

# Diversity ideologies and intergroup attitudes: When multiculturalism is beneficial for majority group members

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## Abstract

In social psychology, the background assumption of most of the research on cultural diversity ideologies is that multiculturalism is not in the interest of majority group members while colourblindness is. However, this assumption may not hold in a context in which multiculturalism benefits the majority group. Two studies investigated the association between multiculturalism and in-group bias amongst Hindu majority members in Mauritius. In Study 1, survey data showed that those who highly identified as Hindus reported less bias when they endorsed multiculturalism. Using an experimental design, Study 2 demonstrated that higher compared to lower majority group identifiers showed stronger in-group bias in colourblindness, polyculturalism, and control conditions, but not in a multiculturalism condition. In contrast to the existing research conducted in Western countries, these findings demonstrate that multiculturalism rather than colourblindness can be reassuring for high majority group identifiers. It is concluded that the meaning and impact of cultural diversity ideologies for intergroup relations depend on the national context.

## Keywords

diversity ideologies, ethnic identification, in-group bias, majority group

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Among Western majority group members, the ideology of multiculturalism has been found to promote ethnic out-group tolerance but also lower acceptance of ethnic minority groups (see Deaux & Verkuyten, 2014; Rattan & Ambady, 2013, for reviews). These divergent findings indicate that there are important moderating conditions, such as the national context (Guimond, de la Sablonnière, & Nugier, 2014), the level of intergroup conflict (Correll, Park, & Smith, 2008), and in-group identification (Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010; Verkuyten, 2006).

According to the social identity perspective, group members who identify relatively strongly with their ethnicity view their ethnic group as an important reflection of the self and therefore are motivated to think and act in their group's best

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interest, especially under conditions of perceived threat (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the U.S. context, highly identified majority group members have been found to support hierarchical intergroup relations more when their in-group's interests, status, or core values are at stake (Morrison, Fast, & Ybarra, 2009; Morrison & Ybarra, 2009). And when there are no perceived threats to their dominant position or majority identity, stronger group identification is not related to out-group attitudes or resistance to policies that benefit minorities (Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006; Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007).

The emphasis of multiculturalism on the recognition and appreciation of different cultural identities can be perceived by high identifying majority members as threatening because it jeopardizes their cultural dominance and group identity (Ginges & Cairns, 2000). Conversely, the ideology of colourblindness in which the emphasis is on the individual may be perceived by majority members as rationalizing the disadvantaged status of minority groups and justifying the majority's dominant position (Apfelbaum, Pauker, Sommers, & Ambady, 2010; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2015; Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, & Bluemel, 2013).

These findings support a functional interpretation of people's preference for different cultural diversity ideologies (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2009). Majority group members, and especially high identifiers, tend to endorse the ideology that supports the maintenance of their cultural identity and status and power position in society. However, it does not follow from this that for majority members multiculturalism is by definition more threatening than colourblindness. There can be situations in which multiculturalism serves the interest of the majority group and colourblindness does not (Verkuyten, 2014). For example, in Malaysia multiculturalism benefits the majority group of ethnic Malay (Noor & Leong, 2013), and in Japan people tend to approve of multiculturalism because it emphasizes the "otherness" of ethnic minorities and justifies the right to maintain the original Japanese

culture (Nagayoshi, 2011). Interestingly, in these types of situations one can expect no association between ethnic identification and intergroup bias in the nonthreatening multicultural context while such an association should exist in a colourblind context.

Empirical support for these expectations would show that findings of the effects of cultural diversity ideologies on majority members' intergroup bias do not only depend on ethnic identification but also on the interests that these ideologies serve. This would further improve our understanding of when and why these ideologies will and will not influence intergroup attitudes. Such an examination is difficult in North American and European countries in which most of the research on the effects of cultural diversity ideologies has been conducted. In Western countries it is quite difficult to encourage majority group members to accept the idea that multiculturalism benefits their in-group, and they typically favour colourblindness or assimilation (Verkuyten, 2014). In contrast, in Mauritius where the current study was conducted, multiculturalism is beneficial for and endorsed by the Hindu majority group, while colourblindness does not serve their group interests (see Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2015). The Hindus, despite a past of hardship through indenture, managed to keep a strong sense of "Hindu-ness" in terms of language, food, customs, and way of life (Eisenlohr, 2006). After the postwar years and the coming of independence from Britain in 1968 they rose to power because of their numerical majority (52% of the population) and ethnic cohesiveness. Currently they are the group that dominates politics and the public sector (Hempel, 2009). Mauritius therefore offers a unique possibility to examine whether, compared to lower identifiers, majority members who identify relatively strongly with their ethnicity show more in-group bias in the context of colourblindness, but not in the context of multiculturalism. Thus, the main hypothesis that is tested in two studies (survey and experimental) is that higher compared to lower Hindu identifiers show more in-group bias under colourblindness but not under multiculturalism.

Furthermore, in Study 2 the ideology of polyculturalism is also considered. In the context of the US and in the Philippines, the endorsement of polyculturalism has been found to be associated with more positive out-group attitudes (Bernardo, Rosenthal, & Levy, 2013; Rosenthal & Levy, 2010, 2012). Polyculturalism is the belief that there are historical links, commonalities, and mutual influences between different cultural groups. The focus on the many connections and interactions between groups implies mutual interdependence and a blurring of group boundaries which would lead to more positive intergroup attitudes. However, in Mauritius and similarly to colourblindness, polyculturalism can be threatening to the cultural dominance of the Hindu majority.

### Multiculturalism in Mauritius

The term multiculturalism is used in different ways and for different purposes (Bloemraad & Wright, 2014). As an ideology, multiculturalism emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and celebrating ethnic group differences. Proponents of multiculturalism argue that a society cannot ignore the demands of diversity because of the cultural and economic benefits of diversity and the fact that minority groups need and deserve cultural recognition and affirmation (Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2000). Yet, at the same time these proponents argue that unity and a shared identity is equally important. A well-functioning society needs a sense of commitment and common belonging making it important to foster a spirit of shared national identity. Group distinctiveness needs to be affirmed within a context of national connection and common belonging. This emphasis on both the recognition of cultural diversity and national unity is typical for Mauritius.

Mauritius is a small island state in the south-western Indian Ocean with a population of around 1.233 million (Statistics Mauritius, 2011). It has no indigenous population and is a past French and British colony, respectively. It is demographically multicultural with a current

population of European, African, Indian (Hindu and Muslim), and Chinese descent. Furthermore, the Mauritian nation is explicitly defined by “unity in diversity” in the form of a “fruit salad” multiculturalism whereby the continuation of distinct cultural groups is considered vital for the existence and cohesion of the nation. Cultural diversity is intrinsic to the Mauritian national self-understanding of being a diasporic nation, and pluralism and dual identities represent the national ideal (see Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2010, 2015). The notion of being a diasporic nation and the related cultural politics of the state, encourage the cultivation of essentialist “ancestral cultures” which embody singularity and purity (Eisenlohr, 2006). Diversity is based on the recognition of the culture of groups that have clear ancestral origins, like the Hindus. The diasporic ancestral culture policy legitimizes the dominant position of the Hindus and has exclusionist implications for the Creoles who have a history of slavery and no recognized claims on legitimizing ancestral cultures originating outside Mauritius (Eisenlohr, 2006; Laville, 2000). Thus the “fruit salad” multiculturalism serves the interests of the Hindu majority.

In contrast, a colourblind ideology is not beneficial to the majority Hindu group. In Mauritius, colourblindness is strongly influenced by the French secular notion of *laïcité* that emphasizes universalistic principles and individual citizens, rather than ancestral group cultures (Guidmond et al., 2014). It takes the form of “one nation, one people” and is promulgated by the press (mainly owned by middle-class Creoles) and public figures who are French educated. Furthermore, the colourblind perspective sometimes serves as a minority group argument to counter the cultural ancestry policy and related Hindu dominance in the public sector (Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2015). Thus, in the Mauritian context, colourblindness might be more threatening for Hindus, especially for higher ethnic identifiers.

While multiculturalism emphasizes cultural distinctiveness of ethnic groups, polyculturalism emphasizes the historical interconnectedness of different cultural groups and the continuing

influences that they have on each other (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010, 2012). Polyculturalism focuses on multiple legacies and continuing interactions and influences, and thereby helps to blur group boundaries. Polyculturalism runs counter to the idea of separate, ancestral cultures which forms the ideological basis for the dominant position of the Hindu group (Eisenlohr, 2006). Therefore polyculturalism can be expected to be associated with more in-group bias, especially for higher ethnic identifiers. Hindus who identify relatively strongly with their ethnicity, compared to low identifiers, might show more in-group bias in a context in which polyculturalism ideology is salient.

## Study 1

Using survey data, we examine in Study 1 the main hypothesis that higher compared to lower Hindu identifiers show more in-group bias under colourblindness but not under multiculturalism. In so doing we focused on the Mauritian “unity in diversity” understanding of multiculturalism. In the literature, no consensus has developed over which set of items best reflects multiculturalism ideology and this probably also depends on the specific national context (Bloemraad & Wright, 2014; Guimond et al., 2014). Existing measures of multiculturalism tend to focus on the cultural difference aspect of the ideology (e.g., Breugelmans & van de Vijver, 2004; Rosenthal & Levy, 2012). Yet, proponents of multiculturalism argue that recognition of diversity should go together with a shared sense of unity and common identity (Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2000). Without this, a society would degenerate into a collection of mutually coexisting but segregated cultural groups. This understanding of multiculturalism is similar to a dual-identity representation that recognizes subgroup identities within a superordinate identity (see Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007). Several multiculturalism measures have included this unity aspect by asking about the importance of recognizing diversity for the development of a cooperative and harmonious society (e.g., Berry & Kalin, 1995; Hahn, Banchevsky, Park, & Judd, 2015). In

Study 1 we followed this approach and focused on multiculturalism as a form of dual-identity representation.

## Method

*Participants.* In total, 295 students from the University of Mauritius participated in a survey study and of those 140 self-categorized as Hindu.<sup>1</sup> Out of these 140 participants, there were 95 females and 45 males with a mean age of 20.72 ( $SD = 1.44$ ). They followed undergraduate courses in one of the three faculties as follows: social studies and humanities ( $n = 87$ ), law and management ( $n = 35$ ), and engineering ( $n = 17$ ). Of the participants, 59 reported living in an urban area and 79 reported living in a rural area.

*Measures.* *Colourblindness* was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The two items taken from Rosenthal and Levy (2012) were; “At our core, all human beings are really all the same, so racial and ethnic categories do not matter,” and “All human beings are individuals, and therefore race and ethnicity are not important.” The two items were highly correlated ( $r = .61, p < .001$ ).

*Multiculturalism* was assessed in terms of dual-identity multiculturalism (Dovidio et al., 2007) with the following four items (same 5-point scales): “An individual should have both a positive ethnic identity and national identity,” “While cultural group differences should be recognized and respected, it is as important to promote a sense of belonging to the nation in which the cultural groups are found,” “It is possible for individuals to feel connected to both their cultural group and the national group,” and “It is as important for an individual to have a sense of affiliation to his/her cultural group as it is important for an individual to have a sense of affiliation to the national category” (Cronbach’s alpha = .67, and item-total correlation ranged from .64 to .76).

Maximum likelihood estimation with varimax rotation was used to ascertain that colourblind and multiculturalism are empirically distinct constructs. A two-factor structure emerged with the

**Table 1.** Correlations, means, and standard deviations for the measured constructs.

	1	2	3	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Ethnic identification	–			3.92	0.75
2. Multiculturalism	.03	–		3.97	0.60
3. Colourblindness	–.26**	.13	–	4.28	0.82
4. In-group bias	.38**	–.14	–.24**	18.56	24.29

\*\* $p < .01$ .

first factor explaining 36.46% of the variance and the second one 24.94%. The two items intended to measure colourblindness had a high loading on the first factor (.99 and .61) and a low loading on the other factor ( $< -0.14$ ). The multiculturalism items loaded on the second factor. The endorsements of the two ideologies were not significantly correlated,  $r = .13$ ,  $p = .12$ .

*Ethnic identification* was measured with a six-item measure (5-point scales) of group identification assessing importance and feelings attached to one's ethnic group was used (see Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). Participants were asked to indicate their ethnic group using the question "In terms of ethnic group, I am \_\_\_\_\_." Then they answered the six items in relation to the group they reported. Two sample items are "I am happy to be \_\_\_\_\_," and "Being \_\_\_\_\_ is important to who I am" (Cronbach's alpha was .90).

*In-group bias* was assessed using the well-known "feeling thermometer" which is a global measure of group feelings. This question is widely used to measure intergroup attitudes among different groups and in various national contexts (e.g., Sibley & Ward, 2013; Verkuyten, 2005; Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). The participants were instructed to use the "feeling thermometer" to indicate whether they have positive or negative feelings about a list of groups on a scale of 0 to 100 degrees. It was explained that 100 degrees indicates very warm feelings and that 0 degrees indicates very cold feelings. Following this, six groups were listed, including the Hindus (in-group), and Muslims and Creoles (two largest minority groups). Feelings towards the Muslims and Creoles were highly correlated,  $r = .78$ ,

$p < .001$ . An in-group bias score was computed by subtracting the in-group score from the average of the Muslim and Creole scores. Thus, a positive in-group bias score indicates relatively warmer feelings towards the in-group than towards the two out-groups.

## Results

*Preliminary analysis.* There were no significant gender, regional (urban/rural), and faculty differences on endorsement of the diversity ideologies so data was collapsed across these three variables. Table 1 shows that participants reported somewhat higher endorsement of colourblindness than multiculturalism,  $t(139) = -3.78$ ,  $p < .001$ . Furthermore, higher ethnic identification was associated with lower endorsement of colourblindness and stronger in-group bias.

*In-group bias.* We performed a two-step hierarchical regression analysis in which we first examined the effect of endorsement of multiculturalism, colourblindness, and ethnic identification (centred scores) on in-group bias. In the second step, we added to the regression equation the two interaction terms of ethnic identification with multiculturalism and colourblindness, respectively.

In the first step, the endorsement of multiculturalism was associated with less in-group bias and ethnic identification was associated with more in-group bias (see Table 2). There was no association between colourblindness and in-group bias. In Step 2, the entry of the interaction terms accounted for an additional 6.8% of the variance in in-group bias. As expected,

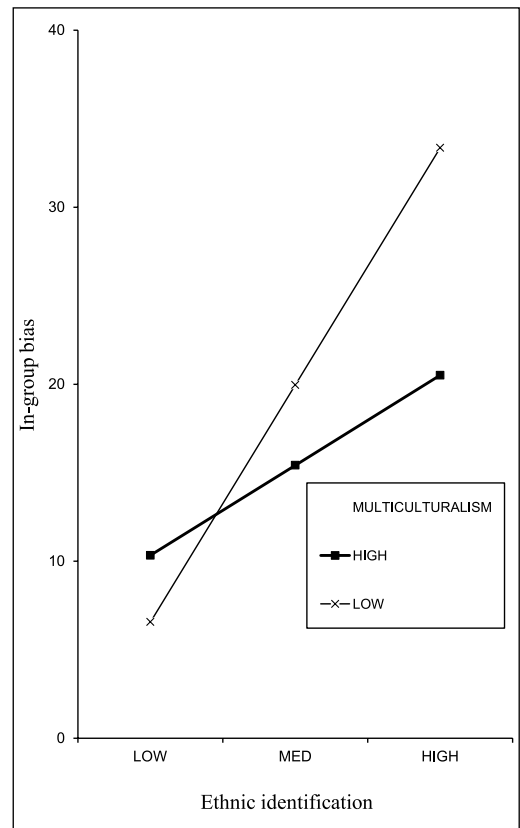
**Table 2.** Multiple regression analyses predicting in-group bias ( $n = 134$ ): Unstandardized beta coefficients (and standard errors).

	Step 1	Step 2
Constant	18.40 (1.91)	17.69 (1.93)
Multiculturalism	-6.61* (3.30)	-.384 (3.40)
Colourblindness	-3.76 (2.42)	-0.95 (2.62)
Ethnic identification	11.69**(2.7)	12.52** (2.62)
Ethnic Identification x Multiculturalism		-9.52* (4.66)
Ethnic Identification x Colourblindness		-6.41 (3.31)
R <sup>2</sup> change	0.19	0.068
F-value change	10.14**	5.91**

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

the interaction of ethnic identification with endorsement of multiculturalism was significant ( $B = -9.52, t = -2.04, p = .04$ ), while the interaction between ethnic identification and colourblindness was marginally significant ( $B = -6.42, t = -1.94, p = .06$ ). The result for the simple slope analysis used to examine the significant interaction between identification and multiculturalism is shown in Figure 1. For those who relatively strongly (+1 SD) endorsed multiculturalism, ethnic identification was not significantly associated with in-group bias,  $B = 6.89, t(131) = 1.85, p = .07$ . In contrast, for Hindu participants who had a lower endorsement of multiculturalism (-1 SD), stronger ethnic identification was associated to more in-group bias,  $B = 18.15, t(131) = 4.69, p < .001$ . However, simple slope analysis showed that for both those who endorsed colourblindness relatively strongly (+1SD) and those who had a lower endorsement of colourblindness (-1SD), ethnic identification was significantly associated with in-group bias, respectively  $B = 7.98, t(131) = 2.35, p = .02$  and  $B = 17.83, t(131) = 4.55, p < .001$ .

The results of Study 1 show that higher ethnic identification was not associated with stronger in-group bias for participants who endorsed multiculturalism. This suggests that multiculturalism is not threatening to the Hindu participants but rather confirms and legitimizes their dominant position in society: social psychological research has demonstrated that higher identifiers tend to respond to perceived symbolic threat by



**Figure 1.** In-group bias as a function of ethnic identification and endorsement of multiculturalism (+/-1 SD).

exhibiting more in-group bias (Ellemers et al., 2002; Morrison et al., 2010). The positive relation

between ethnic identification and in-group bias did not depend on the endorsement of colourblindness. Additionally, colourblindness was not associated with in-group bias and the Hindu participants endorsed colourblindness somewhat more strongly than multiculturalism. This could be due to the fact that students are more exposed to concepts of individual rights and have a more individualistic perspective on meritocracy and individual fairness.

## Study 2

While Study 1 was concerned with individual differences in the endorsement of cultural diversity ideologies, we followed in Study 2 the principle of lay theories activation (Levy, West, & Ramirez, 2005) for examining the causal impact of these ideologies. Following previous research on the effect of diversity ideologies on intergroup attitudes (e.g., Morrison et al., 2010; Morrison & Ybarra, 2009; Verkuyten, 2005; Wolsko et al., 2000), we used an experimental design to examine the situational effects of being encouraged to think in terms of multiculturalism, colourblindness, or polyculturalism. We tried to find out whether the activation of multiculturalism ideology makes higher group identifiers not respond with stronger in-group bias, while the activation of colourblindness and polyculturalism does trigger this response. Furthermore, we also included an experimental control condition in which no cultural diversity ideology was made salient. A positive association between ethnic identification and in-group bias in this control condition, but not in the multiculturalism condition, would further support our argument that multiculturalism can have a reassuring and legitimizing effect for majority group members. Finally, to examine the generality of the findings we did not only measure intergroup attitudes by using the feeling thermometer ratings but also with stereotype attributions.

### Method

*Participants.* In total, 294 University of Mauritius students took part in the study. Of these

participants, 160 described themselves as Hindu<sup>2</sup> (128 females, and 32 males) with a mean age of 21.24,  $SD = 4.44$ . The majority of Hindu participants ( $n = 110$ ) reported living in a rural area and 50 participants reported living in an urban area. Three participants were eliminated for incomplete data.

*Design and measures.* An experimental between-subjects questionnaire study was carried out in which multiculturalism, colourblindness, and polyculturalism were used as ideological frames and an additional control condition was used. The participants were told they were participating in a study on social issues in Mauritius. The questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Four different versions of the questionnaire were randomly divided among the participants. Three versions focused on the corresponding diversity ideology and the fourth control version focused on leisure time in Mauritius. The experimental design and manipulation closely followed previous experimental research on cultural diversity ideologies (e.g., Morrison et al., 2010; Verkuyten, 2005; Wolsko et al., 2000). Participants were first asked to read a short passage about why multiculturalism, colourblindness, or polyculturalism is beneficial for intergroup relations in Mauritian society. The passages served as the experimental manipulation and were adapted from the previous studies. Following the passage, participants were asked to write down five reasons why adopting the particular cultural diversity ideology could be beneficial for intergroup relations in Mauritius (see Wolsko et al., 2000). Next and for strengthening the message, participants were asked to evaluate five statements (5-point scales) on the particular diversity ideology that they had read; these questions were adapted from previous research (e.g., Rosenthal & Levy, 2012).

The *multicultural condition* questionnaire was entitled "The multicultural Mauritian society" and, similar to Study 1, emphasized the importance of the recognition of cultural identities within the framework of unity and common belonging. The five statements presented after the passage also focused on the unity in diversity

understanding of Mauritian multiculturalism. The passage participants read in the multiculturalism condition was as follows:

According to experts in the social sciences, research converges to show that the cultural diversity that exists in Mauritius should be recognized, respected and celebrated. When individuals have secure cultural identities, they can extend this positivity to others. The cultural diversity in Mauritius is a strong point for the country and intercultural harmony can be achieved when Mauritians better appreciate the cultural diversity and recognize and accept each cultural group's positive and negative qualities. Emphasizing the importance of understanding differences between ethnic groups will improve ethnic relations in Mauritian society.

The *colourblind condition* was entitled "Social cohesion in Mauritius" and participants read that:

According to experts in the social sciences, research converges to show that cultural groups do not matter for society to function well. Intercultural harmony can be achieved when we, Mauritians, recognize that at the core we are all the same, that all men and women are created equal, and that we are first and foremost a nation of individuals. Learning to ignore differences between cultural groups—being "colourblind"—will improve relations between groups in Mauritius.

The *polyculturalism condition* was entitled "The polycultural Mauritian society" and participants read that:

According to experts in the social sciences, research converges to show that cultural groups, around the world, have always been and continue to be influenced by each other. It is important to recognize that people belong to cultural groups that are interconnected through past and current struggles, common goals and mutual influence. Intercultural

harmony can be achieved, when we realize that there are many connections between different cultures and different cultural groups impact one another. Learning about the links between cultural groups will improve relations between groups in Mauritius.

The *control condition* was entitled "Social development in society" and participants read the following:

According to experts in the social sciences, research converges to show that leisure time and environment are important factors in the social development of Mauritius. What people do with their free time and where they spend that time are indicators of the country's development.

After the experimental manipulation, the participants were presented with the following measures.

To measure *in-group feeling bias*, participants completed the same thermometer rating as in Study 1. They were requested to give a rating of 10 groups, including Hindus (in-group) and the two main minority ethnic groups, that is, Muslims and Creoles. Correlation between feelings towards Muslim and feelings towards Creoles was significant,  $r = .51, p < .001$ . These ethnic groups were interspersed with several other groups unrelated to ethnicity, such as hairdresser, teacher, runner, and singer. The in-group bias score was derived by subtracting the out-group rating (average of Creole and Muslim) from the in-group rating (Hindu).

To measure *in-group stereotype bias*, participants were asked to use a 5-point scale for estimating the proportion of members of each ethnic group (1 = *almost none*, 2 = *around 25%*, 3 = *half of them*, 4 = *around 75%*, and 5 = *almost all*) that possess six different traits: honest, trustworthy, efficient, competent, friendly and likeable. Although it can be argued that the six traits reflect two (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) or three stereotype dimensions (Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007), maximum likelihood estimation



**Table 3.** Mean scores (and standard deviations) for in-group feeling bias and in-group stereotype bias by experimental conditions, Study 2.

	Experimental condition			
	Multiculturalism	Colourblindness	Polyculturalism	Neutral (control)
Feeling bias	15.68 (17.51)	19.29 (24.66)	10.24 (21.70)	21.00 (23.74)
Stereotype bias	0.39 (0.66)	0.64 (0.94)	0.58 (0.68)	0.87 (1.03)

with varimax rotation yielded only one factor for both the ethnic in-group (Hindus) and for the out-groups (Muslims and Creoles). Therefore, an overall score was computed for the different groups (alpha range from .78 to .90). Subsequently, an in-group stereotype bias score was derived by subtracting the out-group score (average of Creoles and Muslims) from the in-group score. The correlation between the stereotype scores for Muslims and Creoles was significant,  $r = .50, p < .001$ .

*Ethnic group identification* was measured with the same items used in Study 1 and Cronbach's alpha was .87.

## Results

*Preliminary analysis.* We first examined whether ethnic identification differed between the four experimental conditions and this was not the case,  $F(3, 153) = 2.02, p > .10$ . In all three experimental conditions and for the five additional statements that were used to strengthen the experimental manipulation, participants endorsed the particular diversity ideology. The mean scores were significantly above the neutral midpoints (3) of the scale: for multiculturalism,  $M = 4.24, SD = 0.58, t(43) = 14.17, p < .001, d = 4.32$ ; for polyculturalism,  $M = 3.77, SD = 0.51, t(38) = 9.38, p < .001, d = 3.04$ ; and for colourblindness,  $M = 4.05, SD = 0.86, t(34) = 7.2, p < .001, d = 2.47$ . This indicates that in all three conditions the participants followed the respective diversity ideology.

*In-group feeling bias.* Considering the experimental design, differences in in-group bias were examined using the general linear model (GLM) procedure. The general linear model is a flexible

generalization of analysis of variance and regression analysis and yields similar results (Rutherford, 2001; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Between-subjects analysis was conducted in which experimental condition was included as factor and ethnic identification as a continuous centered variable. To test our moderation prediction, the model further included the interaction term between experimental condition and ethnic identification. A main effect was found for ethnic identification,  $F(1, 149) = 30.34, p < .001, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .17$ , and the effect for the experimental condition was not significant,  $F(3, 149) = 0.85, p = .47, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .02$  (see Table 3). Yet, there was a significant interaction effect between condition and ethnic identification,  $F(3, 149) = 2.70, p < .05, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .05$ . As expected and similar to Study 1, in the multiculturalism condition there was no significant association between ethnic identification and in-group bias ( $B = 1.26, t = 0.25, p = .96, d = .04$ ) whereas in the colourblind condition ( $B = 18.27, t = 4.05, p < .001, d = .66$ ), in the polyculturalism condition ( $B = 13.90, t = 3.32, p = .001, d = .54$ ), and in the control condition ( $B = 18.43, t = 4.02, p < .001, d = .65$ ), this association was significant. In other words, when primed with colourblindness or polyculturalism (and in the control condition), the more participants identified as Hindu, the more they showed in-group bias, but this association was not found when primed with multiculturalism.

*In-group stereotype bias.* We performed the same GLM analysis for examining in-group stereotype bias. There was only a main effect for ethnic identification (centred score),  $F(1, 149) = 33.83, p < .001, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .185$ , and not for experimental condition,  $F(3, 149) = 2.09, p = .10$ . As expected,

the interaction between experimental condition and ethnic identification was also significant,  $F(3, 149) = 4.52, p = .005, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .08$ . Similar to the thermometer ratings, the effect of ethnic identification on in-group stereotype bias was significant in the control condition ( $B = 0.76, t = 5.06, p < .001, d = .82$ ), in the colourblind condition ( $B = 0.57, t = 3.86, p < .001, d = .62$ ), and in the polyculturalism condition, ( $B = 0.45, t = 3.23, p = .002, d = .52$ ). But ethnic identification was not significantly associated with in-group bias in the multiculturalism condition ( $B = -0.03, t = -0.18, p = .86, d = -.03$ ).

The results of Study 2 indicate that when higher majority group identifiers are encouraged to think in terms of multiculturalism ideology, they do not tend to express more in-group bias than lower identifiers. However, higher group identification was related to more in-group bias in the context of colourblindness, polyculturalism, and in the control condition. These findings suggest that multiculturalism has a reassuring or mitigating effect for high-identifying majority members in Mauritius.

## General Discussion

Multiculturalism ideology is typically viewed as beneficial for the recognition and equality of ethnic minority groups (Guimond et al., 2014; Hahn et al., 2015) and therefore as an example of a hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing myth (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Multiculturalism would require majority members to relinquish some of their power and status with the result that they could perceive it as threatening to their in-group. According to the social identity perspective, this is especially likely for high majority group identifiers who tend to respond to threats with prejudice and in-group bias (Ellemers et al., 2002; Morrison et al., 2010). However, our results demonstrate that there are no standard outcomes to diversity ideologies and therefore that the sociohistorical context should be taken into consideration when studying the implications of diversity ideologies.

From a functional perspective it can be expected that higher majority group identification

is not related to stronger bias when the particular diversity ideology serves the interest of the majority group (Dovidio et al., 2009). In the context of Mauritius, we found that the association between majority group identification and in-group bias was moderated by diversity ideologies whether assessed in terms of level of endorsement (Study 1) or in terms of situational salience (Study 2). In both studies, participants showed the “general norm to display ingroup bias” (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1999, p. 89): individuals who strongly identify with their in-group tend to have a stronger desire for positive distinctiveness and engage in more in-group bias. This association was found for participants who did not endorse multiculturalism in Study 1, and for the colourblindness, polyculturalism, and control conditions in Study 2. So in general, there is evidence for the well-established link between majority group identification and in-group bias. However, there was no association between majority group identification and bias for Hindu participants who endorsed multiculturalism (Study 1) or who were encouraged to think in terms of multiculturalism (Study 2). This pattern of findings indicates that multiculturalism has a reassuring or buffering effect on the link between ethnic identification and in-group bias. In the context of Mauritius, majority members benefit from multiculturalism and may not perceive it as in-group threatening (Eisenlohr, 2006). It is not possible for majority Hindus to claim “we are all Mauricians, mainly like us” (see Devos & Banaji, 2005) because of their history as indentured labourers and the consensual social representation of Mauritius as a culturally diverse society (“fruit salad”). However, by claiming “we are all different,” they can actually ensure the state-sponsored promotion of Hindu-ness and maintain their political and public dominance which is related to their numerical size (see Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2015). Thus, when society is framed as resting on the promotion of cultural diversity, then those who identify as Hindu can feel secure in their majority identity and do not have to respond with stronger in-group bias. In contrast, an emphasis on colourblindness or

polyculturalism does not serve the distinctiveness of the Hindu identity making higher identifiers respond with stronger in-group bias.

The findings for colourblindness are interesting in light of the ongoing social psychological debate about whether colourblindness has negative or beneficial consequences for intergroup relations (Apfelbaum, Norton, & Sommers, 2012; Rattan & Ambady, 2013). One reason for this debate is the fact that colourblindness can have quite different meanings in different contexts. For example, in France and Western Europe more generally, colourblindness is much more understood in terms of equality than in North America (Guimond et al., 2014). The emphasis in Western Europe is on equal citizenship whereas in North America colourblindness can be used to maintain rather than reduce inequality and therefore benefits majority group members (Knowles, Lowery, Hogan, & Chow, 2009). Historically, Mauritius is strongly influenced by the French notion of *laïcité* that emphasizes individual citizenship. This means that colourblindness goes against the recognition of cultural group differences and therefore is not in the interest of the Hindu majority. In Study 1, we found that higher ethnic identification was associated with lower endorsement of colourblindness, but colourblindness was not associated with in-group bias. However, in Study 2 higher majority group identifiers showed stronger in-group bias when they were encouraged to think about Mauritius in terms of colourblindness. Thus in contrast to research in North America, this suggests that colourblindness can be threatening for majority group members. A priori, colourblindness would not necessarily jeopardize Hindus' access to resources and political power because they could still maintain their dominance by controlling the public sector (i.e., colourblindness may not be a realistic threat). However, colourblindness does undermine the cultural group representation of the nation as a "fruit salad" and thereby can form a symbolic threat to Hindus' distinctiveness and diasporic ancestral identity.

The finding for polyculturalism contributes to the few recent studies among majority members

that have found that the endorsement of polyculturalism is associated with positive intergroup attitudes (e.g., Bernardo et al., 2013; Rosenthal & Levy, 2012). In Study 2, we did not measure polyculturalism but rather encouraged participants to consider the historical links and mutual influences that exist between the different cultural groups in Mauritius. The findings show that polyculturalism is not by definition beneficial for intergroup relations. Polyculturalism helps to blur group boundaries and this goes against the idea of authentic ancestral cultures which forms the ideological basis for the dominant position of the Hindu group (Eisenlohr, 2006). Highly identified Hindus might feel threatened by this ideology and thereby report more in-group bias. In Study 2 we indeed found that within the context of polyculturalism stronger in-group identification was associated with stronger in-group bias.

Our research is one of the first that has examined the role of cultural diversity ideologies for intergroup relations in a non-Western context. There is increasing concern about the "Western-centric" nature of social psychology and we have tried to make a contribution to the much needed empirical evidence beyond the psychology of the Western world (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). The importance of this is shown in our finding that the meaning and impact of different cultural diversity ideologies is not self-evident but depends on the particular historical and political context. In social psychology it is commonly assumed that multiculturalism serves the interest of minority groups and colourblindness is used to the advantage of majority group members (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2009; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). But the fact that this is the case in many Western contexts does not mean that this is so by definition. Multiculturalism can also serve the interests of majority group members—as in the case of Malaysia and in Japan—and colourblindness and polyculturalism can be perceived as undermining the majority group's advantaged position (see Verkuyten, 2014). Furthermore, in Western societies there can be local contexts in which these cultural diversity ideologies work out differently. For example, at the national level in

the United States, Whites constitute the majority and Blacks a minority, whereas this can be the other way around in neighbourhoods and at universities. One study (Hehman et al., 2012) showed that at the national level, Whites endorsed assimilation more than Blacks who were more in favour of multiculturalism. However, at the university level, when in a minority position both Whites and Blacks endorsed multiculturalism more.

Our research has some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, we examined multiculturalism in terms of unity in diversity which is central in Mauritius. This means that our focus was on the importance of cultural diversity recognition for societal cooperation and cohesion. This is similar to a dual-identity representation as proposed in the common in-group identity model (Dovidio et al., 2007), and to the importance of both recognizing diversity as well as national unity as argued for by proponents of multiculturalism (Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2000). This means, however, that the measure used in Study 1 is not fully similar to other measures that mainly focus on the recognition of diversity for assessing the endorsement of multiculturalism (e.g., Breugelmans & van de Vijver, 2004; Rosenthal & Levy, 2012). However, other measures do ask about the importance of recognizing diversity for societal cooperation and cohesion (e.g., Berry & Kalin, 1995; Hahn et al., 2015). Furthermore, in Study 2 and by using an established manipulation (Wolsko et al., 2000), the emphasis was more on multicultural recognition and the findings in both studies were similar. This suggests that the particular measure used in Study 1 is not responsible for the findings. In the literature, no consensus has developed over which set of items best reflects multiculturalism ideology and this probably also depends on the specific societal and national context (Bloemraad & Wright, 2014; Guimond et al., 2014). Furthermore, it has been argued that multiculturalism is a multifaceted construct (e.g., Rosenthal & Levy, 2010) but research tends not to focus upon or incorporate each of these facets, such as equality, acknowledgment of group differences, contribution to society, and societal unity and cohesion. Future

studies could examine further the role of multiculturalism for intergroup relations by examining different facets and different understandings of multiculturalism.

Our theoretical reasoning was based on the empirical literature indicating that in Mauritius, Hindus draw on the cultivation of ancestral traditions to justify their dominant position (Eisenlohr, 2006) and therefore endorse multiculturalism strongly (Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2010). For Hindus the multicultural policy of “ancestral cultures” justifies their dominant position rather than presenting a form of threat. However, we did not have a direct measure of threat and therefore we did not directly test this reasoning. Rather, following the social identity perspective (Ellemers et al., 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and previous research on cultural diversity ideologies (Morrison et al., 2010; Verkuyten, 2006), we argued that higher compared to lower in-group identifiers will respond with more in-group bias when their group’s position and identity are at stake. Yet, future research could examine the effect of multiculturalism on perceived threat and in doing so make a distinction between symbolic and realistic threat. In the U.S. context, symbolic threat tends to play an important role in high majority group identifiers’ resistance to multiculturalism (Morrison et al., 2010; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). In the context of Mauritius, perceptions of realistic threat might be more important. Mauritius is normatively represented as a “fruit salad” in which the different “fruits” are indispensable for the whole. The acknowledgment of diversity is beneficial for the cultural identity of all groups (except the Creoles). In addition, however, the multicultural policy justifies the dominant position of the Hindus in politics and the public sector. Future research could also examine, for example, whether among Hindus in Mauritius multiculturalism is associated with social dominance orientation, and whether the relation between social dominance orientation and intergroup bias is weaker in a multicultural than a colourblind experimental condition.

Our sample was university students and this limits the generalizability of the findings. Thus, it would be important to examine these issues among

nonstudent samples although it is quite a challenge to do social psychological research among other groups in Mauritius. Furthermore, university students' perceptions are informative and important because they are the future leaders, especially in a developing country like Mauritius. Additionally, we only focused on the perspective of Hindu majority members and future studies should also examine minority groups. In Mauritius, high-identifying Creole minority members might find multiculturalism more threatening leading to stronger in-group bias, and colourblindness and polyculturalism more reassuring with lower bias as a result (Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2015).

In conclusion, the current research highlights the importance of looking at diversity ideologies from a functional perspective in light of the history and politics of the studied context. In social psychology there is the tendency to consider the different ideologies as either hierarchy attenuating or enhancing (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) or as representing distinctive, "fixed" perspectives on the importance of recognizing diversity and advancing equality (Guimond et al., 2014; Hahn et al., 2015). Yet, the meaning of these ideologies and how they work out among higher and lower group identifiers have to be understood in their particular societal context. Multiculturalism does not by definition favour minority groups but can be reassuring and beneficial for majority members while colourblindness can be threatening. The implication is that social psychology should not rely on a rather schematic model of the benefits and threats of cultural diversity ideologies for majority and minority members, but rather examine how these ideologies function in particular historical and political contexts. Arguably, whether a particular ideology is hierarchy attenuating or hierarchy enhancing depends on the socio-historical context.

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### Notes

1. The remaining participants self-ascribed to the following ethnic groups: Muslim ( $n = 53$ ), Creole ( $n = 32$ ), Tamil ( $n = 20$ ), Telugu ( $n = 3$ ), Marathi ( $n = 4$ ), Chinese ( $n = 5$ ), mixed ( $n = 18$ ), and other ( $n = 18$ ). The great diversity within Mauritius and the variation in group positions does not make it very meaningful to lump participants of these very different groups together into one category of analysis.
2. Further, 49 described themselves as Muslim, 38 described themselves as Creoles, and 25 described themselves as Tamils.

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