

BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Siromahov, Metodi and Buhrmester, M. and McKay, R. (2020) Beliefs in national continuity are related to essentialist thinking and to perceptions of the nation as a family. *Nations and Nationalism* 26 (4), pp. 845-863. ISSN 1354-5078.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/42592/>

Usage Guidelines:

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>
contact lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk.

or alternatively

Beliefs in national continuity are related to essentialist thinking and to perceptions of the nation as a family

Metodi Siromahov¹  | Michael Buhrmester² | Ryan McKay¹

¹Department of Psychology, Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, UK

²Department of Psychology, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Correspondence

Dr Metodi Siromahov, Department of Psychology, Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX, UK.
Email: m.siromahov@bbk.ac.uk

Abstract

National narratives serve to foster a sense of collective continuity—the perception that the nation has preserved its traits, values and goals across many generations. The present study explores some of the correlates of such perceptions of collective continuity (PCC). We predicted that people who see their nation as more continuous would tend to think about social groups in more strongly essentialist terms and to feel personally attached to other group members (a phenomenon known as identity fusion). An international sample of 307 respondents (predominantly from the United States and India) completed measures of PCC, social essentialism, identity fusion and national identification. Both hypotheses were supported at the level of the level of the full sample, suggesting that perceived national continuity is related to a general cognitive predisposition for essentialist thinking and also to one's sense of personal attachment to the nation. However, exploratory analyses by nationality revealed that the results could not be replicated with the Indian participants, potentially as a result of cultural factors. Identity fusion was also more strongly correlated to cultural/essentialist continuity than to historical continuity. Interpretations and directions for future research are discussed.

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2020 The Authors. Nations and Nationalism published by Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism and John Wiley & Sons Ltd

KEYWORDS

essentialism, identity fusion, national identity, perceived collective continuity

1 | INTRODUCTION

Nationalism as a political project is based on the idea that national self-determination is the only legitimate ground for political sovereignty. However, as many theorists of nationalism (e.g., Billig, 1995; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1986) have noted, this political claim is itself often predicated on certain ontological assumptions, specifically naive realist beliefs about nations being somehow natural or objectively real. One could divide these ontological beliefs in two broad categories: beliefs in the underlying objective reality of the nation and in its transgenerational continuity.

The first category includes ethnicist beliefs about nationhood as defined by some physical essence, such as genes or blood, or arising out of a connection with the soil of the motherland. But beliefs in the underlying reality of nations can be accommodated by civic nationalisms as well—for example, culture can serve as an ersatz national essence (Froio, 2018), especially if a given nation's culture is seen as monolithic and unchanging. In the social psychological literature, this type of naive realist belief in the naturalness of nations is referred to as “essentialism.”

The second component of the ontological dimension of nationalism is a belief in the nation's temporal continuity: “nations not only have to be imagined, but also have to create their own histories” (Billig, 1995, p. 70). People who hold such beliefs will see themselves as part of a historically continuous community going back centuries; they usually talk about multiple generations as part of a single national organism, using phrases like “We defeated Napoleon and Hitler,” or “Within a hundred years we may cease to exist as a nation.” The “us” one identifies with is composed not just of living people that one can meet and form connections with but also represents a long transgenerational chain of being. This creates a sense of shared destiny with one's countrymen, including the ones who died centuries ago and others who are yet to be born; past glories and humiliations are experienced as directly relevant and emotionally salient in the present, as if the individual's self is somehow “projected” into the past.

1.1 | Perceived collective continuity

In recent years, some social psychologists have turned their attention to the study of perceptions of continuity, at both the individual and collective levels, and the role continuity plays in identity construction. It has been suggested (e.g., by Vignoles, 2011; Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015) that the formation of our personal and collective identities is driven by a range of factors, such as the need for self-esteem, for belonging and acceptance, for meaning and purpose, the need to feel competent and capable and, crucially, the need for continuity. For individuals, having a sense of personal continuity (recognising oneself in one's past actions and being able to imagine one's life in the future) fosters emotional resilience in the face of life changes and is an important safeguard against depression and suicide (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003). Moreover, this need for personal continuity can motivate individuals to identify with groups that are also perceived as enduring and temporally continuous, as shown by Smeekes and Verkuyten (2013, 2014a). In the context of national identities, this kind of collective continuity is most often expressed in the form of a national narrative that can perform a wide range of functions: It can serve to justify existing institutional arrangements, to motivate collective action and guide political behaviour (Liu & Hilton, 2005) and to determine who belongs in the group and who does not.

The rhetorical strategies through which people achieve a degree of continuity in their personal and collective identities were explored by Chandler et al. (2003) and Chandler and Lalonde (2008) in the context of the identity narratives of Canadian First Nations adolescents. The researchers identified two broad sets of strategies, which they

categorised as “essentialist” and “narrativist.” Essentialist rhetoric assumes that there is some identity-conferring essence (e.g., genes and the soul) that guarantees that a person remains the same across different life episodes; it sees change as superficial and inconsequential. In contrast, the narrativist approach acknowledges that in some ways, the person has changed profoundly during his or her life, but paradoxically, self-continuity can be reaffirmed by tracing the trajectory of these changes and by constructing a narrative that describes how the person became what he or she is today.

The idea that people strive to achieve a sense of national continuity was further explored by Sani et al. (2007), who adapted the essentialist–narrativist framework to explain how people achieve collective, rather than personal, continuity. In their reading, perceived collective continuity (PCC) consists of two components: belief in the cultural continuity of the group (i.e., its shared values and traits), which maps onto Chandler et al.'s essentialist strategy, and belief in the historical continuity of the group (i.e., belief that the group's past forms an intelligible narrative, with periods of ascendancy and decline following a historical trajectory over multiple generations), reflecting the narrativist strategy.

PCC can have a direct effect on the dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion, as well as on the type of relationship that individual group members form with the collective. For example, Jetten and Wohl (2012) showed that when people's trust in the endurance and continuity of their nation is undermined, this leads them to adopt anti-immigration views to protect the nation's distinctiveness. Likewise, in one survey, Dutch participants who professed stronger beliefs in the essentialist continuity of Dutch people also reported seeing Muslim immigrants as a bigger threat to their nation (Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2014b), and in another experimental study, people's attitudes towards both friendly and hostile out-groups were magnified when they were led to believe that these groups were more continuous (Warner, Kent, & Kiddoo, 2016). Still, as Smeekes and Verkuyten (2015) have pointed out, relatively few studies have looked at the functional difference between cultural/essentialist and historical/narrativist continuity.

The main aim of the present study is to build on these findings by establishing a link between PCC and two other relevant constructs in social psychology: *social essentialism*, a cognitive bias that could potentially underpin PCC, and *identity fusion*, a particular form of alignment with the in-group characterised by a visceral sense of oneness and kinship with other group members (Swann, Gómez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009). By investigating a link between these three constructs we aim to explore whether perceptions of national continuity are related to a more general proneness to think about human beings in essentialist terms and to a corresponding deep emotional attachment to the nation.

1.2 | PCC and social essentialism

Several factors contributing to increased PCC have been proposed, including the endorsement of national narratives (Smeekes, McKeown, & Psaltis, 2017), the need to manage the existential anxiety stemming from death awareness (Sani, Herrera, & Bowie, 2009; Osborne & de la Sablonnière, 2014) and the need for a temporally stable social identity (Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015).

In addition to these putative correlates of PCC, we propose that beliefs in collective continuity are also underpinned by *social essentialism*—a general proneness to seeing social groups as ontologically real “natural kinds” (Gelman, 2003; Haslam, 2017; Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000; Medin & Ortony, 1989). Unlike mere stereotyping, essentialism includes the intuition that a group's stereotypical traits are somehow rooted in a deep, unchanging “essence”: a “national spirit,” “mana,” the effects of geography and climate on the national character (Perkins, 2016), or DNA (Fleising, 2001; Nelkin & Lindee, 1995).

Essentialism has been consistently linked with increased distancing from out-groups, including prejudice (Falomir-Pichastor, Mugny, & Berent, 2017; Hoyt, Morgenroth, & Burnette, 2019; Skewes, Fine, & Haslam, 2018; Wilton et al., 2018) and is a particularly relevant factor in the study of national identity and prejudice against out-groups (Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2002). In discussing the psychological roots of out-group derogation, Pehrson,

Brown and Zagefka (2009) have argued that a strong feeling of national identity does not necessarily lead to xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments. What matters instead is how individuals construct or define their nation. Specifically, ethnic (as opposed to civic) nationalism was shown to moderate the relationship between the strength of national identity and anti-immigrant attitudes: Among people with a strong national identity, those who saw their nation in more essentialist terms were also more hostile to immigrants. Ethnic nationalism can be seen as one manifestation of essentialist thinking, whereby ethnic minorities and immigrants can be seen as foreign bodies in the national "organism," threatening the organic unity and cohesion of the group. Ethnic/essentialist nationalism leads to two contradictory attitudes (Zagefka, Nigbur, Gonzalez, & Tip, 2013): Rejecting the possibility that an immigrant can ever become an equal member of the nation-group, while simultaneously perceiving immigrants as a threat to national cohesion and demanding more integration.

The conceptual links between social essentialism and PCC are easy to discern—essentialist thinking relies on a set of cognitive abilities emerging in early childhood (Gelman, 2003), such as the ability to distinguish between an object's appearance and its true identity or function; and to track an object's identity through time, even as its appearance changes dramatically. These cognitive abilities can be directly mapped onto the components of collective continuity: For example, the belief that there is a set of core national traits or values that define national identity despite superficial differences between group members resembles the appearance/essence distinction in essentialism and the belief that the nation remains essentially the same entity, even as all its individual members are replaced over many generations corresponds to identity tracking in essentialism.

Because of these conceptual similarities, it is possible that individuals who have essentialist intuitions about the characteristics of social groups will be more likely to endorse narratives about the collective continuity of nations. Hence, we propose that PCC and especially its essentialist component (cultural continuity) are related to a generalised readiness to perceive social groups in essentialist terms.

1.3 | Identity fusion theory

In addition to its link to essentialism, we were interested in exploring how PCC is related to identity fusion—a type of alignment with social groups which describes the merging of an individual's personal and collective selves, creating a visceral sense of oneness with the group (Swann et al., 2009; Swann et al., 2014; Swann & Buhrmester, 2015; Swann, Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse, & Bastian, 2012).

The founders of Identity Fusion Theory cite as its precursors Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Both theories emerged out of Tajfel and his colleagues' minimal groups studies (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971), which demonstrated that categorisation, or the "sorting" of others into groups, can enable people to make sense of their social world and to derive guidelines for action under conditions of uncertainty. Furthermore, once people had come to identify with their experimentally created social groups, they began to act in ways that privileged other members of their in-group and disadvantaged the out-group (Tajfel et al., 1971; Turner, 1999). Both SIT and SCT elaborated on the social identity perspective in direct opposition to earlier instinctual theories of conflict (Billig, 2002). Nearly four decades after their inception, they are now among the most popular cognitive theories of inter-group interactions.

Identity Fusion Theory takes as its starting point the distinction between the personal and the collective self in SIT, where the two forms of identity are separate and distinct: My personal identity contains the traits, memories and preferences that characterise me as an individual, whereas my collective identity contains all the information about myself that I derive from my membership in my social group. Where Identity Fusion Theory departs from SIT is in the proposition that in some people, the two identities can become "fused," in which one's personal identity and social identity become intertwined, and group membership becomes an essential component of one's personal identity (Fredman et al., 2015; Swann et al., 2009; Swann & Buhrmester, 2015; Swann & Talaifar, 2018). This interconnection between the self and the group leads highly fused individuals to perceive their social group as an extension

of themselves and to experience any threat to the group as a threat to their own wellbeing. This ultimately leads strongly fused people to report an increased willingness to sacrifice their own life to protect their group from harm (Gómez et al., 2011; Swann et al., 2009; Swann et al., 2014; Swann, Gómez, Dovidio, Hart, & Jetten, 2010).

An example of identity fusion is the deep attachment an individual may develop to their close family to the extent that a significant part of their self-concept is informed by their personal relationships with other family members (Walsh & Neff, 2018). However, identity fusion can also occur with larger social groups, such as a national or religious community (Fredman, Bastian, & Swann, 2017), where a feeling of oneness can be maintained despite the individual being unable to establish personal relationships with every single group member.

Strongly fused people have been shown to endorse extreme behaviours in the name of the group (Gómez et al., 2011; Swann et al., 2014). In a series of studies by Swann et al. (2009), participants completed a priming task which subliminally activated their personal or social self-concepts, depending on the condition. When compared with non-fused people, strongly fused participants were more willing to fight to defend their nation when either one of their self-concepts were activated. Identity fusion also predicted the likelihood of choosing to sacrifice one's own life in order to save several members of one's in-group in a trolley dilemma (Swann, Gómez, Dovidio, et al., 2010). Purzycki and Lang (2019) also explored the effects of identity fusion in less extreme circumstances, demonstrating that in economic games, strongly fused individuals sacrifice a larger amount of their income to benefit other group members than weakly fused people do.

Although the consequences of identity fusion have been explored in detail, the factors that promote or inhibit it have been the subject of more theoretical speculation than practical research. Until very recently, the main hypothesis about the path to fusion was that it was a cultural product (rather than an evolved mechanism; cf. Thomsen & Fiske, 2018) of collective dysphoric or life-changing experiences (Whitehouse, 2018; Whitehouse, McQuinn, Buhrmester, & Swann, 2014), such as collective trauma or rituals involving pain or punishment. Still, Kavanagh, Jong, McKay and Whitehouse (2019) have demonstrated that positive experiences and rituals can also foster identity fusion and a degree of social cohesion. One possible way of reconciling these two positions is to suppose that it is not specifically the *valence* of the collective experience that drives identity fusion but rather the degree to which this experience is *personalised* (i.e., shared by other individual group members; Whitehouse, 2018).

1.4 | PCC and identity fusion

A key aspect in which identity fusion differs from identification is that fusion can lead to perceiving the group as fictive kin (Swann et al., 2012). For example, a person who identifies strongly with France without being strongly fused with it may attach great importance to, and take pride in, being French (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Evans & Kelly, 2002; Spinner-Halev & Theiss-Morse, 2003). However, identification entails an emotional attachment to the nation as an abstraction, or as a label ("being French"), and not necessarily to other individuals of the same nationality. In contrast, identity fusion encompasses an additional layer of emotional attachment and a sense of kinship with other group members as individuals. Strongly fused individuals, in addition to identifying with their nation, are also more likely to believe that all members of their nation share certain "essential" characteristics (Swann & Buhrmester, 2015) and should act together to accomplish the group's goals.

There are clear parallels between identity fusion (as a type of relationship with the social group) and PCC (as a mental representation of the group). Identity fusion implies the perception that a group can and does act in a concerted manner in pursuit of its shared goals. According to Lickel et al.'s (2000) typology of social groups, groups that meet this criterion can be both small (such as a family, a military unit or a group of firefighters) and large (such as a nation). Of these two, fusion with the smaller unit should be able to occur without the need for symbolic mediation, since all group members are free to interact with each other and to form direct personal relationships. However, when the object of identity fusion is a larger group, such as an entire nation, the size of the group represents a

barrier to any direct relationships between an individual and all other group members; in such cases, fusion would require the merging of one's self-concept with a particular representation of the group that emphasises its shared goals across time (cultural continuity) and its shared historical trajectory or destiny (historical continuity)—that is, fusion should require a high-continuity representation of the group. Furthermore, because fusion is often accompanied by a belief that group members share certain essential characteristics, the cultural/essentialist continuity component of PCC could be more important vis-à-vis fusion than the historical/narrativist continuity component is.

To summarise, there is a clear conceptual link between identity fusion and PCC, although to date, no studies have demonstrated this link empirically. Exploring this connection further could provide evidence for the way specific social relationships (fusion) map onto corresponding mental and rhetorical representations of that group (beliefs in national continuity).

1.5 | Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical considerations outlined above, we predict that PCC will be positively correlated with participants' endorsement of essentialist beliefs (Hypothesis 1) and with the degree to which they are fused with their nation (Hypothesis 2). To test the link with essentialism, we will measure participants' essentialist beliefs about human personality in general (i.e., whether the traits that define people are inborn, immutable and fixed). Finding a link between the two can serve as evidence that PCC is related to a general cognitive tendency for social essentialism and not just to a tendency to essentialise one's own national group. We also predict a positive correlation between PCC and identity fusion (Hypothesis 2). To ascertain whether this link is due specifically to identity fusion and not to the element of patriotism present in both constructs, we will also control for the strength of participants' national identification.

2 | METHODS

2.1 | Recruitment method

Respondents were recruited on the online platform Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), which is used extensively in socio-psychological surveys and experimental research. Platforms like MTurk are designed to facilitate the large-scale collection of survey data, and their participant pools tend to be more diverse and representative of the general population than the university samples often used in psychological research (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), which has contributed to the widespread adoption of such platforms in social psychologists over the past decade. However, a downside of this sampling method is the increased potential of inattentive responses, which requires the introduction of attention and comprehension checks, with the concomitant increase in attrition rates compared to face-to-face data collection.

2.2 | Participants

Data were collected from 499 respondents in exchange for a small fee, of which 307 (55% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 37.1$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.4$) remained after exclusions (incomplete responses = 94, failed two attention checks = 69 and duplicate IP addresses = 29). Participation was open to all MTurk workers regardless of nationality, as we aimed to test for associations between fusion, PCC and essentialism both within and across cultures. A majority of the respondents in the final sample were from the United States ($N = 204$, 46% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 39.3$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.2$) and India ($N = 88$, 75%

male, $M_{age} = 31.7$, $SD_{age} = 8.2$). The study received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee at Royal Holloway, University of London.

2.3 | Materials and procedure

Respondents were informed that they would be taking part in a survey on social cognition and national identities and were asked to complete a series of four questionnaires in a randomised order.

PCC was measured using Sani et al.'s (2007) 12-item self-report instrument, which captures two dimensions: cultural and historical continuity. Items include statements like "My nation's shared values, traditions, and beliefs have endured across the generations" (cultural continuity) and "Major phases in my nation's history are linked to one another" (historical continuity). Respondents indicated their agreement with a list of 12 statements on a 7-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (*I totally disagree*) to 7 (*I totally agree*), with higher scores indicated greater degree of perceived continuity. The measure had a good level of internal consistency in Sani et al.'s analysis, with a Cronbach's alpha of .80 (.77 and .82 for the History and Culture subscales, respectively), and Sani et al. (2009) provided additional evidence for its good discriminant validity.

Social essentialism was measured using 18 items taken from Bastian and Haslam's (2006) psychological essentialism scale, which operationalises essentialism as a tripartite construct consisting of beliefs about social categories as discrete, informative and grounded in biology. Items included statements like "People can behave in ways that seem ambiguous, but the central aspects of their character are clear-cut" (discreteness), "Generally speaking, once you know someone in one or two contexts it is possible to predict how they will behave in most other contexts" (informativeness) and "The kind of person someone is can be largely attributed to their genetic inheritance" (biological basis). Bastian and Haslam found the measure to have good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .82). Responses were recorded on a 6-point scale from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly agree*), following the response format in Bastian and Haslam's original study. Upon completion, individual item scores were added up (after recoding any reverse-coded items) and a mean social essentialism score was calculated, with higher values indicating greater endorsement of essentialist beliefs. The same procedure was repeated for the other three questionnaires.

Identity fusion was measured using Gómez et al.'s (2011) 7-item Identity Fusion Scale (sample items: "I am one with my country" and "I'll do for my country more than anyone else would do"), which they report to have a high degree of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .84).

National identification was measured using a tripartite measure of group identification (Henry, Arrow, & Carini, 1999), consisting of subscales that capture affective (e.g., "I enjoy interacting with other members of my nation"), behavioural (e.g., "Everyone needs to contribute to achieve the nation's goals") and cognitive identification (e.g., "I think of this nation as part of who I am."). Henry et al. found that the scale had a total Cronbach's alpha of .85–.89 across two samples of university students (coefficients for the individual subscales were .79–.84 for affective, .80–.83 for behavioural and .76–.78 for cognitive identification). Responses on both measures were recorded on the same 7-point scale used in the PCC measure.

2.4 | Design and analysis

The study had a correlational design with four continuous variables: PCC, social essentialism, identity fusion and national identification. A mean score was calculated for each instrument used in the materials, after recoding any reverse-coded items. We checked that the data met the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and normality and produced a matrix of Spearman's *rho* rank correlation coefficients between PCC, essentialism, fusion and identification. To test Hypothesis 1, we planned to conduct a multiple regression on PCC with age, sex and social essentialism

as predictors. For Hypothesis 2, a similar multiple regression was to be conducted predicting PCC scores from age, sex, identity fusion and national identification.

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | Structure and reliability analyses

Descriptive statistics for all measures are reported in Table 1. A reliability analysis revealed that all measures had a good degree of internal consistency. Out of the two subscales of PCC, historical continuity had a somewhat lower internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .723$) than cultural continuity ($\alpha = .893$) due to three problematic items which were only weakly correlated with the rest of the subscale: item 8 ("There is a causal link between different events in the history of my nation.") and the two reversed items, 6 and 12 ("There is no deeper connection between past, present, and future events in my country" and "There is no continuity between different ages in our national history", respectively).

We used a confirmatory factor analysis to test the two-factor structure of the PCC measure, using full information maximum likelihood estimation for the missing data. The analysis was performed in R version 3.6.1 (R Core Team, 2019) using lavaan 0.6-4 (Rosseel, 2012). The 12 PCC items were included in a two-factor model, and the latent factors were standardised. The model had an acceptable but not perfect fit (TLI = 0.88, RMSEA = 0.098, 90% CIs [0.085, 0.113]) and was a better fit than an alternative one-factor model, $\chi^2(1) = 144.48, p = <.001$. Factor loadings are reported in Table 2.

3.2 | Gender, nationality and age effects

Initial comparisons showed that on average, males had higher identity fusion scores, males: $M (SD) = 4.81 (1.54)$; females: $M (SD) = 4.42 (1.43)$, $U = 9,651.5, p = .010$, and PCC scores, males: $M (SD) = 5.11 (0.81)$; females: $M (SD) = 4.81 (0.85)$, $U = 9,366, p = .003$, than women; after analysing the separate components of the PCC measure, the effect was maintained only for cultural continuity, males: $M (SD) = 5.12 (1.00)$, females: $M (SD) = 4.66 (1.15)$, $U = 8,963.5, p = .001$, but not for historical continuity. No gender effects on essentialism and identification were found.

A further analysis of the sample by country of origin showed that the effects of gender were significant only for the Indian subsample and could not be replicated with the American. Responders located in India also had higher

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics, internal consistency and intercorrelations (Spearman's rho)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	1	1a	1b	2	3	4
1. Perceived collective continuity	4.98	0.84	.865	—					
1a. Cultural continuity	4.91	1.09	.893	.89***	—				
1b. Historical continuity	5.05	0.84	.723	.80***	.48***	—			
2. Social essentialism	3.4	0.57	.824	.12*	.15**	.07	—		
3. Identity fusion	4.63	1.50	.948	.51***	.62***	.22***	.17**	—	
4. National identification	4.99	0.87	.837	.56***	.47***	.49***	.12*	.59***	—
5. Age	37.12	12.35	—	.11	.00	.18**	−.03	−.01	.23***

Note: The measure of social essentialism uses a 6-point response scale, while all other measures use a 7-point scale, as in the original publications they were adapted from.

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

TABLE 2 Factor loadings for the measure of perceived collective continuity

Latent factor	Indicator	B	SE	Z	p	β
Cultural	Item 1	0.768	0.067	11.423	<.001	.611
Cultural	Item 3	1.123	0.063	17.793	<.001	.843
Cultural	Item 5	1.125	0.065	17.437	<.001	.831
Cultural	Item 7	0.871	0.069	12.602	<.001	.660
Cultural	Item 9	1.138	0.068	16.721	<.001	.809
Cultural	Item 11	1.191	0.068	17.446	<.001	.832
Historical	Item 2	0.841	0.060	13.978	<.001	.748
Historical	Item 4	0.881	0.057	15.467	<.001	.809
Historical	Item 6	0.459	0.104	4.427	<.001	.273
Historical	Item 8	0.616	0.066	9.262	<.001	.536
Historical	Item 10	0.856	0.073	11.657	<.001	.657
Historical	Item 12	0.435	0.093	4.657	<.001	.285

average fusion scores ($M_{\text{diff}} = 1.3$, $U = 4,153.5$, $p < .001$), total PCC scores ($M_{\text{diff}} = 0.6$, $U = 5,270.5$, $p < .001$) and scores on the cultural continuity component of PCC ($M_{\text{diff}} = 1.0$, $U = 3,768.5$, $p < .001$) compared with those in the United States.

Given the heterogeneity of the American and Indian samples, we conducted a post hoc hierarchical regression to determine whether the difference in fusion scores between the two groups would remain after accounting for the demographic differences. In Step 1, we regressed fusion scores on sex and age and then added nationality in Step 2. As shown in Table 3, sex and age had no effect on fusion after nationality was included as a predictor, $F(1, 288) = 49.73$, $p < .001$, suggesting that the difference in fusion scores between the American and Indian participants was not attributable to sex or age and could be the product of other demographic (e.g., level of education) or cultural differences.

3.3 | Correlations

As shown in Table 1, PCC was correlated with both essentialism ($r_s = .12$, $p = .030$) and identity fusion ($r_s = .51$, $p < .001$), and there were also weaker but still significant correlations between social essentialism on the one hand

TABLE 3 Hierarchical regression on identity fusion showing a significant effect of nationality above and beyond sex and age (US and Indian samples only, $N = 292$)

	Step 1	Step 2
Intercept	4.46 (0.30)***	3.75 (0.29)***
Sex	0.49 (0.17)**	0.19 (0.17)
Age	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Nationality		1.32 (0.19)***
R^2	.03	.17
R^2 change	.03	.14

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

and fusion and identification on the other. Additional comparisons showed that age was correlated with national identification ($r_s = .23, p < .001$) and perceived historical (but not cultural) continuity ($r_s = .18, p = .002$).

3.4 | Hypothesis 1

To test the prediction that people are more likely to perceive their nation as temporally continuous if they also hold social essentialist beliefs, we conducted a multiple regression on PCC with sex, age and social essentialism as predictors. The results for the full sample ($N = 307$) showed that essentialism is a significant predictor of PCC even after controlling for sex and age, with the whole model accounting for 9% of the variance in PCC. We then repeated the same analysis with the two largest national groups in our sample, United States ($N = 204$) and India ($N = 88$) to test whether these results hold up at the national level. Results for the American subset of the sample were consistent with the first analysis; however, among Indian participants, PCC was linked only to age and not to sex or social essentialism. All three models are summarised in Table 4.

We then conducted exploratory multiple regressions with the cultural (Table 5) and historical (Table 6) components of PCC as the outcomes and the same predictors as above (sex, age and essentialism) to test for any potential differences in how social essentialist beliefs are related to the two forms of national continuity. As with the full PCC scale, social essentialism scores predicted cultural and historical PCC in the American sample but not in the Indian sample, suggesting the existence of cultural differences in the nature of the relationship between essentialism and PCC.

3.5 | Hypothesis 2

To determine whether national identity fusion would predict PCC above and beyond national identification, we conducted multiple regressions on total PCC scores with sex, age, identification and fusion as predictors. The results, summarised in Table 7, revealed that identification predicts PCC above and beyond sex and age for both the American and Indian samples. Crucially, the coefficient for identity fusion was also significant but only for the American sample ($\beta = .186, p = .029$), indicating that for American participants fusion predicts its own share of the variance in

TABLE 4 A multiple regression testing for an effect of essentialism on PCC

	Predictor	B	SE (B)	β	t	p	Model statistics
Full sample	Intercept	3.414	0.32	-.217	10.667	<.001	$R^2 = .09, F(4, 303) = 10.24, p < .001$
	Sex	0.328	0.092	.392	3.547	<.001	
	Age	0.008	0.004	.124	2.257	.025	
	Essentialism	0.315	0.08	.216	3.94	<.001	
United States	Intercept	3.137	0.356	-.131	8.803	<.001	$R^2 = .11, F(4, 200) = 8.23, p < .001$
	Sex	0.233	0.109	.285	2.13	.034	
	Age	0.011	0.004	.181	2.71	.007	
	Essentialism	0.331	0.09	.246	3.693	<.001	
India	Intercept	4.145	0.741	-.213	5.592	<.001	$R^2 = .10, F(4, 84) = 3.09, p = .032$
	Sex	0.216	0.181	.284	1.189	.238	
	Age	0.026	0.01	.278	2.661	.009	
	Essentialism	0.08	0.186	.045	0.428	.670	

Note. The variable of interest in each analysis (essentialism, fusion, and identification) to make comparisons between the three samples easier at a glance is presented in bold.

TABLE 5 A follow-up multiple regression predicting cultural continuity from social essentialism

	Predictor	B	SE (B)	β	t	p	Model statistics
Full sample	Intercept	2.992	0.418	-.239	7.16	<.001	$R^2 = .10$, $F(4, 302) = 10.94$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.475	0.121	.434	3.93	<.001	
	Age	0.004	0.005	.049	0.891	.374	
	Essentialism	0.441	0.105	.230	4.217	<.001	
United States	Intercept	2.444	0.472	-.133	5.175	<.001	$R^2 = .11$, $F(4, 200) = 7.92$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.313	0.145	.290	2.162	.032	
	Age	0.011	0.006	.131	1.955	.052	
	Essentialism	0.472	0.119	.266	3.982	<.001	
India	Intercept	5.079	0.756	-.274	6.714	<.001	$R^2 = .09$, $F(4, 83) = 2.6$, $p = .057$
	Sex	0.282	0.185	.367	1.523	.132	
	Age	0.021	0.01	.222	2.107	.038	
	Essentialism	-0.093	0.19	-.051	-0.488	.627	

Note. The variable of interest in each analysis (essentialism, fusion, and identification) to make comparisons between the three samples easier at a glance is presented in bold.

TABLE 6 A follow-up multiple regression predicting historical continuity from social essentialism

	Predictor	B	SE (B)	β	t	p	Model statistics
Full sample	Intercept	3.414	0.32	-.123	10.667	<.001	$R^2 = .09$, $F(4, 303) = 10.24$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.328	0.092	.219	3.547	<.001	
	Age	0.008	0.004	.173	2.257	.025	
	Essentialism	0.315	0.08	.138	3.94	<.001	
United States	Intercept	3.137	0.356	-.097	8.803	<.001	$R^2 = .11$, $F(4, 200) = 8.23$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.233	0.109	.204	2.13	.034	
	Age	0.011	0.004	.175	2.71	.007	
	Essentialism	0.331	0.09	.158	3.693	<.001	
India	Intercept	4.145	0.741	-.122	5.592	<.001	$R^2 = .10$, $F(4, 84) = 3.09$, $p = .032$
	Sex	0.216	0.181	.162	1.189	.238	
	Age	0.026	0.01	.276	2.661	.009	
	Essentialism	0.08	0.186	.117	0.428	.670	

Note. The variable of interest in each analysis (essentialism, fusion, and identification) to make comparisons between the three samples easier at a glance is presented in bold.

PCC scores that cannot be accounted for by mere national identification. Follow-up regressions on the two components of the PCC scale showed that fusion predicts cultural continuity above and beyond identification only for the American participants but not for the Indian participants (Table 8); conversely, no effect of fusion on historical continuity (beyond mere identification) was found for the American sample, but a small negative coefficient ($\beta = -.272$, $p = .012$) was found for the Indian sample (Table 9).

4 | DISCUSSION

The primary aim of the study was to investigate two potential correlates of the PCC of national groups. Although the planned analyses confirmed the study's hypotheses, post hoc analyses problematised the connections between the

TABLE 7 A multiple regression analysis testing for an effect of fusion on PCC above and beyond that of identification

	Predictor	B	SE (B)	β	t	p	Model statistics
Full sample	Intercept	2.237	0.242	-.178	9.252	<.001	$R^2 = .37$, $F(5, 302) = 44.2$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.269	0.078	.322	3.434	.001	
	Age	0.003	0.003	.042	0.881	.379	
	Identification	0.373	0.059	.388	6.275	<.001	
	Fusion	0.136	0.034	.244	3.987	<.001	
United States	Intercept	2.424	0.319	-.110	7.588	<.001	$R^2 = .28$, $F(5, 199) = 19.01$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.196	0.099	.240	1.971	.050	
	Age	0.005	0.004	.087	1.409	.161	
	Identification	0.327	0.083	.338	3.948	<.001	
	Fusion	0.106	0.048	.186	2.203	.029	
India	Intercept	2.068	0.366	-.265	5.651	<.001	$R^2 = .54$, $F(5, 83) = 24.8$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.269	0.130	.354	2.069	.042	
	Age	0.010	0.007	.103	1.348	.181	
	Identification	0.595	0.082	.723	7.268	<.001	
	Fusion	-0.033	0.061	-.052	-0.535	.594	

Note. The variable of interest in each analysis (essentialism, fusion, and identification) to make comparisons between the three samples easier at a glance is presented in bold.

TABLE 8 Post hoc multiple regression analysis testing for an effect of fusion on the cultural component of PCC

	Predictor	B	SE (B)	β	t	p	Model statistics
Full sample	Intercept	2.072	0.312	-.167	6.645	<.001	$R^2 = .39$, $F(5, 301) = 48.32$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.334	0.101	.305	3.317	.001	
	Age	0.001	0.004	.012	0.258	.796	
	Identification	0.202	0.077	.160	2.61	.009	
	Fusion	0.347	0.044	.477	7.834	<.001	
United States	Intercept	2.077	0.42	-.100	4.943	<.001	$R^2 = .28$, $F(5, 199) = 19.75$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.235	0.131	.217	1.793	.074	
	Age	0.005	0.005	.056	0.91	.364	
	Identification	0.204	0.109	.160	1.874	.062	
	Fusion	0.287	0.063	.381	4.544	<.001	
India	Intercept	2.278	0.384	-.313	5.934	<.001	$R^2 = .51$, $F(5, 8) = 21.45$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.319	0.136	.415	2.337	.022	
	Age	0.006	0.007	.065	0.813	.419	
	Identification	0.436	0.089	.523	4.897	<.001	
	Fusion	0.127	0.067	.200	1.906	.060	

Note. The variable of interest in each analysis (essentialism, fusion, and identification) to make comparisons between the three samples easier at a glance is presented in bold.

constructs under investigation and indicated the confounding role of specific national cultures in how the constructs are related to each other. PCC was correlated with both social essentialism and identity fusion, and the regression analyses showed that these relationships remained after controlling for demographic variables like sex and age.

TABLE 9 Post hoc multiple regression analysis testing for an effect of fusion on the historical component of PCC

	Predictor	B	SE (B)	β	t	p	Model statistics
Full sample	Intercept	2.416	0.263	-.141	9.174	<.001	$R^2 = .26$, $F(5, 298) = 26.84$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.213	0.085	.254	2.491	.013	
	Age	0.004	0.004	.059	1.13	.259	
	Identification	0.548	0.065	.568	8.484	<.001	
	Fusion	-0.08	0.037	-.143	-2.157	.032	
United States	Intercept	2.804	0.336	-.099	8.336	<.001	$R^2 = .19$, $F(5, 195) = 11.11$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.172	0.105	.213	1.638	.103	
	Age	0.005	0.004	.090	1.344	.180	
	Identification	0.449	0.087	.472	5.168	<.001	
	Fusion	-0.076	0.05	-.137	-1.516	.131	
India	Intercept	1.853	0.475	-.176	3.905	<.001	$R^2 = .47$, $F(5, 83) = 18.06$, $p < .001$
	Sex	0.214	0.168	.235	1.269	.208	
	Age	0.013	0.009	.115	1.388	.169	
	Identification	0.77	0.106	.781	7.25	<.001	
	Fusion	-0.205	0.08	-.272	-2.572	.012	

Note. The variable of interest in each analysis (essentialism, fusion, and identification) to make comparisons between the three samples easier at a glance is presented in bold.

Moreover, identity fusion was found to be more strongly correlated with the cultural continuity component of PCC than with historical continuity. However, subsequent analyses by national group showed that these results could not be replicated with the Indian subset of our sample.

A question worth addressing at this stage is the choice of data collection method and the quality of the data collected, especially given the relatively high number of observations excluded due to failed attention checks. As discussed above, the method of data collection used in the present study has been used extensively in social research for nearly a decade, with results equivalent to those obtained through more classic forms of survey research. Attention checks were also necessary to eliminate low-quality responses, and the fact that strong correlations were found between theoretically linked variables (fusion and identification) indicates that the collected responses were non-random. The fact that the identity fusion questionnaire has been validated across cultures (e.g., China, India, the United States and Spain) over the past decade gives us confidence that the questions were interpreted in the same way by different participants.

Our findings have several important implications. First, we argued on theoretical grounds that PCC (or at least its cultural component) should depend at least partially on a social essentialist bias or a cognitive readiness to perceive social groups as “natural kinds” with an immutable nature; this is likely to be the case because without the intuition that some groups act like collective entities moving through time, it should be impossible to perceive a specific group as highly continuous. However, the small correlation coefficient suggests that most of the variance in PCC is attributable to factors outside this general cognitive bias. This interpretation is in line with Gelman's (2003) model of the development of psychological essentialism, which proposes that as children grow, they are forced to reconcile their essentialist intuitions with existing cultural beliefs and common-sense ideas which dictate which categories can be seen as more essentialised than others and what the nature of their “essence” is.

A second implication of our findings is that the cultural and historical components of PCC are functionally distinct in their relationships with attachment to the nation. As predicted, fusion was more strongly correlated with cultural than historical continuity, perhaps due to fusion being accompanied by a belief that nationhood is defined by certain essential characteristics (e.g., culture, values or traditions). In contrast, no difference was observed between

the correlations of cultural and historical PCC with mere national identification. Future studies can explore the distinction between cultural/essentialist and historical/narrativist continuity, as well as the more general question about any causal effects between fusion, PCC and social essentialism.

The findings also suggest a high degree of interplay between cognitive and cultural factors in the link between PCC and identity fusion. The present study revealed a large difference in average identity fusion scores between US and Indian participants, with the latter scoring on average much higher of the fusion scale. These results are broadly consistent with previous findings concerning cultural differences in population norms for identity fusion (e.g., Swann et al., 2014; see also Swann et al., 2009; Fredman et al., 2017, for similar studies with Spanish and Israeli samples, respectively), but their interpretation is complicated by the heterogeneity of the American and Indian subsets of our sample. Age and sex are two important confounds for measures of identity fusion, as seen in the present study, and the Indian participants tended to be younger than the rest of the sample and predominantly male. Moreover, they had higher fusion and PCC scores than the rest of the sample, and because their fusion scores were clustered towards the higher end of the scale, it is possible that the variability in the data was not sufficient to detect the same relationships as found with the full sample.

In addition to any demographic explanations for the differences in mean fusion scores between the US and Indian subsamples, the potential effect of the dominant discourses about nationhood in both societies should also be considered. For example, the prevalence of discourses about national "brotherhood" and metaphors of the nation as an "imagined family" (Lauenstein, Murer, Boos, & Reicher, 2015) differs between cultures; hence, the language of identity fusion could be perceived as more or less natural depending on the prevalence of this type of discourse in a given society. In effect, people in some cultures may be more inclined to speak of "dying" for their "brothers" because such language represents the normal way of expressing patriotism in their culture and not necessarily because it reflects a deeper psychological commitment to the nation.

The difference in mean identity fusion scores between different cultural groups could therefore be attributed to (a) a purely psychological phenomenon, whereby Indian participants become more strongly "fused" with their nation than Americans do, and their identity fusion scores reflect that; (b) a difference in cultural discourses about nationhood in both cultures, where the same level of emotional attachment to the nation is expressed in different terms depending on the dominant discourse in each culture; or (3) both, with the possibility that discourse affects an individual's degree of fusion with the group. Future studies can address this question by exploring the effect of intercultural differences in fusion scores on other factors known to be associated with fusion, for example, endorsement of extreme sacrifice (Swann et al., 2014).

Likewise, cultural differences could account for the differences in mean PCC scores. To take the case of the United States first, the American nation was built around a core of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants and expanded through consecutive waves of immigration from the rest of the non-English world (Kaufmann, 1999). This fact alone precludes the possibility of building national identity through shared ancestry and makes cultural assimilation the primary method for fostering social cohesion. In theory, therefore, American identity privileges language above ancestry and ethnicity; however, in practice, conceptions of Americanness are more complex and contested. Citrin, Wong and Duff (2001) have identified two rival conceptions of American identity, the liberal (commitment to democracy and individualism; no need to extirpate immigrants' native cultures) and the nativist (Americanness means Anglo-Saxon ethnicity; diversity erodes cohesion; therefore, immigration should be limited). Although their survey showed little racial differences in patriotism among Americans, it found that Black respondents endorsed a more nativist version of Americanness and valued Christianity as a marker of national identity more than Whites. Interestingly, Schildkraut's (2007) respondents often held contradictory views (favouring both assimilation and diversity), suggesting that a plurality of identity norms exist that is difficult to reduce to a single "American identity."

India is even more divided than the United States along linguistic, religious and regional but also caste lines. During its liberation, only 40% spoke Hindi, which made language an ineffective basis for cultural unification (Adeney & Lall, 2005). Furthermore, India's cultural diversity was not the result of recent immigration but of cultural co-evolution: Minority cultures are not newcomers, and there is no single hegemonic identity into which they can be

assimilated. Therefore, one dominant conception of Indian identity upon independence was Nehruvian secular nationalism, which defined Indianness territorially (India is a family of cultures within the same nation-state), valued individual liberty and equality, and was more tolerant of cultural diversity (Parekh, 2006). The main alternative to this liberal conception is offered by the Hindutva movement, which seeks to create a cohesive, self-conscious Hindu nation that excludes Muslims from Indianness (Adeney & Lall, 2005).

The liberal and ethnicist identity norms in both cultures are further problematised by the way they are put into practice by different political actors. National identities emerge out of a complex interaction between top-down projects (where political agents codify identities into constitutions and citizenship and immigration laws) and popular support. In the American case, although Americans are generally confident about their ability to assimilate immigrants and derive strength from diversity, historically ethnicism has been more popular than is currently admitted: Americanness has historically excluded African and Asian people, and in 1924, immigration was limited to Northern Europeans (Citrin, Wong & Duff, 2011). Successive Indian governments have also deviated from their official ideology when dealing with members of the diaspora, for example, emphasising shared ancestry when trying to reconnect with affluent professionals living in the West, but downplaying it when dealing with the less affluent “old diaspora” in South Asia (Adeney & Lall, 2005).

It is clear, therefore, that our participants in both subsamples had a plurality of identity norms to work with, hence the difficulty of outlining a singular American or Indian identity. One pertinent difference is how the nature of cultural diversity in the two countries affects the importance of cultural continuity. The source of diversity in the United States is immigration, which requires the assimilation of newcomers into a “core” WASP culture; continuity exists only insofar as the newcomers agree to identify with the local culture and begin to view its past as their own. Meanwhile, this kind of assimilation is impossible in India, which leaves ancestry and continuity (e.g., inhabiting the same territory) as the essential condition for belonging. These differences could explain the higher rates of belief in cultural continuity in the Indian sample.

It should be noted here that any claims about the precise causal connections between PCC, essentialism and identity fusion are at this stage only tentative and theory-driven. For example, we expect social essentialism to be a necessary condition for PCC, rather than a mere correlate, because social essentialism describes beliefs about human traits in general, while PCC is a perception of a specific social group. The logical next step would be to test for a causal relationship between essentialist thinking (either domain-general or specifically focused on national identity) and perceived national continuity. However, it is possible that both essentialism and PCC are affected by a third underlying factor. To give but one example, the *inherence heuristic* proposed by Salomon and Cimpian (2014) describes some people's tendency to explain social phenomena (such as “We drink orange juice for breakfast”) by reference to inherent properties (“Orange juice is refreshing and helps us to wake up”) over alternative, historical and context-dependent factors (e.g., “Orange juice became a staple item for many American families after a publicity campaign by the fruit industry in the mid-20th century”). It is possible therefore that reliance on the *inherence heuristic*, for example, among people with a more intuitive cognitive style (Kozhevnikov, 2007), might be an underlying precondition for both essentialist thinking and PCC.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

Scholars of nationalism have noted that feelings of national identity and pride are often predicated on certain beliefs about the underlying reality of nations: that they form organic groups or natural kinds and that their existence stretches back in time across multiple generations. We have termed these beliefs the ontological component of nationalism (in contrast to its political component) and argued that recent social psychological research has made advances that allow us to study how such beliefs are underpinned by certain cognitive tendencies (e.g., the tendency to essentialise social groups) and how they influence people's alignment with their nation (as in the case of identity fusion). The present study has taken the first steps towards linking all of these concepts together, and we have

attempted to outline some theoretical similarities and areas of overlap between them. We have also sought to demonstrate that perceived national continuity is related to general social essentialism and that the cultural and historical components of PCC are functionally distinct vis-à-vis identity fusion. However, the fact that these results vary across different nationalities demonstrates the need to seek a balance between theorising about general cognitive processes of identity formation on the one hand and culture-specific factors (national narratives or the famous ethnic-civic distinction being only two among them) on the other. Additionally, any straightforward interpretation of these results must be problematised by the difficulty of choosing an appropriate level of analysis: specifically, whether these relationships should be understood in cognitive or in discursive terms, or as some interactions between the two. More work therefore remains to be done in terms of demonstrating any clear causal relationships between PCC and its correlates.

ORCID

Metodi Siromahov  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9059-3337>

REFERENCES

- Adeney, K., & Lall, M. (2005). Institutional attempts to build a "national" identity in India: Internal and external dimensions. *India Review*, 4(3–4), 258–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480500302175>
- Bastian, B., & Haslam, N. (2006). Psychological essentialism and stereotype endorsement. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 42(2), 228–235. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2005.03.003>
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. London: Sage.
- Billig, M. (2002). Henri Tajfel's 'Cognitive aspects of prejudice' and the psychology of bigotry. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 41(2), 171–188. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466602760060165>
- Buhrmester, M., Kwang, T., & Gosling, S. D. (2011). Amazon's Mechanical Turk. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6(1), 3–5. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691610393980>
- Chandler, M. J., Lalonde, C., Sokol, B., & Hallett, D. (2003). Personal persistence, identity development, and suicide: A study of native and non-native North American adolescents. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, Serial no. 273, 68(2), 131–138.
- Chandler, M. J., & Lalonde, C. E. (2008). Cultural continuity as a protective factor against suicide in first nations youth. *Horizons – A Special Issue on Aboriginal Youth, Hope or Heartbreak: Aboriginal Youth and Canada's Future.*, 10(1), 68–72.
- Citrin, J., Wong, C., & Duff, B. (2001). The meaning of American national identity. In Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder. (Ed.), *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Core Team, R. (2019). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. In *R Foundation for statistical computing*. Vienna: Austria. <https://www.R-project.org/>
- Ellemers, N., Kortekaas, P., & Ouwerkerk, J. W. (1999). Self-categorisation, commitment to the group and group self-esteem as related but distinct aspects of social identity. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 29(2–3), 371–389. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-0992\(199903/05\)29:2/3<371::AID-EJSP932>3.0.CO;2-U](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-0992(199903/05)29:2/3<371::AID-EJSP932>3.0.CO;2-U)
- Falomir-Pichastor, J. M., Mugny, G., & Berent, J. (2017). The side effect of egalitarian norms: Reactive group distinctiveness, biological essentialism, and sexual prejudice. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 20(4), 540–558. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430215613843>
- Fleising, U. (2001). Genetic essentialism, mana, and the meaning of DNA. *New Genetics and Society*, 20(1), 43–57.
- Fredman, L. A., Bastian, B., & Swann, W. B. (2017). God or country? Fusion with Judaism predicts desire for retaliation following Palestinian stabbing Intifada. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 8(8), 882–887. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550617693059>
- Fredman, L. A., Buhrmester, M. D., Gomez, A., Fraser, W. T., Talaifar, S., Brannon, S. M., & Swann, W. B. (2015). Identity fusion, extreme pro-group behavior, and the path to defusion. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 9(9), 468–480. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12193>
- Froio, C. (2018). Race, religion, or culture? Framing Islam between racism and neo-racism in the online network of the French far right. *Perspectives on Politics*, 16(3), 696–709. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592718001573>
- Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gelman, S. A. (2003). *The essential child: Origins of essentialism in everyday thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gómez, A., Brooks, M. L., Buhrmester, M. D., Vázquez, A., Jetten, J., & Swann, W. B. Jr. (2011). On the nature of identity fusion: Insights into the construct and a new measure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100(5), 918–933. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022642>

- Haslam, N. (2017). The origins of lay theories: The case of essentialist beliefs. Claire M. Zedelius Barbara Müller & Jonathan W. Schooler *The Science of Lay Theories: How Beliefs Shape Our Cognition, Behavior, and Health*. (3–16). Cham: Springer.
- Haslam, N., Rothschild, L., & Ernst, D. (2000). Essentialist beliefs about social categories. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 39(1), 113–127. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466600164363>
- Haslam, N., Rothschild, L., & Ernst, D. (2002). Are essentialist beliefs associated with prejudice? *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 41(1), 87–100. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466602165072>
- Henry, K. B., Arrow, H., & Carini, B. (1999). A tripartite model of group identification: Theory and measurement. *Small Group Research*, 30(5), 558–581. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104649649903000504>
- Hoyt, C. L., Morgenroth, T., & Burnette, J. L. (2019). Understanding sexual prejudice: The role of political ideology and strategic essentialism. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 49(1), 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12560>
- Jetten, J., & Wohl, M. (2012). The past as a determinant of the present: Historical continuity, collective angst, and opposition to immigration. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 42(4), 442–450. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.865>
- Kaufmann, E. (1999). American exceptionalism reconsidered: Anglo-Saxon ethnogenesis in the “universal” nation, 1776–1850. *Journal of American Studies*, 33(3), 437–457. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875899006180>
- Kavanagh, C. M., Jong, J., McKay, R., & Whitehouse, H. (2019). Positive experiences of high arousal martial arts rituals are linked to identity fusion and costly pro-group actions. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 49(3), 461–481. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2514>
- Kozhevnikov, M. (2007). Cognitive styles in the context of modern psychology: Toward an integrated framework of cognitive style. *Psychological Bulletin*, 133(3), 464–481. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.133.3.464>
- Lauenstein, O., Murer, J. S., Boos, M., & Reicher, S. (2015). ‘Oh motherland I pledge to thee ...’: A study into nationalism, gender and the representation of an imagined family within national anthems. *Nations and Nationalism*, 21(2), 309–329. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12123>
- Lickel, B., Hamilton, D. L., Wierzchowska, G., Lewis, A., Sherman, S. J., & Uhles, A. N. (2000). Varieties of groups and the perception of group entitativity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(2), 223–246. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.2.223>
- Liu, J. H., & Hilton, D. J. (2005). How the past weighs on the present: Social representations of history and their role in identity politics. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 44(4), 537–556. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466605X27162>
- Luhtanen, R., & Crocker, J. (1992). A collective self-esteem scale: Self-evaluation of one's social identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 18(3), 302–318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167292183006>
- Medin, D., & Ortony, A. (1989). Psychological essentialism. In S. Vosniadou, & A. Ortony (Eds.), *Similarity and analogical reasoning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511529863.009>
- Parekh, N. (2006). Defining India's identity. *India International Centre Quarterly*, 33(1), 1–15.
- Pehrson, S., Brown, R., & Zagefka, H. (2009). When does national identification lead to the rejection of immigrants? Cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence for the role of essentialist in-group definitions. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 48(1), 61–76. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466608X288827>
- Perkins, M. A. (2016). *Nation and word, 1770–1850: Religious and metaphysical language in European national consciousness*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315248387>
- Purzycki, B. G., & Lang, M. (2019). Identity fusion, outgroup relations, and sacrifice: A cross-cultural test. *Cognition*, 186, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2019.01.015>
- Rosseel, Y. (2012). lavaan: An R package for structural equation modeling. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 48(2), 1–S. <http://www.jstatsoft.org/v48/i02/>
- Salomon, E., & Cimpian, A. (2014). The inference heuristic as a source of essentialist thought. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40(10), 1297–1315. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167214541659>
- Sani, F., Bowe, M., Herrera, M., Manna, C., Cossa, T., Miao, X., & Zhou, Y. (2007). Perceived collective continuity: Seeing groups as entities that move through time. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 37(6), 1118–1134. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.430>
- Sani, F., Herrera, M., & Bowe, M. (2009). Perceived collective continuity and ingroup identification as defence against death awareness. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45(1), 242–245. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2008.07.019>
- Schildkraut, D. J. (2007). Defining American identity in the twenty-first century: How much “there” is there? *The Journal of Politics*, 69(3), 597–615. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00562.x>
- Skewes, L., Fine, C., & Haslam, N. (2018). Beyond Mars and Venus: The role of gender essentialism in support for gender inequality and backlash. *PLoS ONE*, 13(7), e0200921. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0200921>
- Smeeke, A., & Verkuyten, M. (2013). Collective self-continuity, group identification and in-group defense. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49, 984–994. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2013.06.004>
- Smeeke, A., & Verkuyten, M. (2014a). Perceived group continuity, collective self-continuity and ingroup identification. *Self and Identity*, 13, 663–680. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2014.898685>

- Smeeke, A., & Verkuyten, M. (2014b). When national culture is disrupted: Cultural continuity and resistance to Muslim immigrants. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 17, 45–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430213486208>
- Smeeke, A., & Verkuyten, M. (2015). The presence of the past: Identity continuity and group dynamics. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 26(1), 162–202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463283.2015.1112653>
- Smeeke, A. N., McKeown, S., & Psaltis, C. (2017). Endorsing narratives under threat: Maintaining perceived collective continuity through the protective power of ingroup narratives in Northern Ireland and Cyprus. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 5(2), 282–300. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v5i2.682>
- Smith, A. D. (1986). *The ethnic origins of nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Spinner-Halev, J., & Theiss-Morse, E. (2003). National identity and self-esteem. *Perspectives on Politics*, 1(3), 515–532. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592703000379>
- Swann, W. B., & Buhrmester, M. D. (2015). Identity fusion. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 24(1), 52–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721414551363>
- Swann, W. B., Buhrmester, M. D., Gómez, Á., Jetten, J., Bastian, B., Vázquez, A., ... Zhang, A. (2014). What makes a group worth dying for? Identity fusion fosters perception of familial ties, promoting self-sacrifice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 106(6), 912–926. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036089>
- Swann, W. B., Gómez, Á., Dovidio, J. F., Hart, S., & Jetten, J. (2010). Dying and killing for one's group: Identity fusion moderates responses to intergroup versions of the trolley problem. *Psychological Science*, 21(8), 1176–1183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797610376656>
- Swann, W. B., Gómez, Á., Seyle, D., Morales, J. F., & Huici, C. (2009). Identity fusion: The interplay of personal and social identities in extreme group behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(5), 995–1011. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013668>
- Swann, W. B., Jetten, J., Gómez, Á., Whitehouse, H., & Bastian, B. (2012). When group membership gets personal: A theory of identity fusion. *Psychological Review*, 119(3), 441–456. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028589>
- Swann, W. B., & Talaifar, S. (2018). Introduction to special issue of self and identity on identity fusion. *Self and Identity*, 17(5), 483–486. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2018.1458646>
- Tajfel, H. (1974). Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Social Science Information*, 13(2), 65–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847401300204>
- Tajfel, H., Billig, M. G., Bundy, R. P., & Flament, C. (1971). Social categorization and intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1(2), 149–178. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420010202>
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole.
- Turner, J. C. (1999). Some current issues in research on social identity and self-categorization theories. In R. Spears, N. Ellemers, & B. Doosje (Eds.), *Social identity: Context, commitment, content* (pp. 6–34). Malden, Mass.: Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers.
- Turner, J. C., Hogg, M., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. C. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. New York, NY: Basil Blackwell.
- Thomsen, L., & Fiske, A. P. (2018). Communal sharing/identity fusion does not require reflection on episodic memory of shared experience or trauma-and usually generates kindness. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 41, e219. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X18001784>
- Usborne, E., & de la Sablonnière, R. (2014). Understanding my culture means understanding myself: The function of cultural identity clarity for personal identity clarity and personal psychological well-being. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 44(4), 436–458. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12061>
- Vignoles, V. L. (2011). Identity motives. In K. Luycke, S. J. Schwartz, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 403–432). London, UK: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_18
- Walsh, C. M., & Neff, L. A. (2018). We're better when we blend: The benefits of couple identity fusion. *Self and Identity*, 17(5), 587–603. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2018.1430062>
- Warner, R., Kent, A., & Kiddoo, K. (2016). Perceived collective continuity and attitudes toward outgroups. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 46(5), 595–608. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2202>
- Whitehouse, H. (2018). Four things we need to know about extreme self-sacrifice. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 41, e222. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X1800208X>
- Whitehouse, H., McQuinn, B., Buhrmester, M., & Swann, W. B. (2014). Brothers in arms: Libyan revolutionaries bond like family. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(50), 17783–17785. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1416284111>
- Wilton, L. S., Bell, A. N., Carpinella, C. M., Young, D. M., Meyers, C., & Clapham, R. (2018). Lay theories of gender influence support for women and transgender people's legal rights. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 10(7), 883–894.

- Zagefka, H., Nigbur, D., Gonzalez, R., & Tip, L. (2013). Why does ingroup essentialism increase prejudice against minority members? *International Journal of Psychology*, 48(1), 60–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207594.2012.729841>
- Evans, M., & Kelley, J. (2002). National Pride in the Developed World: Survey Data from 24 Nations. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 14(33), 303–338. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/14.3.303>

How to cite this article: Siromahov M, Buhrmester M, McKay R. Beliefs in national continuity are related to essentialist thinking and to perceptions of the nation as a family. *Nations and Nationalism*. 2020;1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12640>