Ethnic minority children's attitudes towards competitive team members: A minimal group study with British Bengali children

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Título: Las actitudes de los niños de minorías hacia los miembros de un equipo competitivo: el paradigma de grupo mínimo con niños británicos bengalíes.

Resumen: Desde su formulación a finales de los años 90, la teoría evolutiva de la identidad social (SIDT; Nesdale, 1999) ha sido apoyada por numerosos estudios sobre el paradigma de grupo mínimo, aunque estos se han realizado principalmente con niños del grupo mayoritario. Este trabajo adapta el paradigma experimental de grupo mínimo de Nesdale et al. (2003) para evaluar las predicciones de la SIDT en una muestra de niños de una minoría étnica. Se asignó a 148 niños británicos- bengalíes de 5-6, 7-8 y 9-10 años a un 'equipo de dibujo' que poseía habilidades superiores a las de un equipo rival. Los miembros del equipo podían ser del mismo grupo étnico (británicos-bengalíes) o diferente (británicos-blancos). Se pidió a los niños que puntuaran su preferencia por el propio equipo y el rival, el grado en que se sentían semejantes a uno y otro, y si deseaban cambiar de equipo. Se encontró que los niños preferían su equipo en mayor medida que al equipo rival, independientemente de la etnia de sus miembros. Sin embargo, los niños se sentían más iguales a su propio equipo cuando estaba formado por miembros de su grupo étnico que por miembros de distinto grupo étnico. Los resultados se comparan con los obtenidos en estudios previos con niños del grupo mayoritario, y se discuten en relación con la SIDT.

Palabras clave: Teoría evolutiva de la identidad social; niños; minoría étnica; grupo mínimo; británicos-bengalíes.

Abstract: Since its inception in the late 1990s, the social identity development theory (SIDT; Nesdale, 1999) has been supported by various minimal group studies, although such work has invariably been done with ethnic majority group children. The present study adapted Nesdale et al.'s (2003) minimal group experiment to test the predictions from SIDT with a sample of ethnic minority children. One hundred and forty-eight British Bengali children aged 5-6, 7-8 and 9-10 years were allocated to a 'drawing team' that had superior skills than a rival team. The team members were shown to be of the same (Bengali) or a different (white English) ethnicity. Children rated their liking for, and similarity to, their own team and the rival team, and the extent to which they wanted to change teams. It was found that the children preferred their own team members more than the rival team members, irrespective of the ethnic makeup of the teams. However, the children felt more similar to their own team when it was made up of same-ethnic members compared to when it was made up of different-ethnic members. The findings are discussed in relation to those in previous studies with ethnic majority children and support for SIDT.

Keywords: social identity development theory; children; ethnic minority; minimal group; British Bengali

Introduction

Until recently, understanding the development of children's ethnic attitudes has been approached predominantly by accounts that emphasise perceptual-cognitive development (e.g., Aboud, 1988; Doyle & Aboud, 1995; Doyle, Beaudet, & Aboud, 1988). In particular, according to Aboud's (1988) socio-cognitive theory, initially the younger pre-operational child's preferences for and prejudice towards different ethnic others are based on their physical attributes (e.g., skin colour, eye shape, hair texture), and prejudice is strong at this stage due to the inherent fear of the unfamiliar, which is represented by the attributes of out-groups. With the advances in the understanding of ethnic constancy (that one's ethnic group membership remains unchanged in spite of outward changes such as changes in hair colour or dress-code), which coincides with the improvement in conservation skills from 4 through to 7 years of age, ethnic bias and prejudice are expected to peak and plateau before a systematic decline beyond age 7. This decline is explained as a reflection of children's acquisition of concrete operational thoughts as part of their general cognitive development, as they become increasingly able to 'individualise'; that is children are able to perceive and evaluate others as unique individuals and by their internal-psychological attributes rather than focusing on the external-perceptual features that mark their social group membership.

While the socio-cognitive theory is itself conceptually self-contained as well as theoretically consistent, in that the development of children's ethnic attitudes can be explained exclusively by drawing on the general tenets of cognitive development, empirically the research evidence has been mixed in its support for the theory. Studies conducted up to the 1990s (e.g., Aboud 1988; Doyle & Aboud, 1995) found a decline in in-group preference and out-group prejudice in white ethnic majority children from around 7 years of age that followed an increase in ethnic bias. Such a decline was also associated with children's development of conservation skills (Doyle & Aboud, 1995; Doyle, Beaudet, & Aboud, 1988).

One of the key shortcomings with such research findings purported to uphold the socio-cognitive theory is that an association between cognitive development and ethnic prejudice through middle childhood does not denote that ethnic prejudice will invariably 'disappear' as cognitive skills such as conservation are mastered. A closer inspection of data shows that up to half of the conservers still display ethnic prejudice (Doyle & Aboud, 1995). Also, some studies have found that ethnic prejudice does not change or actually increases into middle childhood (Black-Gutman & Hickson, 1996; Coremblum, Annis, & Tanaka, 1997). Thus it seems

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that cognitive development is not a prerequisite, if at all, for the reduction of ethnic prejudice.

Another key problem with the earlier research findings that the socio-cognitive theory was claimed to explain satisfactorily is that such research often confounded the in-group and out-group effects through the interpretation of results (see Aboud, 2003, Brewer, 1999; Cameron, Alvarez, Ruble, & Fuligni, 2001, for reviews). Owing to the methods used to measure children's ethnic preferences and attitudes (asking children to choose from a set of dolls, drawings or photographs that presumably represent the different ethnic groups, or to attribute value-laden traits to such stimuli), a preference for or greater liking towards the in-group stimuli was often inferred as a simultaneous rejection or dislike of the out-groups. Recent research investigating in- and out-group evaluations separately has found that, at least for white majority children, the two are not related to each other (Kowalski, 2003) and that there is little or no devaluation or rejection of out-groups (Aboud, 2003).

Crucially, the earlier research that did support the socio-cognitive theory was, by and large, conducted with the ethnic majority group (white) children. It has been a widely observed phenomenon that ethnic minority children often show a non-biased or even pro-out-group (pro-white) preference or attitude (e.g., Aboud & Skerry, 1983; Annis & Corenblum, 1987; Corenblum & Wilson, 1982). The logic of preferring and liking those who are similar or familiar to oneself (in-group) or rejecting and disliking those who are dissimilar or unfamiliar (out-group) as predicted by the theory does not hold in this case. It is likely that processes beyond cognition alone contribute towards how some children are more or less biased than others in this period of childhood.

Some researchers have looked to factors and processes other than those linked with cognitive development to explain children's ethnic attitudes in middle childhood. The combination of findings from ethnic majority and minority children indicates that from early childhood children already show an awareness of their group's standing in society (where the ethnic majority group tends to be associated with higher status and prefer the in-group while the lower-status minority groups tend to be more egalitarian or out-group-oriented). Other research has also found a decline in out-group positivity or in-group negativity in ethnic minority children alongside improvements in political awareness and public representation of their group (Semaj, 1985; Vaughan, 1986). In more recent studies (e.g., Bigler, Brown, & Markell, 2001; Nesdale & Flesser, 2001), in-group bias can be moderated by altering the relative status of comparison groups in social experimental situations. These findings point towards the involvement of social motivational processes, in particular children's perceptions of relative group statuses, in the development of ethnic attitudes. Such findings are also consistent with a major explanation derived from social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) for the differences between majority and minority

group members' self-identification and intergroup attitudes. Members of an ethnic majority, typically the dominant group, find it easier to make positive intergroup comparisons than those of minority groups, who may attempt to identify with those of the majority group for their higher status and esteem (e.g., Brown & Abrams, 1986; Van Knippenberg, 1984).

On the other hand, being designed to account for primarily adults' intergroup processes, social identity theory does not make specific predictions about age-related changes in children's ethnic attitudes. In light of the above findings and drawbacks of the previous theories, Nesdale (1999) proposed the social identity development theory (SIDT), and refined its framework over the years (see Nesdale, 2004, 2008), to offer a more inclusive and systematic account for the development of intergroup attitudes. He drew upon the social motivational processes of social identity theory, development of children's awareness of relative group statuses, and in-group versus out-group effects described above, and explains that intergroup prejudice is not an inherent or inevitable facet in early childhood, but a possible result after passing four developmental phases: 1) undifferentiated; 2) ethnic awareness; 3) ethnic preference; and 4) ethnic prejudice. After the initial undifferentiated stage when ethnic group cues are unimportant to the very young (2-3-year-old) child, followed by ethnic awareness where he/she becomes able to distinguish him/herself and others by ethnic groups, the first key postulation of SIDT is that children aged 4-5 years in a multiethnic society are typically in the ethnic preference phase. In this phase, the child can not only categorise him/herself by ethnic group membership, but is also aware of which group is of a higher status than others in society and will prefer to be a member of the higher-status group, at least for those who are already members in such a dominant group. Importantly, in contrast to socio-cognitive theory, which posits that prejudice will decline from 7 years, SIDT predicts that it is from this age that prejudice *may* emerge.

According to Nesdale (1999, 2004, 2008), whether a child will hold out-group prejudice rests on several factors, including his/her strength of identification with the in-group which will motivate him/her to adopt any negative attitudes towards an out-group, if such attitudes are prevalent among the in-group. A child will be even more likely to adopt such attitudes if these are shared and expressed by the other members of his/her in-group (as normative attitudes), or if the members feel that their status is threatened by out-group members. These qualifying conditions mean that, although children past the ethnic preference phase will prefer or like their in-group members more than those in out-groups, it is based on social motivational factors rather than age-related cognitive development as to whether and how much children will show ethnic prejudice.

Since its inception in the late 1990s, various studies have provided support for the above premises of SIDT for intergroup prejudice. For instance, it has been found that preju-

dice is greatest among older (ages 9 vs. 7 years) children when the in-group endorses a norm of out-group exclusion (Nesdale, Maass, Durkin, & Griffiths, 2005a). A recent study found that an in-group norm of out-group dislike has a larger effect on older children's (9 years) indirect bullying intentions compared with younger children (7 years; Nesdale, Durkin, Maass, Kiesner, & Griffiths, 2008). Out-group prejudice is also dependent on children's strength of in-group identification and perception of out-group threat; they display dislike for out-groups when they identify strongly with the in-group (Nesdale, Durkin, Maass, & Grifiths, 2005b) or when the in-group perceives a threat from the out-group (Nesdale et al., 2005a, b).

Many of these studies have used the well-established minimal group paradigm (see Tajfel, Flament, Billig, & Bundy, 1971) where children are randomly assigned to one of a few to several arbitrary groups, which can vary in dimensions such as relative status, nature of group norms and level of threat to others. Thus a benefit of using this method is that children's identification with or attitudes towards the groups are tested when such dimensions are manipulated even when the groups are 'artificially' created (e.g., Bigler, 1995; Bigler, Jones, & Lobliner, 1997; Bigler et al., 2001). Additionally, studies such as the aforementioned can easily add the extra dimension of ethnic group membership by allocating children to arbitrary groups that consist of other members that belong to their own or different ethnicity. In this way, children's relative attitudes towards in- and out-group members in terms of both the experimentally engineered or 'naturally occurring' grouping (such as ethnic groups) can be assessed.

The first minimal group study that tested children's attitudes towards invented in-group and out-group members of their own and a different ethnicity was performed by Nesdale, Maass, Griffiths and Durkin in 2003. Majority group (white) 5-, 7- and 9-year-old children were led to believe that they were assigned to a team (in-group) that had superior drawing ability than the rival team (out-group). The team members were shown to be of the same (Anglo-Australian) or a different (Pacific Islander) ethnicity. The results showed that children liked their own team (in-group) members more than rival team (out-group) members regardless of the teams' ethnic makeup, but liking for the rival team was reduced when its members were of a different ethnicity. Children also felt most similar to same-ethnic own team members and least similar to different-ethnic rival team members. The findings indicate that, as the researchers hypothesised according to SIDT, children tend to allege with their in-group (own team), particularly as it holds a higher status (by drawing ability) than the out-group, and ethnicity does not influence this (in-group) process. However, ethnicity does impact liking towards the out-group (rival team) as children are aware of the differing status levels between ethnic groups (where Pacific Islanders have lower status than Anglo-Australians).

Thus far, research testing the validity of SIDT has been conducted with ethnic majority children, or the dominant group, in multiethnic societies. In this vein, similar to the problem of generalisability for socio-cognitive theory, it is unclear whether the above patterns explainable by SIDT may hold for other children (in particular, ethnic minority groups with lower statuses). There is some indication of ethnic differences in the relevant intergroup processes as recent research (Griffiths & Nesdale, 2006) found that, while majority group (Anglo-Australian) children show clear in-group positivity, minority group (Pacific Islander) children are equally positive towards their in-group and the majority group, and are less positive towards a lower-status minority group (Aboriginals). Also, such effects vary with age only for the ethnic majority children, but not the minority group. These findings suggest that ethnic minority children are even more sensitive to the relative statuses of ethnic groups.

The present study was conducted to test the predictions of SIDT with a group of ethnic minority children in London by using Nesdale et al.'s (2003) minimal group experiment. The children were of British Bengali background, where their parents or ancestors had emigrated to the UK from the former colony which is now Bangladesh. According to national statistics, the ethnic group can be seen as a lower-status group in that both adults and children achieve at lower levels (in terms employment, income and education) than the ethnic majority (white English) group and several other ethnic minority groups (Office for National Statistics, 2001).

In our experiment, British Bengali children aged 5-10 years were allocated to a team that consisted of either same- (Bengali) or different-ethnic (English) members and were led to believe that their team was being entered into a drawing competition, where their team had performed better than a rival team (thus carried a higher relative status) on an earlier task. The rival team were shown to also consist of either same- or different-ethnic members. Prior to the 'competition', children were asked to rate how much they liked their own team and the rival team members, how similar they were to these team members, and how much they wished to change teams.

If SIDT also holds for ethnic minority children, who are as sensitive as, if not more than, their white ethnic majority counterparts to relative group statuses and are motivated to identify with the in-group (their own drawing team), then these children should like their own team more than the rival team regardless of these teams' ethnic makeup. While ethnic majority children liked the out-group less when it consisted of lower-status ethnic group members than when it consisted of same-ethnic members in Nesdale et al. (2003), this pattern may not hold for ethnic minority children, who may have similar liking for same- versus different-ethnic out-group (rival team) members due to their more egalitarian ethnic attitudes as shown in the research describe earlier. Still, as ethnic minority children should be as aware of intergroup differences in both arbitrarily assigned and authentic

(such as ethnicity) grouping as their majority group counter-parts, British Bengali should rate themselves as most similar to same-ethnic own team members and least similar to different-ethnic rival team members, as was the case for white majority children in Nesdale et al.'s (2003) original study.

Method

Participants and design

The sample of 148 British Bengali children consisted of pupils attending two state primary schools in East London. Non-white ethnic minority children accounted for over 70 per cent of the schools' population (of which 30% were Bengali) and were representative of primarily working-class (lower SES) families in the area (over 75% of the children had a free school dinner each day).

The sample was drawn from three age groups: forty-nine 5-6-year-olds (age M = 5.5 years), fifty 7-8-year-olds (age M = 7.4 years), forty-nine 9-10-year-olds (age M = 9.7 years), who attended school years 1, 3 and 5, respectively. The numbers of boys and girls were approximately equal in each age group.

The study employed a 3 (age group: 5-6 vs. 7-8 vs. 9-10 years) × 2 (own team ethnicity: same/Bengali vs. different/English) × (rival team ethnicity: same/Bengali vs. different/English) between-participants design. In each age group, approximately equal numbers of boys and girls were randomly allocated into the own team ethnicity × rival team ethnicity conditions. In all, there were four conditions: (1) own team of same-ethnic/Bengali members and rival team of same-ethnic/Bengali members, (2) own team of same-ethnic/Bengali members and rival team of different-ethnic/English members, (3) own team of different-ethnic/English members and rival team of same-ethnic/Bengali members, (4) own team of different-ethnic/English members and rival team of different-ethnic/English members.

Measures

A response booklet was created to guide the children through several measures with which they indicated their liking towards and their perceived similarity between themselves and team members, their willingness to change teams, and their perceived relative status of the two teams (as a check of the manipulation of team status)

Liking scales.—Two bipolar scales containing five faces depicting 'very sad' to 'very happy' expressions measured how much the children liked other members of their own team and the members of the rival team (from 1, a very sad face indicating "don't like them a lot", to 5, a very happy face indicating "like them a lot").

Perceived similarity scales.—Two bipolar scales containing five faces, from 'very sad' to 'very happy', measured how similar to, or different from, members of their own and the rival teams the children perceived themselves to be (from 1, a very sad face indicating "I am very different" to 5, a very happy face indicating "I am very much the same").

Willingness to change teams.—A single, unipolar scale with faces differing in size was used to measure how willing children were to change teams (from 1, smallest face meaning "I don't want to change teams at all", to 5, largest face meaning "I want to change teams a lot").

Perceived relative status between teams: a status manipulation check.—As all the children were led to believe that their own team had better drawing skills (a higher status) than the rival team, a manipulation check was performed that involved asking the children which team were the better drawers. The responses consisted of a single, unipolar scale ranging from 1, "the other team are a lot better drawers than my team", to 5, "my team are a lot better drawers than the other team". This check was employed to ensure that the children understood that their own team (drawing in-group) was the higher status group in terms of drawing skills only and that this relative status was not influenced by the ethnic make-up of the teams (ethnic minorities in Britain, including the Bengali community, generally have a lower social status than the white-English majority).

Procedure

As in Nesdale et al. (2003), this study was conducted in three phases. In phase 1, team members' images were made from photographs of a non-participant sample of sixty 5-, 7- and 9-year-olds (20 in each age group; 10 boys and 10 girls, 5 Bengali and 5 white English of each) drawn from another school unknown to the participants. This is because, for each age group of participants from each sex, two own team members and three rival team members were employed (the participant was the third own team member). Hence, a maximum of five same-ethnic/Bengali (condition 1 above) or five different-ethnic/English team members (as condition 4 above) were required for each age group and sex. The photographs showed only the faces of the children, who were also instructed not to smile. This was to minimise the influence of any expression or clothing on the participants' responses. The sixty photographs had been selected from a larger batch based on the similar perceived attractiveness of the children depicted of each age group, sex and ethnic group as judged by another non-participant sample of children. Each image was printed in standard 'passport' size of approximately 35mm (width) by 45mm (length).

In phase 2, which was one week before testing (phase 3), the participants were asked by their teachers to make a drawing of themselves. The children were told that there would be some visitors to the school who would judge their drawings.

In phase 3, the children were interviewed individually by an experimenter, a Bengali male. Approximately equal numbers of boys and girls in each age group were randomly allocated into the four own-rival team ethnicity conditions.

Each child was asked to imagine that he/she was participating in a drawing competition where his/her drawings had been judged by "an artist", and that he/she and two other children from other schools had been put into "teams" for this competition. The child was then told that the artist had judged that his/her drawing was "excellent" (to promote a sense of high status) and that his/her teams were of drawers "just like you". He/she was then shown the photos of his/her own team members and asked to pick a colour for their team (e.g., "the orange team") to reinforce the in-group identity, and in all cases the child's own team was also awarded with a gold star to reinforce their excellence. The child was then shown the photos of those in the rival team according to the condition to which he/she had been allocated (gender was kept constant by keeping all own and rival team members the same sex as the participant). It was explained to him/her that the rival team's drawings had been entered into the same competition, and that those were judged by the artist to be "good" even though his/her own team's drawings were "better". The rival team was then identified as a different colour team (e.g., "the green team") to further emphasise the distinction between the two teams.

Each child was then presented with the response booklet that contained the 5-point measures. All children were given the same order of questioning: liking towards their own and the rival teams; perceived similarity between themselves and members of their own and the rival teams; willingness to change teams; the status manipulation check (which team were the better drawers). The liking and similarity measures for own and rival teams were counterbalanced across the sub-sample for each condition (for instance, half of the children in the same-ethnic own team and same-ethnic rival team condition were asked to judge their liking towards and perceived similarity with the own team members first followed by their liking towards and perceived similarity with the rival team members. The other half in the same condition were asked to give the same measures for the rival team members followed by those for their own team members).

Results

Manipulation checks

This scale was designed and given to confirm that the status manipulation had led children to believe that their own team were better drawers than the rival team, and that the ethnic make-up of own versus rival team had no impact on their relative statuses in terms of drawing ability perceived by the children. Children consistently rated their own team as better drawers (M = 4.61, SD = 1.02, on a 5-point scale, and this value reliably exceeded the neutral scale mid-point of 3, t(148) = 19.16, p < .001). A 3 (age) × 2 (own team ethnicity) × 2 (rival team ethnicity) ANOVA confirmed that neither own team nor rival team ethnicity, whether by themselves or when interacting with age, influenced the relative statuses between the teams as perceived by children. The data were also explored for gender effects, which were absent, hence all analyses reported were conducted with the dependent variables summed over the genders.

Liking towards own and rival team members

Table 1 shows, for each age group, children's liking towards members of their own and rival teams when the members were of the same/Bengali or different/English ethnicity. A 3 (age) × 2 (own team ethnicity) × 2 (rival team ethnicity) × (team: own team versus rival team) ANOVA, with team being a within-participants variable, was used to assess children's evaluations of their liking towards members in their own and the rival teams. The results revealed a main effect of drawing team, F(1, 136) = 47.50, p < .001, η^2 = .21. Children liked their own team members (M = 4.76, SD = .49) more than the rival team members (M = 2.28, SD = 1.41). Examination of the data showed that children with different-ethnic/English members in their own team (M = 4.79, SD = .44) liked the other members in their own team to the same degree as children with same-ethnic/Bengali members in their own team (M = 4.73, SD = .53). Also, liking for the rival team members was also unaffected by whether these members were of the same/Bengali (M = 2.22, SD = 1.35) or different/English (M = 2.34, SD = 1.50) ethnicity.

Table 1. Bengali children's liking towards own and rival teams when team members were the same or different (English) ethnicity by age group.

Age group	5-6 years		7-8 years		9-10 years	
Ethnic makeup / Liking towards:	Own team	Rival team	Own team	Rival team	Own team	Rival team
Same-ethnic own team/ Same-ethnic rival team	4.67 (.65)	1.75 (1.42)	4.82 (.41)	2.45 (1.37)	4.77 (.49)	2.17 (1.38)
Same-ethnic own team/Different-ethnic rival team	5.00 (.00)	2.09 (1.38)	4.54 (.78)	2.23 (1.59)	4.69 (.58)	2.25 (1.46)
Different-ethnic own team/Same-ethnic rival team	4.62 (.51)	1.85 (1.28)	5.00 (.00)	2.23 (1.54)	4.74 (.44)	2.26 (1.31)
Different-ethnic own team/Different-ethnic rival team	4.85 (.38)	2.00 (1.53)	4.85 (.56)	2.54 (1.81)	4.84 (.44)	2.42 (1.54)
Average for age group	4.78 (.47)	1.92 (1.37)	4.80 (.54)	2.36 (1.55)	4.76 (.49)	2.28 (1.41)

Perceived similarity with team members

Another 3 (age) × 2 (own team ethnicity) × 2 (rival team ethnicity) × (drawing team: own team versus rival team) ANOVA was used to assess children's perceptions of similarity between themselves and their own and rival team members. The results revealed two significant effects. There was a main effect of drawing team, $F(1, 136) = 54.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .47$, but this main effect was qualified by a significant drawing team × own team ethnicity interaction, $F(1, 136) = 3.86$, $p < .05$. Figure 1 shows that although own team members were consistently rated by children as more similar to themselves than were rival team members, when the own team was made up of same-ethnic/Bengali members they were rated to be more similar than when the own team was made up of different-ethnic members. Children felt most similar to members of their own team who were of the same ethnicity/Bengali as themselves.
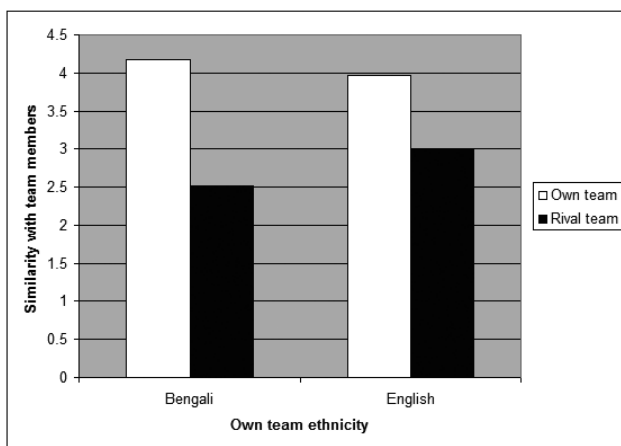

Figure 1: Mean similarity between themselves and their own and rival team members perceived by Bengali children when own team members were of the same or different (English) ethnicity.

Willingness to change teams

A 3 (age) × 2 (own team ethnicity) × 2 (rival team ethnicity) ANOVA was used to assess how much children wished to change teams. The analysis showed no significant effects. Children were generally highly unwilling to change teams ($M = 1.51$, $SD = 1.04$). This further confirms that the status manipulation was effective in leading children to believe that their own team were better drawers (thus they did not want to change team for the competition).

Discussion

The current study was performed to extend testing of the validity of SIDT (Nesdale, 1999, 2004, 2008) by adapting the minimal group experiment (Nesdale et al., 2003) for use with ethnic minority children. The bases for social categorisation and comparisons were arbitrarily assigned minimal groups

(drawing teams), where children's own team (in-group) held a higher status than a rival team (out-group) in terms of drawing ability in the context of a drawing competition, and team ethnicity, which was either the same as (Bengali) or different from (English) children's own.

It was predicted that British Bengali children would give a higher liking for their own team members compared with the rival team members regardless of their ethnicity. This prediction was supported and the result is in line with that for ethnic majority children in the original study (Nesdale et al., 2003). This upholds SIDT in terms of explaining ethnic minority children's intergroup attitudes in this particular context (involving competition), as the finding confirms that minority groups are as aware and responsive to the minimal groups' relative statuses, and are motivated to identify with and prefer the in-group (their own drawing team) to the extent that the teams' ethnic group membership does not influence this process.

Contrary to the pattern found for ethnic majority children in the original study, British Bengali children's out-group attitudes (liking towards the rival team members) were also not affected by the groups' ethnicity. This differs from majority children's finding in that white majority children liked the rival team less when it was made up of different-ethnic members than when it was made up of same-ethnic members. This suggests that either ethnic minority children are not as aware and responsive to ethnic group membership in their evaluation of competitive out-groups or they are aware of ethnic differences among group members but such differences did not influence their evaluation of members in such groups. The latter is much more likely as the similarity ratings, which were not value-laden, indicate that British Bengali children saw same-ethnic own team members as most similar to themselves, and such members were in the 'in-group', both in terms of being in the same competitive team and being of the same ethnicity. They also saw different-ethnic rival team members as most different from themselves, and such members were in the 'out-group' both in terms of being in the opposing team in a competition and being of a different ethnicity. Hence minority group children are at least just as aware of multiple group differences, and engage in intergroup comparisons, as majority group children. It might be simply that ethnicity does not 'matter' to ethnic minority group children when they are placed in a context where competition is emphasised between two opposing teams; the competitive team membership is far more important than ethnic group membership. This explanation is plausible as the results concerning children's willingness to change teams show that children were more or less uniform in their unwillingness to change to a lower-status team for the competition. That ethnicity does not affect ethnic minority children's in-group or out-group attitudes is perhaps also reflective of their more egalitarian ethnic attitudes compared with the majority group as reported in previous research (Aboud & Skerry, 1983; Annis & Corenblum, 1987; Corenblum & Wilson, 1982). Nevertheless, future research is

needed to ascertain the precise reasons behind ethnic minority group children's differential pattern of intergroup attitudes by testing their attitudes towards members of different kinds of groups in different contexts.

One issue to consider when interpreting the above findings is that although the British Bengali community is a 'minority' group in terms of numerical representation and is lower in status than the ethnic majority (English) in the wider society, these are often not the case in ethnically highly diverse urban areas, such as London, where the present study was conducted. Indeed British Bengali children were one of the largest ethnic groups in the school catchment from which the participants for this study were drawn. In the local context, it could be said that there were no clear 'majority' groups and in fact English children could be said to be a 'minority' group in terms of number. This may have an impact on the ethnic attitudes of British Bengali children, who may perceive the various ethnic groups as being more equal in status due to their exposures to and experiences with these groups. Future research will benefit from testing groups of children who make up the 'real' minority group in their local context.

Another issue to consider is that, in 'real-life' situations, children tend to form groups spontaneously based on ethnic group membership, and through the interaction with group members they explore and reinforce their pre-existing commonalities and differences (e.g., Leman & Lam, 2008). The contrived condition in the current study where children found themselves joining forces with peers of a different ethnic group and competing against those of their own ethnic group is relatively rare in 'real life'. Still, this (and previous research with majority group children) study has found that the arbitrary assignment of children to even temporary group memberships in a task-specific competition context can mean that such artificially engineered and temporary group membership will override ethnic group membership in children's evaluations of one another. This is of potential importance for intervention programmes designed to reduce intergroup prejudice, where cross-categorising children by grouping different ethnic members into one 'team' for competitive purposes against different- or same-ethnic members in another team can offer a useful tool for de-emphasising between-ethnic differences, promoting a common identity among members of different ethnic groups, and encouraging more favourable or flexible attitudes towards members of different ethnic groups.

The findings in the present study are generally in line with predictions derived from SIDT in combination with peculiarities of ethnic minority children's intergroup attitudes. The key significance of these findings is that ethnic attitudes are dependent on the specific immediate intergroup context, which may include cross-categorisation between ethnicity and other group memberships, as to whether or not children express bias towards members of their own or other ethnic groups. Future research directions should include measuring the effects of different kinds of intergroup comparisons on the ethnic attitudes of majority versus minority group children in different contexts.

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