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What is This?

Ethnic Minority Labeling, Multiculturalism, and the Attitude of Majority Group Members

Maykel Verkuyten[1] and Jochem Thijs[1]

Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the effects of single (e.g., "Turks") and dual ethnic minority labels ("Turkish Dutch") on the attitude of (Dutch) majority group members. Following the dual identity version of the common in-group identity model, it was predicted that attitudes will be more positive toward minority groups that are described with dual labels compared with single labels. In addition, it was expected that the effect of labeling on out-group attitudes will be stronger for participants who endorse multiculturalism. The findings are in agreement with these different predictions, but alternative interpretations are discussed. The results show the importance of labeling in interethnic relations.

> I believe that words have an important function in societal relations, they have a symbolic value. When you call someone a Turk, then you emphasize that he is not a Dutchman.
>
> As long as the elite keeps talking in terms of *the* Moroccans, *the* Turks and *the* Antilleans . . . it is difficult for immigrants to identify with the Netherlands. Similar to America, we should recognize the dual identity of newcomers by consistently talking about the Moroccan, Turkish and Antillean Dutch.
>
> —Ella Vogelaar (2008)

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These quotes are from Ella Vogelaar, the, at-the-time (2008), Dutch Minister for Housing, Neighborhoods and Integration. They contain three notable issues. First, and in contrast to North America, the use of hyphenated or dual labels to identify minority group members is rather uncommon in European countries such as the Netherlands. Second, dual identity labels are seen as providing ethnic minority members a stronger sense of belonging and commitment to the nation. Third, Vogelaar argues that labels or linguistic representations can have important implications for intergroup relations. Implicitly, the use of dual labels is expected to improve the native population's attitude toward ethnic minorities. This article examines this latter expectation by using an experimental design in which single and dual out-group labels were manipulated. In addition, in trying to explain when and why labeling has an effect on out-group attitudes we examined the attitude toward four ethnic minority groups (of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, and Antillean backgrounds) and the moderating role of multiculturalism as the preferred type of interethnic relations.

Social Categorization and Out-Group Attitude

There is extensive evidence for the role of social categorization in the development and maintenance of prejudice and discrimination. People tend to experience less positive affect toward members of the out-group, remember more negative information about out-group members, and are less helpful toward out-group than in-group members (see Brewer & Brown, 1998). However, social categorization is a dynamic process, and modifying the ways in which out-group members are categorized can be an important intervention for improving out-group attitudes. For example, the common in-group identity model proposes that altering the level of category inclusiveness will change the way people think and feel about out-group members (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). The emphasis on a common, one-group identity has been found to predict more positive attitudes toward former out-group members by virtue of their recategorization as fellow in-group members (see Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007, 2009). However, this strategy can arouse resistance among minority groups and is not very realistic when ethnic and racial cues and different ways of live define the separate group identities (see Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Dovidio et al., 2009). Furthermore, in nonsettler European societies that have a historically established majority group, the linguistic representations of nationhood and of the native population often correspond: Dutch typically means ethnic Dutch, and German means ethnic German. Thus, the native population does not have a dual identity label and only the minority groups can be defined in these terms.

An alternative version of the common in-group model is the dual identity model in which subgroup identities and a common in-group identity are simultaneously emphasized (see also Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Various studies have found that the simultaneous activation of subordinate and superordinate categories can reduce in-group bias (e.g., Crisp & Hewstone, 2007; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). For example, crossed-categorization research has found that levels of bias are reduced or eliminated when

people are made aware of shared membership on a second social category (see Crisp & Hewstone, 2007). Labels such as Moroccan Dutch and Turkish German emphasize that people are at the same time part of their ethnic minority group and of the superordinate national category. Dual labels define ethnic minority members as part of the national in-group. That means that the use of these labels can be expected to lead to more positive attitudes than single ethnic labels such as Turks and Moroccans that "emphasize that one is not a Dutchmen" (see the first opening quotation). Thus, we expected the attitude toward ethnic minority groups to be more positive when these target groups are identified with dual linguistic representations compared with single ethnic labels.

Research on ethnic hierarchies has shown that in most countries not all ethnic minority groups are evaluated similarly (for reviews, see Hagendoorn, 1995; Owen, Eisner, & McFaul, 1981). In the Netherlands, for example, several studies have found a hierarchy of preferences for ethnic minority groups among the ethnic Dutch (Hagendoorn, 1995; Verkuyten & Kinket, 2000). The Dutch favor European immigrants most highly, followed by members of ex-colonial groups such as Surinamese and Antilleans, and, finally, members of Islamic groups such as Moroccans and Turks. The differential evaluation of these ethnic out-groups is related to the degree to which the groups have adapted to society and the extent to which they are perceived as threatening national identity (Hagendoorn, 1995). For example, people of Turkish and Moroccan origin are evaluated more negatively than those with a Surinamese and Antillean background because the former are perceived as more threatening and less integrated in Dutch society. However, following the dual identity model, it can be expected that dual labeling has a positive effect on the evaluation of all four minority groups. This finding would indicate that the effect is independent of perceived threat and level of out-group negativity and thereby more general.

The Endorsement of Multiculturalism

It has been argued that multiculturalism can lead to reified group distinctions that become fault lines for conflict and separatism (Brewer, 1997). A one-sided focus on ethnic groups or what is sometimes called "difference multiculturalism" (Turner, 1993) would lead to fragmentation and segregation and thereby endangers social cohesion. Thus, proponents of multiculturalism have argued that successful multicultural approaches require a shared superordinate category (Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2000). Furthermore, in acculturation research multiculturalism is distinguished from assimilation and segregation (Berry, 2005). Whereas multiculturalism involves a common identity representation, assimilation and segregation imply separate group perspectives (Dovidio et al., 2009). Assimilation emphasizes the identity of the majority group by requiring minorities to conform to dominant values and ideas and to abandon their minority group identity. Segregation stresses group differences and focuses on distinctive ethnic identities. In contrast, multiculturalism posits the need to cultivate commonalities and shared commitments across and in addition to group difference (Hartmann & Gerteis, 2005).

Research in the Netherlands has shown that multiculturalist views typically contrast with the endorsement of assimilation (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Brug & Verkuyten, 2007). Those in favor of multiculturalism tend to emphasize the importance of being inclusive by recognizing ethnic differences. The emphasis is on the recognition of diversity within a common society. A dual label emphasizes ethnic differences within a common national category, whereas a single label focuses on the separate and distinctive group identities. Thus, especially for higher multiculturalists, we expected a more positive attitude toward ethnic minority groups under the condition of dual labeling compared with single labeling. An additional reason for this expectation is that dual labels represent and express cultural pluralism that is typically endorsed by multiculturalists (Benet-Martínez, in press). A label such as Turkish Dutch communicates the possibility of multicultural individuals who combine an involvement and identification with both cultures.

Ethnic labeling was expected to have less effect on the attitude for low multiculturalists who tend to endorse the assimilationist one-group majority perspective that rejects minority identities, whether these are single or dual labeled. Thus, we expected the endorsement of multiculturalism to moderate the relationship between out-group labeling and out-group attitude.

Method

Participants

The study was conducted at secondary schools in the south of the Netherlands that predominantly have native Dutch students. The students were asked to participate in a research on "The Dutch Society: A Study Among Students in the Netherlands." The students participated on a voluntary basis and all students were willing to participate. An anonymous paper-and-pencil questionnaire was administered during regular class hours and under supervision. The sample included 505 ethnic Dutch participants between 14 and 18 years of age ($M = 15.17$, $SD = 0.84$). In total, 52% were males and 48% were females.

Measures

The endorsement of multiculturalism was measured first in the questionnaire with six items adapted from Berry and Kalin's (1995) Multicultural Ideology Scale. These items have been used in previous research in the Netherlands and assess the endorsement of multicultural recognition (e.g., Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Verkuyten, 2005). This version was used, and three sample items are, "The more cultures there are, the better it is for the Netherlands," "The Dutch should accept that there are different cultural and religious groups in the Netherlands," and "People who come and live in the Netherlands should adapt their ways of life" (reverse coded). Answers were given on 5-point rating scales: *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Cronbach's α is .79, and a higher score indicates a stronger endorsement of multiculturalism.

Subsequently, an experimental between-participants design was used in which the participants were randomly presented with single or dual labels for the four main ethnic minority groups living in the Netherlands. One group of participants was asked to indicate their out-group feelings toward Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, and Antilleans living in the Netherlands. The other group of participants was asked to indicate their feelings toward the Turkish Dutch, Moroccan Dutch, Surinamese Dutch, and Antillean Dutch. For each of the target groups the participants were presented with the well-known "feeling thermometer," which is widely used and intended as a global measure of out-group feelings (e.g., Verkuyten, 2005; Wolsko, Park, & Judd, 2006). The exact wording of the instruction was as follows:

> Use the 'feeling thermometer' to indicate whether you have positive or negative feelings toward the following groups that live in the Netherlands. You may mark any degree between 0 and 100. Fifty degrees represents neutral feelings. Markings above 50 degrees indicate positive or warm feelings, and markings below 50 degrees indicate cold or negative feelings.

Results

Labeling and Out-Group Feelings

To examine the effects of labeling and differences in out-group feelings, we conducted a 4×2 repeated-measures multivariate analysis of variance with the four target group feelings as a repeated-measures factor and experimental condition as a between-subjects factor. The analysis yields a significant within-subject effect for target group, $F(3, 1{,}509) = 174.89$, $p < .001$, and the effect is linear involving differential distances toward the four ethnic groups (i.e., the ethnic hierarchy), $F(3, 502) = 411.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{Partial} = .45$.[1] The participants evaluated people of Surinamese origin ($M = 59.41$, $SD = 20.30$) most positively, followed by people of Antillean ($M = 48.63$, $SD = 24.22$), Turkish ($M = 44.42$, $SD = 23.31$), and Moroccan origin ($M = 39.80$, $SD = 23.15$). The mean scores for the latter two groups are significantly below the neutral midpoint of the scale indicating that the participants had negative feelings toward these groups $t(504) = -5.38$, $p < .001$; and $t(504) = -9.90$, $p < .001$, respectively. Of the participants, 48% indicated to have negative feelings toward the minorities of Turkish origin, 22% reported neutral feelings, and 30% scored at the positive side of the scale. For the feelings toward the Moroccan out-group, these percentages are 56%, 20%, and 24%, respectively.

The (linear) effect for target group is not qualified by an interaction effect between group feeling and experimental condition, $p > .10$. However, there is a main effect (between-subjects) for condition, $F(1, 503) = 19.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{Partial} = .038$. For all four ethnic minority groups, and as expected, the out-group feelings are more positive in the dual labeling condition compared with the single labeling condition (see Figure 1). However, in the dual condition also, the general feeling toward Moroccans is significantly below the neutral midpoint of the scale, $t(255) = -4.51$, $p < .001$.
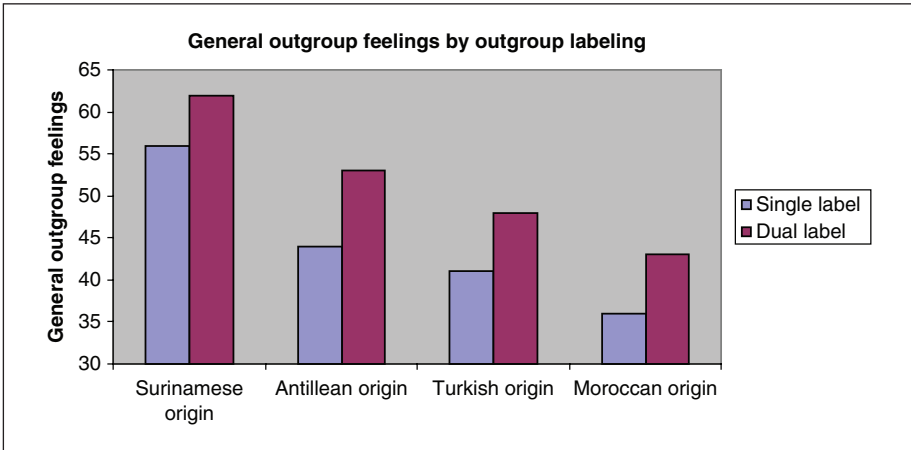
Figure 1. General out-group feelings (thermometer ratings) by out-group labeling

Multiculturalism

We hypothesized that the endorsement of multiculturalism moderates the relationship between out-group labeling and out-group feelings. Because the experimental manipulation yielded similar results for the four ethnic target groups, we conducted a multiple regression analysis with the average of the four out-group evaluations as the dependent variable (Cronbach's α = .86). Experimental condition (a contrast coded ".5" for dual labeling and "−.5" for single labeling), multiculturalism (standardized score), and their interaction were the predictors.

The results show a strong main effect of multiculturalism, β = .53, t = 14.28, p < .001. However, this effect is qualified by the interaction with experimental condition, β = .07, t = 2.00, p < .05. To examine the nature of this interaction, we conducted simple slope analyses following the procedures laid out by Aiken and West (1991). We tested the effect of the experimental manipulation for high versus low levels of multiculturalism (1 standard deviation above the mean and 1 standard deviation below the mean, respectively). As shown in Figure 2, the positive effect of the dual labeling condition is significant for participants who strongly endorse multiculturalism (β = .24, t = 4.52, p < .001), whereas it is not significant for participants who do not endorse multiculturalism (β = .09, t = 1.69, p > .05).

Discussion

In chapter 11 of his classical book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport (1954) discusses the importance of linguistic factors. He argues that social categorization involves labeling and that labels are "nouns that cut slices." He also points out that most groups can be labeled in various ways and that different labels have different connotations. Not
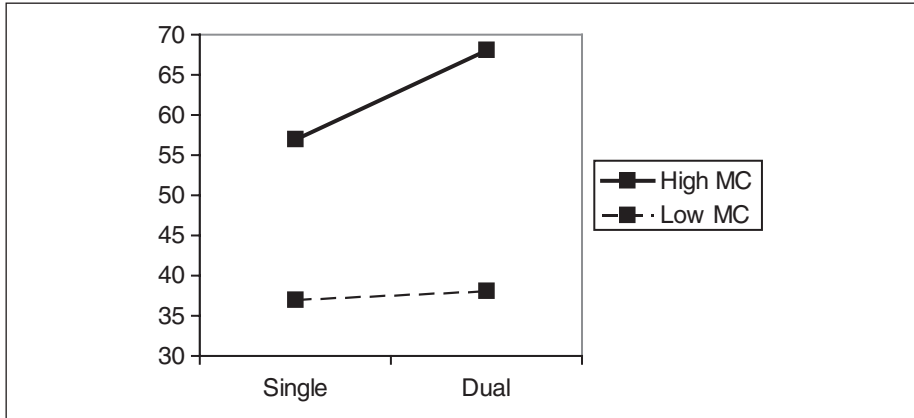
Figure 2. Out-group feelings by out-group labeling (single vs. dual) and multiculturalism (low vs. high)

only negative derogatory labels but also simple category labels activate stereotypes (Carnaghi & Maass, 2007). Our study shows that the labeling of ethnic minority groups makes a clear difference for the general feelings that majority groups members have toward these groups. It turned out that dual labels (e.g., Turkish Dutch) elicited more favorable feelings than single labels (e.g., Turks).

This effect of labeling was quite strong (Cohen, 1988) and was found for ethnic out-groups that have a different position in the ethnic hierarchy (Hagendoorn, 1995). Thus, the dual labeling led to more positive feelings toward out-groups that, in general, are evaluated positively (Surinamese origin) or neutral (Antilleans), but it also led to less negative feelings toward ethnic out-groups that are at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy (Turkish and Moroccan origin). This indicates that the labeling effect is not dependent on the type of minority out-group and on whether this group is less or more integrated and less or more accepted in Dutch society (Hagendoorn, 1995).

Theoretically, the findings support the dual identity version of the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) which is comparable with the mutual inter-group differentiation model (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). This version argues that it is possible to perceive ethnic groups as distinct entities within the context of a superordinate national category. Dual identities imply that ethnic minorities are part of the national category and can benefit from the processes that lead to favoritism toward in-group members. Previous studies on the dual identity model have typically focused on the effects of dual self-identifications, functional relationships, and the different categorizations of group members by comparing a dual identity situation with a one-group or common identity approach (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2007, 2009; Gónzalez & Brown, 2003; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). We focused on out-group labeling and the evaluative reactions of majority group members. Our findings show that dual or hyphenated labels lead to more positive out-group feelings compared with single ethnic labels.

Although our findings are in agreement with the dual identity model, there are alternative theoretical explanations that future studies should examine. One possibility is that dual identity groups are perceived as a different set of people than single identity groups. Compared with the latter (e.g., Turks), the former (e.g., Turkish Dutch) might be seen, for example, as higher educated and better integrated in society and therefore evaluated more positively. In the Dutch context, this is more likely for the two groups at the bottom of the hierarchy (of Turkish and Moroccan origin) than for people originating from the former colonies of Surinam or Dutch Antilleans. The latter two groups are more similar to the native Dutch in terms of education, labor market, religion and language (Social and Cultural Planning Office, 2005). The labeling effect, however, was similar for the four ethnic groups.

Another possibility is that the effect of labeling is because of difference in linguistic abstraction rather than (inclusive) categorization. To identify the minority target groups, participants were presented with a noun in the single condition (e.g., Turks) and an adjective in the dual condition (e.g., Turkish Dutch). Research has shown that people can form different impressions of and make inferences about others when nouns rather than adjectives are used to describe them (Carnaghi et al., 2008). For example, nouns induce greater stereotyping than adjectives, convey greater essentialism, and are more potent in directing people's thoughts. Thus, the labeling effect found might be related to linguistic features rather than inclusive categorization. The more positive evaluation of the dual label might, in part, be because of the fact that the noun "Dutch" is more central to the identity of the target group than the adjective "Turkish." This alternative interpretation could be tested in future studies, for example, by comparing the effects of the labels "Turkish Dutch' and "Dutch Turkish" to identify people of Turkish origin living in the Netherlands.

The dual label used in the current study might also communicate various messages. Our findings show that the difference in out-group feelings between the experimental conditions was significant for the higher but not for the lower multiculturalists who typically tend to favor assimilation (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Verkuyten, 2005). For the latter, both single and dual group labels are incompatible with an assimilation ideology that emphasizes a one-group representation in which majority (e.g., "Dutch") and national identity (also "Dutch") correspond. For the former, multiculturalism implies a dual identity representation in which intergroup differences are recognized and ethnic minorities are included as equal members in the national category. This superordinate representation corresponds to the values that people who endorse multiculturalism tend to have for society (Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2000). In addition, a dual identity reflects and communicates the possibility of multicultural individuals which is favored by people who endorse multiculturalism (Benet-Martinez, in press). Thus, people endorsing multiculturalism might react more favorable to dual identities because these represent and embody cultural pluralism. Future studies should examine these different interpretations of why higher multiculturalists react more favorable to dual rather than single labels.

Most social psychological studies are concerned with neutral or weak positive out-group attitudes and have not examined clear negative attitudes (Billig, 2002; Brown,

2000). This is generally the case in research in which, for example, thermometer out-group ratings are typically found to be positive or above 50 degrees. In contrast, in the present study, around half of the sample, or one in two participants, indicated as having negative feelings toward people of Turkish and Moroccan origin. These negative feelings might in part be because of the fact that the native Dutch participants were from schools in which there is little interethnic contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Whatever the reason, the scores indicate that people do express negative views of minority groups and that there is not much subtle about their feelings. In addition, the findings show that dual labeling improves the attitude toward these two groups, but the feelings toward the Moroccan Dutch remain on the negative side of the scale.

Our results show that labels do matter in a multiethnic society. They matter because words define categories and each label has its own connotations. Minority members are sensitive to names given them and majority members react differently toward ethnic out-groups depending on the labeling. Thus, an ethnically heterogeneous society should be concerned about the way language is used. Out-group labeling is also an important issue for researchers and for the conclusions they draw and the findings they disseminate. For example, what should we concluded about the attitude of the Dutch participants toward people from Antillean or Turkish origin (see Figure 1). Are these attitudes neutral and going in the direction of positive or are they rather negative indicating prejudice? The conclusion, and thereby the societal, educational and policy implications, differs depending on the way that these out-groups are labeled. Thus, not only in everyday life do "words have an important function in social relations" (see first opening quotation of Minister Vogelaar) but also in research. The out-group label affects the level of prejudice found and is important for testing theoretical notions about, for example, the role of the endorsement of multicultural recognition.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Note

1. Other contrasts (e.g., quadratic, cubic) comparing the four group evaluations were significant as well. However, the effect size ($\eta^2_{partial}$) was largest for the linear contrast matching the Dutch ethnic hierarchy.

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