

British National Identity and Life Satisfaction in Ethnic Minorities in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

This study examines British national identification in survey data from 226 Indians, Pakistanis, Black Caribbeans and Black Africans. Black participants reported stronger ethnic identification and more frequent ethnic discrimination; and Pakistanis reported higher religiosity and more frequent religious discrimination, but stronger British national identification. Uncertainty about the meaning and accessibility of British national identity and perceived ethnic discrimination were associated with decreased British national identification. British national identification was in turn positively associated with life satisfaction. Uncertainty about the meaning and significance of Britishness challenges its value to overall identity maintenance, making it less accessible to ethnic minorities.

Keywords

British national identity, social identity uncertainty, discrimination, life satisfaction, ethnic minorities

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Introduction

The focus of this paper is upon the psychological implications for ethnic minorities of uncertainty about the meaning and accessibility of British national identity. Since 1603 when Great Britain was formed, the question of British national identity has been debated. There have been many triggers for these debates, such as the fall of the British Empire, the arrival of immigrants from the former colonies, entry into the European Community, devolution and, most recently, the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. But what is British national identity? How coherent is it? Who is deemed to be British and who is not? These questions are especially pertinent for British-born individuals of ethnic minority background whose Britishness has consistently been questioned in public and political discourses (Gilroy, 1987; Meer, Dwyer & Modood, 2010). Consistent with social identity theory from social psychology (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), it is argued that certainty of a positive national identity (as a social identity) can have psychological benefits and is associated with overall life satisfaction. It can provide feelings of self-esteem, distinctiveness, and belonging (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2013), increase social and economic opportunity through its civic dimension (Kelman, 1997), and operate as a superordinate identity which brings together diverse groups (Asari, Halikiopoulou & Mock, 2008). Yet, there are perceived facilitators of, and barriers to, British national identification among ethnic minorities, which introduce uncertainty and should be further investigated. Accordingly, the present study examines some correlates of British national identification and life satisfaction in a diverse sample of ethnic minority individuals in the United Kingdom.

Ethnic minority communities in the United Kingdom

Ethnic minorities form a significant part of the United Kingdom population. Data from the 2011 Census show that 14% of the population in England and Wales were from ethnic minority groups and that the most populous groups were: Indians (2.5% of the population of England and Wales), Pakistanis (2%), Black Africans (1.1%) and Black Caribbeans (1.1%). As the most populous ethnic minority groups, these are the focus of the present study. It is acknowledged that these groups are themselves very diverse with distinct social, cultural and economic profiles. For instance, some groups face greater rates of unemployment than others, which is also associated with decreased access to the job market (Battu, Seaman & Zenou, 2011). Furthermore, the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United Kingdom has exemplified the significant health inequalities faced by ethnic minority groups in the country, given that people from these groups are at disproportionately higher risk of COVID-19 infection and mortality and poor mental health due to the pandemic (Jaspal & Lopes, 2020; Kirkby, 2020). As socio-economic factors are also related to national identification (Kuovich, 2009), the socio-economic profiles of these groups are also investigated.

For decades there have been debates about intergroup relations between ethnic minority groups and the White British majority and about national identity and belonging (e.g. Ballard, 1994; Ghuman, 2003; Gilroy, 1987; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2013). Furthermore, significant societal events, such as the September 11th attacks in New York in 2001, the July 7th bombings in London in 2005 and the Windrush scandal in 2018, have reignited these debates (Cinnirella, 2014; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010; Wardle & Obermuller, 2019) and led to claims that multiculturalism has failed (Modood, 2007). More recently, the Black Lives Matter movement, which originated in the United States, has become a global movement, also raising questions of identity, belonging and equality among Black Britons (Page, 2020). At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of people gathered in solidarity across the United Kingdom to highlight and challenge racism perpetrated against Black people (BBC News, 2020).

Research into Britishness among ethnic minorities has yielded mixed findings. Hussain and Bagguley (2005) found that their British Pakistani interviewees generally endorsed a

British national identity due to their citizenship rights (see also Manning & Roy, 2010). Similarly, in his analysis of survey data, Maxwell (2009) found that South Asians were more likely to self-identify as British than Black Caribbeans. However, it has also been found that British South Asians experience difficulties in reconciling aspects of their national and ethnic identities (Sekhon & Szmigin, 2011), and that this may be accentuated by perceived discrimination from the White British majority (Maxwell, 2006; Robinson, 2009). Ethnic minority individuals may face discrimination due to their ethnicity and/or religion and, in view of increasing Islamophobia in the United Kingdom, Muslims are especially susceptible to religious discrimination (Allen, 2010). The variable findings may be attributed to the fluctuating meanings of Britishness in society and the uncertainty with which people, including ethnic minorities, regard their national identity.

Understandings of Britishness

The definition of Britishness is a controversial question. It is not surprising that there is uncertainty since it is a construct based on no simple geographic specificity, no ethnic base, no religious homogeneity, and no formalized constitution, leaving it open to many interpretations. People's understandings of this category determine whether and to what extent they identify with it. In this, context is key, and it is noteworthy that much high-profile national debate about British national identity has arisen in the context or aftermath of significant, primarily negative events.

In April 1990, Member of Parliament Norman Tebbit proposed the 'cricket test' to assess the loyalty of South Asian and Caribbean immigrants and their children, suggesting that lack of loyalty was reflected in them supporting the teams associated with their heritage identities, rather than the English team (Fletcher, 2012). In May 2006, the then Education Minister Bill Rammell commissioned a review into whether 'core British values' should become a compulsory component of secondary level education in England – in the aftermath of the July 7th bombings in London in 2005 (Asari, Halikiopoulou & Mock, 2008). In 2014, the British government called on schools to promote 'fundamental British values' as part of their curriculum, focusing on democracy, individual liberty, tolerance, respect for those of other backgrounds and religions, and respect for the rule of law (Lockley-Scott, 2019). This constituted a key element of the government's anti-radicalization strategy – aimed primarily at young Muslims.

The institutional approach to promoting Britishness appears to be rather reactive and is often associated with perceived threats to the nation, such as radicalization and terrorism, thereby implicitly singling out particular ethnic minority groups in society. In summary, Asari, Halikiopoulou and Mock (2008) aptly observe that the United Kingdom has not succeeded in producing 'a discourse that integrates various ethnic groups under the umbrella of a common British identity' (p. 1).

Ethnic minority individuals themselves have varied understandings of Britishness. Research into the 'boundaries of Britishness' among British South Asian young adults shows that there is no monolithic understanding of Britishness in this population but rather a series of diverse understandings which are dependent on social context. In an early study, Jacobson (1997) interviewed British Pakistani Muslim young people and found that they tended to define Britishness in three key ways – in terms of whiteness and having British ancestry (racial boundary); as a civic category to which one has access as a British citizen (civic boundary); and a cultural identity to which one has access if one's norms, values and lifestyle are 'typically British' (cultural boundary).

In later research with both British Pakistani and British Indian young adults, Vadher and Barrett (2009) identified additional boundaries, including the multicultural and instrumental boundaries, which refer to the notions that Britishness is culturally heterogeneous

(and that this is a key component) and that it serves the practical needs of the individual (e.g. providing access to education and healthcare), respectively. In addition, there is a body of research in sociology and cultural studies focusing on performativity and hybridity in relation to nationhood (e.g. Billig, 1995; Edensor, 2006; Lavi, 2013), which tends to acknowledge the duality and multiplicity of identity vis-à-vis social context (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012). Across much of this research, a key point is that the social representation (Moscovici, 1988) of Britishness is not entirely clear and that understandings of national identity are diverse in ethnic minority communities.

National identity uncertainty

Against this backdrop, it is plausible to hypothesize that there is a risk of social identity uncertainty in relation to Britishness in ethnic minorities, that is, uncertainty about the nature of Britishness and about their own access to membership within this national category (see Wagoner, Belavadi & Jung, 2017). Moreover, due to perceived discrimination (mainly on the basis of ethnicity), ethnic minority individuals may perceive a ‘racial boundary’ to Britishness and, thus, perceive it to be inaccessible to them (Jacobson, 1997; Vadher & Barrett, 2009). They may believe that it is futile to identify with a group that does not accept them. Equally, they may claim the identity but remain uncertain as to whether their claim is socially accepted. These uncertainties may in turn be related to a weaker identification as British (Wagoner, Belavadi & Jung, 2017). It may be more accurate to say that they result in an insecure identification and one which may threaten the individual’s sense of self-esteem, efficacy, distinctiveness or continuity (as suggested in identity process theory, Breakwell, 2015a, 2015b, 2020) and thus result in lower life satisfaction.

In a parallel argument, Hogg (2007) argued that feelings of self-uncertainty motivate people to identify with groups in order to reduce their uncertainty. He goes on to say that this search for self-certainty can lead to participation in group and societal extremism (Hogg & Adelman, 2013). Uncertainty about Britishness and perceived discrimination may lead ethnic minority individuals to develop stronger ethnic and religious identities, providing alternative sources of belonging, distinctiveness and self-esteem (Yoo & Lee, 2005). These identities are important for ethnic minority individuals in the UK (Robinson, 2009), who are coping with uncertainty.

Identities and life satisfaction

The social cure perspective in social psychology (Jetten, Haslam & Haslam, 2012) posits that social group identification performs positive functions for psychological wellbeing and that it equips people to cope more effectively with social and psychological stressors. The key is for individuals to identify strongly with meaningful ingroups (e.g. national, ethnic, religious groups) so that they can derive social support from them. Furthermore, consistent with social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), national identity can be conceptualized as a social group membership which provides feelings of belonging, distinctiveness and self-esteem (Spinner-Halev & Theiss-Morse, 2003). Yet, it must also be acknowledged that group identification does not invariably lead to positive psychological outcomes given that some group memberships may, for instance, induce guilt in group members due to the group’s history (Becker and Tausch, 2014).

It has also been suggested that identification with multiple social groups is beneficial because it facilitates increased social support (potentially from multiple sources and in multiple contexts) (Jaspal & Ferozali, 2020), and ensures a source of support when one group membership begins to wane or ceases to exist (Haslam et al., 2008). Furthermore, one group membership may be a ‘gateway’ to another, enabling individuals to access an additional source

of support (Wakefield et al., 2019). For instance, self-identification with an ethnic group may also provide access to the religious group perceived to be associated with that ethnicity.

In view of its psychological benefits, it can be hypothesized that robust identification with relevant social groups would be associated with general life satisfaction. Conversely, exclusion from these groups and discrimination perceived to be tied to other valued group memberships should be associated with decreased life satisfaction. The extent to which these group memberships (i.e. Britishness, ethnicity, religion) are available to ethnic minority individuals may vary. Perceiving discrimination is likely to be linked to having doubts about being allowed access or being accepted as British, that is, national identity uncertainty. Perceiving discrimination is likely to arouse less life satisfaction given the uncertainties of achieving a British identity.

Hypotheses

1. There should be differences between different ethnic groups in levels of social group identification and discrimination.
2. Uncertainty about British national identity and perceived incompatibility between British national and ethnic identities should predict the variance of British national identification.
3. Income, British national identification, ethnic identification and discrimination should predict the variance of life satisfaction.
4. There will be a difference in employment status between ethnic groups.
5. Unemployed ethnic minority people should report more discrimination and less psychological wellbeing than those who are employed.

Method

Ethics

Ethical clearance was provided by the College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Ethics Committee at Nottingham Trent University for this project (Ref: 2020/118).

Participants

Two hundred and twenty-six participants were recruited on *Prolific*, an online recruitment platform, and completed a survey concerning social identity, discrimination and life satisfaction. There were 81 Indians (35.8%), 40 Pakistanis (17.7%), 48 Black Africans (21.2%) and 57 Black Caribbeans (25.3%). One hundred and twenty-four (54.9%) participants were male and 102 (45.1%) were female. The mean age of participants was 29.8 ($SD=8.70$), with a range of 18-69. For a full overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample, see Table 1.

Insert Table 1 here

Measures

Ethnic identification was measured using the 6-item Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (Phinney & Ong, 2007), which included items such as ‘I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group’. Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree; $\alpha=.87$). **Religiosity** was measured using the 5-item Brief Version of the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (Plante et al., 2002), which included items such as ‘I pray daily’. Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with each statement (1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree; $\alpha=.94$). **British national identification** was measured using the 7-item

British National Identity Scale (Cinnirella, 1997), which included items such as ‘To what extent do you feel British?’ Participants responded on a Likert scale (1=not at all to 5=extremely; $\alpha=.85$). *Perceived ethnic discrimination* was measured using the 9-item Everyday Discrimination Scale (Williams, Jackson, Yu & Anderson, 1997), which included items such as ‘People act as if they’re better than you are’. Participants indicated the frequency of these events (1=never to 6=almost every day; $\alpha=.90$). *Perceived religious discrimination* was measured using the same scale but in relation to their religion ($\alpha=.94$). *Identity incompatibility* was measured using two items (from Sønderland, Morton & Ryan, 2017) which were adapted in relation to British national-ethnic identity and British national-religious identity configurations, respectively: ‘Thinking about being British and your ethnicity, how easy or difficult is to belong to these groups at the same time?’ and ‘Thinking about being British and your religion, how easy or difficult is to belong to these groups at the same time?’ Participants responded a Likert scale (1=extremely easy to 7=extremely difficult.). *British national identity uncertainty* was measured using an adapted version of the 11-item Social Identity Uncertainty Scale (Wagoner, Belavadi & Jung, 2017), which included items such as ‘I feel that the definition of Britain’s identity is unclear’. Participants indicated how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement (1=not at all to 9=very much; $\alpha=.93$). *Life satisfaction* was measured using the 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) which included items such as ‘In many ways my life is close to my ideal’. Participants indicated how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree; $\alpha=.88$).

Results

Descriptive statistics

Please see Table 2 for overview of descriptive statistics for the participant sample.

Insert Table 2 here

Religious and occupational profile of ethnic groups

Chi-squared tests (bootstrapped at 1000 samples to correct for small sample sizes) were performed to examine relationships between ethnic group and gender; ethnic group and income; ethnic group and religion; ethnic group and educational level; and ethnic group and employment status.

A chi-squared test showed that females and males were evenly distributed between all ethnic groups in this sample [$\chi^2(3, 226) = .492, p = .89$]. Other chi-squared tests showed that there was no difference between ethnic groups (Indian, Pakistani, Black African and Black Caribbean) for their income level [$\chi^2(27, 226) = 34.491, p = .15$] and for their educational level [$\chi^2(9, 226) = 8.591, p = .48$].

However, a chi-squared test showed statistically significant relationships between ethnic group and religion [$\chi^2(15, 226) = 288.163, p < .001$; *Cramer’s V* = .652, $p < .001$; 95% CIs (.605, .701)]. Indians were more likely to be Hindus and Sikhs ($N=36, 44.4\%$; $N=13, 16\%$) or to have no religion ($N=16, 19.9\%$) than they were likely to be Muslim ($N=9, 11.1\%$). In contrast to this, Pakistanis were more likely to be Muslims ($N=37, 92.5\%$) than having no religion ($N=2, 6.9\%$) or being Hindus ($N=0; 0\%$) or Sikhs ($N=0; 0\%$). Moreover, both Black Africans and Black Caribbeans were more likely to be Christians ($N=49, 86\%$ and $N=41, 64.6\%$) than Indians ($N=5, 30.8\%$) and Pakistanis ($N=1, 2.5\%$).

Furthermore, a chi-squared test demonstrated differences between ethnic groups for employment status [$\chi^2(9, 226) = 18.09, p < .05$; *Cramer’s V* = .163, $p < .05$; 95% CIs (.130, .266)]. Results showed that more Indians and Black Africans were employed ($N=44, 31.9\%$ Indians and $N=39, 28.3\%$ Black Africans) than Black Caribbeans ($N=33, 23.9\%$) and, in particular, than Pakistanis ($N=22, 15.9\%$). Similarly, more Indians ($N=6, 37.5\%$) and Black Caribbeans

($N=6$, 37.5%) were self-employed than Black Africans ($N=3$, 18.8%) and, in particular, than Pakistanis ($N=1$, 6.3%). In contrast, more Pakistanis were unemployed ($N=8$, 38.1%) than Indians ($N=5$, 23.8%) and than Black Africans and Black Caribbeans ($N=4$, 19% and $N=4$, 19%, respectively). More Indians were likely to be students ($N=28$, 51%), than Black Africans ($N=11$, 21.6%), Pakistanis ($N=9$, 17.6%) and Black Caribbeans who were least likely to be students ($N=5$, 9.8%). This suggested that Pakistanis in this sample were more likely to be unemployed than other ethnic groups.

Effects of occupation on key variables of interest

A multivariate one-way ANOVA bootstrapped at 1000 samples showed statistically significant main effects of occupation status on ethnic discrimination [$F(3,223)=5.636$, $p=.001$]; religious discrimination [$F(3,223)=2.720$, $p<.05$]; and life satisfaction [$F(3,223)=2.663$, $p<.05$].

Post-hoc LSD tests showed that unemployed people also showed much more ethnic and religious discrimination ($M=2.81$, $SD=.95$; $M=2.04$, $SD=.93$, respectively) than employed people ($M=2.37$, $SD=.70$; $M=1.53$, $SD=.66$) and, in particular, than self-employed people ($M=2.11$, $SD=.83$; $M=1.48$, $SD=.60$) and students who showed the lowest levels of ethnic and religious discrimination ($M=2.07$, $SD=.92$; $M=1.61$, $SD=.95$, respectively) [$t=.37729$, $p<.05$; 95% CIs (.0024, .7322); $t=.63333$, $p=.013$; 95% CIs (.1358, 1.1308); $t=.74222$, $p<.001$; 95% CIs (.3498, 1.1347) for ethnic discrimination and $t=.43996$, $p=.007$; 95% CIs (.1210, .7589); $t=.51253$, $p=.025$; 95% CIs (.0654, .9597); $t=.45009$, $p=.013$; 95% CIs (.0974, .8028) for religious discrimination, respectively].

Finally, unemployed people also showed less life satisfaction ($M=15.48$, $SD=7.57$) than students ($M=19.29$, $SD=6.58$), than self-employed people ($M=16.81$, $SD=7.21$) and than employed people who, conversely, showed the highest life satisfaction ($M=20.31$, $SD=6.00$) [$t=.10847$, $p=.017$; 95% CIs (.0196, .1852) for the difference between unemployed and employed people for life satisfaction].

These results suggest that unemployed people appear to be more vulnerable not only to ethnic and religious discrimination but also to lower life satisfaction than those who are employed or students.

Effects of ethnic group on key variables of interest

A multivariate one-way ANOVA bootstrapped at 1000 samples showed statistically significant main effects of ethnic group (Indian, Pakistani, Black Caribbean and Black African) on ethnic identification [$F(3, 225)=3.219$, $p<.05$], religiosity [$F(3, 225)=7.667$, $p<.001$], British national identification [$F(3, 225)=7.518$, $p<.001$], ethnic discrimination [$F(3, 225)=3.633$, $p=.014$], religious discrimination [$F(3, 224)=10.158$, $p<.001$], and clash between British national and religious identities [$F(3, 225)=4.841$, $p=.003$].

Post-hoc LSD tests demonstrated that Black Caribbeans showed stronger ethnic identification ($M=33.71$, $SD=6.32$) than Indians ($M=30.75$, $SD=7.33$, $t=2.955$, $p=.016$; 95% CIs -5.363, -.548) and Pakistanis ($M=29.53$, $SD=6.48$, $t=4.183$, $p=.004$; 95% CIs 1.354, 7.013).

Pakistanis showed higher levels of religiosity ($M=15.38$, $SD=3.90$) than Indians ($M=11.89$, $SD=4.33$, $t=3.486$, $p<.001$; 95% CIs 1.831, 5.141) and Black Caribbeans ($M=11.79$, $SD=4.85$, $t=3.583$, $p<.001$; 95% CIs 1.750, 5.417), and Black Africans showed higher levels of religiosity ($M=13.82$, $SD=4.21$) than Black Caribbeans ($M=11.79$, $SD=4.85$, $t=2.033$, $p=.018$; 95% CIs .3554, 3.710).

Pakistanis showed stronger British national identification ($M=24.48$, $SD=4.35$) than Indians ($M=22.53$, $SD=5.40$, $t=1.944$, $p<.05$; 95% CIs .0308, 3.8575), Black Caribbeans ($M=20.46$, $SD=5.23$, $t=4.017$, $p<.001$; 95% CIs 1.897, 6.136) and Black Africans ($M=20.16$, $SD=4.73$, $t=4.317$, $p<.001$; 95% CIs 2.274, 6.359). Indians showed a stronger British national

identity than Black Africans ($t=2.373$, $p=.007$; 95% CIs .661, 4.085) and Black Caribbeans ($t=2.073$, $p<.05$; 95% CIs .269, 3.876).

Black Africans reported more ethnic discrimination ($M=2.52$, $SD=.72$) than Indians ($M=2.15$, $SD=.82$, $t=.366$, $p=.008$; 95% CIs .094, .637) and Pakistanis ($M=2.18$, $SD=.81$, $t=.336$, $p<.05$; 95% CIs -.925, -.402). Black Caribbeans reported more ethnic discrimination ($M=2.50$, $SD=.83$) than Pakistanis ($t=-.651$, $p=.001$; 95% CIs -.923, -.379).

Pakistanis reported much more religious discrimination ($M=2.11$, $SD=.63$) than Indians ($M=1.59$, $SD=.65$, $t=.524$, $p<.001$; 95% CIs .278, .770), Black Caribbeans ($M=1.46$, $SD=.70$, $t=.651$, $p<.001$; 95% CIs .379, .923) and Black Africans ($M=1.45$, $SD=.59$, $t=.664$, $p<.001$; 95% CIs .402, .925).

Pakistanis reported much more incompatibility between British national and religious identities ($M=3.90$, $SD=1.53$) than Black Caribbeans ($M=2.86$, $SD=1.49$, $t=1.035$, $p=.002$; 95% CIs .391, 1.678) and Black Africans ($M=2.96$, $SD=1.56$, $t=.937$, $p=.003$; 95% CIs .317, 1.557). Indians also reported more incompatibility between these identities ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.52$) than Black Caribbeans ($t=.653$, $p=.020$; 95% CIs .106, 1.20) and Black Africans ($t=.556$, $p<.05$; 95% CIs .036, 1.075).

Correlations

See Table 3 for full correlations matrix.

Insert Table 3 here

Multiple regression models predicting British national identity and life satisfaction

A stepwise multiple regression bootstrapped at 1000 samples with predictors of ethnic group; religious group; ethnic discrimination; religious discrimination; perceived incompatibility between British and ethnic identities; perceived incompatibility between British and religious identities; British national identity uncertainty was conducted to predict the variance of British national identification. The model (see Table 4) was significant with a $R^2=.338$; $F(4, 224)=28.068$, $p<.001$. In the model, British national identity uncertainty emerged as the strongest predictor of British national identification, followed by ethnic group, perceived incompatibility between British and ethnic identities, and religiosity.

Another stepwise multiple regression bootstrapped at 1000 samples with predictors of ethnic discrimination; ethnic identification; religiosity; British national identification; perceived incompatibility between British national and ethnic identities; income; qualification; employment and religious group was conducted to predict the variance of life satisfaction. The model (see Table 4) was significant with a $R^2=.209$; $F(5, 225)=11.611$, $p<.001$. In this model, the following predictors were significant: income, followed by ethnic identification, religiosity, ethnic discrimination, and British national identification.

Insert Table 4 here

Discussion

This study sheds light on the socio-economic profiles of, and social psychological underpinnings of both British national identification and life satisfaction in, four major ethnic minority groups in the United Kingdom: Indians, Pakistanis, Black Caribbeans and Black Africans. It offers a social psychological framework for understanding how ethnic minorities are affected by uncertainty associated with social representations of Britishness and how this uncertainty is managed in view of completing group identification demands. Consistent with hypotheses 1-3, the findings show that uncertainty in relation to national identity is inversely associated with British national identification and that this form of identification is at least one

determinant of life satisfaction in ethnic minority individuals. It is argued that national identity uncertainty may lead to fluctuating meanings of Britishness and that this may be aversive for life satisfaction in this population.

In the United Kingdom, ethnic minority groups are commonly referred to as 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic' or 'BAME', which appears to have limited value in social sciences research. Our study reveals significant differences between the four ethnic groups on several key variables, which suggests that more in-depth analyses of each group would be beneficial. Although the findings showed no differences between ethnic groups in level of income or educational attainment, there was a clear difference in employment status, with Pakistanis being more likely to be unemployed than the other ethnic groups in the sample. Indeed, it has been shown that there are significant socio-economic inequalities among the diverse groups that constitute the category 'BAME', with Pakistanis being especially susceptible to work-related inequalities (Battu, Seaman & Zenou, 2011). Although there were no significant differences in other socio-economic markers, it is possible that the precarious employment conditions of the Pakistani minority could culminate in poor socio-economic outcomes in the future. Furthermore, the study did show that income (a key socio-economic variable) was the strongest predictor of life satisfaction (see also Cheung & Lucas, 2015)

In support of hypothesis 5, the study revealed that employment status was related to level of perceived discrimination and life satisfaction. Unemployed people reported more religious and ethnic discrimination, and less life satisfaction than people who were employed or in education. Ethnic minority individuals who are unemployed may have decreased first-hand contact with the White British majority, leading to a reliance on dominant social representations of intergroup relations, such as in the media or through discussions with other ingroup members (e.g. Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Indeed, much of the reporting in this area does tend to be negative (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Crucially, this study measured *perceived*, rather than actual discrimination and, thus, it is possible that those with reduced contact overestimate their level of discrimination. Furthermore, when intergroup contact does occur, this is not in an occupational context where there is often a common goal or superordinate occupational identity, which can bring together people of diverse backgrounds (Eckel & Grossman, 2005). More generally, employment status has been found to be an important predictor of psychological wellbeing, including life satisfaction (Daig, Herschbach, Lehmann, Knoll & Decker, 2009), as it was in our study.

Black Caribbeans exhibited stronger ethnic identification than other groups and both Black Caribbeans and Black Africans reported more frequent ethnic discrimination than other groups. Previous research has found that Black minorities tend to experience especially high levels of discrimination (Maxwell, 2009). Indeed, it is partly in response to this widespread discrimination that hundreds of protesters have mobilized in various cities in the United Kingdom in solidarity with the Black Lives Movement (BBC News, 2020). Although this study was conducted prior to the recent demonstrations in the United Kingdom, issues of discrimination and national belonging have become accentuated in the context of the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Perceived discrimination may lead to greater reliance on the ethnic ingroup as a primary source of belonging, distinctiveness and self-esteem (Brandolo, Brady, Pencille, Beatty & Contrada, 2009). Conversely, Pakistanis reported higher religiosity and more frequent religious discrimination than other groups in the sample, which could be attributed to the Islamophobic sentiment which has been observed in many Western countries (Allen, 2010; Cinnirella, 2014). Yet, despite the importance of religion in their lives and the frequency of discriminatory experiences due to their religion, Pakistanis still reported much stronger British national identification than Black respondents. Individuals appear to be able to retain a British national identity in spite of perceived religious discrimination, suggesting that this experience, though

aversive, is not necessarily an impediment to national identity. Conversely, ethnic discrimination in particular does appear to be an impediment to British national identification, possibly because belief in ethnic discrimination challenges the feasibility of being fully accepted as British.

The results suggest that a social psychological analysis of national identification, which focuses on the impact of identity threat and uncertainty, is important, since uncertainty about the meaning of Britishness makes it less likely that individuals will identify with this national category. Consistent with identity process theory (Breakwell, 2015a), it appears that social representations of Britishness (that are characterized by uncertainty) may threaten identity and, thus, be sidelined in favor of other group memberships which do provide certainty and enhance identity resilience. Indeed, the multiple regression model showed that British national identity uncertainty had the strongest impact on British national identification, suggesting that the perception of uncertainty in relation to Britishness and to one's own membership of the national category leads to decreased British national identification (Wagoner, Belavadi & Jung, 2017).

For several years, it has been acknowledged that the United Kingdom has failed to produce 'a discourse that integrates various ethnic groups under the umbrella of a common British identity' (Asari, Halikiopoulou and Mock, 2008, p. 1). Although there have been attempts to construct a coherent social representation of Britishness and to disseminate it through educational channels, such as the Fundamental British Values initiative, this has clearly not had the desired reach or effect on ethnic minority communities in the United Kingdom. Frequently, these initiatives are associated with negative events and circumstances (e.g. racial tensions, radicalization, terrorism) and proposed reactively as 'remedies' to a 'problem'. There has seldom been a national campaign or initiative to promote a sense of Britishness simply because of the social psychological benefits of a robust national identity.

The findings of this study suggest that it would be advantageous to develop a social representation of Britishness based on civic conceptions of nationhood, given that ethnicity is clearly a key component of identity and ethnic discrimination a key impediment. Indeed, the regression model also showed that perceived incompatibility between British national and ethnic identities was a significant predictor of decreased national identification. Ethnic minorities clearly value their ethnic identity but may find it difficult to resolve perceived tensions between this identity and their Britishness, thereby leading them to favor their ethnic identity over their national identity (Amiot & Jaspal, 2014). It will be important to consider whether this social representation of Britishness resonates not only with 'visible' ethnic minorities, such as British South Asians and Black British people, but also with White ethnic minorities, such as Jews and more recent migrants from the European Union. Major societal events, such as recent reports of antisemitism in the Labour Party and the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, have also brought to the fore questions of national belonging in White ethnic minorities. In short, a civic British national identity that is inclusive of, and *understood by*, ethnic minorities may be perceived as being more compatible with their ethnicity and, thus more readily adopted by these groups. However, this hypothesis will need to be studied further.

Important group memberships, including ethnicity, religion and Britishness, are significant predictors of life satisfaction, possibly because they provide feelings of social support (Jetten, Haslam & Haslam, 2012). Moreover, perceived ethnic discrimination, in particular, is aversive for life satisfaction, which echoes existing evidence of the deleterious impact psychologically of racism (Brandolo et al., 2009). These findings remind us that, despite the advances made in ethnic equality, ethnic discrimination continues to exist and must continue to be challenged. We are reminded of the psychological importance of being able to identify with significant social group memberships, given the association with higher life satisfaction.

Limitations

There are several limitations in this study which should be addressed in future research. First, this study focused on the four most populous ethnic minority groups in the UK, namely Indians, Pakistanis, Black Africans and Black Caribbeans. Future research should also include other significant ethnic minority groups, such as Bangladeshis, Arabs, and migrants from the European Union. Second, a key finding from this study is that the various ethnic minority groups frequented categorized as 'BAME' are diverse. However, it is clear that even the categories of 'Indian', 'Pakistani', 'Black African' and 'Black Caribbean' are very diverse. Thus, a beneficial next step in research would be to examine differences between regional groups (e.g. Punjabis vs. Gujaratis; South Africans vs Nigerians; Kashmiris vs Punjabis; Jamaicans vs Barbadians). Although the study focuses on the United Kingdom, it is possible that the findings are transferable to other countries in Europe with historical overlaps in relation to immigration, such as Germany and France. Similar studies should be conducted in countries with distinct acculturation ideologies concerning immigrants, such as Canada which historically espouses multiculturalism and the United States which has a more assimilationist state acculturation ideology. Third, existing research into the distinct conceptualizations of Britishness is largely qualitative and some of this work has drawn on theoretical constructs, such as performativity and the hybridity of national identities. However, this study did not examine the ways in which ethnic minorities conceptualized Britishness or the fine-grained performative elements of nationhood. This would require more sensitive quantitative measures of British national identity but would be advantageous in future research. Fourth, although this study suggests that British national identity uncertainty may be causally related to decreased British national identification, its cross-sectional design cannot confirm this hypothesis unequivocally. Researchers might be able to use an experimental design to demonstrate the causal impact of uncertainty on level of identification in ethnic minorities.

Conclusions

This study exemplifies that ethnic minority groups in the United Kingdom should not be treated as if they were simply part of a homogeneous social classification (BAME) and that effective interventions for promoting good psychological health must be cognizant of their differences. Both Islamophobia and racism do appear to remain significant societal challenges in the United Kingdom. There has been renewed focus on the problem of racism in the wake of the Black Lives Matters Movement, which has also raised questions of identity, belonging and equality in ethnic minority communities. Ethnic discrimination in particular appears to be an impediment to British national identification.

Yet, a key finding from this study is that ethnic minorities possess uncertainty in relation to the meaning of Britishness, which in turn inhibits a strong sense of British national identity. Consequently, it is argued that certainty of a positive national identity can have psychological benefits, such as identification with one's national group and, thus, overall life satisfaction. This requires a coordinated institutional approach to providing clarity about Britishness in all sections of society – not only in the school environment. The debate on nationhood in the United Kingdom is complex and multi-faceted. Yet, this study provides some evidence that British national identification is associated with life satisfaction in ethnic minorities and that the promotion of a civic British national identity, inclusive of ethnic diversity and opposed to discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, might make this identity more accessible to people from these communities.

Declaration of interest statement

The authors have no interests to declare.

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Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Ethnicity	Indians <i>N</i> =81 (35.8%)	Pakistanis <i>N</i> =40 (17.7%)	Black Africans <i>N</i> =48 (21.2%)	Black Caribbeans <i>N</i> =57 (25.3%)						
Religion	Christians <i>N</i> =86 (38.1%)	Muslims <i>N</i> =50 (22.1%)	No-religion <i>N</i> =39 (17.3%)	Hindu <i>N</i> =36 (15.9%)	Sikh <i>N</i> =13 (5.8%)	Jain <i>N</i> =2 (0.9%)				
Gender	Males <i>N</i> =129 (54.9%)	Females <i>N</i> =102 (45.1%)								
Occupation Status	Employed <i>N</i> =138 (61.1%)	Student <i>N</i> =51 (22.6%)	Unemployed <i>N</i> =21 (9.3%)	Self-Employed <i>N</i> =16 (7.1%)						
Income	Below £10,000 <i>N</i> =50 (22.1%)	Between £10,000 and £14,999 <i>N</i> =13 (5.8%)	Between £15,000 and £19,999 <i>N</i> =23 (10.2%)	Between £20,000 and £24,999 <i>N</i> =28 (12.4%)	Between £25,000 and £29,999 <i>N</i> =20 (8.8%)	Between £30,000 and £34,999 <i>N</i> =28 (12.4%)	Between £35,000 and £39,999 <i>N</i> =18 (8%)	Between £40,000 and £44,999 <i>N</i> =11 (4.9%)	Between £45,000 to £49,999 <i>N</i> =13 (5.8%)	More than £50,000 <i>N</i> =22 (9.7%)
Educational Qualifications	GCSE <i>N</i> =11 (4.9%)	A Levels <i>N</i> =56 (24.8%)	Undergraduate Degree <i>N</i> =111 (49.1%)	Postgraduate Degree <i>N</i> =48 (21.2%)						

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for the key variables

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Age	29.80 Median=29	8.70	18	62
Ethnic discrimination	2.32 Median=2.33	.81	1	5.44
Religious discrimination	1.59 Median=1.22	.77	1	5.56
Strength of ethnic identification	31.39 Median=33	6.81	10	42
Strength of British national identity	21.84 Median=22	5.24	7	35
Religiosity	12.97 Median=13	4.53	5	20
British national identity uncertainty	52.46 Median=53	18.37	11	99
Perceived incompatibility between British national and ethnic identities	3.84 Median=4	1.65	1	7
Perceived incompatibility between British national and religious identities	3.26 Median=3	1.69	1	7
Life Satisfaction	19.39 Median=20	6.52	5	33

Table 3. Correlations between the variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Age		.10	.20**	.04	.06	.04	.01	-.03	.03	.04	.11
2.Ethnicity	.10		.23**	-.24**	.16*	-.30**	-.02	.05	.05	-.23**	.07
3.Ethnic discrimination	.20**	.23**		.34**	.12	-.24**	.07	.16*	.22**	.26**	-.10
4.Religious discrimination	.04	-.24**	.34**		.04	.10	.40**	.01	.00	.32**	.00
5.Ethnic identification	.06	.16*	.12	.04		.06	.23**	-.03	-.09	-.03	.28**
6.British national identification	.04	-.30**	-.23**	.10	.06		.10	-.47**	-.36**	-.15*	.15*
7.Religiosity	.01	-.02	.07	.40**	.23**	.10		.03	-.03	.12	.26**
8.British national identity uncertainty	-.03	-.05	.16*	.01	-.03	-.47**	.03		.39**	.19**	.02
9.Perceived incompatibility – British national and ethnic identities	.03	.05	.22**	.00	-.09	-.36**	-.03	.39**		.44**	-.10
10.Perceived incompatibility – British national and religious identities	.04	-.23**	.26**	.32**	-.03	-.15*	.12	.19**	.44**		.02
11.Life satisfaction	.11	-.07	-.10	.00	.28**	.15*	.26**	.02	-.10	.02	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .005$

Table 4. Stepwise regression models predicting the variance of British national identification and life satisfaction, respectively.

British national identification						
<i>Predictors</i>	β	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>95% CIs</i>	
British national uncertainty	-.40	.017	-6.609	<.001	-.147, -.079	
Ethnicity	-.22	.13	-4.048	<.001	-.805, -.278	
Perceived incompatibility-British and ethnic identities	-.20	.19	-3.275	.001	-.996, -.248	
Religiosity	.12	.064	2.198	.029	.015, .266	
Life satisfaction						
<i>Predictors</i>	β	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>95% CIs</i>	
Income	.22	.13	3.644	.001	.225, -.754	
Ethnic identification	.22	.06	3.528	.001	.04, .330	
Religiosity	.18	.09	2.906	.004	.085, .442	
Ethnic discrimination	-.13	.50	-2.116	.035	-2.048, -.073	
British national identification	.12	.08	1.985	.048	.001, .306	