Appraisal of Out-group in the Context of Inter-group Relations: Role of Personal and Collective Identity

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This study was done to explore the manner in which two important groups in India, namely Hindus and Muslims appraise themselves and others in the context, where if seen at the national level Hindus are in a majority position, but when seen at the local level Muslims constitute the majority group. The sample comprised 150 college going students, of whom 85 were Muslims and 65 were Hindus. For assessing personal identity and collective identity; the Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenback, & Rosenberg, 1995) and Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) were used respectively. The other measures used were the Religious Prejudice Scale (Singh, 1981) and Adjective Rating Scale (Ghosh, Kumar, & Tripathi, 1992). The main findings showed that both Hindus and Muslims exhibited ethnocentric attitude and appraisal of out-group were different for both the groups. In case of Muslims, religious prejudice and collective self-esteem were important predictors of out-group appraisal; however these were not important for Hindus. Results also indicated that Hindus who appraised themselves negatively also appraised the Muslims in a negative manner but Muslims who appraised themselves negatively appraised the Hindus positively.

Keywords: out-group appraisal, personal identity, collective identity, religious prejudice, inter-group relations

Social categorization as a fundamental cognitive process is the basis of research in the area of intergroup relations. According to Sherif (1962) whenever individuals belonging to one group interact with another group or its members in terms of their group identifications we have an instance of intergroup behavior. Categorization of people along nationality, religion, ethnicity, etc. has widespread social and psychological implications. It is unlikely that

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processes in groups will be unaffected by relations between groups. Further the mere categorization of people into groups is not the only basis of inter-group relation, as the relation between groups does not exist in a vacuum. There are several factors that impact these interrelationships. One of the crucial factors as pointed by Apfelbaum (1979) is the process of domination and subordination between groups that must be considered while exploring the inter-group dynamics.

The pioneering work in the field of group dynamics was done by Sherif (1966). He traced the origins and form of intergroup behavior to goal interdependence. Tajfel (1974, 1982) argued that individuals define themselves to a large extent in terms of their social membership. Based on the assumption that society is hierarchically structured into different social groups that share different power positions, the social identity approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) asserts that social categories provide members with a social identity; a definition and evaluation of who one is, and a description and evaluation of what this entails. The theory further states that social comparisons in inter-group setting are designed to attain positively valued distinctiveness from other groups (Tajfel, 1972). Groups are a major source of self-definition, and the manner in which people define their group membership has implication for self-definition and self-esteem. The more positive our feelings about our group, the higher will be our personal self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). According to Tajfel and Turner (1986) people display in-group bias and out-group discrimination because it enhances social identity that further elevates the self-esteem of the members.

Social identity theory (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Tajfel, 1978) distinguishes the social from the personal identity. Social identity refers to social categorization of self in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories. Social identity, therefore, refers to the shared self (in-group vs. out-group) and is associated with intergroup differentiation/categorization and the perception of self, in-group, and out-group in terms of relevant stereotypes. Personal identity refers to self-categories that define individual as a unique person in terms of his or her individual differences from other (in-group) persons. Reid and Deaux (1996) extending Rosenberg's (1988) hierarchical classification suggested that self-classification corresponds to social identity while self-descriptions in terms of traits correspond to personal features of identity. According to the structural model of Trafimov, Triandis, and Goto (1991) the two types of self are represented by separate 'baskets', so primarily one should facilitate access to that but not to the other part of the self. The self-

categorization theory states that personal and social identities are representation of self at different levels of abstraction, relative to both one another and the social frame of reference (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). It further argues that the personal and social identity need to be distinguished as two different levels of categorization, which are equally valid and authentic expression of the psychological process of self (Turner et al., 1987).

The difference between personal and social identity is not a matter of the attributes that define that category or of the abstract level of inclusiveness of the category used to define self. What matters is that how the self is actually being defined in a specific instance, the level of comparison and self-categorization that is actually taking place, and the subjective sense of self that results. According to Fiske and Von Hendy (1994) self is multi-leveled and multi-faceted, but at any particular moment, the self is a specific product of a context-dependent comparison. Evidence indicates that in-group category membership is more self-descriptive when intergroup contrasts raise the salience of those memberships (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1991). The self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) proposes that as shared social identity becomes salient, individual self perception tends to become depersonalized. That is, individuals tend to define themselves less as differing individual person and more as the interchangeable representatives of some shared category membership. Thus based on the saliency of identity, either self or social, the inter group dynamics gets affected.

The Indian Context

Group dynamics in India provide a rich context in which the interplay of self and social identity can be explored in various permutations and combinations. Majority of the studies done in India in the context of inter-group relations, have mainly focused on Hindus (constituting the majority group) and Muslims (occupying the minority position) (Bohra, 1979; Taylor & Jaggi, 1974; Tripathi & Srivastava, 1981). Results have revealed that status differentiations in inter-group relations exert an important influence in determining inter-group attitudes and relations. Majeed and Ghosh (1981, 1982) reported in their study that ethnic attitudes are influenced by societal position. A high caste Hindu and Muslim had favorable attitude towards own group but low caste schedule caste expressed negative own group evaluation and favorable out-group attitude for both high caste Hindus and Muslims. Investigating the socio-political biases

between Hindus and Muslims; Ghosh, Kumar, and Tripathi (1992) found that Hindus ascribed more power to themselves, but Muslims differentiated themselves from Hindus in terms of in-group positive identity. Owing to historical reasons, Muslims in India occupy not only a minority position, but on the socio-cultural and political parameter they find themselves at a disadvantage position. In this backdrop, the above findings highlight that the attitudinal in-group bias is considerably moderated by social contextual realities as well as power dynamics between groups. De Ridder and Tripathi (1992) rightly pointed out that power dynamics between groups can be understood in terms of resource power, which refers to social, economic, and political means or resources that each group is perceived to possess and by which it is able to exert influence.

Researches in the area of inter-group relations have thrown up competing explanation (Mummendey & Otten, 2001; Mummendey, Otten, Berger, & Kessler, 2000; Reynolds, Turner, & Haslam, 2000; Stapel & Koomen, 2000). Generally, findings have revealed that minority groups exhibit ethnocentric attitudes; however others have shown that many subordinate status groups do not confirm to the principle of ethnocentrism (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). It is possible that high status groups can have an insecure identity (Turner, 1978). Social identity and self-categorization theories do not accord much significance to numerical minority/majority status. Minority status according to the theory is simply an array of factors, which makes categorization a more meaningful basis of perception of self and others (Oakes & Turner, 1986). It also points out that a category perception is sensitive to changing relations between groups in our social world (Oakes, Haslam, & Reynolds, 1999; Turner, 1999). Hence, the present study attempts to investigate the majority/ minority categorization in a specific context in India where the hierarchical placement of categories is reversed. One residential university located in a city of North India provided the context to explore the dynamics between Hindus and Muslims. The composition of the population of this university is about 80% Muslims and 20% Hindus and others; therefore the group dynamics, in terms of resources, favors the Muslim group.

Objectives and Hypotheses

The main objectives of the present study were to investigate how, despite sharing the same history and nationality, difference in the hierarchical placement, via the inter-group context, shape perceptions

of members of in-group and out-group. It also attempts to explore the manner in which religious prejudice along with identity affects the appraisal process of out-group. In view of earlier findings it was hypothesized that Hindus being in a minority will show more ethnocentric attitude as compared to Muslims. Secondly it was conjectured that respondents high on collective self-esteem would be more negative in appraising out-group

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 150 respondents, both men (n = 55, 36.7%) and women (n = 95, 63.3%). Of them 65 were Hindus (Men = 24, 36.9%; Women = 41, 63.1%) and 85 were Muslims (Men = 31, 36.5%; Women = 54, 63.5%). Age range of the respondents was 15 to 30 years (M = 20.55, SD = 2.68) with 74.7% of them falling in the range of 18 to 22 years. Around 86.7% (n = 130) were graduates while 13.3% (n = 20) had higher secondary education. The monthly income of the sample was quite diverse, ranging from Rs. 900 per month to Rs. 150,000 per month with a mean income of Rs. 18,917.20 (Hindus mean income = Rs. 19,032 and Muslims mean income = Rs. 18,827).

Measures

Demographic Information.   This section required the respondents to provide information about their age, gender, religion, educational qualification, and monthly income of the family.

Adjective Rating Scale.   To measure the attitudes of respondents belonging to both Hindu and Muslim community towards their own group as well as the other group, Adjective Rating Scale (ARS; Ghosh et al., 1992) was used. The scale consisted of 22 adjectives (for example, responsible, trustworthy, lazy, cruel, honest, opportunist, etc.) out of which 11 adjectives were positive and 11 were negative. On each adjective, participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale (1= *very less* to 5 = *very much*) the extent to which the adjectives were applicable to people of their own religious group as well as the other religious group (e.g., for Hindus the other religious group were Muslims and vice versa). The adjectives for this scale were taken from Norm Violation Inventory developed by Ghosh et al. (1992). The Cronbach's alpha for ARS was found to be .75 for the present sample.

Religious Prejudice Scale.   Religious Prejudice Scale (Singh, 1981) consisted of 14 statements and response on each statement was elicited on a 5-point rating scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The wordings of the items were general (e.g., It is not possible to trust people of different religious groups; It is good to be devoted to ones' own religion). Possible range of the score varied from 14 to 70 and low score denoted less prejudice towards out-group. The Cronbach's alpha reached the value of .45 for the current sample.

Self-Esteem Scale.   Items of Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg et al., 1995) were translated and adapted in Hindi. The scale consisted of 10 items with 5 positively worded and 5 negatively worded items and is a self-report measure of global self-esteem. Items are related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. Respondents were required to respond on a 5-point rating scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5) and low score on this scale indicated low self-esteem. Alpha coefficient (.68) for the present study indicated the scale as dependable measure of global self-esteem.

Collective Self-Esteem Scale.   To assess collective esteem, Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) was employed. The scale consisted of 8 items where five items were positively worded and remaining three items were negatively phrased which were later reverse scored. Responses were acquired on a 5-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5) with possible score ranging from 8 to 40 and high score indicated positive collective-esteem. In case of current sample, Reliability indices of Collective Self Esteem Scale was determined as .73.

Procedure

The study was done in Indian university having Muslims in the majority and Hindus in the minority. Students were contacted personally and requested to participate in the study. After eliciting their verbal consent and establishing rapport they were briefed that the purpose of the study was to examine how people describe members of their groups and those belonging to a different group. After introducing them to the study the questionnaires were distributed. The questionnaires were self-administered and respondents were assured for the confidentiality of their responses. Information regarding age, gender, family structure, and income was inquired in the demographic

sheet. Afterwards, respondents were requested to rate themselves on a list of adjectives as members of their own religious group and they also had to rate others (in case of Hindus they had to rate Muslims and Muslims had to rate Hindus). This was followed by the Religious Prejudice Scale and Personal and Collective Self-Esteem Scale. It was required from the respondents to answer all the questions. After they filled the questionnaires they were thanked for their cooperation.

Results

Table 1 depicts the trends of inter-correlations between all the variables amongst the Hindu and Muslim respondents.

Table 1

Inter-correlations between Religious Prejudice, Individual and Collective Self-esteem and In-group and Out-group appraisals amongst Hindus and Muslims (N=150)

Variables		Rel. Prej.	Ind. SE	Col. SE	+ve In-group	-ve In-group	+ve Out-group	-ve Out-group
Income	H	.38**	-.17	-.06	-.10	.07	-.07	.16
	M	-.03	-.24	-.31	-.36**	-.06	-.27*	.06
Religious Prejudice	H	-	-.18	.11	-.11	-.21	-.33**	.08
	M	-	.02	.19	.18	-.07	-.44**	.43**
Individual Self-Esteem	H		-	.34**	.17	-.18	-.09	.03
	M		-	.46**	.52**	.09	.07	.48**
Collective Self-Esteem	H			-	.11	.08	-.01	.17
	M			-	.48**	-.13	.08	.50
+ve In-group Appraisal	H				-	-.37**	.39**	-.03
	M				-	-.41**	-.04	.49**
-ve In-group Appraisal	H					-	.03	.39**
	M					-	.34*	-.02
+ve Out- group Appraisal	H						-	-.53**
	M						-	.29**
-ve Out-group Appraisal	H							-
	M							-

*p < .05, ** p < .01

Note. Inc. = Income; Rel. Prej.= Religious Prejudice; Ind. SE = Individual Self-Esteem; Col. SE = Collective Self-Esteem; +ve In-group = Positive In-group Appraisal; -ve In-group = Negative In-group Appraisal; +ve Out-group = Positive Out-group Appraisal; -ve Out-group = Negative Out-group Appraisal; H = Hindus (*n* = 65); M = Muslims (*n* = 85)

Findings of Table 1 showed that income appears to be significantly correlated with religious prejudice for Hindus, indicating that Hindus with higher income reported more religious prejudice. For Muslims income was significantly but negatively correlated with collective self-esteem, positive own-group evaluation and positive out-group evaluation. That is, Muslims with high income had low collective self-esteem and they did not positively appraise their group as well as the out-group. Religious prejudice amongst the Hindus negatively and significantly related to positive out-group appraisal indicating that higher the prejudice less the tendency to evaluate the Muslims in a positive manner. Similar findings was noted amongst Muslims, that is, higher the religious prejudice greater the tendency not to appraise the Hindus positively. Religious prejudice was not significantly related to negative out-group appraisal amongst Hindus, but it was positively related in case of Muslims indicating that higher the religious prejudice greater will be the negative evaluation of Hindus by Muslims.

On individual self-esteem the table clearly shows that for both Hindus and Muslims it was positively correlated with collective self esteem. In case of Muslims individual self-esteem was highly correlated with positive in-group evaluation and negative out-group evaluation. Collective self-esteem was not significantly related to evaluation of either in-group or out-group for Hindus but it was significantly related to positive in-group evaluation and negative out-group evaluation for Muslims.

Thereby, it implies that Muslims having a strong collective identity rated their groups more positive and the other group more negatively. Regarding the inter-correlations amongst in-group and out-group evaluations, positive in-group appraisal was significantly correlated with positive out-group appraisal for Hindus but amongst the Muslims positive in-group evaluations was significantly related to negative out-group rating. Hindus who negatively evaluated their group also had a tendency to evaluate Muslims negatively but those Muslims who negatively evaluated their group evaluated the Hindus more positively.

Positive and Negative Appraisals of In-group and Out-group

To test the hypotheses that Hindus are more ethnocentric compared to Muslims *t*-test was performed on four categories of appraisal (positive in-group, positive out-group, negative in-group and negative out-group).

Table 2

Comparative Ratings of In-group and Out-group on Positive and Negative Adjectives by Hindus and Muslims (N=150)

	Positive in-group		Positive out-group				95% CI		
	M	SD	M	SD	t	p	LL	UL	Cohen's d
Hindus (n = 65)	3.63	.63	3.11	.67	5.41	.43	.33	.72	.29
Muslims (n = 85)	3.67	.76	3.22	.50	4.24	.50	.24	.66	-1.48
	Negative in-group		Negative out-group						
Hindus (n = 65)	2.79	.56	3.23	.59	5.33	.47	.27	.60	.34
Muslims (n = 85)	2.66	.58	3.19	.69	4.96	.62	.31	.73	.10

Note: CI = Class Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit

Table 2 shows that the appraisal of positive and negative in-group and out-group was not significant, indicating that both Hindus and Muslims were not significantly different on ethnocentrism.

Table 3

Out-group Appraisal in Relation to Religious Prejudice, Individual Self-Esteem, and Evaluation of Own-group (N=150)

Variables	Positive Appraisal of Out-group		Negative Appraisal of Out-group	
	Muslims (n = 85)	Hindus (n = 65)	Muslims (n = 85)	Hindus (n = 65)
Religious Prejudice	-.39***	-.28	.29**	.28
Ind. Self-Esteem	-.09	-.23	.10	.12
Col. Self-Esteem	-.08	.11	.27**	-.05
Positive In-group	.24	.35*	.40**	.18
Negative In-group	.31*	.03	.18	.55**
R^2	.23	.19	.53	.24
ΔR^2	.17	.10	.49	.15
F	3.72**	2.09	14.25***	2.77*

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Note. Ind. Self-Esteem = Individual Self-Esteem; Col. Self-Esteem = Collective Self-Esteem

Results of Table 3 indicated that with respect to positive appraisals of out-group; religious prejudice emerged as a significant predictor for Muslims. The negative value of Beta coefficient

($B = -.39$, $p < .001$) indicates that Muslims high on religious prejudice rated Hindus less positively. Similar results emerged in case of negative appraisal of out-group where religious prejudice again emerged as a significant predictor only for Muslims and not for Hindus. However, the value of standardized Beta was positive ($B = .29$, $p < .05$) implying that highly prejudiced Muslims rated out-group more negatively. Individual self-esteem and collective self-esteem did not significantly contribute to positive appraisal for both the groups, but collective self-esteem emerged as a significant predictor for negative appraisal of out-group amongst Muslims ($B = .27$, $p < .001$). This shows that Muslims high on collective self-esteem were more negative towards the out-group.

Table 3 further shows that the manner in which respondents appraised their in-group affected the out-group appraisal in an interesting way. Significant positive Beta coefficient ($B = .35$, $p < .05$) between positive in-group appraisal and positive out-group appraisal by Hindus indicated that if they were positive about themselves they also perceive the out-group member in a positive manner. Further Hindus who rated their group negatively also rated the out-group negatively ($B = .55$, $p < .001$). However, Muslims who rated themselves more negatively were more positive about Hindus ($B = .31$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

The fact that people either belongs to the same group or are part of a separate distinct social group often influences perception, thinking and interaction between them. The inter-group perspective argues that social behavior to a large extent is influenced by the social categories to which we belong and the power status that exists between the two categories (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005). The correlations shows that mere categorization of individuals in groups is not the only important basis, if actions and attitudes between two groups have to be understood then the position of the member in the group and the status that the group has in the society has to be accounted for. Significant positive correlation between income and religious prejudice for Hindus and non-significant correlation for Muslims shows that with increasing income Hindus became more prejudiced towards the other group but Muslims on the other hand become less collectively oriented. Greater income for the majority group means more power and assertion of their status, but for members of the minority group it means greater upward mobility in comparison to their own group. In such a changing social scenario

members of minority groups may pursue the individualistic orientation and as a result group identity gets primed less frequently than the individual identity. Thus to explain intergroup relations the 'a' individual related characteristics cannot be ignored and made subservient to group level dynamics.

The setting in which the study was undertaken was unique in two ways. One, the educational institute was largely a residential university and secondly Muslims formed the majority group and Hindus were a minority on the campus. In a residential institute the basis of grouping can be on religion, ideology, region of origin, professional inclinations, etc. Thus the available categories amongst student may be diverse which may give rise to many group identities and it is simplistic to presume that at one particular time the most salient collective identity will be on the basis of religion. As rightly pointed out by Reicher and Hopkins (1996) inter-group dynamics will depend on the extent to which we are accustomed to use the available categories. In order to get a better understanding the intricacies and the intertwining of identities needs to be explored in a much broader perspective.

Appraisal of Out-group

Appraisal in the context of inter-group relations is not just a byproduct of cognitive processes but a social phenomenon. Though Hindus were a minority on the campus but in the larger social framework Muslims constitute a minority in India. Hence, both exhibited ethnocentric tendency. According to Brewer (2007) attitudes towards out-group varies as a function of inter-group relationship and the associated security motives underlie in-group favoritism

The tendency to maintain positive distinctiveness by groups is desirable, but categorization is a dynamic context dependent process that is influenced by comparative relations within a context. An interesting result was that when respondents (both Hindus and Muslims) evaluated their in-group positively then they evaluated the out-group negatively, but if Muslims evaluated themselves negatively then they evaluated Hindus more positively. In case of Hindu students, negative evaluation of in-group did not result in positive evaluation of Muslims. This is indicative of the complexity of the social reality. The majority minority dynamics plays at several levels at the same time in a single time frame. Despite being in the majority in a given social context, Muslims occupy a minority position in the larger Indian context. They find themselves in a relatively deprived position both economically and socially. Hindus in India occupy the majority

position not due to their population size but have more control over economic, political, and social resources. Muslims on the other hand occupy a minority position with very little share in the economic and political development of the country. It is this state of deprivation and discrimination that affects their sense of security.

Minority groups exposed to continuous discrimination internalize the negative evaluations and tend to favor the out-group (Apfelbaum, 1979; Deschamps, 1982). Hewstone and Jaspers (1984) observed that minorities devalue the in-group and favour the out-group in those instances where they do not perceive alternatives to the existing system. In India an aspiring educated Muslim would like to be in the position of that group which in the larger social milieu enjoys greater resources. Ghosh (2002) also reported that in the Bangladesh context the majority dominant Muslim group fails to achieve a positively valued psychological distinctiveness as the minority Hindu out-group. Despite being in the minority Hindus in Bangladesh have played an active role in the socio-historical development of their country.

As far as social identity is concerned it was hypothesized that respondents who evaluated their social identity more positively will be more negative towards out-group, this was true only for Muslim respondents. Those Muslims who felt positive about their group membership evaluated the out-group negatively. This clearly indicates that in an inter-group setting, the social identity gains more salience than the personal. The self categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) posited that when social identity is salient, group members perceive themselves as exemplars of the group and not as unique individuals. Hence in those contexts where the social identity is salient, appraisal of situation and events related to social identity focus more on the social rather than the personal (Smith, 1999). Thus it is not the mere positioning of oneself in a particular group, rather the extent to which a member identifies with his or her group and how they evaluate their membership that also plays a crucial role.

Limitations and Suggestions

The study attempted to investigate the inter-group dynamics in a unique context but it mainly focused on the student community. Incorporating a cross-section of the society would have been more insightful as the inter-group dynamics unfolds differently in different sections within the same group. The extent to which members of the two groups have opportunity to interact with each other is important in the development of attitude towards each other. The study did not focus on the nature of contact between the two groups. As far as

student community is concerned they do have contact with the other group members, hence it was not known about the extent of contrast and comparison that these students made with the out-group. Group membership is crucial but the shifting allegiance to different subgroups also has to be taken into consideration. In future the within group dynamics also needs to be explored, as groups are neither static nor homogenous entities.

Conclusion and Implications

Though the majority minority dynamics was different in the present location but the findings highlight that it is difficult to ignore the bigger picture. Muslims due to the minority status of the institute may have been in a majority position having more control over the resources on the campus but at the national level they are aware of their minority position. Not only Muslims are at a disadvantaged position, but due to historical reasons the conflict of interests between the Hindus and Muslims in India constantly pose a threat to their identity. According to Augoustinos (1991) and Hewstone, Jaspars, and Lalljee (1982) the broader social reality or social status plays a crucial role. Hence along with the social context it is also the historical developments between groups that determine inter-group attitude which are nothing but shared perceptions that members of one group have for members of another group. Thus positioning oneself in a particular group does not make one oblivious to the position or status of other groups and its members. Erikson (1964) pointed out that people from minority groups do have difficulties in forming a coherent sense of identity. The psycho-historical setting not only affects but also makes their identity vulnerable.

The finding of the study has several implications. In order to understand inter-group relations one has to take holistic perspective rather than a sectarian view, where religion forms the basis of an overarching categorization system. People at one point of time may identify with different groups, in different capacities and that too at different levels. Hence a macro level analysis is required to explore the intricacies. Further a large-scale study can be done to investigate relevant context variables that along with social identity may affect the appraisal process.

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