppen. In A. Mummendey, & B. Simon (Eds.), *Identität und Verschiedenheit* (pp. 175–193). Bern: Huber.
- Mutterlose, F., & Belz, F. (2004). Deutschsein als Negativität: Sein durch Nicht-Sein. *Verhaltenstherapie und Psychosoziale Praxis, 36*, 301–312.
- Oakes, P. J., Haslam, S. A., & Reynolds, K. J. (1998). Social categorisation and social context: Is stereotype change a matter of information or a matter of meaning? In D. Abrams, & M. A. Hogg (Eds.), *Social identity and social cognition* (pp. 55–79). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Oakes, P. J., Haslam, S. A., & Turner, J. C. (1994). *Stereotyping and social reality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Oakes, P. J., Haslam, S. A., & Turner, J. C. (1998). The role of prototypicality in group influence and cohesion: Contextual variation in the graded structure of social categories. In S. Worchel, J. F. Morales, D. Páez, & J.-C. Deschamps (Eds.), *Social identity: International perspectives* (pp. 75–92). London: Sage.
- Peabody, D. (1985). *National characteristics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Perdue, C. W., Dovidio, J. F., Gurtman, M. B., & Tyler, R. B. (1990). Us and them: Social categorisation and the process of intergroup bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59*, 475–486.
- Perreault, S., & Bourhis, R. Y. (1998). Social identification, interdependence and discrimination. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, 1*, 49–66.
- Poppe, E., & Linssen, H. (1999). Group favouritism and the reflection of realistic dimensions of difference between national states in central and eastern European nationality stereotypes. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 38*, 85–102.
- Rabbie, J. M., & Horwitz, M. (1969). Arousal of ingroup-outgroup bias by a chance win or loss. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 13*, 269–277.
- Reicher, S. D., & Hopkins, N. (2001). *Self and nation: Categorisation, contestation and mobilisation*. London: Sage.
- Riketta, M. (2002). Intergroup comparisons within the context of nested self-categorisations: Effects of regional and national comparisons on the acceptance of the European Union. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, 5*, 119–131.
- Rutland, A., & Cinnirella, M. (2000). Context effects on Scottish national and European self-categorisation: The importance of category accessibility, fragility and relations. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 39*, 495–519.
- Salazar, J. M. (1998). Social identity and national identity. In S. Worchel, J. F. Morales, D. Páez, & J.-C. Deschamps (Eds.), *Social identity: International perspectives* (pp. 114–123). London: Sage.
- Schaller, M., & Maass, A. (1989). Illusory correlation and social categorisation: Towards an integration of motivational and cognitive factors in stereotype formation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56*, 709–721.

- Smith, P. B., Giannini, M., Helkama, K., Maczynski, J., & Stumpf, S. (2005). Positive autostereotyping and self-construal as predictors of national identification. *Revue Internationale de Psychologie Sociale*, *18*, 65–90.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2001). *Using multivariate statistics*. London: Allyn & Bacon.
- Tajfel, H. (1959). Quantitative judgement in social perception. *British Journal of Psychology*, *50*, 16–29.
- Tajfel, H. (1969a). Cognitive aspects of prejudice. *Journal of Social Issues*, *25*, 19–91.
- Tajfel, H. (1969b). The formation of national attitudes: A social psychological perspective. In M. Sherif, & C. W. Sherif (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary relationships in the social sciences* (pp. 137–176). Chicago: Aldine.
- Tajfel, H. (1970). Aspects of national and ethnic loyalty. *Social Science Information*, *9*, 119–144.
- Tajfel, H., & Billig, M. (1974). Familiarity and categorisation in intergroup behaviour. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *10*, 159–170.
- Tajfel, H., Billig, M., Bundy, R. P., & Flament, C. (1971). Social categorisation and intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *1*, 149–178.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of group conflict. In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–53). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In S. Worchel, & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Tajfel, H., & Wilkes, A. L. (1963). Classification and quantitative judgement. *British Journal of Psychology*, *54*, 101–114.
- Turner, J. C. (1999). Some current issues in research on social identity and self-categorisation theories. In N. Ellemers, R. Spears, & B. Doosje (Eds.), *Social identity: Context, commitment, content* (pp. 6–34). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (Eds.) (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorisation theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Uzzell, D. (1996). Creating place identity through heritage interpretation. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *1*, 219–228.
- Weidenfeld, G. (2002). Deutschlands neuer Weg. Retrieved on 23/9/2002 from <http://www.welt.de/daten/2002/09/23.html>

Copyright of European Journal of Social Psychology is the property of John Wiley & Sons Ltd. 1996 and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.