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EMPIRICAL STUDIES IN PSYCHOLOGY

MAY 13– 16th, 2021

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE



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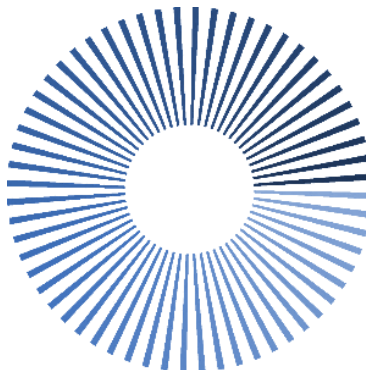
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TUNING FORKS (E. Zimmermann, Leipzig – Berlin)

Instruments for generating tones of a given frequency. They are used in studies of auditory sensitivity for determining the differential, absolute and upper thresholds. Figure shows a set of three tuning forks generating the C-major chord, each fork generating the tones of 256 Hz (c¹), 320 Hz (e¹), and 384 Hz (g¹) respectively. The forks were tuned to the pitch of the originals from the German Physico-Technical Imperial Institute (Phys.-techn. Reichsanstalt).

Judging identities based on historicity: Discriminative validity of Ethnic identity delegitimization scale

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Abstract

In this study, we further explored the validity of a novel psychological construct – Ethnic identity delegitimization (EIDL), a general tendency to question the legitimacy of ethnic groups that have been existing shorter than one's ethnic ingroup. Since it is based on historicity (i.e., the length of a group's existence), we tested its discriminative validity in comparison to two other historicity-based constructs: Autochthony beliefs and Collective self-continuity. A total of 138 psychology students (84% women) filled in three questionnaires: 1) short version of EIDL scale, 2) Autochthony beliefs scale, and 3) short Collective self-continuity scale. We performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), to contrast two different models: 1) a three-factor model with three mutually related but separated constructs, and 2) a one-factor model where all the items loaded on the same factor. The analysis indicated an excellent fit of the three-factor model, while the one-factor model had a suboptimal fit. Correlations between the three factors were moderate. The results confirm discriminative validity of Ethnic identity delegitimization, as well as its hypothesized relations to Autochthony beliefs and Collective self-continuity.

Keywords: Ethnic identity delegitimization; Ethnic identity; Autochthony beliefs; Collective self-continuity

Introduction

Ethnic identity delegitimization (EIDL) represents a general tendency to question or disprove the existence of ethnic outgroups, thus denying their ethnic identity (Ninković, 2021). This tendency is derived from the belief that some ethnic groups have more “rights” to their ethnic identity than the others. It is based on the length of groups' existence – those who have existed longer have a more stable group identity that is thus more “real”. On the other hand, the identity of younger ethnic groups is seen as fragile and sometimes fabricated. This aspect of *historicity* is one of the key determinants of EIDL.

We defined EIDL as a general tendency, i.e. tendency not related to a particular outgroup. That means that, those who endorse a belief that older ethnic groups are more legitimate than the younger ones would not necessarily claim that their ingroup is more legitimate than the outgroup. This distinguishes EIDL from Bar-Tal's definition of delegitimization as a societal belief about a particular outgroup within the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal et al., 2012; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2007). However, claims that comprise beliefs about ethnicity (il)legitimacy can be exploited to reinforce ethno-nationalist sentiment in conflict situations, as was the case during Yugoslav wars when they were used to

assimilate Bosniaks into Serbian or Croatian ethnic group (Hayden, 2002).

Since EIDL is a typical part of ethno-nationalist discourse, it was previously studied in the context of psychological constructs related to conservatism (Ninković, 2021). A substantial positive relation was found between EIDL and essentialist views of ethnic identity, strength of ethnic identification, and conservative political orientation. However, it appeared as a distinct construct, despite moderate correlations with these variables. Furthermore, it emerged as a significant predictor of Serbs' attitude towards Bosniaks over and above these predictors. To more precisely map its position within the nomological network, in this study, we related EIDL to two other constructs that are based on historicity: Autochthony beliefs and Collective self-continuity.

Autochthony denotes a belief that a territory belongs to its original inhabitants, i.e. that the group who settled first (or earlier) can claim the ownership of the territory (Martinović & Verkuyten, 2013). It is similar to EIDL due to the historicity aspect: both types of beliefs use history as an argument for excluding outgroups, or to perceive their identity as illegitimate. The distinction between the two constructs is in *what makes another group illegitimate*: while the length of its existence is crucial for EIDL, autochthony is mostly focused on primo-occupancy of a territory. Furthermore, EIDL is more directly related to identity.

Another historicity-based construct of interest here is Collective self-continuity (CSC). In ethnonational context, it represents a sense of continued existence over time that is derived from ethnic or national group membership (Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015). Similar to Autochthony, CSC shares the historicity aspect with EIDL in that both constructs relate to one's group history in some manner. However, unlike EIDL, which is a belief related to outgroups, CSC is an identity motive that is always related to one's ingroup.

The aim of this study was to explore the relation between EIDL, Autochthony beliefs and CSC. Our hypothesis was that although EIDL will be moderately positively correlated to the two other constructs, it cannot be reduced to them (i.e. it will emerge as a separate one in factor analysis).

Method

Participants and Procedure

One hundred and thirty eight psychology students (84% women) from University of Belgrade participated in charge for course credits. Their age ranged from 18 to 42 years ($M = 21.1$, $SD = 2.4$). The survey was administered via SoSci survey platform (Leiner, 2019).

Measures

All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale.

Ethnic Identity Delegitimization was operationalized using shortened form of previously validated EIDL scale (Ninković, 2021), consisting of four items that loaded highest on the EIDL factor (i.e., *To be considered an ethnicity, a group should have long history and tradition.*) The short form of EIDL scale showed excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$).

Autochthony beliefs were measured with a previously used four-item scale (*Every country belongs to its original inhabitants*; Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013). The scale had high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$).

Collective self-continuity scale (CSC) had two items: 1) *Being Serb gives me a sense of continuity — between past, present, and future* and 2) *Being Serb gives me the feeling that I am part of a long shared history* (Smeekees & Verkuyten, 2013). Two items had relatively high bivariate correlation ($r = .76$).

Results

Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations for the mean scores of three scales are detailed in Table 1. All three measures covered full theoretical range and had approximately normal distribution. Moderate inter-correlations indicate that the three constructs are distinct from each other.

Table 1. Descriptives and inter-correlations of mean scores

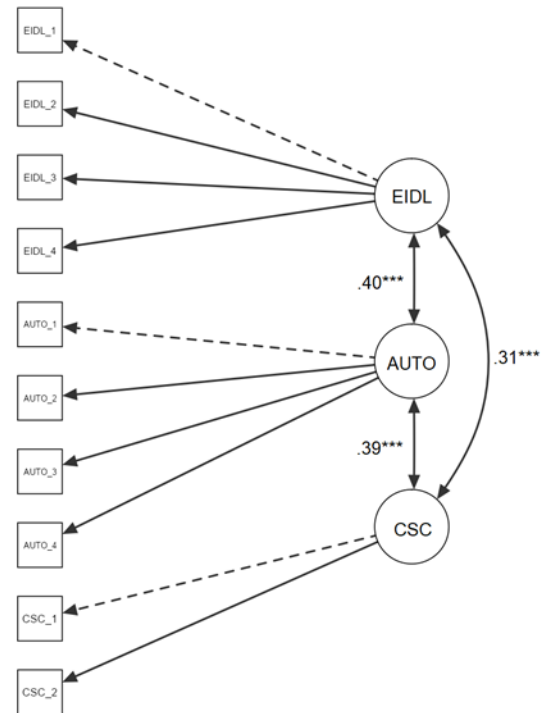
	Range	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	2	3
1. EIDL	1 - 7	3.5	1.5	0.50	2.03	.37*	.29*
2. Auto	1 - 7	3.8	1.3	1.29	1.49		.35*
3. CSC	1 - 7	4.3	1.6	1.62	1.72		-

Note. Standardized values of Skewness and Kurtosis are reported; absolute values < 2.58 indicate normal distribution. *** $p < .001$

To test whether EIDL is distinct from Autochthony beliefs and Collective self-continuity, we ran confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Maximum Likelihood estimation. Two models were tested: 1) the hypothesized, three-factor model, with items from each scale loaded on separate factors, and 2)

one-factor model, where all items were loaded on one factor. The analysis was conducted using the Lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) in R 4.0.0 (R Core Team, 2020).

In line with our hypothesis, a model with three separate factors showed an excellent fit: $\chi^2(32) = 44.276$, $p = .073$, $\chi^2 / df = 1.38$, CFI = .99, TLI = .98, SRMR = .03, RMSEA = .05 (90% CI [.00, .09]). Inter-correlations between the factors were moderate, as expected (Figure 1). The alternative, one-factor model had inadequate fit: $\chi^2(35) = 414.372$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2 / df = 11.84$, CFI = .60, TLI = .48, SRMR = .19, RMSEA = .28 (90% CI [.26, .31]).



Note. EIDL – ethnic identity delegitimization; AUT – autochthony beliefs; CSC – collective self-continuity
*** $p < .001$

Figure 1. Three-factor model

Discussion

Our results indicate discriminative validity of Ethnic identity delegitimization. We showed that it is a construct distinct from Autochthony beliefs and Collective self-continuity, but that the three constructs are moderately correlated. This is in line with the initial hypothesis that the three historicity-based constructs would be related, but not reducible to a single one.

Its similarity to Autochthony beliefs suggest that EIDL might be viewed as an aspect of historical defensiveness – a set of mechanisms that are used to downregulate specific intergroup emotions. In a proposed model of historical defensiveness, Bilewicz (2016) argues that a belief that one's ingroup is autochthonous in a given area legitimates violence

against the non-autochthonous outgroup, and downregulates intergroup emotions such as guilt. Our study suggests that even abstract beliefs about ethnic identity legitimacy, as operationalized through EIDL, might be a part of the defensive toolkit, which should be further explored. This abstract belief is easily adapted to specific outgroups in different conflict or post-conflict contexts (ex-Yugoslavia, Cyprus, Israel). Regardless of its position within the historical defensive strategies, it would be interesting to experimentally test whether people prone to this tendency would endorse it still if their ingroup, instead of outgroup, would be a target. Another line of research could be to experimentally induce or reduce this tendency and observe its effects on outgroup emotions and attitudes. It would shed light on the function of EIDL in intergroup relations.

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