

Ethnic Minority Identity: Twenty Years On



Nimmi Hutnik

Roehampton University of Surrey

Martyn Barrett

University of Surrey

Poster presented at the 11th European Conference on Developmental Psychology,
Milan, Italy, August 2003



Introduction

- **There is a burgeoning body of research into biculturalism** (Bernal & Knight 1993; Modood, Beishon & Virdee 1994; Modood, Berthoud, et al. 1997; Ghuman 1994; Padilla 1995; Liebkind 1996; Weinreich, Luke & Bond 1996; Phinney & Devich-Navarro 1997; Phinney, Cantu & Kurtz 1997).
- **In the 1980s, research into ethnic minority identity (Hutnik, 1985, 1991) suggested that it is essential to measure not only the individual's identification with the minority group but also their identification with the majority group.**
- **Using data collected in 1983 from Asian adolescents living in Birmingham in the UK, and based upon a quadripolar model, Hutnik (1985, 1986, 1991) found evidence of 4 strategies of self-categorisation:**
 1. **Assimilation** – high identification with the majority group, low identification with the minority group
 2. **Dissociation** – high identification with the minority group, low identification with the majority group
 3. **Acculturation** – high identification with both the majority and the minority group
 4. **Marginality** – low identification with both the majority and the minority group
- **Evidence for each of these four categories was found (Hutnik, 1985, 1986, 1991) both for:**
 1. **self-categorisation strategies (At a fundamental level, I think of myself as Indian/ I think of myself as British)**
 2. **styles of cultural adaptation (with regard to food preferences, friends, films, music, clothes, dating, language usage religion and marriage)**
- **However, the expected one-to-one relationship between strategies of self-categorisation and styles of cultural adaptation was not obtained. That is, it was possible to think of oneself as Indian only and not British but to be British in one's food preferences, film choices, dating patterns etc. Or vice versa, it was plausible to think of oneself as British only and not Indian but to prefer an Indian style of life.**



Aims of the current study

- To investigate whether the four strategies of self-categorisation obtained 20 years ago with a sample of British Asian adolescents still pertain in the new millennium.
- To determine whether the four styles of cultural adaptation obtained 20 years ago still pertain in the new millennium.
- To examine the nature of the relationship between strategies of self-categorisation and styles of cultural adaptation in 2003, and to compare the relationship with that which existed in 1983.



Hypotheses

- **Firstly we hypothesised that ethnic minority individuals would adopt one of four strategies of self-categorisation:**

1. the assimilative strategy: those who see themselves as belonging exclusively to the majority group and not to the ethnic minority group (British, not Indian)
2. the dissociative strategy: those who see themselves as belonging exclusively to the ethnic minority group and not to the majority group (Indian, not British)
3. the acculturative strategy: those who identify with both the ethnic minority group and the majority group (both British and Indian)
4. the marginal strategy: those who identify with neither group (neither Indian nor British)

- **Secondly, we hypothesized that these same four categories would also be obtained with regard to styles of cultural adaptation when measured with regard to food, films, friends etc.**

- **Thirdly, we hypothesised that there would be a one-to-one relationship between strategies of self-categorisation and styles of cultural adaptation: the acculturative individual (in terms of self-categorisation those who see themselves as both Indian and British) would demonstrate a high level of acculturation with regard to everyday behaviour i.e. their styles of cultural adaptation. The dissociative individual would also adapt by dissociating him/herself from majority group behaviour and norms and affirming only the minority group. The assimilative individual would tend to negate manifestations of ethnic group belonging and affirm only those of the majority group, while the marginal individual would use an idiosyncratic person-based adaptation strategy rather than a social one.**

Method: Materials

- The self-categorisation questions and the cultural adaptation questions were merged into a single questionnaire but analysed separately. Participants were required to express their level of agreement over a total of 26 statements. They were asked to read the questions in pairs. This was done in order to encourage a conscious comparison of the ethnic minority group with the majority group.

- Sample items from the questionnaire are as follows:

PAIR A

1a. I am a person who enjoys watching Indian films. SD D N A SA

1b. I am a person who enjoys watching British films. SA A N D SD

PAIR B

2a. I am a person who thinks that it is important that
I be able to speak the language of my ethnic group. SA A N D SD

2b. I am a person who thinks that it is important that I be
able to speak English fluently SA A N D SD

- The Cronbach's alpha for the cultural adaptation scale was 0.70 based on our final sample of 290 participants. In order to make the current study comparable with data obtained in the 1980s, only one item was used to measure self-categorisation. Thus no Cronbach's alpha was obtained for this measure.



Method: Participants

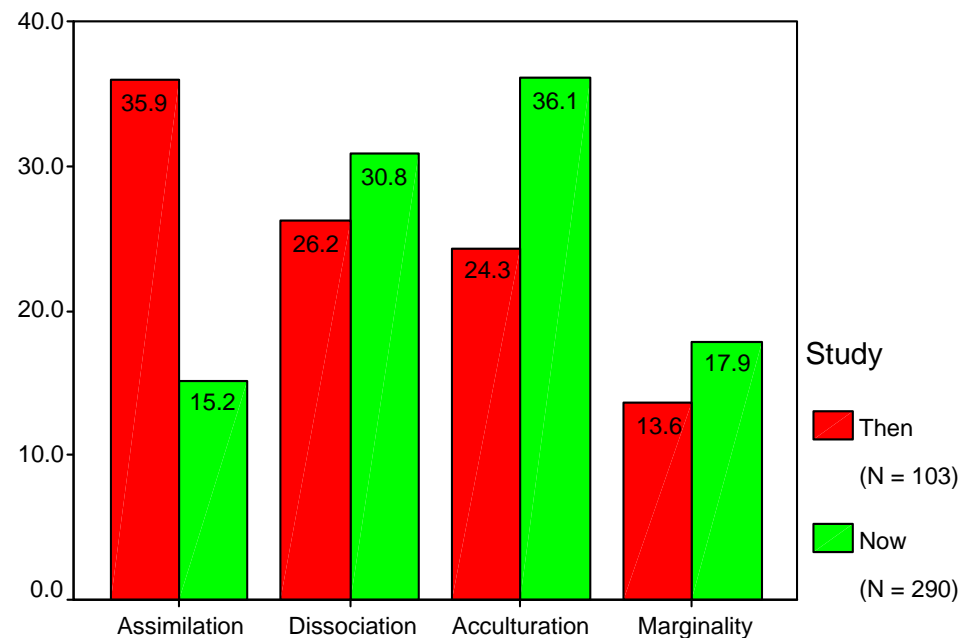
- Data were collected from the same school in Birmingham in the UK in which the original data had been collected twenty years previously (N=290).
- Only those of Asian extraction were included in the statistical analysis.
- All participants were girls from Year 7 to Year 13 (A level).
- 35.9% were of Indian origin, 51% were of Pakistani origin and 13.1% were Bangladeshi.
- 58.3% of the sample were Muslims, 18.6% were Sikh, 6.9% were Hindu and 1% were Christian.
- 72.1% of the students came from nuclear families while 10.3% came from extended families and a further 7.6% came from single parent families.
- 84.5% of the sample were born in Britain while 11% were born outside Britain.
- 58.2% came from working class backgrounds and 17.3% had parents who were unemployed.

Results: Self-Categorisation

- Analysis was carried out in three phases. First the self-categorisation data were analysed and compared with the previous data of 1983. Next the cultural adaptation data were analysed using cluster analysis and cross-tabulations. Again comparisons were made between the old data and the new data. Finally, the relationship between self-categorisation and cultural adaptation was investigated using crosstabulation and the Contingency C statistic. Again the current findings were compared with the previous data.

- Self-categorisation Results

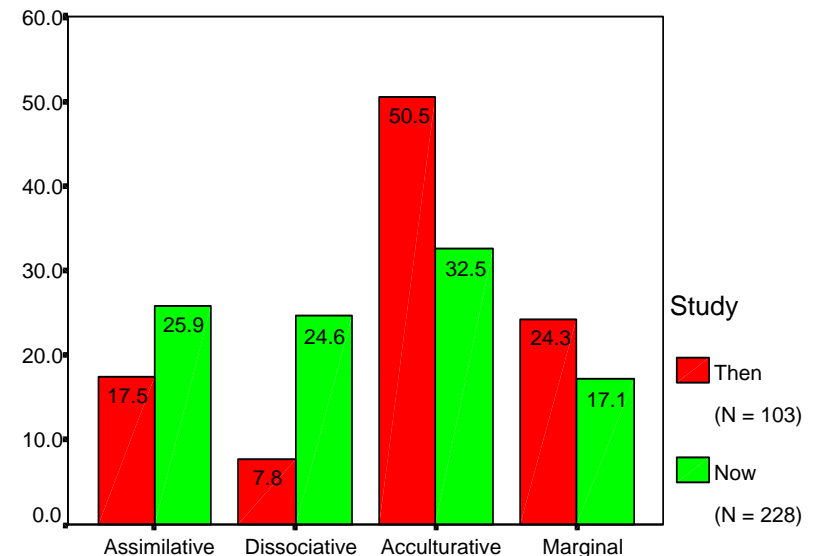
**Figure 1. Strategies of self-categorisation:
Then and Now.**



Results: Cultural Adaptation

- A cluster analysis was performed on the cultural adaptation totals using SPSS for Windows 11.1 and the k-means clustering method. A four-cluster solution emerged as the best solution for the data and shows that all four categories are still in operation 20 years later.
- An ANOVA on the cluster means for the Indian items achieved significance ($F(3,224)=158.895, p<0.001$). An ANOVA on the cluster means for the British items also showed significant differences ($F(3,224)=141.277, p<0.001$) Thus each of the four clusters are significantly different in their style of cultural adaptation.
- Have there been any changes in the trends of cultural adaptation over the 20 years that have lapsed between the two studies?

Figure 2. Styles of Cultural Adaptation: Then and Now (in %)



Relationship between self-categorisation and cultural adaptation: Then and Now

Here a cross-tabulation and a Contingency C analysis were performed to investigate the relationship between self-categorisation strategy and style of cultural adaptation. The expectation was that there would be a one to one correspondence between the two: the more one sees oneself as Indian and not British, the more one will prefer Indian food, clothes, friends and customs over British ones. So, too if one affirms both cultures equally, then it is likely that one will define oneself in terms of the ethnic group *and* the national group label. In the cross-tabulation we are looking down the diagonal to see whether the majority of those who are (say) assimilative in their self-categorisation are also assimilative in their cultural adaptation.

Table 1: Self-Categorisation by Cultural Adaptation Cross-tabulation

	Assimilative S-C: British not Indian	Dissociative S-C: Indian, not British	Acculturative S-C: Both British and Indian	Marginal S-C: Neither Indian, nor British
Assimilative Cultural Adaptation	14	14	23	6
Dissociative Cultural Adaptation	5	21	8	22
Acculturative Cultural Adaptation	2	28	42	0
Marginal Cultural Adaptation	15	7	4	10

Pearson's Chi-Squared test

- The chi-squared test is highly significant ($\chi^2=79.698$, $df=9$, $p<0.001$). The Contingency C likewise shows a significant relationship between self-categorisation strategy and cultural adaptation style ($C=0.513$, $p<0.001$).
- Thus, there is a trend towards a one-to-one correspondence between self-categorisation strategy and cultural adaptation style.
- Is this the same or different from our previous data?

- Table 2: The relationship between self-categorisation strategy & Cultural Adaptation: Then and Now

	Then	Now
Is there a significant relationship between S-C & C-A?		
Contingency C	No (n.s.)	Yes ($p<0.001$)



Discussion: Similarities

In discussing the results we shall look at what is similar across the 20 year span and then look at what is different.

■ Both then and now, we have found robust evidence that a quadri-polar model is necessary for the study of ethnic minority identity. Data shows British Asian adolescents regularly and routinely fall into one of four quadrants with regard to their self-categorisation strategy and style of cultural adaptation. These are:

1. the assimilative, where they affirm the majority group culture more than the minority group culture,
2. the dissociative, where they affirm the minority group culture more than the majority group culture
3. the acculturative, where they affirm both the majority and the minority cultures
4. the marginal where they are unable to affirm either culture.

■ Several studies suggest that there are more than four categories for the management of ethnic minority identity. Coleman et. al. (2001) argue that in addition to assimilation, separation and acculturation, there are strategies of fusion, integration and alternation which are context dependent. In this model, acculturation is placed on a linear continuum with assimilation at one pole, acculturation at some unspecified midway point and separation at the other pole. This differs from our use of the term acculturation.

■ We think acculturation subsumes these three mechanisms, in that people who accept the challenge of affirming two sometimes very disparate cultures will use different mechanisms for doing so. Sometimes they will fuse the two cultures together as in the creation of Indipop which fuses Bollywood and Britain in Bhangra beats that are essentially British Asian (fusion). At other times they will integrate, allowing for the co-existence, without compromise, of both the east and the west, as in the ability to appreciate both Western classical and Indian classical music (integration). And further still, they will alternate speaking (say) Hindi where appropriate and English where appropriate. What determines the choice of a particular mechanism at a particular time will be a function both of the individual's personal style and the context in which they are responding, whether to white people or people from minority cultures. Further research will be required to substantiate this hypothesis.



Discussion: Differences

Demographic changes:

- Foremost is the change in ethnic composition from a predominantly Indian Sikh sample in 1983 to a mainly Pakistani Muslim sample in 2003. Also 13.1% of the sample now Bangladeshi in origin (from 0%).
- The mean age now (14.3 years) is lower than that of the previous sample (16.2 Years) due to the aim of looking at developmental differences in ethnic minority identity (to be reported elsewhere).
- Both samples are predominantly second generation, though a few of the current sample are third generation (parents born in Britain).
- The large majority of both samples come from nuclear families, while some come from extended or single parent families.
- In terms of class, there have been few changes. More of the current sample occupy higher social positions in terms of occupational prestige (Classes 1-3), but the vast majority are still of working class origin.
- There are some important differences in sample characteristics, their similarities make them comparable. Differences which may have been attributable to religion have been found not to be so (to be reported elsewhere).

Changes in strategies of self-categorisation:

- Most significant is a rise in the acculturative strategy from 24% to 36% (i.e. a significantly larger proportion of individuals see themselves as both Indian and British than 20 years ago.)
- Alongside this is an increase in dissociation and a decrease in assimilation (i.e. young people are happier to categorise themselves solely in terms of the ethnic minority group label and fewer young people see themselves only in terms of their national identity). Perhaps, the rich cultural heritage which Asian people inherit in the context of a social ideology that seeks to respect and affirm cultural diversity has enabled Asian adolescents to 'own' their ethnicity more. Or perhaps there are more people who, in the face of racist prejudice and discrimination, are unable or unwilling to 'own' their national identity as a part of the core self. In fact it may be the combination of these two factors that affords these people the freedom to see themselves as totally 'Asian' and not British.



Discussion: Differences

- In this light, it might be significant that the marginal category, those who see themselves as neither Indian nor British has suffered a small increase. It is a temptation for those of us who work in the field of mental health to pathologise this strategy, to see it as somehow dysfunctional and this indeed might be true. However, there is no empirical evidence to support this yet, though we hope to test this out very soon. Instead, it might be that this category of people vehemently eschews the use of social identity components to define and describe themselves. Indeed, the marginal category may represent a kind of transcendence of self-limiting definitions or a greater identification with a more cosmopolitan or even global identity.

Salman Rushdie once said:

I don't define myself by nationality – my passport doesn't tell me who I am. I define myself by friends, political affinity, groups I feel at home in ... and of course – writing. I enjoy having access to three different countries, and I don't see that I need to choose.

(From an interview with Salman Rushdie by John Haffenden in *The literary Review*, Sept. 1983)



Discussion: Changes

Changes in cultural adaptation styles:

- The acculturative cluster of cultural adaptation has seen a fall of 18%
- The dissociative cluster has seen a rise of 16.8%
- Also, fewer people are assimilative in their cultural style Now than previously
- So, too, fewer people are marginal

Does this bode well or ill?

- The psychology of minority groups reiterates the right to question the accepted norm and to be different, rejecting the pressure of Anglo-conformity. The reiteration of this over time has produced a two-way effect: many white people have begun to affirm and appreciate Asian and black culture. The last 20 years has seen a much warmer embrace of Asian food, Asian literature, Asian TV programmes and Asian-themed plays and musicals. It seems as if the Asian minority has much more of a voice now than it did before.

■ Changes in the relationship between self-categorisation and cultural adaptation:

There is a significant change in the nature of the relationship between self-categorisation and cultural adaptation. Twenty years ago, it seemed that the way adolescents categorised themselves had nothing to do with the life style they chose to live. There was a pronounced disjunction between the two. Today, this disjunction has lessened. The statistical analysis tells us that there is a strong correlation between self-categorisation and cultural adaptation. Thus, there seems a greater coherence between the cognitive elements of social identity and the behavioural elements of everyday preference. Is this because something has changed within the ethnic minority group or because something has changed within the context? Since the ethnic minority continues to be primarily second generation rather than third generation, we are led to conclude that it is a change in the context that makes this coherence possible. In an Eriksonian frame (Erikson, 1959), it is evidence of a group coming into its own, of questioning and re-synthesising its own identifications and increasingly developing a sense of being 'at home' with itself and within its context.



Conclusion

- Let us return to the three main questions posed by this paper:

- Are there 4 strategies of self-categorisation?

Yes. Twenty years on it is still true that a quadri-polar model is appropriate for the study of ethnic minority identity among British Asian adolescents. Ethnicity is not an either/or matter. Individuals may choose to categorise themselves with labels pertinent to one of the two cultures, with labels pertinent to both cultures, or with labels pertinent to neither one. Individuals may be assimilative, dissociative, acculturative or marginal.

- Are there 4 styles of cultural adaptation?

Yes. Twenty years on, ethnic minority individuals may prefer a British style of life over an Indian one (i.e. they are assimilative in their cultural adaptation). Or they may prefer an Indian style of life over a British one (i.e. they are dissociative). Many have learned to affirm both British and Indian ways of life and a few are unable to truly feel at home in either culture.

Further research is necessary to look at sub-categories of response (fusion, integration, alternation, etc.) within the four large categories that have accumulated robust empirical support.

Is there a one-to-one relationship between strategies of self-categorisation and styles of cultural adaptation?

Yes. In 2003 there is a trend towards one-to-one relationship between these variables whereas in 1983 there was not.

- This study provides further support for the quadri-polar model of ethnic minority identity proposed by Hutnik twenty years ago. This model has clear policy implications for important social issues, particularly for policies of multiculturalism in Britain and elsewhere in the world.



References

- Bernal, M.E. & Knight, G.P. (Eds.) (1993). *Ethnic Identity: Formation and Transmission among Hispanics and other Minorities*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Coleman, H.K.L., Casali, S.B. & Wampold, B.E. (2001) Adolescent strategies for coping with cultural diversity. *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 79, 356-364.
- Erikson, E. (1959) Identity and the life cycle: Selected papers. *Psychological Issues*, 1, p.23ff.
- Ghuman, P.A.S. (1994). *Coping with Two Cultures: A Study of British Asian and Indo-Canadian Adolescents*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Hutnik, N. (1985) Ethnic minority identity: The case of second generation South Asians in Britain. D.Phil. thesis. Oxford University.
- Hutnik, N. (1986) Patterns of ethnic minority identification and modes of social adaptation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 9, (2) pp. 50-67.
- Hutnik, N. (1991) Ethnic minority identity: A Social Psychological perspective. Oxford: Clarendon Press and New Delhi OUP.
- Liebkind, K. (1996). Vietnamese refugees in Finland: changing cultural identity. In G. Breakwell & E. Lyons (Eds.), *Changing European Identities: Social Psychological Analyses of Social Change* (pp. 349-369). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Modood, T., Beishon, S. & Virdee, S. (1994). *Changing Ethnic Identities*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Modood, T., Berthoud, R., Lakey, J., Nazroo, J., Smith, P., Virdee, S. & Beishon, S. (1997). *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Padilla, A.M. (Ed.) (1995). *Hispanic Psychology: Critical Issues in Theory and Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Phinney, J. & Devich-Navarro, M. (1997). Variations in bicultural identification among African American and Mexican American adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 7, 3-32.
- Phinney, J., Cantu, C.L. & Kurtz, D.A. (1997). Ethnic and American identity as predictors of self-esteem among African American, Latino, and White adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 26, 165- 185.
- Weinreich, P., Luk, C.L. & Bond, M.H. (1996). Ethnic stereotyping and identification in a multicultural context: "Acculturation", self-esteem and identity diffusion in Hong Kong Chinese university students. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 8, 107-169.