The Relationship between Intercultural Personality Traits and Xenophobia in Italy and Germany: A Comparative Study

Petia Genkova, Christoph Daniel Schafer, Elise Bonacina

University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Germany

ABSTRACT

Xenophobic tendencies in a receiving society constitute challenging obstacles for the opportunities of refugees and other immigrants. The present study examined the relationships between identifications with social groups and xenophobic attitudes. In particular, it tested whether national identification, ethnic identification, superordinate identification and dual identification are associated with xenophobia, employing a German and an Italian sample. We anticipated and found that ethnic identity tends to be positively related to xenophobia, while dual identification is negatively related to xenophobia. This pattern suggests that especially ethnic identification can function as a marker for the accentuation of intra-societal differences, while dual identification is likely to indicate a more inclusive value orientation. The results also demonstrated that there was no measurement invariance between the German and the Italian sample, suggesting that the connotations of the items are likely to differ between the two cultural contexts, indicating that the cross-cultural applicability cannot be taken for granted even in case of widely established scales.

Keywords: xenophobia; intercultural; personality traits; Germany; Italy

INTRODUCTION

Increasing global mobility entails that diversity in many Western societies is on the rise. Both the internationalization of the labour market and refugee movements contribute to the heterogeneity of demographic compositions in terms of ethnic and cultural groups. At the same time, social, economic, and ecologic challenges (partially related to globalisation) require an increased degree of societal cooperation and cohesion. Opposing this requirement for cooperation are tendencies towards polarization in many societies, while policies regarding immigrants often belong to the core of political polarization in several societies. Xenophobic tendencies are both an obstacle for necessary cooperative steps and for the integration of refugees and other immigrants. Xenophobia is described by the International Labour Organization (2020) as "attitudes, prejudices and behaviours that reject, exclude, and often disdain people on the basis of being perceived as alien to the community or national group" [3]. Xenophobia can entail considerable stress for the victims, which can have not only psychological but also physical effects. For example, demonstrated that xenophobia can have adverse health impacts for people with an immigration background. Excluding social groups does not only harm its direct victims, but also hampers society as a whole in social and economic terms, undermining societal cohesion and preventing people from unfolding their productive and creative potentials. It is therefore essential to identify factors that can contribute to the reduction of xenophobic attitudes in a society.

Studies on social framework conditions indicated that there are differences in xenophobic attitudes between receiving societies. For example, found in a comparative international study a broad variety in the average attitudes to societal diversity and equality across countries.

In the present article, we compare the level of xenophobia and its relations to identifications in Italy and Germany. Both of these two countries have comparatively high levels of immigration. The main focus of our study is the association between xenophobia and identifications with social groups, since the assignment of the self to social groups has far-reaching consequences for the perception and evaluation of self and others .

ATTITUDES TOWARDS OUTGROUPS IN ITALY AND GERMANY

Previous studies found differences in the attitudes towards diversity in general and immigrants in particular between Italy and Germany. When asking respondents about their agreement to the statement that increasing cultural diversity in the respective country entails positive changes in the country, 50 % of the respondents in a German sample evinced agreement with this statement, whilst in an Italian sample it was only 26 %. Comparing the attitudes towards immigrants, it was demonstrated that more Italians than Germans advocate stricter measures against illegal immigrants. Since national pride was found to be associated with stronger distancing from outgroups, this finding is in line with the observation that national pride is more pronounced in Italy than in Germany.

The fact that self-reported national pride and distancing from outgroups is lower in Germany than in Italy is likely to be partially rooted in German experiences related to World War II and the holocaust. More recent historical developments, however, might be involved as well. Italy experienced a drastic transition from an emigration to an immigration country, which was accompanied by an initial underdevelopment of regulatory norms with regard to immigration processes day. An initial

widespread nervousness in the face of a high number of immigrants within a comparatively short period of time appears to have popularized calls for restrictive measures. Reports and discourses about increased crime rates of certain minority groups are likely to have contributed to polarization and generalized xenophobia. Even though the average level of xenophobia (based on self-reports) is lower in Germany, there are similar tendencies there. Xenophobia has been on the rise in Germany as well, especially among younger people, while a new right-wing populist party (AfD) has gained ground in the political landscape in the recent years

IDENTIFICATIONS AND OUTGROUP ATTITUDES

The categorization of individuals into social groups has far-reaching consequences for the perception and evaluation of self and others. According to self-categorization theory the evaluation of groups and individuals depends on the extent to which they are perceived as being in line with the ideal self. When the prototype of an ingroup is perceived as being close the ideal self, members of the ingroup tend to be liked. This tendency is enforced by the fact that group members are perceived as similar to one another, so that a perceptual assimilation of ingroup members to one another leads to more liking, when the ingroup prototype is in line with the ideal self . Differences between groups, in contrast, are accentuated by categorizations. To the extent that outgroup prototypes are seen as deviating from the ideal self, outgroup members tend to be devalued and disliked. It was demonstrated empirically that the evaluation of outgroups depends indeed on how the ingroup and its resulting relationships to outgroups are defined. For example, it was observed that the association between national identification and attitudes towards immigrants varies, depending on how the national ingroup is defined. A study by Pehrson et al. revealed that the relationship between national identification and prejudice was more marked when inhabitants defined national belonging group membership as linked to ethnic characteristics than when being based on ethnically neutral definitions.

In both West Germany and East Germany, national identification was found to be associated with prejudice towards immigrants. This finding might be related to the observation that German citizenry used to be based on descent instead of a place of birth of living [13]. In other words, the essence of being German had been constructed as being dependent on German ancestry, instead of living in Germany in accordance with German customs. Thus, identifying with Germany might often imply to identify with an ethnic group, so that this identification should render the distinction between the ingroup of ethnic Germans and other ethnic groups (such as immigrants) more salient. Thus, identifying with a country whose citizenry is defined ethnically can accentuate differences to other ethnicities, so that an evaluative hierarchy between the ingroup and other ethnicities can be implied

Since group categorizations tend to induce positive evaluations of ingroup members (to the extent that the ingroup prototype is perceived as being close to the ideal-self), the salience of a common group membership can lead to liking between individuals. As self-categorization theory argues, the categorization implies that similarities within groups are accentuated, while the perception of differences with groups diminish. The rationale of several approaches for improving intergroup relations is to use this mechanism on a higher level. When the boundaries of the ingroup are extended to include a former outgroup, so that former outgroup members become ingroup members, the tendency towards ingroup liking can embrace former out group members

In case of the so-called "recategorization" approach, it is attempted to foster identification with a superordinate group, which includes both former ingroup and outgroup members under the umbrella of a common group. Thus, the borders of the groups are redrawn, so that the new, superordinate group substitutes for the original groups. Since group members, however, often want to retain ingroup values and practices , an attempt of dissolving original group boundaries is rarely an option in case of natural groups. Since group identifications are often valued by the group members, trying to dissolve these group identities can be perceived as threat, which can exacerbate out group attitudes.

An alternative to the attempt of undermine group identities is the dual identity approach. In this approach, the original groups are being maintained, while these groups become part of superordinate group. This avoids threats to the group distinctiveness while reaping the benefits of including former out group members under the umbrella of a common group.

The subjective experience of dual identification might have effects above and beyond those of superordinate group identification. The experience of belonging to both a specific ingroup and to a superordinate group could be an indicator for having reconciled the demands and values from both groups. This reconciliation can be achieved when those values from both groups which are subjectively perceived as relevant are also perceived as compatible.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Owing to the peculiar role of nationalism in German history, the degree of open nationalism and self-reported negative attitudes to outgroups is in Germany is less prevalent than in many other countries. In line with previous results, we expected that the degree of self-reported attitudes of xenophobia in a German sample would be lower than in an Italian sample (H1). We employed a direct and an indirect measurement of xenophobia, thus applying a distinction for which Meertens and Pettigrew argued in their seminal work on prejudice. These authors indicated that in many societies, such as Northern America and Western Europe, social norms discourage the expression of prejudice and discrimination in public. The reduction of the open expression does not imply that prejudice has disappeared. Instead, more indirect and subtle forms of negative feelings against foreigners seem to be still present. We therefore included in our study social distance measures adapted from Bogardus, which aim at indirect expressions of xenophobic inclinations, similar to the subtle prejudice measures of Meertens and Pettigrew. We used these social distance measures to ask participants directly about the two of the largest immigrant groups in Germany and Italy, respectively. For the German sample, we used Turks and Russians as target groups, while for the Italian sample, we used Rumanians and Albanians. As a further indicator of xenophobic inclinations, we assessed to what degree participants demand that immigrant groups should give up their cultural identity and cultural characteristics, drawing on acculturation preferences of majorities elaborated by Berry.

We also expected that national identification would be positively associated with xenophobic tendencies (H2a). This anticipation was based on both self-categorization theory and previous findings. National identification should, according to self-categorization theory, render the differences to other groups more salient. When the prototype of the national ingroup is experienced as related to the ideal self, outgroups (whose differences to the ingroup are accentuated) should be devalued. It was observed in former studies in Germany that national identification is indeed associated with prejudice . Since ethnic identification should render the difference between the ingroup of "ethnic" Germans and other citizens with a migration background salient, we also expected that ethnic identification is associated with xenophobic inclinations (H2b).

A superordinate identification that comprises several nations under one umbrella should be associated with positive values towards these included nations. Identifying with such a supranational identification should also indicate a non-parochial orientation, with a tendency of embracing international values. Thus, we expected that identifying with Europe, as a supranational entity, should decrease xenophobic inclinations, even beyond European nations or ethnicities (H3).

Finally, the experience of a dual identification should indicate that values of an ingroup (that are subjectively regarded as significant) are compatible with values from a superordinate group. Thus, when individuals identify both with a nation and a supranational community that stretches across national borders, an international orientation is signified that should not be compatible with generalized prejudice towards non-nationals. We therefore hypothesised that the feeling of being dually identified with both a national ingroup and Europe should be associated with positive attitudes towards other nations and ethnicities (H4).

METHODS

Measures

The data was collected using a written questionnaire. Answering the questionnaires took about 30 minutes. In addition to demographic information (see table 1), various constructs were measured which relate to identifications, intergroup attitudes and intercultural capacities. The wording of the scales was developed by back and forth translation by two

bilingual native speakers. This elaborate, multiple-stage revision enabled to specify the indicators more precisely, supporting the comparability of the data collected with the two questionnaires.

The constructs relevant for the present study were the following:

Xenophobia

To assess xenophobia, we used direct and indirect measures. For measuring the direct form, we employed a short version of the questionnaire on xenophobia) [21], consisting of 5 items with a Likert scale (from 0 = *is not correct at all* to 3 = *is totally correct*). An example item is: "If others spread in our country, we have to show them who is the master of the house". For the German sample, Cronbach's α was .75, while for the Italian sample Cronbach's α was .76.

We also measured "social distance" as an indirect variety of xenophobic attitudes, by asking participants whether they were willing to admit outgroup members to the formers' ingroups. We employed and slightly adapted items from the social distance measure of Bogardus [18, 19]. Example items are: "I would let them marry into my family", "I would accept them as neighbours in my street", or "I would tolerate them as colleagues at my workplace". We used two of the largest immigrant groups in Germany and Italy as target groups. For the German sample, we used Turks and Russians, while for the Italian sample, we used Rumanians and Albanians.

As a further indicator of subtle xenophobic inclinations, we employed an item from Berry et al. "Do you consider it valuable for foreigners to maintain their own cultural identity and cultural characteristics in Germany or Italy?" To this item, participants could provide a yes or no answer. This item can be understood as the (reversely coded) demand that immigrants give up their cultural characteristics.

Ingroup identification and Superordinate Group Identification

We measured participants' levels of identification with the ingroup and with the superordinate group by using scales of Waldzus et al. The phrasing of the items was nearly identical for both scales, only differing with regard to the target group: "I identify with [my fellow countrymen / Europeans]", "I have a negative attitude towards [Germany / Italy / Europe]" (recoded), "I consider myself to belong to the [Germans / Italians / Europeans]", "I like being [German / Italian / European]", and "I feel like a [German / Italian / European]". The internal consistencies were as following: For ingroup identification, α was .89 for the German and .88 for the Italian sample; superordinate group identification ⍺ was .62 for the German and .82 for the Italian sample.

Dual Identification

To measure dual identification, we used items from Orth et al. [24]: "I feel European and a [German/Italian]" and "Sometimes I feel more [German/Italian] and sometimes more European" (Spearman-Brown Coefficient ρ = .49 for the Germen sample and .74 for the Italian sample).

Ethnic Identification

To assess ethnic identification, we employed items of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure of Phinney. This scale aims at measuring three sub-components of ethnic identity: ethnic identity achievement, ethnic behaviours, and ethnic identity affirmation and belonging. For ethnic identity achievement, Cronbach's α was .73 (German sample) and .74 (Italian sample). For ethnic behaviours, the Spearman-Brown Coefficient ρ was .26 (German sample) and .40

(Italian sample). For affirmation and belonging, Cronbach's α was .88 for both the German and the Italian sample.

Samples

The German and Italian samples were collected using snowball sampling at the universities of Passau (Germany), Verona and Milan (Italy). A total of 152 individuals took part in the study. From these, we selected only those individuals who were born inside Germany or Italy, respectively. The remaining sample consisted of 90 participants who lived in Germany (67 %) and 45 who lived in Italy (33 %). The demographic variables age, gender and education were used in the main statistical analysis. Additionally, the demographic categorical variables employment and partnership status were recorded for the descriptive statistics. The mean age was 34 years (*SD* = 17) in the German sample and 32 years (*SD* = 13) in the Italian sample. Table 1 shows the distributions (and, if used in the main analyses, the coding) of demographic categorical variables in the two samples. Solely the cell distribution of partnership status differs significantly between the German and the Italian sample.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the German and the Italian sample in addition to a χ^2 – Difference Test, for comparing the demographic group variables of these two samples.

Variable	(Coding)	Germany (n = 90)		Italy (n = 45)		Total (n = 135)		χ^2 – Difference Test
		n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	p
Gender	female (0)	47	52	29	64	76	56	.18
	male (1)	43	48	16	36	59	44	
Education	no university/college degree (0)	61	69	26	58	87	65	.22
	university/college degree (1)	28	31	19	42	47	35	
Employment	unemployed	48	55	18	40	66	50	.11
	part-or full-time employed	40	45	27	60	67	50	
Partnership	without partner	37	42	10	23	47	36	.03
	with partner	51	58	34	77	85	64	

RESULTS

To test our hypotheses about the relationships between identifications with social groups and attitudes towards outgroups, we performed multiple regression analyses. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the main variables are presented in Tables 2a (for the German sample) and 2b (for the Italian sample).

identification could range from 1 to 7. Owing to missing values, n was 45.

$*p \leq .05$; $**p \leq .01$; $***p \leq .001$ (all two-tailed).

Results on the scale properties

In order to assess the comparability of the dependent variables across the

Table 2a: Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the main variables; German sample

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Ingroup Identification	2.00	1.46						
2. Superordinate. Group Identification	1.39	1.08	.39***					
3. Dual Identification	4.43	1.26	.30**	.44***				
4. Ethnic Identity Achievement	3.55	0.68	.17	.19	.37***			
5. Ethnic Behaviours	3.27	0.88	.39***	.27*	.36***	.41***		
6. Ethnic Identity Affirmation and Belonging	3.55	0.82	.66***	.27*	.30**	.48***	.48***	
7. Xenophobia Scale	0.83	0.44	.19	.17	.05	.03	.17	.28**

Notes. Higher mean scores indicate a higher level of the construct in question. The scores for the ingroup identification and superordinate group identification could range from -4 to 4, while dual identification could range from 1 to 7. Ethnic identity achievement, ethnic behaviours and ethnic identity affirmation and belonging could range from 1 to 5; xenophobia from 0 to 3. Owing to missing values, ns varied between 89 and 90.

two groups, we first examined whether there is measurement invariance across the groups. If this was the case, group differences could be compared, and regression analyses could be run as multiple group analyses. We employed M-tests to assess measurement invariance. Since the M-test was significant for two of our identification measures and for our xenophobia measure ($p \leq .035$), measurement invariance could not be assumed. We therefore run separate analyses for the two samples.

Table 2b: *Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the main variables; Italian sample*

Measure	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Ingroup Identification	0.89	1.68						
2. Superordinate. Group Identification	0.88	1.45	.55***					
3. Dual Identification	4.69	1.57	.39**	.66***				
4. Ethnic Identity Achievement	3.63	0.74	.06	.04	.11			
5. Ethnic Behaviours	3.37	1.04	.30*	.47**	.27	.41**		
6. Ethnic Identity Affirmation and Belonging	3.63	0.78	.31*	.09	0.00	.40**	.14	
7. Xenophobia Scale	1.06	0.56	.21	-.49***	-.44**	.03	.13	.37*

$*p \leq .05$; $**p \leq .01$; $***p \leq .001$ (all two-tailed).

Notes. Higher mean scores indicate a higher level of the construct in question. The scores for the ingroup identification, superordinate group, and for the outgroup attitudes could range from 1 to 9, while dual

MAIN ANALYSES

Differences between the German and the Italian Sample

Hypothesis 1 states that xenophobia is higher in the Italian than in the

German sample. This hypothesis could not be appropriately tested because there was an indication for the violation of measurement invariance for the xenophobia items across the two samples. Descriptively, however, we found differences in the predicted direction. The mean of the xenophobia scale was 1.06 for the German sample and .83 for the Italian sample.

Group Identifications and Attitudes towards Immigrants

All of the run regression analyses included the same set of control variables for each sample, namely age, gender, and education (with vs. without university or college degree). To test whether national identification (hypothesis 2a), superordinate group identification (hypothesis 3), and dual identification (hypothesis 4) are associated with xenophobic inclinations, these variables were together included into regression analyses as predictors. As criteria, we used measures of direct and indirect expressions of xenophobic tendencies. As a direct measure, we used the xenophobia scale. The assessed social distance to outgroups and granting immigrants to keep their cultural characteristics (vs. abandoning these characteristics) served as indicators of subtler forms of xenophobic inclinations. For the xenophobia scale and the social distance measure, we used linear regression models. As the demand for giving up cultural characteristics was a binary variable, we used logistic regression analyses for this variable as a criterion.

We found that national identification only had an effect on allowing that immigrants keep their cultural characteristics (vs. the demand for abandoning these characteristics) in the German sample (B = -0.63, SE = 0.27, Wald's χ^2 (1) = 5.57, p = .018, OR = 0.53). There were no other significant effects of national identification on the criteria. Superordinate group identification had only a (negative) effect on the xenophobia scale in the Italian sample (B = -0.16, SE = 0.08, β = -0.41, t = -2.11, p = .042), with no other significant effects. Dual identity, however, had significant effects on (a lack of) social distance to Rumanians in Italy (B = 0.07, SE = 0.04, β = 0.37, t = 2.08, p = .044) and to Albanians in Italy (B = 0.08, SE = 0.04, β = 0.40, t = 2.28, p = .028). There was also an effect on granting immigrants their cultural characteristics (B = 0.92, SE = 0.30, Wald's χ^2 (1) = 9.42, p = .002, OR = 2.51).

To test whether ethnic identity is associated with xenophobic inclinations (hypothesis 2b), we run separate regression analyses. In these analyses, we used the same set of control variables as in the previous analyses (i.e., age, gender, and education). Measures of ethnic identity components served as predictor variables. These components were: ethnic identity affirmation and belonging, ethnic identity achievement, and ethnic behaviours. As criteria, we again employed the xenophobia scale, the social distance measure, and the granting immigrants their cultural characteristics. We found that ethnic identity affirmation and belonging had significant effects on most criteria. It had an effect on the xenophobia scale in Germany (B = 0.20, SE = 0.07, β = 0.38, t = 2.96, p = .004) and Italy (B = 0.27, SE = 0.11, β = 0.38, t = 2.42, p = .021). It also had an effect on social distance to Rumanians in Italy (B = -0.16, SE = 0.06, β = -.40, t = -2.86, p = .007) and Albanians in Italy (B = -0.18, SE = 0.06, β = -0.43, t = -2.91, p = .006). Additionally, this predicator had an effect on granting immigrants their cultural characteristics in the German sample (B = -1.32, SE = 0.50, Wald's χ^2 (1) = 6.96, p = .008, OR = 0.27).

Ethnic identity achievement had solely an effect on granting immigrants their cultural characteristics in the German sample (B = 1.42, SE = 0.56, Wald's χ^2 (1) = 6.44, p = .011, OR = 4.12). The variable ethnic behaviours, in turn, had only an effect on granting immigrants their cultural characteristics in the Italian sample (B = -1.08, SE = 0.51, Wald's χ^2 (1) = 4.48, p = .034, OR = 0.34).

DISCUSSION

Differences in xenophobia between Germany and Italy

Previous research indicated that xenophobic attitudes are more widespread in Italy than they are in Germany. We hypothesised that we could replicate this finding by demonstrating higher values on the xenophobia scale in the Italian sample than in the German sample. Not least due to the role that nationalism had played in German up to 1945 and the subsequent coping with the past, self-reported, open xenophobia is lower in Germany than in many other countries. In line with previous results, we expected that the degree of blatant xenophobia in a German sample would be lower than in

an Italian sample (H1). For the short scale used in this study to measure xenophobia, there was no measurement invariance. This indicates that the participants in the two countries responded to the individual items of the instrument in different patterns, so that a comparison of the mean values is not possible. Demonstrated by a simulation study that only 35 % of the group comparisons are robust if there is no measurement invariance. Therefore, a stringent testing of hypothesis 1 was not feasible. Descriptively, however, there was a difference between the sample means in the expected direction. Future studies should focus on the development of xenophobia measurement instruments that possess measurement invariance across various countries and cultural groups.

Group Identifications and Attitudes towards Immigrants

We had hypothesised that national identification (hypothesis 2a), ethnic identification (2b), superordinate identification with Europe, and dual identification with both the national in group and Europe would affect xenophobic tendencies. We found little support for an influence of national identification or superordinate group identification on xenophobia, so that we could not corroborate hypotheses 2a and 3. These results should be viewed, however, in light of our small sample sizes, which entailed low statistical power.

Considering that low number of participants, it is remarkable that we observed significant results in several of our analyses. The effect for ethnic identity affirmation and belonging was significant in most of our analyses, thus partially supporting hypothesis 2a. This component of ethnic identity had been developed to tap on the affective aspects of ethnic identity, involving the feeling of belonging and pride. The fact that this variable had the clearest association with xenophobic attitudes suggests that affective bonds to one's ethnicity are particularly decisive in determining the relationship to out groups. While a nation and national identification can include different ethnicities, ethnic identity is particularly exclusive. Feeling strongly attached to one's ethnicity and proud of it was associated with subtle forms of xenophobic attitudes as well as with blatant rejection of outgroups. The overlap between ethnic pride and blatant rejection of outgroups could suggest that pride implies the devaluing of others. Alternatively, it is conceivable that only those who are willing to admit xenophobic tendencies are also willing to express their ethnic pride. Future studies should examine by longitudinal, cross-lagged designs (and, ideally, by experimental studies that encourage ethnic identification) whether there is bi-directional causation.

For dual identification, half of the regression analyses with measures of subtle xenophobia as criteria were significant. Thus, hypothesis 4 received partial support. The fact that dual identification was only significant subtler forms of xenophobic attitudes could indicate that self-reports about these tendencies is more susceptible to individual orientations. In other words, while blatant xenophobia might solely be expressed by individual with relatively extreme political views, measures like preferred social distance or acceptance of different cultural characteristics might vary more sensitively in response to individual feelings about outgroups. It is further remarkable that (except for ethnic identification) dual identification in particular evinced effects of xenophobic tendencies. This result corroborates that idea that dual identification is indicative of a successful integration of values from the national ingroup with more cosmopolitan values. In summary, the results suggest that, nations should be defined by values that are ethnically open and that are reconcilable with international orientations, when positive intergroup relations are aspired.

LIMITATIONS

The two samples mainly consisted of students from the universities of Passau, Milan, and Verona. They were collected employing snowball sampling. Future studies would ideally redesign the selection process in such a way that representative samples are obtained. As [27] points out, the disadvantage of snowball sampling is that it is does not result in a random sample. Other important limitations refer to the small sample size of Italians and the fact that there were only student and academic participants in both samples. It is therefore questionable whether the results can be generalized to other population groups.

Due to the small sample sizes, particularly with regard to the Italian sample, there were serious power limitations of the study, rendering it challenging to find significant results. Even though the high likelihood of

false negatives, it is problematic that we employed three criteria to test the same hypotheses, implying the multiple comparisons problem. Replication studies are therefore required.

Most crucially, a cross-sectional study does not allow inferences about causality. Thus, it is conceivable that the attitude towards other nations and cultures is an essential influential factor on the identification with the ethnic or national ingroups and with superordinate, international entities. From the perspective of self-categorization theory [5], influences in both directions are likely. A higher degree of perceived similarities (and a lower degree of perceived differences) between the national ingroup and other national groups should be associated with the perception of a common, superordinate group. The perception of a common group, in turn, should increase the perception of similarities within this group, rendering subgroup (national or ethnic) categorization less prevalent. Thus, identifications with superordinate groups should lead to the perception of more similarities amongst subgroups and to more positive attitudes towards other sub-groups, while the perception similarities between nations should increase the likelihood of identifying with a superordinate, international group.

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