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Which national group will I identify myself with? The role of preferred and perceived identity representations

BART DURIEZ,* ARJAN REIJERSE,*
KOEN LUYCKX,* NORBERT VANBESELAERE* and
JOKE MEEUS**

**Department of Psychology, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium*

***Department of Psychology, Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile, Santiago, Chile*

ABSTRACT. Research shows that the more people identify with a national in-group, the more their citizenship representation becomes in line with the citizenship discourse attached to this national-identity. However, although national identification may lead to a preference for a specific citizenship representation, national identification might itself depend on preexisting citizenship representation preferences. In line with this, a longitudinal study among Flemish-Belgian high-school students ($N = 275$) showed reciprocal relations between national identification and citizenship representation. A second study among Flemish-Belgian high-school students ($N = 407$) then showed that strength of national identification does not simply depend on preexisting citizenship representation preferences but on the (mis)match between such preferences and the citizenship representation perceived to be attached to a national-identity. In addition, results showed that the relation between national identification and out-group attitudes depends on the national-identity under consideration.

KEYWORDS: citizenship representations, national identification, national-identity, nationalism, out-group attitudes

Research on intergroup discrimination has pointed out the importance of in-group identification. In this respect, it has been shown that even when individuals are randomly assigned to separate groups on the basis of trivial criteria, they tend to display in-group bias (i.e. the positive evaluation and treatment of the in-group; Tajfel and Turner 1986). In order to explain this phenomenon, social identity theory has argued that whenever people identify themselves as a member of a group, a desire to achieve a positive social identity through intergroup comparisons is activated. However, whether identifying oneself as a member of a certain group also triggers out-group derogation (i.e. the negative evaluation and treatment of out-groups) is less clear (Brewer 1979; Mummendey and Otten 1998). Recently, Reicher and Hopkins (2001) has argued that whether in-group identification will lead to out-group

derogation depends on the content of a group's identity. In this respect, self-categorization theory (Turner et al. 1987) has stressed the concept of the in-group norm. In-group norms are said (1) to define the content of the group identity; (2) to describe and prescribe group members' beliefs; and (3) to be activated when a group category becomes salient (Terry and Hogg 1996).

In line with this reasoning, the relation between national identification and out-group derogation has been found to range from weakly negative to moderately positive (Hinkle and Brown 1990; Pehrson et al. 2009b). Again, the way in which national-identity is shaped by in-group norms might shed light on the nature of this relationship. In this respect, in past research and theorizing, two distinct citizenship representations have been identified: an ethnic citizenship representation and a civic citizenship representation (Kohn 1944; Smith 2001). Both citizenship representations constitute beliefs about how society should be organized and who can be regarded an in-group member. An ethnic citizenship representation entails that nationality is based on genealogical grounds and that group membership is denied to anyone who is not part of the ethnic or cultural group. A civic citizenship representation entails that fulfilling one's citizenship obligations suffices to obtain nationality (Esses et al. 2005; Rothì et al. 2005). Considering its exclusive character, a stronger ethnic relative to civic citizenship representation can be expected to relate to a narrower definition of the in-group (i.e. not including immigrants) and to more negative attitudes toward groups that do not classically belong to the in-group (i.e. immigrants).

When looking across countries, consistent with these descriptions and in line with the concept of in-group norms, the relationship between national identification and out-group derogation has been shown to be moderated by citizenship representations (Hinkle and Brown 1990; Pehrson et al. 2009a,b; Reicher and Hopkins 2001). Specifically, through multilevel analysis, it has been shown that out-group attitudes are more negative in countries where citizenship is represented in a relatively more ethnic fashion (Pehrson et al. 2009b). Even more recently, however, it has been shown that when looking within rather than across countries, citizenship representations mediate rather than moderate the relationship between national identification and out-group derogation (Meeus et al. 2010; Reijerse et al. 2012). This suggests that rather than being open to how people wish to represent citizenship, national-identities have a specific citizenship discourse attached to them; a discourse that can, in theory, be either relatively more ethnic or relatively more civic in nature. When people identify more strongly with a particular national-identity, they are more likely to adopt the attached dominant discourse, and bring their attitudes (e.g. towards immigrants) in line with this dominant discourse.

In Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium), for instance, from a historical viewpoint, it has been argued that the dominant citizenship discourse is relatively ethnic (Billiet et al. 2003).¹ In line with this, research has shown a strong positive relationship between Flemish national identification and out-group derogation (Billiet et al. 2003; Maddens et al. 2000; Meeus et al. 2009). In addition, in line with the idea that individuals who identify

themselves strongly with their national in-group start behaving in accordance with existing in-group norms, longitudinal data collected among Dutch-speaking Belgians in Flanders show that the relation between Flemish identification and out-group derogation is mediated by the way in which people represent citizenship: the more Flemish people identify with the Flemish in-group, the more ethnic their citizenship representation becomes, and as a result, the more negative their out-group attitudes become (Meeus et al. 2010).

In sum, previous studies and theories have argued that the nature of the relationship between national identification and out-group derogation depends on the citizenship representation attached to a particular national identity. The underlying assumption being that national identification triggers a process of internalizing the norms of one's national in-group, which may or may not lead to out-group derogation, depending on the nature of these in-group norms. Such a view, however, leaves little room for individual differences. Although pressing circumstances (e.g. war) might increase the salience of an in-group and although in-group identification may lead people to behave in accordance with in-group norms, in general, people have the choice to identify with a whole range of different groups (e.g. a city, a region, a country). Hence, it seems plausible that the degree to which people will self-identify as a member of a particular group is at least in part the outcome of a choice-process: do I wish to identify myself with this particular group?

In the present paper, we will examine why people differ in the degree to which they self-identify with their national group. In doing so, we will argue that rather than being the spark that sets a process in motion, national identification is itself but a chain in a chain of events. Specifically, we will argue that national identification itself depends to some extent on people's preexisting ideas about how society should be organized and about the conditions out-group members need to fulfill to become in-group members. In other words, in line with previous studies in which it has been argued that differences in national identification take root in preexisting values (e.g. stability and safety; Roccas et al. 2010) and attitudes (e.g. right-wing authoritarianism; Blank 2003), and in line with recent studies showing that certain values (i.e. intrinsic values) render people immune to the pressing circumstances that might trigger the chain of events ending in out-group derogation (i.e. Duriez et al. 2012b), we will argue that although levels of national identification might codetermine people's citizenship representation, national identification is likely to be influenced itself by people's preexisting values and attitudes in general and their preferred citizenship representation in particular.

To this end, in study 1, we reanalyzed the data of Meeus et al. (2010). Meeus et al. (2010) gathered two-wave longitudinal with a one-year interval to test how national identification, citizenship representations and out-group derogation would influence each other over time in adolescence; a period that is generally not only considered a turbulent period but also a critical period for the development of a stable sense of identity (both personal and social; Duriez et al. 2007, 2012a). However, because Meeus et al. (2010) were only interested

in testing whether citizenship representations would moderate or mediate the relationship between national identification and out-group derogation over time, they exclusively regarded national identification as an independent variable, excluding the time 2 measure of national identification from their analyses. In other words, they did not consider the possibility that national identification might also itself depend to some extent on prior levels of, for instance, type and level of citizenship representation. As a result, they could not test whether preferences for a particular citizenship representation also predicted over-time changes in national identification, which happens to be the focus of the present paper.

In study 2, we will take our reasoning one step further. Specifically, we will argue that rather than differences in national in-group identification simply taking root in differences in preexisting citizenship representations, people will only strongly self-identify with a national in-group when the citizenship representation they perceive to be attached to this group is compatible with their preexisting citizenship representation. In sum, we believe that the (mis)match between one's preference for a particular citizenship representation and one's perception of the citizenship representation that is attached to a national-identity will codetermine one's level of national identification. Specifically, we expect the highest levels of national self-identification both (1) among people who prefer an ethnic citizenship representation and who perceive this identity in general to be represented in an ethnic fashion; and (2) among people who prefer a civic citizenship representation and who perceive this identity in general to be represented in a civic fashion. At the same time, we expect the lowest levels of national self-identification both (1) among people who prefer an ethnic citizenship representation but who perceive this identity in general to be represented in a civic fashion; and (2) among people who prefer a civic citizenship representation but who perceive this identity in general to be represented in an ethnic fashion. Such a match reasoning is consistent with Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, which states that individuals are motivated to validate their beliefs by comparing and affiliating themselves with (similar) others. In line with Festinger's (1954) ideas, identifying oneself with a group of similar others can be expected to reduce the uncertainty surrounding one's values and attitudes and further strengthen these values and attitudes. In this respect, Taber and Lodge (2006) showed that when people were asked to evaluate arguments about affirmative action, they judged arguments that were congruent with their prior attitudes as more convincing than incongruent arguments. In addition, when people were free to select a source of information, they tended to choose an attitude-confirming source. According to Taber and Lodge (2006), such a confirmation bias leads to a strengthening of one's attitudes over time.

Study 1

Although Meeus et al. (2010) have shown that the more people identify with the Flemish national in-group, the more ethnic their citizenship representation

becomes over time, they did not include a time 2 measure of national identification in their analyses. As a result, they could not test whether national identification was itself influenced by people's citizenship representation. In order to test this, the data of Meeus et al. (2010) were reanalyzed with a time 2 measure of national identification included. We expected this reanalysis to reveal reciprocal effects, with national identification predicting over-time changes in citizenship representation (as documented in depth by Meeus et al. 2010), and citizenship representation predicting over-time changes in national identification.

Method

Participants

Data were collected during regular school hours in secondary schools in Flanders. Five-point Likert scale items were used for all measures. The first data wave were collected in the autumn of 2005 (time 1) and consisted of 443 eleventh grade high-school students following an academic track (mean age = 16.27, 54 per cent female). Approximately 62 per cent of the initial sample participated in the second data wave (time 2) that was conducted one year later. All participants in the longitudinal sample ($N = 275$; 55 per cent female) were Flemish-speaking Belgians. A logistic regression analysis showed that sample attrition (dropout = 0, retention = 1) was not predicted by the study variables at time 1 (model $\chi^2(3) = 3.88$, ns), suggesting that dropout could be considered completely at random. It should be stressed that although the one-year time interval that was used in this study might seem short to witness over-time change in national identification, the choice for a one-year interval and the choice for a sample of late high-school students was guided by the nature of adolescence. Adolescence is generally not only considered a turbulent period but also a critical period for the development of a stable identity (both personal and social), and it is often argued that the socio-political attitudes that become incorporated in one's identity in this period become relatively stable dispositions by late adolescence (Duriez et al. 2007, 2012a).

Measures

National identification

At both time points, six items assessed the extent to which individuals self-identify with the Flemish national in-group (i.e. 'I feel Flemish', 'Being Flemish is important to me', 'I am proud to be Flemish', 'I feel a bond with Flemish people', 'In many ways, I resemble other Flemish people' and 'I consider myself a typical Fleming'). Cronbach's alphas were 0.92 at time 1 ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.88$) and 0.92 at time 2 ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.05$).

Citizenship representation

At both time points, four items were used to measure a preference for an ethnic citizenship representation of Flemish identity (i.e. 'Someone can only be truly Flemish when having Flemish ancestors', 'Mixing Flemish culture with other cultures should be prevented', 'Flemish culture should be protected against change' and 'Flemish culture should be handed down from generation to generation and protected'), and four items were used to measure a preference for a civic citizenship representation of Flemish identity (i.e. 'Someone who settles permanently in Flanders and who follows all basic rules, should receive all rights as a Flemish citizen', 'Being Flemish has nothing to do with descent or cultural background, but only with the extent to which someone participates in the Flemish community', 'Descent or cultural background cannot be reasons to deny someone Flemish citizenship' and 'Someone who resides in Flanders and who keeps to all legal obligations, has to be considered as a fully fledged Flemish citizen'). As in Meeus et al.'s (2010) study, an individual's mean score on all items was subtracted from each individual score in order to control for systematic response sets. Both at time 1 and time 2, the scree plot of an exploratory factor analysis pointed to a one-factor solution (explaining >50 per cent of the variance). The civic citizenship representation items loaded >0.60, and the ethnic citizenship representation items loaded <-0.60 on this factor. Subsequently, after reversing the civic citizenship representation items, a relative ethnic to civic citizenship representation score was computed by summing all items (Cronbach's alphas = 0.88 and 0.86, Ms = -0.52 and -0.51, SDs = 0.77 and 0.72, at times 1 and 2, respectively). A positive score indicated a preference for an ethnic relative to a civic citizenship representation of Flemish identity. A negative score indicated a preference for a civic relative to an ethnic citizenship representation of Flemish identity.

Results and discussion

Preliminary analyses

Flemish national identification related to a more ethnic citizenship representation ($r = 0.55$ at times 1 and 2, $P < 0.01$), and between-time correlations showed rank-order stability in Flemish national identification ($r = 0.74$, $P < 0.01$) as well as in citizenship representation ($r = 0.68$, $P < 0.01$). There were no age differences, but a multivariate general linear model (MGLM) analysis (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.94$, $F [4, 264] = 4.55$, $P < 0.01$) revealed gender differences in Flemish national identification at time 1 ($F [1, 267] = 12.27$, $\eta^2 = 0.044$, $P < 0.05$) and time 2 ($F [1, 267] = 4.00$, $\eta^2 = 0.015$, $P < 0.05$), and citizenship representation at time 1 ($F [1, 267] = 9.04$, $\eta^2 = 0.033$, $P < 0.01$), with boys scoring higher ($M = 3.20, 3.18$ and -0.41 ; $SD = 1.02, 1.07$ and 0.83 , respectively) than girls ($M = 2.76, 2.92$ and -0.69 ; $SD = 1.01, 1.02$ and 0.71 , respectively). Therefore, gender was controlled for in our primary analyses.

Primary analyses

In order to examine the direction of effects between Flemish national identification and an ethnic vs. civic citizenship representation, a fully saturated structural equation model was tested using Lisrel 8.72 (see Jöreskog and Sörbom 2005), including all variables at time 1 and time 2, all within-time correlations, and all possible prospective effects from time 1 to time 2. In this model, which is displayed in Figure 1, gender (1 = male, 2 = female) related negatively to Flemish national identification ($r = -0.26$, $P < 0.01$) and citizenship representation ($r = -0.23$, $P < 0.01$) at time 1. Flemish national identification and citizenship representation were strongly related at time 1 ($r = 0.52$, $P < 0.01$), and both Flemish national identification and citizenship representation showed high rank-order stability ($\beta = 0.70$ and 0.59 , $P < 0.01$, respectively). Most importantly, results showed a significant cross-lagged effect from Flemish national identification to citizenship representation ($\beta = 0.23$, $P < 0.01$) as well as a significant cross-lagged effect from citizenship representation to Flemish national identification ($\beta = 0.12$, $P < 0.01$). The first cross-lagged effect (from national identification to citizenship representation) supports the idea that levels of national identification determine people's citizenship representation, as suggested in previous research (e.g. Meus et al. 2010). The second cross-lagged effect (from citizenship representation to national identification) supports the idea that levels of national identification are itself influenced by people's citizenship representation. In sum, a greater Flemish national identification and a preference for a relatively more ethnic citizenship representation seem to develop hand in hand over time, with both Flemish national identification predicting over-time increases in a relatively more ethnic citizenship representation and a relatively more ethnic citizenship representation predicting over-time increases in Flemish national identification. Finally, the within-time correlation at time 2 showed additional correlated change ($r = 0.13$, $P < 0.01$), suggesting that, apart from Flemish national identification and citizenship representation influencing each other, a third variable might also contribute to the observed over-time changes.

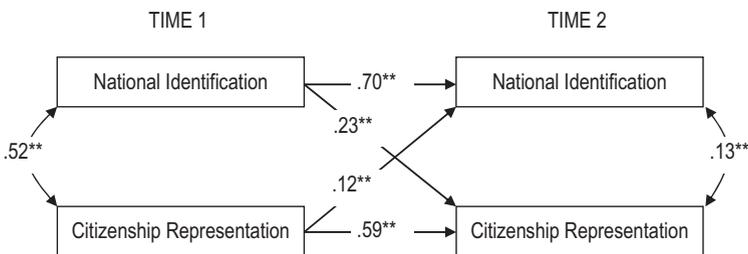


Figure 1. Structural equation model of longitudinal relations between Flemish national identification and a relative ethnic to civic citizenship representation. Coefficients are standardized estimates. For clarity reasons, gender effects are not shown. $*P < 0.05$, $**P < 0.01$.

Study 2

Study 1 showed that although levels of national identification determine people's citizenship representation, levels of national identification are itself in part determined by people's citizenship representation. Study 2 then examined the idea that the degree to which people identify with their national in-group not only depends on one's preference for a particular citizenship representation (i.e. an ethnic or civic representation) but also on whether the citizenship representation that is perceived to be attached to a national-identity is compatible with one's preferred citizenship representation. Specifically, we expected the highest levels of self-identification with a particular national-identity (1) among people who prefer and perceive an ethnic citizenship representation; and (2) among people who prefer and perceive a civic citizenship representation. At the same time, we expected the lowest levels of self-identification with a particular national-identity both among people who prefer another citizenship representation than they perceive to be attached to this national-identity.

Given that, in Flanders, people have the option to identify with more than one national group (i.e. the Flemish and the Belgian national group, which also includes French-speaking Belgians and a small group of German-speaking Belgians who live in the predominantly French-speaking region of Wallonia), study 2 assessed strength of identification with the Flemish and the Belgian in-group.

In addition, study 2 examined whether the relationship between strength of national identification and out-group derogation depends on the national-identity under consideration. As has already been noted, from a historical point of view, it has been argued that whereas the discourse on Flemish identity would be rather ethnic, the discourse on Belgian identity would be rather civic (Billiet et al. 2003, 2006). However, although it has been shown that Flemish identification is positively related to out-group derogation (Billiet et al. 2003; Maddens et al. 2000; Meeus et al. 2009, 2010), it has never been convincingly shown that, among Flemings, stronger identification with the Belgian national-identity relates to more positive out-group attitudes. The reason for this being that in previous studies (Billiet et al. 2003, 2006; Maddens et al. 2000), participants needed to indicate their national identification on a bipolar scale ranging from Flemish to Belgian, excluding the possibility to look at the independent main effects of both national-identities on out-group attitudes.

Method

Participants

In 2009, a sample of 407 Flemish-speaking Belgian high-school students (mean age = 16.36, SD = 0.58, 63 per cent female) was collected. Of these participants,

47 per cent were in an academic track, 41 per cent were in a technical education and 12 per cent were in a vocational education. Data were collected during school hours. Participation was voluntary and anonymity was guaranteed. Five-point Likert scale items ranging from 'completely disagree' to 'completely agree' were used for all measures. At the scale level, 5 per cent of the data were missing because some people did not answer all of the questions. Participants with and without complete data were compared using Little's (1988) missing completely at random test. A nonsignificant chi-square ($\chi^2(191) = 174.78$, ns) suggested that missing values could be reliably estimated using the expectation maximization algorithm (Schafer and Graham 2002).

Measures

National identification

Flemish identification was measured the same six-item scale that was used in study 1 (i.e. 'I feel Flemish', 'Being Flemish is important to me', 'I am proud to be Flemish', 'I feel a bond with Flemish people', 'In many ways, I resemble other Flemish people' and 'I consider myself a typical Fleming'). Belgian identification was measured with similar items (i.e. 'I feel Belgian', 'Being Belgian is important to me', 'I am proud to be Belgian', 'I feel a bond with Belgian people', 'In many ways, I resemble other Belgian people' and 'I consider myself a typical Belgian'). Cronbach's alphas were 0.90 ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.88$) and 0.89 ($M = 3.35$; $SD = 0.86$) for Flemish national identification and Belgian national identification, respectively.

Preferred citizenship representation

Preferred citizenship representation was measured with an adapted version of the scale that was used in study 1. Specifically, preferred citizenship representation was assessed with four items measuring a generalized preference for an ethnic citizenship representation (i.e. 'Someone can only be a member of a given society when having ancestors there', 'Mixing cultures should be prevented', 'Cultures should be protected against change' and 'Culture should be handed down from generation to generation and protected') and four items measuring a preference for a generalized civic citizenship representation (i.e. 'Someone who settles permanently in a particular society and who follows all basic rules, should receive all rights as a citizen of that society', 'Being a member of a particular society has nothing to do with descent or cultural background, but only with the extent to which someone participates in the community', 'Descent or cultural background cannot be reasons to deny someone citizenship of a particular society' and 'Someone who resides in a particular society and who keeps to all legal obligations, has to be considered as a fully fledged citizen of that society'). As in study 1, systematic response sets were controlled for by subtracting each participant's mean scores from each individual item score. The scree plot of an exploratory factor analyses

then pointed to a one-factor solution (explaining 38 per cent of the variance). The civic citizenship representation items loaded >0.40 , and the ethnic citizenship representation items loaded <-0.40 on the extracted factor. A preferred ethnic to relative civic citizenship representation scale was then computed by summing the ethnic and (reversed) civic citizenship representation items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$, $M = -0.38$, $SD = 0.63$). Positive scores indicate a preference for an ethnic citizenship representation. Negative scores indicate a preference for a civic citizenship representation.

Perceived citizenship representation

In order to measure perceived Flemish citizenship representation, the items that were used in study 1 (e.g. 'Someone can only be truly Flemish when having Flemish ancestors') were preceded by 'I think that the general opinion in Flanders is that . . .'. In order to measure perceived Belgian citizenship representation, these items were preceded by 'I think that the general opinion in Belgium is that . . .'. As in study 1, systematic response sets were controlled for by subtracting each participant's mean scores from each individual item score. In both cases (i.e. for perceived Flemish citizenship representation and for perceived Belgian citizenship representation), the scree plot of an exploratory factor analyses then pointed to a one-factor solution (explaining 42 per cent and 37 per cent of the variance, respectively). The relevant civic citizenship representation items loaded >0.40 , and the relevant ethnic citizenship representation items loaded <-0.40 on the extracted factors. Relative ethnic to civic citizenship representation scales were then computed by summing the relevant ethnic and (reversed) civic citizenship representation items (Cronbach's alphas = 0.80 and 0.76, M s = 0.33 and 0.37, SD s = 0.59 and 0.55, for perceived Flemish and perceived Belgian identity representation, respectively). Positive scores indicate the perception of an ethnic citizenship representation. Negative scores indicate the perception of a civic citizenship representation.

Out-group derogation

The derogation of two out-groups (Walloons and immigrants) was measured at the level of both affect and attitude. Whereas immigrants are an out-group to both the Flemish and Belgian in-group, Walloons (i.e. French-speaking Belgians) belong to the Belgian but not the Flemish in-group. First, four-item scales measured positive affect toward Walloons and immigrants (i.e. 'I respect their achievements', 'I wish to have good relationships with them', 'I admire their achievements' and 'Generally, I have a positive attitude towards them') and four-item scales measured negative affect toward Walloons and immigrants (i.e. 'Generally, I have a negative attitude towards them', 'They irritate me', 'I distrust them' and 'I feel contempt for them'). After reversing the positive affect items, Cronbach's alphas were 0.92 ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.97$) for affect toward Walloons and 0.92 ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.96$) for affect toward immigrants. Second, a six-item scale measured negative beliefs about immigrants (Meeus et al. 2010; i.e. 'In general, immigrants can not be trusted',

'In some neighborhoods, the government does more for immigrants than for the Flemish', 'Immigrants pose a threat to the employment of the Flemish', 'Immigrants come here to take advantage of our social security system', 'Flanders should never have admitted immigrants' and 'The Islam threatens our Flemish cultural identity'; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$, $M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.02$). Third, a four-item scale measured negative beliefs about Walloons (e.g. 'Walloons take greater advantage of the national social security system than Flemings', 'Walloons are less inclined to obey to traffic regulations than Flemings', 'Walloons are more inclined to resort to nepotism than Flemings' and 'Economically speaking, Walloons are less enterprising than Flemings; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$, $M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.93$).

Results and discussion

Preliminary analyses

Table 1 displays the correlations between the study variables. A preference for a relatively more ethnic citizenship representation related positively to Flemish (but not Belgian) national identification as well as to negative affect and

Table 1. *Correlations between the variables in study 2.*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>01</i>	<i>02</i>	<i>03</i>	<i>04</i>	<i>05</i>	<i>06</i>	<i>07</i>	<i>08</i>
01. Flemish national identification								
02. Belgian national identification	0.59**							
03. Preferred citizenship representation	0.26**	0.06						
04. Perceived Flemish citizenship representation	0.00	-0.01	0.06					
05. Perceived Belgian citizenship representation	0.00	-0.03	0.02	0.73**				
06. Negative affect toward Walloons	0.35**	-0.07	0.47**	0.17**	0.11*			
07. Negative attitude toward Walloons	0.25**	0.06	0.35**	0.07	0.05	0.58**		
08. Negative affect toward Immigrants	0.36**	0.00	0.65**	0.08	0.07	0.61**	0.46**	
09. Negative attitude toward Immigrants	0.26**	0.07	0.64**	0.06	0.02	0.56**	0.53**	0.64**

Note. * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$.

attitudes toward both Walloons and immigrants. Perceived Flemish and Belgian citizenship representation related strongly to each other but were largely unrelated to the other variables (including citizenship representation preference). In spite of a strong positive correlation between Flemish and Belgian national identification, Flemish (but not Belgian) national identification related positively to anti-Walloon and anti-immigrant affect and attitudes (both of which were positively related). There were no age differences, but an MGLM analysis revealed gender differences (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.93$, $F [9, 392] = 3.46$, $P < 0.01$) in Flemish national identification, anti-Walloon affect and attitudes, and anti-immigrant affect and attitudes ($F [1, 400] = 9.13, 15.12, 4.17, 5.49$ and 6.65 ; $\eta^2 = 0.032, 0.045, 0.014, 0.017$ and 0.017 ; $P < 0.05$), with boys scoring higher ($M = 3.73, 3.03, 3.42, 3.01$ and 3.19 ; $SD = 0.93, 0.95, 0.86, 0.95$ and 0.98) than girls ($M = 3.42, 2.63, 3.21, 2.77$ and 2.93 ; $SD = 0.77, 0.86, 0.84, 0.88$ and 0.96). An additional MGLM analysis revealed educational level differences (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.91$, $F [9, 393] = 2.24$, $P < 0.01$) in preferred citizenship representation and anti-immigrant attitudes ($F [1, 401] = 13.40$ and 6.13 , $\eta^2 = 0.063$ and 0.030 , $P < 0.01$), with technical ($M = -0.22$ and 3.18 , $SD = 0.56$ and 0.95) and vocational students ($M = -0.25$ and 3.19 , $SD = 0.56$ and 0.97) scoring higher than academic track students ($M = -0.54$ and 2.85 , $SD = 0.65$ and 0.98). Therefore, we decided to control for both gender and level of education in both our primary and additional analyses.

Primary analyses

Regression analyses then examined whether preferred citizenship representation and perceived Flemish citizenship representation interacted in predicting Flemish national identification and whether preferred citizenship representation and perceived Belgian citizenship representation interacted in predicting Belgian national identification. Analyses included gender (1 = male, 2 = female) and level of education (1 = academic, 2 = technical, 3 = vocational) as control variables, preferred citizenship representation, perceived citizenship representation and the preferred–perceived interaction, which was calculated after centering the preferred and perceived citizenship representation scores.

In a first analysis, Flemish national identification was significantly predicted by gender ($\beta = -0.16$, $P < 0.05$), preferred citizenship representation ($\beta = 0.24$, $P < 0.01$) and the preferred–perceived interaction ($\beta = 0.11$, $P < 0.05$). Simple slope analysis then examined the slopes between preferred citizenship representation and national identification at low vs. high ethnic levels of perceived citizenship representation (i.e. one standard deviation below and above the mean). For Flemish national identification, slopes were 0.20 ($t = 2.05$, $P < 0.05$) and 0.44 ($t = 5.29$, $P < 0.01$). To meaningfully interpret the preferred–perceived interaction, we plotted this interaction in Figure 2. As can be seen in this figure, Flemish national identification is strongest among people preferring a rather ethnic representation of citizenship. This suggests that people with a preference for a relatively more ethnic representation of

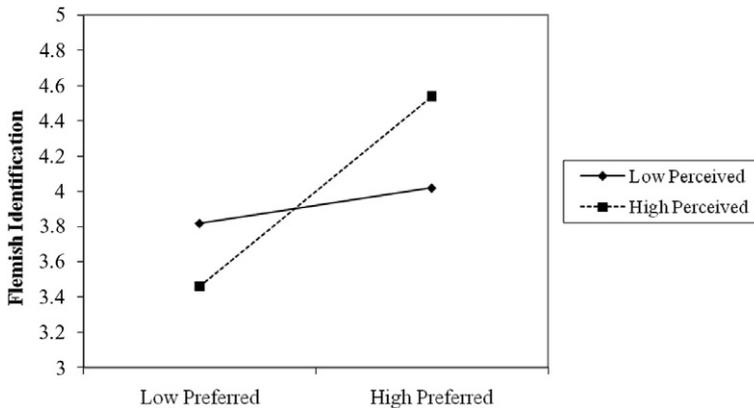


Figure 2. Simple slopes of perceived Flemish citizenship representation predicting Flemish national identification at varying levels of preferred ethnic relative to civic citizenship representation. High levels are one standard deviation above the mean and refer to a relatively more ethnic preference or perception. Low levels are one standard deviation below the mean and refer to a relatively more civic preference or perception.

citizenship are more likely to self-identify as a Fleming than people with a preference for a relatively more civic representation of citizenship, regardless of how one sees citizenship represented by other members of the Flemish national in-group. However, Figure 2 also shows that this is not the whole story and that perceptions of how other in-group members represent this identity do play a role. Specifically, people who prefer a rather ethnic identity representation were much more willing to self-identify as a Fleming when they perceived other members of the Flemish national in-group to also represent this identity in a relatively more ethnic way compared with when they perceived other members of the Flemish national in-group to represent this identity in a relatively more civic way. At the same time, people who prefer a rather civic identity representation were much less willing to self-identify as a Fleming when they perceived other members of the Flemish national in-group to represent this identity in a relatively more ethnic way compared with when they perceived other members of the Flemish national in-group to represent this identity in a relatively more civic way.

In a second analysis, Belgian national identification was significantly predicted by the preferred–perceived interaction only ($\beta = 0.18$, $P < 0.01$). Simple slope analysis then examined the slopes between preferred citizenship representation and national identification at low vs. high ethnic levels of perceived citizenship representation (i.e. one standard deviation below and above the mean). Slopes were -0.14 ($t = -2.25$, $P < 0.05$) and 0.24 ($t = 3.12$, $P < 0.01$). To meaningfully interpret the preferred–perceived interaction, we plotted this interaction in Figure 3. As can be seen in this figure, Belgian national identification is the strongest both among people preferring a rather civic identity

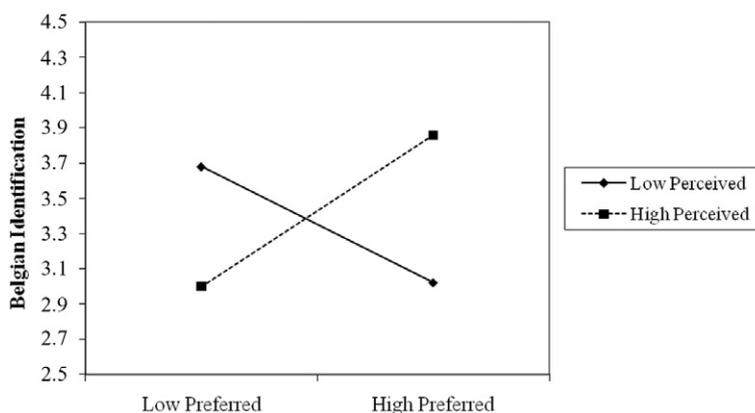


Figure 3. Simple slopes of perceived Belgian citizenship representation predicting Belgian national identification at varying levels of preferred ethnic relative to civic citizenship representation. High levels are one standard deviation above the mean and refer to a relatively more ethnic preference or perception. Low levels are one standard deviation below the mean and refer to a relatively more civic preference or perception.

representation and perceiving a rather civic identity representation among the other members of the Belgian national in-group and among people preferring a rather ethnic identity representation and perceiving a rather ethnic identity representation among the other members of the Belgian national in-group. In sum, the degree to which one identifies with the Belgian national-identity seems to depend at least to some extent on the match between one's preferred citizenship representation and one's perception of how Belgian citizenship is represented by other members of the Belgian national in-group. In general, people with a preference for a specific citizenship representation tend to identify more strongly with the Belgian national in-group when they perceive other members of the Belgian national in-group to represent citizenship in the way they prefer to represent citizenship.

Additional analyses

Regression analyses including gender, level of education, and Flemish and Belgian identification examined whether Flemish and Belgian identification predicted anti-Walloon and anti-immigrant affect and attitudes. Apart from a gender effect on anti-Walloon affect ($\beta = -0.15$, $P < 0.01$), analyses revealed significant effects in opposite direction of Flemish and Belgian identification, with anti-Walloon affect and attitudes and anti-immigrant affect and attitudes being predicted positively by Flemish identification ($\beta = 0.38, 0.47, 0.36$ and 0.48 ; $P < 0.01$) and negatively by Belgian identification ($\beta = -0.30, -0.21, -0.22$ and -0.22 ; $P < 0.01$). Results show that the relation between national identification and out-group derogation does indeed depend on the national-identity

under consideration. Consistent with the positive relationship that was found between a Flemish national-identity and a preference for a relatively more ethnic citizenship representation, in the case of the Flemish national-identity (an identity that was argued to go hand in hand with a relatively more ethnic citizenship discourse), national identification related positively to out-group derogation (i.e. anti-Walloon and anti-immigrant affect and attitudes). In contrast, in the case of the Belgian national-identity (an identity that was argued to go hand in hand with a relatively more civic citizenship discourse), national identification related negatively to out-group derogation (i.e. anti-Walloon and anti-immigrant affect and attitudes).

General discussion

Results of study 1 support the idea that a preference for a specific citizenship representation at least in part determines whether one will identify with a particular national in-group. In particular, strength of national identification did not only determine people's citizenship representation, as has been suggested in previous research (e.g. Meeus et al. 2010), but was itself influenced by people's preferred citizenship representation. Specifically, study 1 showed reciprocal effects between Flemish national identification and a relatively ethnic vs. civic citizenship representation, with both a greater preference for a relatively more ethnic citizenship representation predicting over-time increases in Flemish national identification and Flemish national identification predicting over-time increases in a preference for a relatively more ethnic citizenship representation.

Results of study 2 show that the degree to which one identifies with a particular national in-group (i.e. Flemish and/or Belgian) not only depends on one's preference for a citizenship representation but also on the match between one's preferred citizenship representation and the citizenship representation perceived among the other national in-group members. Specifically, Belgian national identification was highest among people preferring and perceiving an ethnic citizenship representation and among people preferring and perceiving a civic citizenship representation. Similar results were found for Flemish national identification. Although a main effect of preferred citizenship representation showed that the more people prefer an ethnic citizenship representation, the more willing they are to identify as a Fleming, the interaction suggested that levels of Flemish national identification get polarized when people perceive an ethnic citizenship representation: Perceiving an ethnic citizenship representation increases the willingness to self-identify as Flemish in people with a preference for a relatively more ethnic citizenship representation but decreases the willingness to self-identify as Flemish in people with a preference for a relatively more civic citizenship representation.

In addition, study 2 showed that the relationship between national identification and out-group derogation depends upon the national-identity

under consideration. Whereas identification with the Flemish national in-group (a group with a supposedly more ethnic citizenship discourse) was strongly related to anti-Walloon and anti-immigrant affect and attitudes, identification with the Belgian in-group (a group with a supposedly more civic citizenship discourse) was not. When simultaneously entering Flemish and Belgian identification in regression analyses, both had a main effect in opposite direction, implying that the highest out-group derogation levels were found among people strongly identifying with the Flemish and weakly identifying with the Belgian national in-group, whereas at the same time, the lowest out-group derogation levels were found among people strongly identifying with the Belgian and weakly identifying with the Flemish national in-group. In revealing independent effects of Flemish and Belgian national identification, results extend previous studies in which participants needed to indicate their national identification on a bipolar scale ranging from Flemish to Belgian (Billiet et al. 2003, 2006). In fact, the correlation analyses in our study revealed that these identities are not mutually exclusive by definition (as assumed in previous studies). In fact, given the strong correlation between Flemish and Belgian national identification (see Table 1), people most often identify themselves equally strongly as Flemish and Belgian, and when they do identify with both national-identities, this results in moderate out-group derogation levels.

Taken together, results suggest (1) that people will identify most strongly with a national group when the citizenship representation that they perceive to be prominent in this group is compatible with their own preexisting citizenship representation (study 1); and (2) that identification with such a group will further strengthen their preexisting citizenship representation (study 1). As such, results are consistent with Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparison processes, which states that individuals are motivated to validate their own beliefs and behaviors through a comparison with (similar) others. Apparently, by providing support for one's preferred citizenship representation (i.e. one's beliefs about how a nation should be organized and who should be regarded a fellow in-group member), national groups seem able to reduce the uncertainty surrounding these beliefs and even strengthen them.

Limitations and suggestions

Given that the existence of reciprocal effects and correlated change might suggest that third variables are at work, future research might identify variables that determine both one's preferences for a particular citizenship representation and one's willingness to identify with a particular national-identity. One direction in which to look for such variables might be the family context. Recent studies have stressed the importance of the style that parents use in interacting with their children and especially of the goals they promote in this interaction for the development of related concepts such as right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation (Duriez 2011; Duriez et al. 2007,

2008). However, preferences for a particular citizenship representation and a particular national-identity might also be determined by other socialization agents such as peers, politicians and the media. With respect to peers, research has shown that peer groups often create and enforce norms for attitudes and behavior toward out-groups (Poteat et al. 2007). With respect to politicians and the media, in Flanders, a clear shift in references to national-identity occurred. At a given point in time, both Flemish politicians and the Flemish media started referring to everything as 'Flemish' rather than 'Belgian', with plenty of institutions changing their name accordingly. For example, in the early 90s, the Flemish branch of the national television changed its name from 'Belgian Radio and Television' (*Belgische Radio en Televisie*) to 'Flemish Radio and Television' (*Vlaamse Radio en Televisie*) and started paying more attention to local Flemish news items (Nelissen 2004). The current political situation in Belgium (with Belgium recently establishing a new world record in the discipline of 'government formation' on account of the largest Flemish political party having a quite clear separatist nationalist agenda), surely suggests that such evolutions in the media and the political landscape have altered the accessibility of the Flemish national-identity, the social desirability of identifying oneself with this identity, and the popularity of Flemish nationalism.

Conclusion

Although studies examining the link between national identification, citizenship representation and out-group derogation have typically treated national identification as an independent variable and citizenship representations as the result of the identification process, the present study shows that this is only part of the story. One's preference for a given citizenship representation also codetermines one's willingness to identify with a particular national-identity. Specifically, people are more inclined to identify themselves with a national in-group when the way in which this group structures society and includes or excludes out-group members is perceived compatible with their preexisting citizenship representation. In other words, based on one's beliefs about how society should be organized and who should be granted in-group membership, people decide to some extent whether they want to identify with a particular national in-group. Identification with a national in-group that is seen as compatible with one's own beliefs, in turn, seems to validate and strengthen these beliefs and affect one's out-group attitudes.

Note

1 Belgium covers an area of 30 528 km², has a population of about 11 million people and is home to two main linguistic groups: Dutch-speaking (about 60 per cent) and French-speaking (about 40

per cent) Belgians. Belgium's two largest regions are the Dutch-speaking region of Flanders in the North and the French-speaking region of Wallonia in the South. The third region, the officially bilingual Brussels-Capital Region, is a mostly French-speaking enclave within the Flemish Region.

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