

The Cognitive Underpinnings of Essentialist Nationalism: Exploring the Role of Identity Fusion and Heuristic Thinking

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I, Metodi Siromahov, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the work.

Abstract

This thesis represents an attempt to apply cognitive and social psychological theories to the study of two key aspects of nationalism: essentialist thinking and perceived collective continuity. It has two general aims: first, to determine whether socio-cognitive theories of group identity and information processing can account for some people's tendency to perceive national groups as distinct biological "kinds", a tendency which contributes to out-group stereotyping and prejudice. The second goal is to integrate identity fusion theory, a promising but still relatively under-researched model of group alignment, into already established socio-cognitive theories, specifically psychological essentialism and perceived collective continuity. The thesis contains 9 empirical studies divided into 3 parts. Part I explores the relationships between identity fusion, essentialist thinking, and perceived collective continuity, in a series of correlational and experimental studies. Part II takes a more cognitive approach and tests for an effect of information processing style (intuitive as opposed to analytical) and working memory load on social and national essentialism. Finally, Part III integrates rhetorical and discursive theories of social identity and attempts to bridge the gap with the earlier cognitive approaches. In a final experimental study, the attempt is made to redefine the boundaries of national identity through the use of high-continuity rhetoric. The main conclusion of this thesis is that purely cognitive theories of social alignment cannot, on their own, account for the intuitive appeal of essentialist nationalism, but can still offer important insights in this area when combined with less mechanistic theories of meaning-making and narrative identity.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Why study nationalism from a psychological perspective? The first part of the question – *why nationalism?* – at first glance hardly requires an explanation, given how central to political life nationalism has become in the past decade. This holds true almost everywhere in the two centres of what is understood as “the West” – in the United States of America, as well as in Europe, where nationalist-populist movements are exerting a profound influence on the political life of a number of countries, and in some cases have successfully formed governments. Nationalism seems to be the spirit of the age in much of the Western world, but for all its ubiquity today, it is worth remembering that until fairly recently it was generally seen as a spent force, or at least as one in terminal decline.

1.1 Why nationalism?

Nationalism’s heyday, the thinking went, lay in the second half of the 19th century. Since the early 1800s, the ideals of national sovereignty had challenged the legitimacy of absolute monarchies, forced constitutions upon a number of European countries, and led to the fragmentation of the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires into independent nation-states; by the 1870s, ideals of national unity led to the emergence of German and Italian nation-states out of the patchwork of kingdoms and duchies in the heart of Europe. By the early 1900s the principle of national sovereignty had become so universally accepted that the Wilsonian reconstruction of post-war Europe in 1918 was carried out exclusively along national lines – the old

dynastic empires of the Hapsburgs, Romanovs, and Ottomans were carved up into national states, defined more or less by the principle of national self-determination. But this new Europe of the nations proved less hospitable to liberal democracy than its architects had hoped (Sontag, 1972). These young nation-states emerged with national minorities of their own within their borders, whose autonomy they in turn aimed to suppress; the unfulfilled territorial ambitions of “Greater Italy”, “Greater Germany”, “Greater Hungary”, “Greater Poland”, “Greater Greece”, led to popular anger and the rise of irredentist and revisionist movements; governments enacted forced population transfers, waged wars of expansion that uprooted thousands, and even small states colonised their newly conquered lands with settler-farmers, in the manner of colonial powers (Mazower, 2000, p.121; Hobsbawm, 1995, p.50-51). Later National-Socialist attempts to radically alter the political and ethnic map of the continent were certainly the most destructive manifestation of these tendencies, but they also had very clear precedents in interwar Europe.

Post-WWII reconstruction could not be more different than the half century that preceded it. With Europe divided between two colossal world-powers, the political alliances that emerged were organised along ideological lines, not national ones. The international organisations that emerged with the denouement of the war – the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations, the Bretton Woods system, the European Economic Community – created the expectation that nationalist politics would be superseded by international cooperation and increased interconnectedness. Finally, the neoliberal turn of the 1970s and ‘80s led to the erosion of protections for national industries, and to the economic globalisation of the entire capitalist block that greatly diminished the relevance of the nation as a political and economic unit.

This process was paralleled by an increasing interest in nationalism as a historical phenomenon, and the crystallisation of nationalism studies as a multidisciplinary field of scholarly enquiry. The second half of the 20th century saw the publication of several foundational books: Elie Kedourie’s *Nationalism* (1960/1996), Ernest Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), Eric Hobsbawm’s *The Invention of Tradition*

(1983/2012) and *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (1992), Anthony Smith's *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983/2006), among others.

But Hegel's famous remark that the owl of Minerva only takes flight with the falling of the dusk appeared to also hold true in the case of the increasing scholarly interest in nationalism – scholars were beginning to grasp this phenomenon just as it appeared to be slipping into irrelevance. Throughout the 1990s, the case studies cited most often in academic discussions of nationalism were all either peripheral to the metropolises in the First World (the Yugoslav wars of independence, the genocide in Rwanda), or concerned the small separatist movements (the Basque, the Québécois) and the successes and failures of multiculturalism in the West (e.g., the cases of Belgium and Switzerland). The question of French, German or American nationalism was left largely neglected; the impression was that nationalism was something that belonged to our past, and could today be found only somewhere “out there”, in parts of the world that still had to catch up to “us” in their social and political development, or was an issue that concerned only a handful of national minorities in the metropolises. By the late 20th century, a consensus had emerged that nationalism, at least in the capitalist West, had outlived its purpose, and was gradually slipping into irrelevance. This idea was shared by intellectuals across the political spectrum, from liberals like Francis Fukuyama¹ to Marxists like Eric Hobsbawm² (Caplan & Feffer, 1996).

Against this backdrop, Michael Billig's *Banal Nationalism* (1995) was an important intervention that deeply influenced how nationalism has been viewed in academia since. The main question Billig sought to answer was how it was possible

¹“For national groups whose identity is more secure and of longer standing, the nation as a source of thymotic identification appears to decline. The passing of the initial, intense period of nationalism is most advanced in the region most damaged by nationalist passions, Europe. [...] Modern Europe has been moving rapidly to shed sovereignty and to enjoy national identity in the soft glow of private life. Like religion, nationalism is in no danger of disappearing, but like religion, it appears to have lost much of its ability to stimulate Europeans to risk their comfortable lives in great acts of imperialism”. (Fukuyama, 1992, p.270-272)

²“[The nation] is no longer a major vector of historical development.”; to the extent that nationalism exists in the West today, it is not the “emancipatory” and “unificatory” nationalism of the 19th century, but “essentially negative, or rather divisive”, an attempt to “erect barricades to keep at bay the forces of the modern world” (Hobsbawm, 1992, p.165).

for Western leaders to successfully use nationalist rhetoric at times of crisis, such as the UK's war with Argentina, or the United States's war in the Persian Gulf, given that nationalist fervour was not a part of everyday life in these societies.

How do people come to see themselves as British, American, etc.? To see the world as naturally divided into nations, and national sovereignty as a naturally given moral value? Furthermore, how does this occur given that most people today do not partake in the traditional nationalist spectacles of flag-waving and listening to rousing speeches on the sanctity of the motherland? Billig's answer is that there are a number of mundane practices through which people in the Western world come to view themselves as nationals inhabiting a world of nations; these practices constitute a "banal nationalism", distinct from the passionate nationalism of separatist movements and far-right political parties:

"The separatists, the fascists, and the guerillas are the problem of nationalism. The ideological habits, by which 'our' nations are reproduced as nations, are unnamed and, thereby, unnoticed. The national flag hanging outside a public building in the United States attracts no special attention. It belongs to no special, sociological genus. Having no name, it cannot be identified as a problem." (Billig, 1995, p.6)

1.2 Why a psychological approach?

Why study nationalism from a psychological perspective? The field of nationalism studies encompasses multiple disciplines, from sociology and anthropology to political science, however very few notable contributions have come from cognitive social psychology. Billig, a social psychologist involved in early research on Social Identity Theory with Henri Tajfel (Billig, 1976; Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971), is a noteworthy exception here, but even in this case his analysis of banal nationalism was centred on the role of rhetoric in shaping world-views and identities, rather than on established social or cognitive psychological theories.

Whenever psychological theories have been applied to the study of nationalism, these have tended to follow either one of two broad tendencies. The first

encompasses works that attempt to derive some grand theory of nationalism in its historical totality (i.e., nationalism in the abstract, as opposed to concrete nationalisms), but whose theoretical foundations do not meet scientific criteria of rigour or falsifiability. Among these I would place excessively reductionist sociobiological theories like Rushton's Genetic Similarity Theory (2005)³, but also Freudian and Lacanian psychodynamic theories, such as the social psychology of Erich Fromm (nationalism as collective narcissism: Fromm, 1941, 1956, 1962), and Slavoj Žižek's (1993, pp.221-3) idea of nationalism as a form of "enjoyment" organised around some unnameable national essence⁴. This is not to say that none of these theories are thought-provoking or make valid and original points. However, given that the scientific foundations of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis have been heavily discredited (e.g., Billig, 2006; Hines, 2003; Witkowski & Zatonski, 2015, p.109-122), anything valuable in these theories must first be excised out of the context of *jouissance*, the *objet petit a*, and the Oedipus complex, and translated into the theoretical frameworks of modern social psychology.

The second category of psychological writings on nationalism typically make use of more empirically testable models, such as cognitive theories of social categorisation (Turner, 2010; Turner & Oakes, 1986), in-group favouritism and out-group derogation (Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001; Viki & Calitri, 2008; Wagner, Becker, Christ, Pettigrew, & Schmidt, 2012), and the effect of stereotypes on prejudice. Brubaker (2004) described this as a cognitive turn in the anthropology of ethnicity and nationalism, in which knowledge about general cognitive processes began to be applied specifically to questions of nationhood. Social psychologists working within this cognitive framework generally refuse to engage in grand theory-

³For a critique of GST, see e.g. Bell (2006); Tooby and Cosmides (1989); for a more general critique of sociobiological theories, see e.g. Brewer and Caporael (1990)

⁴"The national Cause is ultimately the way subjects of a given nation organize their collective enjoyment through national myths. What is at stake in ethnic tensions is always the possession of the national Thing: the "other" wants to steal our enjoyment (by ruining our "way of life") and/or has access to some secret, perverse enjoyment." (Žižek, 1992, p.165). "An ideological fantasy is one way a community organizes its enjoyment and beliefs, for example, by discursively installing the ideals of a nation – a national 'Thing' — that is unique, whole, but threatened by an external and persecutory 'Other' [...] The ideological fantasy contends that the removal of this enemy can restore social harmony and wholeness." (Kingsbury, 2008, p.52)

building and instead focus on particular, and often extreme, manifestations of nationalism, such as xenophobia, ethnic and racial prejudice, support for far-right movements (more on this in Chapter 3), or belief in the moral superiority of one's nation.

Research in this field has contributed much to our understanding of social identities, cohesion and conflict. However, this approach in turn carries the risk of excessive reductionism. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, there exists a long history of attempts to theorise nationalism in its many manifestations, and within this history several core features of nationalism have been identified and discussed at length. These core features – belief in the underlying reality of the nation, belief in its transgenerational continuity, belief in the organic unity of national culture and biology – make the nation a form of collective identity unlike any other social alignment in the modern world. By reducing nationalism to merely another form of in-group identity, or to intergroup conflict, and by using the same theories of group behaviour to explain nationalism as we do for collective processes during corporate mergers, we run the risk of ignoring those facets of nationhood that make it unique among all other types of identities or ideologies.

1.3 Aims and structure of the thesis

This thesis represents an attempt to apply cognitive and social psychological theories to the study of some key aspects of nationalism. However, as will become clear in the next chapter, despite the familiarity of the term "nationalism" and the rich connotations it conjures up, the phenomenon is notoriously elusive and difficult to define. Rather than taking the nature of nationalism as self-evident, I have decided to take a more oblique approach to the subject. In Chapter 2 I examine a slice of the history of nationalist thought and thought on nationalism, and out of it I will try to identify the central features of nationalism as discussed in influential works in history, sociology, and anthropology. I will argue that the two key features that consistently crop up in the literature are the perceived underlying reality of nations (also called psychological essentialism) and the nation's perceived continuity

through historical time. These two phenomena will be the focus of the rest of my thesis.

In Chapter 3, I review relevant theories and empirical findings from the field of social and cognitive psychology, which will form the basis of the theoretical apparatus that I will employ in my empirical chapters later on. For the sake of clarity, in the empirical chapters of this thesis I will be using the following definitions of key terms:

- “*Nationalism*” will be understood here not as a strictly political ideology, but as the (often implicit) beliefs in the deep reality and continuity of the nation as a social form.
- “*National identification*” will be used to mean a person’s self-identification with a national group (i.e., the state of identifying with the nation).
- Meanwhile, “*national identity*” will mean the mental construct of the characteristics that membership in the group entails (for example, I will be discussing the boundaries of national identities, and will be drawing a distinction between civic and ethnic national identities).
- When I discuss the *strength* of one’s national identification, this will be taken to mean how important for a person’s self-concept it is to belong to that nation.

Furthermore, I will be referring regularly to at least three key concepts from social psychology that will be the main subject of investigation in this thesis – perceived collective continuity, identity fusion, and social essentialism:

- *PCC* is understood by Sani et al. (2007) to mean the perception that “as members of [a social group], we see ourselves as parts of an endless chain, a body that transcends us not only in space, but also, and perhaps more importantly, in time” (p.1118), and is said to encompass both a belief that the group’s values, traditions and other traits have endured unchanged across multiple generations, and a belief that the group’s past forms an intelligible narrative with meaningfully connected episodes.
- *Identity fusion*: Likewise, I will be using the standard definition of identity fu-

sion as a state in which people's "stable conceptions of themselves as individuals become fused with their identities as group members" (Swann, Gómez, Conroy, Morales, & Huici, 2009, p.995), marked by a visceral sense of oneness and kinship with the group (the assumptions and implications of identity fusion theory are discussed in Chapter 3). Fusion will be operationalised as a score on the verbal self-report measure developed by Gómez et al. (2011).

- Finally, *psychological essentialism* will be used interchangeably with "essentialist thinking" and simply "essentialism" to refer to the belief that some objects possess a deep, immutable and unchanging identity-conferring essence. "Social essentialism" will also be used to refer to essentialist thinking about personality traits or social groups (i.e., the essentialisation of social entities specifically). "National essentialism" or "essentialist nationalism" will mean essentialist thinking about national groups in particular, i.e. the tendency to perceive national groups as distinct biological "kinds".

This thesis has two general aims: first, to determine whether social cognitive theories of group identity and information processing can account for national essentialism, which has been shown to contribute to out-group stereotyping and prejudice (more on this in Chapter 3). The second goal is to integrate identity fusion theory, a promising but still relatively under-researched model of group alignment, into already established social cognitive theories, especially psychological essentialism and perceived collective continuity.

The empirical section of this thesis consists of eight studies which can be divided into two parts. Part I (Chapters 4-7) explores the relationships between national essentialism, perceived national continuity, and two forms of alignment with social groups (national identification and identity fusion). In Chapters 4 and 5 I demonstrate that perceptions of one's nation as temporally continuous are correlated with essentialist thinking about people's traits and characteristics, and also with identity fusion with the nation. In subsequent studies I test for a causal effect of social essentialism and identity fusion on perceived national continuity (Chapter 6), and for the reverse effect of perceived continuity on identity fusion (Chapter 7),

however none of these experimental studies show evidence of causal effects.

The studies in Part II (Chapters 8 and 9) test the usefulness of dual process theories for predicting participants' belief in the continuity of the nation and their proneness to essentialist thinking. In Chapter 8 I report two studies testing for a link between cognitive style and essentialist thinking – first using an experimental manipulation and then a correlational design. In the next chapter (Chapter 9) I report another experimental study in which cognitive load was manipulated to test for an effect on essentialist beliefs about personality traits and national groups.

Finally, in Part III I depart from the more cognitive approach that informs the rest of this thesis to explore the role of narratives and rhetoric in the construction of nationhood. Chapter 10 provides a brief outline of the intersection between cognitive and narrative theories of social psychology, and Chapter 11 contains an experimental study in which I demonstrate that high-continuity rhetoric can be used to shift the boundaries of national identity.

The final section of this thesis marks a shift in my theoretical approach to the psychology of nationalism. This shift was driven in the first instance by my difficulty to reconcile the purely cognitivist, information-processing theories that informed Chapters 8 and 9 with those aspects of social cognition and self-identity that depend on the subjective construction and articulation of meaning behind one's thoughts and actions. At the same time, becoming better acquainted with Michael Billig's (1987; 1997) rhetorical social psychology enabled me to reinterpret some of the issues that I had been grappling with while trying to understand implicit nationalism and national identity from a purely cognitive perspective.

This section contains a theoretical chapter (Chapter 10) that provides a brief outline of a rhetorical-narrative approach to understanding nationalism, and points out some intersections between the “purely” narrative and “purely” cognitive approaches to social psychology. The following chapter then reports a large pre-registered experimental study informed by this combined narrative-cognitive approach, in which we successfully shifted the boundaries of British identity to be closer to European identity by using high national continuity rhetoric.

My main conclusion will be that purely cognitive theories of social alignment cannot on their own account for the intuitive appeal of essentialist nationalism, but can still offer important insights in this area when considered in combination with less mechanistic theories of meaning-making and national identity.

1.4 Psychological research in the context of the replication crisis

Finally, it is important to situate this thesis, along with the methodological choices and research practices that shaped it, in the historical context of the current replicability crisis in experimental psychology (Stangor & Lemay Jr., 2016). The idea behind this thesis was conceived in 2014, and the empirical research for it was conducted between 2015 and 2018. This period turned out to be a tumultuous one for social psychology as a discipline. Researchers had for decades warned about the dangers of low-powered studies and selective reporting (e.g. Ioannidis, 2005), however the impact of these criticisms on research practices prior to the 2010s was relatively limited. This all started to change very quickly in 2011 with a number of high-profile cases of outright academic fraud (such as the case of Diederik Stapel, who admitted to fabricating data for approximately 100 published papers; Crocker & Cooper, 2011, cited in Świątkowski & Dompnier, 2017) or otherwise of controversial findings that failed to replicate (most notably, Bem's (2011) claim to have demonstrated the existence of extra-sensory perception and other paranormal abilities using the established methods of experimental psychology).

It was becoming clear that there were a range of endemic problems not just with the professional integrity of a few researchers, but with the whole incentive structure of academic research, which ended up incentivising publishability over truth (Nosek, Spies, & Motyl, 2012; Stangor & Lemay Jr., 2016). Underpowered studies, hypothesising after results are known (HARK-ing), p-hacking, selective reporting, and other questionable research practices undermined researchers' confidence about previously established findings (John, Loewenstein, & Prelec, 2012; Pashler & Wagenmakers, 2012).

Independent replication attempts have demonstrated (e.g., Rohrer, Pashler, & Harris, 2015; Świątkowski & Dompnier, 2017) that a wide range of classic effects in social and experimental psychology could not be consistently replicated, raising doubts about the real rates of Type I errors in the literature. Priming techniques (the use of subliminal messages or imagery to induce behavioural change), which I had set out to use as the primary manipulation technique in several of my studies, were among the hardest hit by the crisis (e.g., Cesario, 2014; Klein, 2014),

The landscape of social psychology has shifted rather radically since the start of my doctoral research, as the current replicability crisis has unfolded. At the start of this PhD project, doing power analysis to justify one's sample size prior to conducting a study was not yet a firmly established practice, and priming was still a widely accepted experimental procedure. As the research project progressed, I became more committed to open and transparent research practices, and more aware of the ever-present pitfalls of p-hacking, HARK-ing, or other questionable practices which might contribute to the conceptual confusion in the literature. Consequently, the final 5 studies conducted for this thesis – Studies 2, 4, 5, 8, and 9 (in chronological order) – were pre-registered, and links to the pre-registration protocols are provided. Crucially, my final study (Study 9, Chapter 11) was accepted as a Stage 1 Registered Report, which is considered the gold standard in this new research climate of open science, at the *British Journal of Social Psychology*, and at the time of writing this is undergoing Stage 2 peer review.

Chapter 2

Nationalism: A historical perspective

“Theorists of nationalism have often been perplexed, not to say irritated, by these three paradoxes: (1) The objective modernity of nations to the historian’s eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists. (2) The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept – in the modern world everyone can, should, will ‘have’ a nationality, as he or she ‘has’ a gender – vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations, such that, by definition, ‘Greek’ nationality is sui generis. (3) The ‘political’ power of nationalisms vs. their philosophical poverty and even incoherence. In other words, unlike most other isms, nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers: no Hobbeses, Tocquevilles, Marxes, or Webers.” (Anderson, 2006, p.5)

“Nation” is a slippery term – its meaning can vary greatly not only between different speakers, but also between historical ages. In everyday usage it tends to cover three overlapping concepts (Leerssen, 2006): (1) nation in the sense of “society”, i.e., a group of people living together and interacting in the same political community, under shared institutions; (2) nation in the sense of “culture”, i.e., a group of people with very similar traditions, culture, and identity built around the same signifiers (e.g., national narratives, mythscapes or collective memories (Bell, 2003)); and (3) nation as “race”, or a community with a shared ancestry, whose identity and culture they trace back in time across multiple generations.

Different scholars tend to emphasise some element of this triad over the other two, contributing to the conceptual fuzziness in the field. The meaning of the term

“nation” will thus largely depend on the theory of nationalism that one endorses. Some would argue that the word *natio*, or some other word referring to much the same concept, has been used since antiquity. For example, Greek and Roman chroniclers had a distinctly ethnic-nationalist perspective when writing about foreign tribes and peoples, whom they viewed as *gens*, or as natural kinship groups with fixed, immutable traits that shared the same ancestry (Geary, 2003). This could suggest that our modern concept of nationhood would not be that alien to pre-modern societies. However, at that time ethnicity was attributed solely to foreigners – the Romans themselves were not a *gens* but a *populus*, made up of citizens of different origins and traditions, a historically contingent and politically constructed ingroup, not a natural one (Geary, 2003). Modernists (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1992, 2012) would point out that although the word “nation” was used in the Middle Ages, at the time it denoted local rather than cultural or kin allegiances¹, departing from the modern usage.

A similar conceptual fuzziness exists around nationalism. The term is sometimes used as synonymous with patriotism, or love for one’s country, but just as often a distinction is drawn between “benign” patriotism and “extreme” nationalism, where the latter is seen as more bellicose and intolerant than the former. In some cases nationalism describes a passionate devotion to one’s nation, and a belief in its cultural superiority above all other nations; in other cases it refers to a belief in the political sovereignty of national groups (e.g., Breuilly, 1985; Kedourie, 1996). Moreover, for all its power to inspire political movements and to foster social bonds, nationalism does not seem to represent a consistent set of ideas, a philosophy, or a political programme (Freeden, 1998). Tamás (1994b) goes so far as to argue that a strictly nationalist philosophy does not and could not possibly exist:

“Nationalism is treated sometimes alongside other political doctrines such as liberalism and socialism. Therefore it would seem quite strange that there is no real theoretical version of nationalism offering the mandatory answers to

¹Huizinga (2014) describes how students at the University of Paris in the Middle Ages were grouped into four “nations” based on their place of origin: the French, the Picards, the Normans (all regions of northern France), and the English, which “included everyone coming from the British isles, whether he spoke English, Anglo-French, or one of the Celtic languages” (p.115).

questions usually tormenting political philosophers. There is no specifically nationalist view of liberty and justice, there is no intrinsically nationalist view of a good society – nor can there be. There have been philosophers who were personally inclined to be nationalists, but this is marginal to their philosophy.” (Tamás, 1994b, p.129)

In other words, nationalism does not constitute a philosophy or a form of politics in itself – it does not have its Calvin, its Marx, or its de Beauvoir, to whom we can turn for a basic definition of the ideology. Instead, representatives of different philosophical and political traditions have used the idea of the organic national community as a foundation for their preferred political projects. There are national identities created by pre-existing dynastic states (such as France), and stateless nations that strive to create their own nation-states (such as the Kurds, or pre-unification Germany and Italy). There are territorially-defined nations, but there are also dispersed national diasporas, such as the Jewish diaspora prior to the foundation of the state of Israel. Some national identities are defined by religious affiliation (such as the separate identities of Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats) or by a unique language, but there are also multiconfessional and multilingual nations. Finally, different nationalisms can be located at different points on a continuum from ethnically to politically defined (Kohn, 1944/2017), and multiple competing conceptions of national identity often coexist within the same society, with different political groups mobilising one representation or the other in order to motivate their political projects (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 2009).

Some forms of nationalism since the 18th century have sought to amalgamate a multitude of ethnicities into a single national “high culture” – making French people out of the Bretons, Occitans and Provençals; Germans out of the Bavarians, Saxons, and Thuringians; Italians out of the Milanese, Florentins, and Sicilians, etc. At the same time, an opposite, centrifugal force, has pushed to break apart such nations into their component ethnic groups – a trend perhaps more accurately described as “ethnicism”. In everyday discourse, we tend to use the term “nationalism” to refer to either one of these trends, depending on the context. Thus, for example, Yugoslavia

disintegrated in the 1990s in what was often described as a flare-up of nationalist sentiments; but there is no clear theoretical reason why the same break-up should not be seen as a *failure* of nationalism – specifically, the failure of Yugoslav nationalism to build a resilient polity in the same way French, German and Italian nationalism had successfully done. Similarly, opposition to European integration is often seen as an expression of the endurance of nationalism, but at the same time the construction of European identity is rarely described as a rival nationalism in itself.

This conceptual confusion poses an obstacle for anyone who is interested in the psychology of nationalism – simply put, one cannot study “nationalism in general”, or rely on common-sense definitions of the term. Luckily, there is a long history of attempts to theorise nationalism in its many manifestations – as a form of identity, as an emotional attachment, and as a political ideology. This chapter provides a brief overview of the history of nationalist thought and of thought on nationalism, from the earliest political and philosophical writings on the concepts of nation and nationhood to the most recent academic approaches, which have proliferated in the past 70 years.

It is not the aim of this chapter to produce a comprehensive review of all relevant writing on the subject, as such reviews have already been attempted elsewhere – in particular, I will be drawing upon the excellent work done by Özkırımlı (2010), Leerssen (2006), and Smith (1986; 2010). Instead, I will use this brief overview for two purposes. First, I will highlight the psychological ideas contained in different theories, and will argue that some theory of human psychology is at least implicit in most of the major works on nationalism. And second, I will attempt to identify the core characteristics of nationalism that different theorists have grappled with over the past three centuries, especially those that are most relevant to the psychology of nationalism. It is these characteristics that will become the focus of the empirical chapters (Chapters 3-11) later in this thesis.

2.1 From the Enlightenment to Romanticism

For most of the 20th century, it was received wisdom that earlier generations of scholars and political theorists had not produced any valuable theories of nationalism, lacking as they did the scientific concepts and tools of sociology and anthropology. The reality, however, is more complex. Özkırımı (2010) argues that Europeans have been theorising about nationalism at least since the eighteenth century, and that some prominent Enlightenment philosophers, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (d. 1778) and Immanuel Kant (d. 1804) in particular, can be seen as the most influential advocates of a kind of democratic or liberal nationalism. In this framework the nation stood for a free association of all members of a political community – the ideal of shared, equal citizenship, as opposed to the regimes of stratified private power of the European monarchies of that age. The concept of the sovereign nation was thus initially linked with Enlightenment ideals of liberty, however it did not stay confined to this section of the political spectrum for long.

German Romanticism emerged in the 19th century partially as a reaction to French cultural hegemony. In the preceding era, French (along with Latin) had been seen not merely as one national language among many, but as the universal language of (restored) classical culture and learning; across Europe, Enlightenment rulers had been following the French customs in everything from state building and jurisprudence to high literature and landscaping. Thiesse (1999) describes the inevitable reaction to this cultural hegemony as a crusade against the universal culture²: poets and folklorists in Britain, Germany, and Switzerland began recording and compiling traditional songs, folk tales, and supposedly ancient epic poems; these were enthusiastically received by the public as an expression of some authentic, autochthonous folk culture. If France was the inheritor of classical Graeco-Roman culture, the Romantics would instead identify with the barbarian tribes of classical antiquity; if France embodied universal Civilisation, they would turn to Nature instead – away from the Parisian salons and towards the rural huts³. Seeing Enlightenment universalism as an instrument of French domination, Romantics like Johann Gottfried

²“la croisade contre la Culture unique” (Thiesse, 1999, p.34)

³“aux salons de l’élite raffinée, les chaumières rustiques” (Thiesse, 1999, p.23)

Herder (d. 1803) emphasised the uniqueness of each national culture – Herder held that each national language is an expression of the soul of that nation, and is reflective of the patterns of thought and feeling that have characterised that nation for centuries. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, in his *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808/2013), similarly argued that Germans, unique among Europe's nations, still spoke their own living, ancestral language, which placed them in a unique position to guide humanity towards a higher form of civilisation.

Why was language so important in Fichte's understanding of nationhood? His name is often mentioned in connection with the theory of linguistic determinism (e.g., Orman, 2008, p.31; May, 2012, p.61; cf. Steinberg, 2014, p.265-267), but his actual position is much more nuanced and provocative. Fichte shared the belief, widespread at the time, that a German people had existed at least since the times of the Roman empire, and that they had occupied the same lands and spoke their ancestral language up to the present day. According to Fichte, the language of the ancient Germans thus emerged out of their contact with the same physical environment that their descendants inhabit today, unlike the language of the French, which is based on vulgar Latin with an admixture of Greek words. In German, even words describing abstract ("supersensible") concepts, such as freedom, or humanitarianism, are still based on root words that refer to more immediate, sensory phenomena, making even the more abstract concepts immediately comprehensible to all German speakers. Thus, even as it evolves, German remains rooted in real life: "The words of such a language in all its parts are life and create life" (Fichte, 2013, p.50). But (according to Fichte) a people who abandon their ancestral language for another, lose this connection to the living world. They can pick up the meaning of sensible ideas, such as "a tree", by referring back to the sensations and objects that these designate; but the more abstract concepts by definition do not refer to anything physical that one can point to or experience directly in the world. These abstract foreign words are rootless, self-referential, and spiritually dead: "the most that [those who abandon their ancestral language] can do here is to have the sense-image and the intellectual meaning explained to them, so that they are taught the lifeless and dreary history

of an alien culture, and not at all their own. They are also exposed to images that are, for them, neither immediately clear nor animating” (p.51). For example, while the roots of the German *Menschlichkeit* could be found in something tangible and meaningful (*Menschen*), the equivalent loan word from Latin, *Humanität*, was sterile and empty, carrying no analogous connotations. This is why Fichte saw a great threat in the gradual intrusion of foreign words into German: “German speech has been wrapped in incomprehensibility and obscurity from either lack of skill or malice; it [the intrusion of foreign words] must be avoided, and for translation into true German the necessary means are always to hand” (p.54). But since the French had “lost” their “ancestral” (i.e., Celtic) language, and had adopted a Romance language centuries ago, the damage done to their culture was irreversible: “This incomprehensibility is inherent in neo-Latin languages, and cannot be avoided since they lack a living language against which they could compare their dead language, and to be frank they have no mother tongue at all” (p.54).

Fichte’s *Addresses* illustrate several of the essential themes in much nationalist thought since the era of Romanticism: the idea of nations as distinct cultural units, each with its unique spirit or psyche (*Volksgeist*); the centrality of language (and by extension culture) for national identity, over and above political or legal institutions; and the belief that national culture somehow has an objective, material existence or foundation (e.g., through its connection to the “soil” of the fatherland, or the nation’s geography). The type of nationalism exemplified by Fichte and Herder soon became a dominant cultural current in Europe – even, paradoxically, in France, in opposition to which this philosophy was originally developed. Peoples known from ancient Roman sources were posthumously given a German national identity because they spoke a Germanic language. Philology, in mapping the family tree of Indo-European languages, was soon being used to map out the ethnic relationships between historical peoples and modern nations, and to give “new, ‘objective’ criteria to peoplehood along the lines of Herder and Fichte’s mystical linguistics” (Geary, 2003, p.29). Belief in the national language as an expression of the eternal *Volksgeist* in particular quickly gained popularity in the late 18th and early 19th century,

and provided many budding nationalisms with the toolkit (folklore, epic poems of dubious antiquity, a codified national language) that they needed to bolster their claims of political legitimacy (Morgan, 2012; Thiesse, 1999).

The cultural shift from universalism to particularism was accompanied by a political shift: national sovereignty in Romantic thought was associated less with the political equality and autonomy of all members of the community, and more so with the preservation of the nation's unique characteristics and traditions. The national cause gradually became the source of political legitimacy for movements both progressive and traditionalist.

2.2 Early 20th century: Modern sociological theories

The development of sociology in the early 20th century also led to attempts to produce scientific (detached, systematic, universal) theories of nationalism. In contrast to earlier thought on the subject, scholars began to see nationalism not as something to be attacked or defended, but explained. Still, at this early stage the nation was universally seen as an organic community, its sovereignty generally left unquestioned (Özkırıklı, 2010). Scholars still saw the *-ism* as the political phenomenon demanding investigation, but not the existence of the nation itself, and they developed typologies of nationalism that sought to distinguish its morally defensible forms from the indefensible ones.

Debates revolved around the precise role of the nation in the political life of the community. For instance, C. Hayes (1931) identified at least three distinct types of nationalism that emerged in this period: first, the Jacobin nationalism of the French Revolution (which saw the nation as the embattled masses struggling against the forces of unearned privilege – the monarchy and the church) called for a militarist union between the nation and the state (“the nation in arms”, national education) in order to safeguard the gains of the revolution. Second was the Liberal nationalism of Bentham, Humboldt and Mazzini, who saw national self-determination combined with a limited, constitutional government as the best guarantor of individual liberty. Finally, Integral nationalism, which itself descended from the conservative

traditionalist nationalism of the 18th and 19th centuries, provided the basis for a number of political movements in the first half of the 20th century, the most notable examples of which were the fascist movements in Italy and Germany. This ideology elevates the nation from a vehicle for constructing the good society into an end in itself; all individuals are required to work to enhance the might of the nation, and to conform to the same set of standards and morals, while dissent is suppressed by a strong government.

Finally, a number of binary oppositions were proposed to categorise different forms of nationalism, although most of the proposed categorisations have tended to converge on a couple of common themes. Consider, for example, Hans Kohn's (1944/2017) influential distinction between civic nationalism (built around citizenship and common institutions) and ethnic nationalism (justified by appeals to shared "genes" or some autochthonous national culture). A very similar binary can be seen in the idea of *Staatsnation* (a nation-state, in which people living under the same institutional structures develop a sense of shared identity out of their shared history and political constitution; exemplified by 19th century France) and *Kulturnation* (a culturally defined community which predates the existence of a unified state, and often works towards building a nation-state to house the community under the same roof; exemplified by 19th century Germany).

2.3 The Marxist tradition

Adding to this multitude of theories of nationalism as a form of politics, the late 20th century saw a renewed interest in voices coming from the Marxist historical tradition, most notably with Erica Benner's *Really Existing Nationalisms* (1995/2018). Up until the 1990s, Marxist thought on nationalism had not had a profound impact on nationalism studies. Marx, the consensus went, traced all social and political phenomena to the basic economic structures of society, and his materialist system relegated nationalism to a mere epiphenomenon of class struggle. Blind to the cultural force of national identities, Marxism could not really explain nationalism – it could only attempt to explain it away.

Benner sought to challenge this consensus, and instead argued that there is a distinct theory of nationalism to be found in Marx's writings, albeit one not expressed in a systematic manner. But even more than his proto-theories on nationalism, what Benner sees as a valuable insight in Marxian writings on the subject is precisely their refusal to "insulate a general phenomenon called 'nationalism' from the more specific interests and values and political programmes that make it assume different forms" (Benner, 2018, p.8). According to Benner, if we approach the study of nationalism by focusing on questions of identity and culture, we risk accepting uncritically the claims of nationalist ideologues, and end up arguing on their terms:

"If national conflicts are essentially conflicts over identity, and if national identity is a unique, even primary value for most people most of the time, then it is hard indeed to see how such conflicts can be alleviated through the politics of bargaining, compromise and clear-headed discussion." (Benner, 2018, p.8)

Still on the topic of Marxist approaches to nationalism, a particularly interesting case were the Austro-Marxists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, whose primary concern was how to justify the preservation of the Hapsburg empire as a polity, all the while satisfying the national claims of its constituent peoples. The most influential idea that came out of the Austro-Marxist tradition was articulated by Otto Bauer in his classic work *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (1907/2000), namely the idea of cultural autonomy, which was born out of a need "to preserve a supranational state with no identifiable ethnic or class character, and at the same time the inclination to placate the awakening ethnic and regional consciousness" (Tamás, 1994a, p.77). Bauer argued for the decoupling of the nation from the state; nations would have control over matters of culture, education, the arts, and national identity, all the while remaining loyal to the federal state as "citizens, taxpayers, and soldiers" (Tamás, 1994a, p.78). Even more interesting is the Austro-Marxist reformulation of the relationship between socialism and nationalism – rather than seeing them as two opposing political forces, Bauer and Renner argued that the biggest obstacle to national sovereignty was the stratification of society by class; if class division is what drives international conflicts, it follows that

once classes are abolished, nations will be able to coexist and cooperate peacefully, and all members of a nation will be able to share fully in the nation's prosperity (Özkırımlı, 2010). In other words, nationalism and socialism become mutually reinforcing.

Needless to say, the Austrian attempt to theorise away the problem of national self-determination did not bring about the United States of Austria that Bauer and Renner envisioned, and had very little influence on the practice even of nominally socialist multi-ethnic states, like the USSR. What makes the Austrian case so interesting here is the way it inverts the problematic of identity and sovereignty. Nationalist ideologues typically make the two-pronged claim that nations form objectively real cultural communities, and that this implies a right to national sovereignty. Whereas many later critics of nationalism would dispute the objective reality of nations, the Austro-Marxists seemingly accepted this prong of nationalist ideology, but denied that political self-determination should necessarily follow from it.

2.4 Primordialism, Perennialism, and Modernism

By far the most influential and enduring theoretical divide to emerge out of the rising interest in nationalism in the 1960s and 70s has been the primordialism-modernism debate. Put simply, primordialists believe that nations (or some very similar type of social groups) have always existed, from the earliest forms of human society to the present day, and are based on kinship ties and genetic similarity. Primordialists often ground their analysis in ideas about human social organisation derived from sociobiology (evolutionary psychology). In contrast, modernists see the nation as a product of certain aspects of modernity, such as the industrial revolution, capitalism, mass literacy, or the role of economic and political elites.

Primordialism

Primordialism describes a number of theories that see nationhood as a natural feature of human life, i.e., the product of some natural “givens” that exist outside of history (hence, nations are “primordial”). This does not automatically entail a belief that any one nation has always existed (e.g., that French people have existed since

the dawn of time). Rather, it means that although nations can emerge and change, nationhood is a universal presence in human culture: “The quality of ‘ethnicity’ inheres in all human association, even if its manifestation and intensity change and fluctuate. Ethnicity is seen as a given attribute of humanity” (Smith, 1986, p.210).

Smith (2010) distinguishes between sociobiological and cultural primordialism. An example of the former is Pierre van den Berghe’s theory of humanity’s evolved proneness to form nation-like groups. This theory hinges on two claims: first, that humans follow an evolved reproductive strategy to associate with others who are genetically closer to them, which confers a comparative advantage in terms of survival and reproduction upon their shared “nepotist” genes. And second, that humans interpret cultural symbols as markers of kinship, which allows them to diversify their gene pool by forming extended kinship groups with others that are culturally (and not merely genetically) more similar to them (Smith, 2010). In this reading, nationalism arises out of an evolved strategy to form communities based on shared language, religion and customs.

The cultural version of the primordialist argument is exemplified by Clifford Geertz and Edward Shils (the latter being responsible for coining the term “primordialism”), who saw certain cultural constants as the “givens” that underpin feelings of national identity. Nationhood is built upon elements (language, culture) that are *perceived* as given and natural (as not having a social basis). For example, people will naturally feel attached to the territory where they live, and will feel a sense of familiarity and proximity to others who speak the same language as themselves; these feelings are “primordial” in human cultures in the sense that they are not the product of any one specific culture or historical period.

“What Geertz is claiming, and what is so important about the primordialist contribution, is that we, as individuals and members of collectives, *feel and believe* in the primordality of our ethnies⁴ and nations – their naturalness, longevity, and power” (Smith, 2010, p.57, emphasis in original)

In sum, primordialist theses can differ considerably, but what unites them

⁴*Ethnie* is a term introduced by Smith (1986) – see the end of the section on Ethnoscymbolism below for an explanation.

is the belief in the naturalness of nations as an organisational unit of humanity. However, a number of objections and criticisms have been raised against this line of thinking. Smith (2010) accuses van den Berghe of walking back on his own reductionist biological determinism by introducing cultural and social factors. An additional, purely psychological, objection can be raised against primordialist theories, of both the evolutionary and cultural variety. Both approaches see ethnic and national identities as rooted in strong emotional attachment to an ethnic group, motivated either by inherent biological drives or by some timeless cultural characteristics. This idea sounds intuitively plausible, not least due to the popular view that emotions are somehow more primitive and primal than cognition or rationality. However, as will become clear in Chapter 3, a consensus has emerged in social psychology that social emotions are often driven by cognitive processes like categorisation and self-identification, or in other words, that “certain assumptions or knowledge systems set the stage for affect” (Tilley, 1997, p.502). Put simply, our feelings towards groups and cultural symbols are not the foundation of our identities, but rather, our identities determine what emotional reactions and attachments we feel towards these groups and symbols.

Perennialism

In addition to primordialist ideas, which have been popular among sociologists and anthropologists, Smith (1986; 2010) has identified a related intellectual trend, which is more often subscribed to by historians – perennialism. Perennialists reject the naturalness of the nation, but still argue that nations are a ubiquitous form of collective allegiance that has existed in all recorded historical periods. What distinguishes them from the primordialists is that perennialists do not invoke biological indicators or ethnicity as the foundation of group membership, and are much more open to the idea that the nation is a form of communal identity built through political participation. This in turn opens up the possibility of studying the role of identity building and the social representation of collective identities in narratives and myths (Bell, 2003).

Here, again, two subcategories can be identified. *Recurrent perennialism* holds

that certain nations may come and go, but the nation as an organisational form (or something very similar to it, whether we call it “ethnies” or “peoples”) has always existed – what recurs throughout history is the national *form* of identity, rather than any particular identity. In contrast, *continuous perennialism* stresses the continuity of modern nations with medieval and ancient “peoples”, for example identifying the modern German nation with the tribes described in Tacitus’s *Germania*. This paradigm was also dominant among historians before the 1940s (Smith, 2010), and to this day informs popular understanding of nationhood and national identity in a large part of the world. Geary (2003) characterises continuous perennialism thus:

“This pseudohistory assumes, first, that the peoples of Europe are distinct, stable, and objectively identifiable social and cultural units, and that they are distinguished by language, religion, custom, and national character, which are unambiguous and immutable. These peoples were supposedly formed either in some impossibly remote moment of prehistory, or else the process of ethnogenesis took place at some moment during the Middle Ages, but then ended for all time. Second, ethnic claims demand the political autonomy of all persons belonging to a particular ethnic group and at the same time the right of that people to govern its historic territory, usually defined in terms of medieval settlements or kingdoms, regardless of who may now live in it. [...] After these moments of primary acquisition, according to this circular reasoning, similar subsequent migrations, invasions, or political absorptions have all been illegitimate. In many cases, this has meant that fifteen hundred years of history is to be obliterated.” (Geary, 2003, p.11-12)

As becomes clear from the above quote, Geary exemplifies the tendency among some modern historians to reject continuous perennialism. His argument is that ancient chroniclers were using certain labels (such as “Franks” or “Langobards”) to describe a complex and shifting political landscape on both sides of the Roman Empire’s border; and later historians interpreted these labels as ethnic identities. However, the reality that these labels designated could vary significantly between different historical moments. Names could be reclaimed, adapted to new circumstances, and used to construct or justify different social realities. For example, Geary (2003)

describes how medieval elites constructed ethnic identities to separate themselves from the peasants over whom they ruled. Popular among the French nobility was the view that their serfs were descendants of the Gauls conquered by Julius Caesar, which made them slaves by birth; that was in contrast to the nobility, who identified as descendants of the “free” warriors who subsequently conquered the land – the Franks (i.e., Germanic peoples, not Gauls), the only “real” Frenchmen. Historian Walter Goffart (2006, 2008) has similarly offered alternative readings of the “migrations” of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, arguing that many “barbarian tribes” were in fact Roman armies in all but name, whose “Germanic” identities were used to maintain an institutional barrier between Rome’s military and political elites, and to deny military leaders of that era a claim to the imperial throne.

Furthermore, whereas perennialists see national identity as static and transmitted undiluted from one generation to another, social constructionists have argued that identities are in fact historically constructed, the product of specific cultural and social circumstances, and are continuously being reinvented and renegotiated. Perennialist and primordialist approaches cannot explain why only some ethnicities acquire national consciousness, while others are lost to history; or why the ethnic boundaries settle in precisely the places they do. They tend to look back at a chaotic historical process, full of qualitatively different events which cannot be ascribed to only one national history, and to impose a retrospective narrative onto it, weaving a historical thread that seems like the only possible way things could have turned out – like destiny (Balibar, 1995; in Özkırımlı, 2010).

Modernism

Modernist theories of nationalism depart significantly from primordialist and perennialist ones – as the name suggests, they tend to see national identity as a uniquely modern phenomenon, distinct from whatever types of communal identities or solidarities existed before the advent of the modern world. This is not merely a historical claim about the recency of nationalism’s origins. More than that, it also involves the claim that a set of advances in the social and economic realm (some combination of a capitalist economy, imperialism, modern industrial production, the division or

labour, mass political participation, etc.) made nationalism structurally necessary. “For the ‘modernist’ [...] pre-modern eras were unable to accommodate nationalism or nations.” (Smith, 1986, p.69).

Early proponents of this line of enquiry traced nationalism alternatively to mass political participation and collective will (Renan), to the realm of the economy, the division of labour and the complementarity of economic roles in modern societies (Durkheim), or to modern state-building (Weber). The politics/economy divide has persisted in later modernist theories in the 1960s and ‘70s. For example, Ernest Gellner (1983) advanced the theory that nationalism was made both possible and necessary by the centralisation of the state and the growth of national economies in early modernity. Modern states require a division of labour, which necessitates occupational mobility, as well as a capacity for clear, universalised communication between individuals (i.e., a mode of communication that does not rely on local dialects and particularisms). Hence, all members of society – not just the small sliver of the clergy – must be educated into a monolithic high culture, facilitated by a monolithic education system organised and funded by a monolithic state. Nationalism thus performs a specific function in society: it fosters loyalty to groups that are culturally homogeneous and capable of producing a literate high culture, are not separated into rigid internal subgroupings, and are internally mobile and fluid. Modern states cannot exist without an ideology like this, which explains why nationalism has become so pervasive. A unified national culture needs the state, just as the state needs the unifying culture in order to maintain social cohesion (Gellner, 1983, p.140). And, because we are irrevocably committed to an industrial form of civilisation (going back to pre-modern, agrarian forms is impossible), this means we are also irrevocably tied to the national form of society for the foreseeable future.

In contrast to Gellner’s analysis, Tom Nairn (1981) argued that since the modern economy is essentially global, the roots of nationalism are to be sought not in the modernisation processes within individual nations, but in world history and the interaction between expansionary core societies and the reaction they provoke in the global periphery (an approach inspired by Wallerstein’s (1974/2011; 1983/2003)

world systems analysis). In this reading, nationalism is seen as the product of uneven global development, with local elites in peripheral countries responding to European economic dominance by (1) adopting some elements of modernity (such as modern industry, state building, education) while (2) preserving a sense of identity “separate” from the outsiders, and (3) forging cross-class solidarities in their countries, inviting the masses to “take matters into their own hands” in order to “catch up” with the West. This theory certainly seems plausible at face value – as we saw above, nationalism was articulated most forcefully in politically and economically underdeveloped societies, such as Germany prior to its unification. This ideology of nationalism then returned to the core countries (which did not have a conscious nationalism as they already had the kind of centralisation that nationalism is meant to produce), which were in turn forced to develop national identities and adapt to this new norm in international politics.

The above two examples will suffice for the purposes of this review, although they by no means exhaust the possible modernist interpretations of the origins of nationalism. In fact, such narratives differ substantially, depending on who is telling the story. The starting date of modernity can vary considerably, from the discovery of the Americas, through the invention of mass printing and the emergence of vernacular literature in the 16th and 17th centuries, to the industrial revolution of the 19th. Different authors have also come up with divergent accounts of which economic or political factors were necessary for nationalism to emerge in the first place. More importantly, modernist accounts in general tend to suffer from a number of weaknesses: they are criticised for being overly reductionist, failing to account for local variations, and for only fitting the facts in some historical contexts, but not in others (Özkırımlı, 2010). For example, although there are clear historical examples of nationalist feeling arising as a reaction to underdevelopment, just as many counter-examples can also be found. In the Hapsburg empire, nationalism in Bohemia developed very early on, although this was also the most economically developed region of the empire; at the same time, no nationalisms developed in economically underdeveloped regions like Northern England or Southern Italy.

Nationalisms developed in the Balkan lands of the Ottoman empire, but not in the equally rural and impoverished Levantine and Anatolian lands, etc.

Additional critiques have been raised against the modernist enterprise on purely theoretical grounds, and these can be very illustrative of how, upon closer observation, the distinction between modernism and other, less critical approaches, begins to blur. Smith (who himself favoured an ethno-symbolist approach, not a modernist one) argued that modernists see a “radical break between pre-modern units and sentiments and modern nations and nationalism” (Smith, 1986, p.13). But Gellner’s thesis is somewhat different – that a radical break did occur, but it was a break in the social and economic structure of society, which in turn was the main force behind the rise of the modern nation. He conceded that some forms of patriotism (emotional attachment to a community) have always existed. Rather, his argument was that the term “nation” should be reserved for a very particular social and political formation, which can only come into existence in a modern society with a capitalist economy. While pre-modern social units and sentiments certainly existed, and may be recognisable today, they played only a supplementary role in the process of modernisation. The problem here is that at this point the modernist/perennialist division becomes less a matter of historical or sociological analysis, and more a matter of shifting definitions. According to Smith, modernists operate with a definition of nationalism that comes from the 18th and 19th century – so the assertion that nations are modern becomes a mere tautology, and no alternative forms of nationhood are accepted by them, by definition. Gorski (2006, in Özkırımlı, 2010) goes so far as to argue that the distinction drawn by modernists between modern nations and pre-modern communities is so rigid that even many modern nations do not fit the criteria. Finally, modernist interpretations are functionalist in spirit, however in the real world nationalism has served many different functions – it has facilitated modernisation in some cases, but has also helped to preserve people’s traditions in others; it has been used in the service of class interests, but has also satisfied deep psychological needs for identity and belonging.

As this brief summary demonstrates, modernists have probably the least to say

about the psychology of nationalism. Modernist theories are essentially critical of nationalist claims about the naturalness and antiquity of nations, which is why their proponents have little to say, or are outright suspicious, of attempts to psychologise what they view as a historical and structural, not individual, phenomenon. And yet, this makes their attempts to deal with the persistence and intensity of national feelings all the more instructive.

Both Gellner and Nairn have had to deal not just with the existence of pre-modern ethnic attachments and patriotism, but with the strength and importance of national identity on a very personal level for many people today. Gellner (1983), for example, attacked several popular ideas about nationhood that he characterises as pernicious myths. First, he argued that contrary to popular beliefs nationalism is not a powerful force, but is “astonishingly weak” – most nationalisms that could potentially exist fail to manifest (e.g., a Highland nationalism has not emerged in Scotland, even though Highland culture is more distinct vis-à-vis Scotland than Scotland is vis-à-vis the United Kingdom). Another myth is “the nationalist ideologue’s most misguided claim: namely that ‘nations’ are there, in the very nature of things, only waiting to be ‘awakened’ (a favourite nationalist expression and image) from their regrettable slumber, by the nationalist ‘awakener’” (p. 48). In other words, he sees national identity not as a perennial/primordial feature of human psychology, but as a delusion or a myth that is nevertheless immune to rational refutation. Here Gellner draws a distinction between nationalism as a political movement on the one hand, and as an unexamined belief in the objective existence of nations (the intuition that nations are “the bricks of which mankind is made up”) on the other. Some people might object to political nationalism as a movement, but still believe that a nation exists even if it is “sleeping” or is not aware of its identity: “Nationalism sees itself as a natural and universal ordering of the political life of mankind, only obscured by that long, persistent and mysterious somnolence” (p.48). It should also be noted that in the 1990s Nairn had a change of heart and embraced a form of neo-primordialism (Nairn, 1998). The intense passions and feelings of belonging that nationalism inspires, he then argued, were to be sought in “human nature”, possibly in genetics

and sociobiology.

In summary, after reducing nationalism to the status of an epiphenomenon of political and economic modernisation, modernists are left with a number of nationalist “surplus” beliefs and emotional attachments. These beliefs – in the underlying naturalness of nations, in the historical continuity and endurance of national identities – can be characterised as misguided, as myths, or as ideological, yet despite the radical critique offered by modernism they are still with us. These are some of the aspects of nationalism that seem irreducible to economics, and must be dealt with on the terrain of psychology.

2.5 Ethnosymbolism

The final approach that will be discussed here is ethnosymbolism, which emerged out of the critique of modernism in the 1980s. These theories can be described as post-modern, in the sense that they are interested less in exploring some “deeper”, objectively existing economic and social structures that give rise to nationalism, and focus instead on the role of subjective meaning-making, representation, and narration in the construction of national identities. Ethnosymbolism is not so much an outright rejection of modernism, but rather an attempt to support something like its key thesis about the modernity of nations by means of a different, social-constructivist form of analysis. In this reading nations are seen as “cultural artefacts” (Bell, 2003), their identities not so much “invented” out of whole cloth (*pace* Hobsbawm, 2012), but instead reappropriated and reinterpreted over time.

For example, Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983/2006) explored how various developments in the economic and political realms since the 16th century allowed for modern nations to be represented in the collective imagination. The invention of printing in the conditions of early European capitalism generated a demand for written works in different local vernaculars, elevating national languages above the previously universal Latin and French, and making individual speakers aware of belonging to the same linguistically defined community. Likewise, colonial administrations in Southeast Asia brought new nations into be-

ing unwittingly, through the use of population censuses, maps, and other practices that required the categorisation of the local populations into clearly defined communities.

Underpinning this analysis is the claim that a Foucauldian epistemic shift occurred at the outset of modernity that made it possible for large groups of people to think of themselves as national communities. Anderson writes that modernity brought about a wholly new way of thinking about human activity in a historical context, which in turn made it possible to think about the nation in the terms that we take for granted today. In pre-modern times, “the mediaeval Christian mind had no conception of history as an endless chain of cause and effect or of radical separations between past and present” (Anderson, 2006, p.23). The sacrifice of Christ was prefigured in the biblical story of the sacrifice of Isaac, in the same way that the impending end of the world was mirrored in the book of Revelations. The Virgin Mary was not seen as a distant historical figure who existed in a particular location in Palestine at a particular moment in historical time, but as a constant presence in the lives of people across Christendom. Mythological events and characters were seen not as belonging to some definite historical point in the past, but as an omnipresent (or better, “omnitemporal”) presence in God’s plan; the origins of the cosmos and of human beings were essentially the same. The past, the present, and the future were folded into each other. In contrast, the scientific revolution and the invention of printing allowed people to think of historical events as long causal chains occurring in linear, “Cartesian” time. This enabled people to think of their nations as communities of individuals existing simultaneously, in the same historical moment: “The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history” (p.26). Additional factors that made nationalism possible were the desacralisation of Latin (leading to the fracturing of Christendom into smaller vernacular-based communities) and the erosion of belief in the divine right of kings.

Finally, Anthony Smith proposed “ethnie” as a more technical term, and less

burdened by connotations to political movements and ideology, to encompass the sense of nationhood that existed in both modern and pre-modern societies – “a group bonded intersubjectively by a chosen common self-identification, involving a common sense of culture and historical continuity” (Leerssen, 2006, p.16). The properties of an *ethnie* as defined by Smith (1986) are worth listing in full:

1. *A collective name*: In antiquity it was believed that someone’s “real name” captured the essence of that person; similarly, in modernity, the name “summons up images of the distinctive traits and characteristics of a community [...] Part of any study of ethnicity is to discover and grasp these different images of community which names evoke.” (Smith, 1986, p.24)
2. *A common myth of descent (a myth-symbol complex)*: myths of past collective experiences provide interpretative frameworks for members of the community, defining its ‘essence’, sense of identity, and dignity.
3. *A shared history* which defines the collective identity in terms of sequences of historical events in which group members have participated collectively. Such ethnic traditions can be defined and contested by different social strata; e.g., 19th century Greece, when Orthodox priests and the new intelligentsia and bourgeoisie competed in classrooms and universities for the monopoly of national interpretation of Greek history along Byzantine or Hellenic lines.
4. *A distinctive shared culture* – not just language and religion, but also customs, institutions, laws, folklore, architecture, dress, food, music and the arts, and even physical markers of identity like skin colour and physique.
5. *An association with a specific territory*: a symbolic geographical centre, a sacred habitat, a “homeland” to which a people can symbolically return even if it is scattered around the world, or is not in possession of that territory.
6. *A sense of mutual solidarity*.

2.6 Common themes

After two centuries of attempts to theorise nationalism, both as a social and as a political phenomenon, several recurrent themes have emerged out of the literature –

a set of quintessentially nationalist ideas or beliefs that different historians, political theorists, and sociologists have either endorsed or criticised in the process of theorising nationalism. These can be grouped into two broad categories, one political and the other ontological.

The political dimension of nationalism encompasses beliefs that national self-determination is the highest legitimate ground for political sovereignty. For example, historian Adrian Hastings defines nationalism as the 19th century ideology that each nation should have its own state, arising out of a belief in the supreme value of one's national culture. Extreme forms of this belief can acquire almost sacral dimensions: "In our age, it seems as if an aura attends the very idea of nationhood. The rape of a motherland is far worse than the rape of actual mothers" (Billig, 1995, p.4).

The ontological dimension encompasses beliefs about what nations are, specifically naive realist beliefs about nations being somehow natural or objectively real. This includes ethnic nationalist beliefs about national identity being defined by some physical essence, such as genes or shared blood, or arising out of a connection with the soil of the motherland (as we saw in the case of Fichte). But beliefs in the ontological 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. I will be referring to this type of naive realist belief in the naturalness of nations as "essentialism", and the way social cognitive psychologists have studied it will be explored critically in the next chapter.

A second component of the ontological dimension is the belief in the historical continuity of nations: "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 typically see themselves as part of a historically continuous community going back centuries; they will usually talk about multiple generations of ingroup members as all being 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". What is

interesting here is that people who believe in the historical continuity of their nation will see themselves as part of a community that transcends temporal boundaries; 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. For the nationalist, this way of thinking creates a sense of shared destiny with one’s countrymen, including those 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. This theme of national continuity was derided as a myth by Gellner, as was shown above, but has since been recognised as an essential component of national identity by the ethnosymbolists. Smith (1986), and more recently Bell (2003), have commented on the persistent nationalist trope about nations undergoing periods of “sleep” and “awakening” as an example of naive realist thinking about collective identities; identity is seen here as something objective that a person might be mistaken about, or have forgotten.

2.7 Conclusion

The 20th century produced a wealth of theoretical perspectives on nationalism, inspired by evolutionary theory, sociology, structural anthropology, modernisation theory, and many more. Almost none of these approaches took psychology as the point of departure for their analysis. Nonetheless, almost all of them have made use of psychological concepts, from the evolutionary psychology of some primordialists, to the role of social representations in the work of the ethnosymbolists. Arguably, Anthony Smith and Benedict Anderson’s work in the late 1980s marks the point where the study of nationalism becomes self-consciously psychological, as attention is turned towards how nations are imagined and represented – the mundane use of “a national frame of reference that does not lead one to kill but shapes the way one scans and reads a newspaper” (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001, p.3).

This thesis explores the psychological underpinnings of nationalism. As such, it is not intended to study nationalism as a political or economic phenomenon – that

task has been attempted many times, and this chapter has provided only a slice of the available literature on the subject. Instead, my aim is to look more closely at the intuitions and beliefs of nationalism (what I have termed here its ontological dimension). The next chapter will review the social psychological literature on beliefs in national continuity and essentialist thinking, and I will be using these two concepts as proxies for studying the psychology of nationalism in the subsequent empirical chapters.

Chapter 3

Implicit nationalism: Psychological perspectives

3.1 Psychological approaches to the study of nationalism

Psychologists and sociologists have long been interested in studying the manifestations of “hot” nationalism – emotional outbursts of patriotic fervour that can lead individuals to kill and die in the name of their nations. However, there are certain manifestations of nationalist thinking that, following Billig (1995), have been described as “banal” or “implicit”, which also pose important questions for social psychology. Rather than igniting passions and pushing people towards collective action, implicit nationalism is present whenever a person uses a nationalist frame of reference to make sense of the social world. Rather than being separate from, or opposed to, “hot” nationalism, implicit nationalism serves as the foundation for more overt, political mobilisations. Eruptions of “hot” nationalism rely on individuals already perceiving the world along national lines in everyday life (Billig, 1995; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

As I argued in Chapter 2, implicit nationalism can be characterised by two interrelated intuitive beliefs: (1) that nations are somehow objectively real or natural groups, each with its own essential character, and (2) that they have a continuous existence in historical time. Both refer to an implicit belief that nations are natural

entities, rather than social artefacts.

Although psychology has not produced a general theory of nationalism in its political dimensions, there are a number of theories that can explain the cognitive underpinnings of these implicit beliefs, and why some individuals tend to be more susceptible to them than others. This chapter reviews the relevant literature on this subject, from cognitive theories of perceived national continuity and social essentialism to social theories of collective identity and alignment with national groups.

3.1.1 Nationalism as a social bias

Viewed from a cognitive perspective, nationalism can be interpreted as the product of how the individual processes information and organises knowledge about one's social world. For example, findings from the field of implicit racial prejudice can serve as a direct analogue to implicit nationalist beliefs, and understanding the cognitive mechanisms underpinning the former can also help illuminate the latter.

With the decline and in many cases the criminalisation of institutionalised racism in the late 20th century, social theorists began to notice a shift from overt forms of prejudice to a more subtle, often implicit, "modern racism" (McConahay, 1983), marked by a need to reconcile an open endorsement of egalitarian principles with often unconscious forms of prejudice. In the words of (Chugh, 2004, p.207), "The essence of these more subtle forms of racism is that the discriminator aspires to and believes in a self-image that is nondiscriminating, yet does discriminate in certain situations. Further, this phenomenon is not limited to an extreme few, but rather, pervasive in society". Some cognitive psychologists have explained these implicit social biases through the principles of associative learning: traces of past experiences make certain social cognitions more readily available under similar circumstances, leading to social behaviours (e.g., non-verbal friendliness) which can be in conflict with one's openly held beliefs (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary, 2001).

The invention of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) allowed for the quantification of these implicit biases by means of a latent response measure. In such tasks participants are typically shown two words or

images and are asked to press a button if the two are related based on some criterion. The participant will tend to be quicker in determining whether the two concepts are related if they are also more closely associated in one's mind, leading to shorter response times for intuitively associated concepts, and longer response times in cases where the participant has to consciously suppress the intuitive connection and make a slower, reasoned decision.

The IAT can thus be used to test for implicit connections between a social category, such as race or nationality, and negative attitudes; it can also be used to demonstrate the accessibility of stereotypes about a given social group (Rudman et al., 2001). For example, Hugenberg and Bodenhausen (2003) report an experiment where Black faces showing an ambiguous emotion were judged as angry more often than White faces were.

The origins of these implicit biases have also been investigated from a cognitive perspective. Setoh et al. (2019) have shown that children too show signs of implicit bias; some have suggested that it arises out of a combination of innate (cognitive) and environmental factors. On the one hand, children intuitively categorise stimuli into groups based on inferred characteristics (Gelman, 2003), such as sorting people into racial categories. On the other, they tend to form more positive attitudes towards more familiar stimuli (Lee, Quinn, & Heyman, 2017). Because children tend to be exposed more often to people of their own race, this "perceptual asymmetry" is an important environmental factor that contributes to the consolidation of out-group stereotypes. Moreover, some experimental research has shown that implicit social biases can be learnt (Karsay & Schmuck, 2019) and also changed (Rudman et al., 2001), meaning that associations can be made more or less salient depending on exposure to new information.

Although research on implicit social biases has focused predominantly on the social categories of race and gender, the same basic framework can be used to study the implicit cognitions that underpin some strands of political nationalism, especially those marked by in-group favouritism, out-group derogation, or generalised prejudice.

3.1.2 Implicit nationalism as system justification

Another cognitive approach to the study of nationalism is informed by Systems Justification Theory (SJT; Jost and Banaji, 1994). According to SJT, people are predisposed to perceive the status quo, the particular form their current political and social system takes, as natural and moral; it is a primarily motivational theory of social cognition which holds that, as (Carter, Ferguson, & Hassin, 2011, p.342) explain, “people have a motive to support the larger system of which they are a part, and to see the status quo as legitimate and good”. This motive can operate unconsciously, independently of a person’s explicitly stated beliefs. People occupying a less advantageous position in the social hierarchy may nevertheless support the existing social order, believing that the system is fundamentally just, and that inequality is the result of the individual’s personal qualities. The reason why this support for the status quo is psychologically necessary is unclear, although it can be argued that it stems from a need to maintain a sense of personal control and ontological security (van Marle & Maruna, 2010), or a belief in a just world. An alternative explanation could be that system justification is necessary to manage the cognitive dissonance (e.g., Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959; Harmon-Jones, 2012) that would arise out of routine participation in social systems that one might be privately opposed to.

In the context of nationalism, exposure to national symbols (e.g., the national flag) has been shown to increase belief in the legitimacy and justness of the current social system, and this effect was not moderated by participants’ explicit (liberal or conservative) ideology (Carter et al., 2011; Hassin, Ferguson, Shidlovski, & Gross, 2007). Hassin et al. (2009) have attributed this phenomenon to a similar subliminal association effect as the one discussed above with relation to implicit social bias: the activation of nation-related cues could make related beliefs, attitudes, and associations, more easily accessible and hence more likely to guide behaviour.

3.1.2.1 Placing the cognitive perspective in the present thesis

The cognitive theories discussed in this section had a significant influence on the studies reported in Part II of the present thesis. Although I do not make specific

reference to the IAT or to SJT in these studies, the idea that attitudes towards the in-group (such as perceived collective continuity or the essentialisation of social groups) can be tied to implicit cognitive processes eventually led me to explore the role of information processing styles, as discussed in Chapter 8.

The rest of this chapter explores two related traditions within modern social psychology which furnished the other half of the theoretical apparatus of my research – those of how social groups are imagined and represented in the mind (covering perceptions of collective continuity, essentialism, and entitativity), and the social identity tradition, with a special focus on identity fusion.

3.1.3 Imagining the nation

3.1.3.1 Beliefs in national continuity

The past is a vital resource for the construction of national identities in the present. In Eric Hobsbawm's often-cited formulation, "Historians are to nationalism what poppy-growers in Pakistan are to heroin-addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market" (Hobsbawm, 2012, p.255). Whenever a nation finds itself at a crossroads, or its identity is questioned, discourse often follows a familiar format: iconic scenes, episodes and protagonists from history are summoned to argue that the present moment either fits seamlessly into the unbroken stream of national history or represents a threatening disturbance to it. National narratives have historically played a fundamental role in defining the parameters of a nation's identity (Bhabha, 1990; Geary, 2003; Hobsbawm, 1992; László, 2014; Thiesse, 1999) – at their core, such historical tales can carry important messages about what constitutes the "essence" of the nation, and by implication who can or cannot claim membership to it, and how profoundly a nation can change before people start to feel that it has lost its identity. Paradoxically, in this way claims to historical continuity can serve to erase the historical nature of nations. A high degree of historical continuity gives the nation the aura of something eternal and unchanging, a fact of nature rather than the product of historical contingency (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001, p.18).

The psychological need for self-continuity In addition to providing some of the contents and defining some of the boundaries of collective identity, narratives can

also satisfy a deep psychological need for self-continuity, and can serve an important role in shaping both personal and collective forms of identity. Chandler's work on identity continuity and suicide risk among aboriginal Canadian adolescents is particularly illustrative here. As he and his colleagues have shown (Ball & Chandler, 1989; Chandler, 1994; Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Chandler, Lalonde, Bryan, & Hallett, 2003), the ability to integrate different life episodes into a coherent, continuous self, and to project that self into the future, becomes particularly important when a person is experiencing an identity crisis or a social group is going through a process of cultural change. The need to fashion a continuous self out of disparate life events confronts the individual with the need to resolve an apparent contradiction between stability and change – how to integrate the idea of the continuous, self-identical “I” across one's lifespan with the profound changes that accrue over time. Crucially, the argument here is that this contradiction is only apparent (Chandler & Proulx, 2007) – the resolution lies not in simply asserting, for example, the stability of one's identity in the face of change, but in constructing a framework that allows for a balance between stability and change. Chandler et al. (2003) have identified two broad sets of strategies that people tend to turn to when trying to resolve the stability-continuity dialectic.

The first set of strategies (or “track“, which implies that people can move from simpler to more complex strategies over time) termed “essentialist”, are characterised by a belief in some “kernel” of identity that constitutes the essence of one's self as other aspects of identity change. These strategies can range from the simpler (where change is simply denied, and focus is shifted onto a seemingly enduring element of identity, such as one's appearance, name, soul, or DNA) to the more complex (e.g., where change is acknowledged, but is envisioned as the result of a predetermined process of maturation, and the end state of one's life trajectory is viewed as always latent from the beginning).

The other track encompasses “narrative” strategies that envision identity not as a “thing” that one possesses, but as a narrative structure, the meaning one creates out of disparate life episodes. By nature, these strategies are more easily accepting of

change, however they too can vary in complexity. For example, a simple narrative account might describe one's life as a series of events without any deeper connection between them; or as a series of events that always illustrate the same "theme", much like a medieval romance might illustrate the chivalry of its protagonist without involving any deep character transformation and growth. More complex narrative strategies open up the possibility to think of oneself as an active agent in one's story, and of past events as having a determinate effect on one's present state. At the final stage of the narrative track, people develop a sceptical perspective on their own life narratives as something constructed, not given or waiting "out there" to be discovered.

Chandler and his colleagues have also emphasised that these two sets of strategies – the essentialist and the narrative – should not be seen as mutually exclusive modes of cognition, where persons and cultures can be classified as "essentialists" and "narrativists"; nor should a value system be imposed on them, for example one that sees one set as more "primitive" than the other. Instead, they have noted that "most (perhaps all) of the participants in our research are "capable" of answering in either a Narrative or Essentialist voice. Consequently, what we take ourselves to be measuring, and what we believe culture and development is shaping is not 'ability' but 'accessibility' and the tendency for young persons socialized in different ways to employ different default strategies to problems of personal persistence" (Chandler et al., 2003, p.66).

From self-continuity to collective continuity The strategies for maintaining self-continuity identified by Chandler and his colleagues have provided a useful framework for the study of collective identity, and especially the role of historical narratives in the construction of national identity. In particular, the Perceived Collective Continuity (PCC) inventory (Sani et al., 2007), which measures people's belief in the continuity and endurance of a given social group, mirrors the typology of rhetorical strategies identified in Chandler et al.'s research on self-continuity. What Chandler termed "essentialism", or the belief in "some identity-conferring something that we imagine to somehow stand outside of time" (Chandler & Proulx,

2007, p.281), is reflected in the PCC component of “cultural continuity”: the idea that a group’s traditions, values, and beliefs form a kernel of collective identity that weathers all historical transformations. Conversely, “narrative” strategies are translated into the second component of PCC, “historical continuity”: the idea that the group’s history forms part of an unbroken stream, in which different historical events and ages, although punctuated by profound changes, still form part of a larger, overarching historical trajectory, rendering the group’s past intelligible.

In recent years some social psychologists have turned their attention to role that such perceptions of continuity, at both the individual and the collective level, play in identity construction and in the experience and expression of nationalism. It has been suggested (e.g., by Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015; Vignoles, 2011) 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 (perceiving one’s life as an unbroken stream of events, and thus recognising oneself in one’s past actions and being able to project one’s life into the future) contributes towards one’s emotional resilience in the face of life changes and is an important safeguard against depression and suicide (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Chandler et al., 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).

Smeekes and Verkuyten (2014b) draw an important distinction between two similar but functionally separate concepts: whereas *collective continuity* describes (PCC) the perceived endurance of a group over time, *collective self-continuity* refers to the individual’s continued membership in a group (i.e., to the endurance of those aspects of my self-concept that are derived from my membership in a group). Both types of continuity can be an important source of stability and ontological security (van Marle & Maruna, 2010) for a person: on the one hand, belonging to a group that I perceive as highly continuous in itself inspires confidence that the effects of

my commitments and sacrifices to the group will endure; and on the other, belonging to a group for a prolonged period of time inspires confidence in the stability and endurance of my own self-concept, even as some of my life circumstances might change with time. In this way both types of continuity are relevant to the social psychology of nationalism, as they provide a motivational account for identification with social groups.

In the context of national identities this kind of collective continuity is most often expressed in the form of national narratives that can perform a wide range of functions. They can serve to justify existing institutional arrangements by presenting them as having endured the test of time, or as forming an essential component of the national identity; they can also motivate collective action and guide political behaviour through reference to past collective experiences, such as historical injustices (Liu & Hilton, 2005); and narratives can also be used to draw the boundaries of group membership (e.g., by selectively choosing which people are framed as one of “us” in “our” national story) and thus determine who does or does not belong in the group (László, 2014).

3.1.3.2 Essentialism

Karl Popper (1982; in N. Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2004) understood essentialism as the intellectual position that abstract concepts have precise, definable meanings – in other words, that they possess an “essence” that is contextually invariable. An early example of essentialism in philosophy is the Aristotelian understanding of categories as sets of exemplars with clear, impermeable boundaries (something either belongs to the category or does not), defined by a list of inclusion criteria that all exemplars must possess (all members of the category “dogs” have an essential set of properties that define “dogness”). N. Haslam et al. (2004) contrast essentialist theories of categorisation with anti-essentialist models developed in the 20th century that conceive of categories as “fuzzy sets”. For example, according to prototype theory (Rosch, 1988), categories are not defined by a set of essential properties, but are centred around a prototype, the proximity to which determines category membership. In effect, this means that two exemplars of a category may

not have any single defining property in common, and yet be categorised together due to resembling the prototype in different ways.

While essentialism has been largely abandoned as a metaphysical position in philosophy, the concept has proven useful in cognitive psychology. Chandler's views on essentialism as a rhetorical strategy were mentioned briefly above, but his description is worth quoting in full:

“Of the two views, the Essentialist position is the more venerable, or at least this is regularly said to be true in the context of Western or Euro-American thought. As Schlesinger (1977) puts it, “the ancient philosophers” (meaning, ancient Western Philosophers—Plato, for example) regularly insisted that “being was given once and for all, complete and perfect, in an ultimate system of essences” (p. 271). *Clear remnants of such lingering Platonism may have grown rather harder to detect* after being filtered through successive generations of Western thought (Smith, 1988), but certain signature constants remain. The kernel idea common to all subspecies of this Essentialist view is that *there actually is a kernel idea—some enduring something (DNA, ego, spirit, soul)* that, as William James (1891) derisively put it “stand[s] behind the passing states of consciousness and our always shifting ways of being,” (p. 196), and successfully vouchsafes our identities by immobilizing or negating or otherwise defeating time. [...] There still remains, it is argued, *some persistent essential kernel of existence that forms the foundation of our identity*, and from which we can begin the work of knitting back up the raveled sleeve of our persistent selves.” (Chandler et al., 2003, p.9, emphasis added)

Although essentialism may not describe the world as it is, it still describes how people make sense of the world in particular circumstances: “[Psychological essentialism] would not be the view that *things* have essences, but rather the view that people's *representations* of things might reflect such a belief (erroneous as it may be)” (Medin & Ortony, 1989, p. 183, emphasis in original). More specifically, psychological essentialism can be seen as a cognitive shortcut for explaining the non-obvious properties of categories of objects, which could serve a useful purpose

in facilitating cognition (N. Haslam, 2017). To categorise things based on their superficial features might seem intuitively plausible – for example, cats meow and have fur, fish have fins and live in water, etc. However, appearances can be fleeting – cats can lose their fur without ceasing to be cats, and we know that whales are mammals even though they look very much like fish. In other words, there is a mismatch between how an object *looks* to us, and what it *really* is. “Essentialism” according to Medin and Ortony (1989) is the intuition that the identity and characteristics of an object are determined by some deep, essential and unchanging property. In some cases we might have a good scientific understanding of what that identity-conferring property is, but in other cases the intuition that it exists is sufficient; Medin and Ortony refer to this as a “placeholder essence”. In Gelman’s (2004) terms, the essence can be either sortal (used to determine whether an object belongs in a category or not), causal (giving rise to the object’s properties), or ideal (not having a material presence in the world, much like the *Volksgeist* of Romantic nationalism).

Gelman and Legare (2011) discuss psychological essentialism as a broad domain-general tendency to essentialise (i.e., the same person should be motivated to essentialise to a similar extent, for example, animal species and national groups). However, out of the multiple examples of essentialist thinking they provide, one can distinguish between two conceptions of essentialism:

- a “Essentialism” as the reification of abstract categories: A category is essentialised when it is seen as having an objective reality independent of people’s thinking about it.
- b “Essentialism” as the inference that an invisible physical “thing” is responsible for the category’s properties: “everyday objects can be construed as containing hidden, causally powerful properties” (Gelman & Legare, 2011, p.9), meaning that when people essentialise an object, they implicitly attribute its characteristics to a hidden “essence” residing inside of it. This implicit ontology has been used as an explanation of some people’s intuitive fear of moral contamination, such as their reluctance to

wear a jumper worn by Hitler (Nemeroff & Rozin, 1994) or their implicit belief that an organ transplant can confer onto them some of the donor's personality traits (Meyer, Leslie, & Gelman, 2013).

These two distinct uses of “essentialism” as a concept can overlap in some contexts. For example, when a social group is seen as a natural kind with a set of essential characteristics (definition a.), these can be explained in terms of the group's shared genes, “blood” or “spirit”, which constitute a tangible, physical essence (definition b.). However, Gelman and Legare (2011) provide a range of examples of essentialist thinking, some of which demonstrate biases in categorisation without references to a tangible essence (for example, when categorising an object, children will use its origin or purpose to determine whether it is a given type of thing or not), and others involving references to an essence without any apparent biases in categorisation (“essentialist beliefs extend to reasoning about individuals, e.g., Bob and Joe have distinct and unique souls”; p.9).

This distinction between definitions of essentialism as a cognitive bias and as a naïve ontology is a subtle one, and Meyer et al. (2013) attempt to bridge it with the argument that “one need not have beliefs about the precise nature or location of an essence to believe that it exists and causes common features of category members” (p.669). Since the essentialisation of a social group is a matter of intuition and is an implicit ontological position (rather than a clearly articulated one), the precise nature of the “essence” at the core of the group may be left unspecified, and this gap (or “placeholder”) can be filled in by any number of explanations – from references to genetics to magical thinking, spirits and “ectoplasm”. Therefore, it can be argued that what defines the phenomenon is the intuitive process of categorisation, and not the reliance on magical thinking and belief in “essences” as such.

3.1.3.3 Origins of essentialist thinking: phylogenetic and ontogenetic

The origins and cognitive underpinnings of this tendency to essentialise have also been the object of different interpretations. Exponents of the evolutionary (or na-

tivist) view, such as Atran (1998; 2005) and Pinker (1994; 1997) have argued that essentialism stems from an evolved, domain-specific cognitive function – an evolutionary adaptation performing “a balancing act between what our ancestors could and could not afford to ignore about their environment” (Atran, 1998, p.550). According to them, the human mind was shaped by natural selection to think about animal species as ontologically distinct “kinds” of creatures, with the advantage of facilitating the allocation of attention to those features of the object that are most relevant for survival. Social essentialism can thus be seen as an extension of the functioning of this innate cognitive module into the domain of social cognition.

In contrast to the evolutionary view, developmental psychology has offered valuable insights into the developmental trajectory of essentialist beliefs. It is well known that children are prolific essentialists (Gelman, 2003, 2004; Meyer & Gelman, 2016) whose essentialist intuitions change and mature over time. For example, younger children tend to think that the essence is localised in the object’s centre (e.g., the torso of a lion), and with age they come to see the essence as more diffused (Newman & Keil, 2008).

Proponents of this view generally agree that essentialist thinking is underpinned by largely unconscious cognitive mechanisms involved in perceiving, categorising and representing information about social groups, living beings, and inanimate objects (Gelman, 2003; N. Haslam, 2017; Sutherland & Cimpian, 2019). Starting in early childhood, the output of these essentialism-prone cognitive mechanisms is gradually refined through a range of cultural practices. Children may give up their essentialist beliefs about animal species when they acquire a better scientific understanding of the principles of evolution, specifically the common descent and fluidity of all categories of living creatures (Emmons & Kelemen, 2015). Specific linguistic practices have also been shown to shape people’s essentialist beliefs. These include the use of generic language (generic statements like “Boys play with trucks” and “Girls wear pink”, as opposed to specific statements about a concrete individual; Rhodes, Leslie, & Tworek, 2012), or the habit of attributing a person’s behaviour to individual characteristics rather than to environmental factors (N. Haslam, 2017;

Norenzayan, Choi, & Nisbett, 1999).

Gelman's (2003) position regarding the developmental trajectory of essentialism has been that, rather than being a singular cognitive tendency, essentialist thinking could be the product of multiple different capacities that develop independently of each other in early childhood and all play important roles in social cognition. These capacities include the ability to distinguish between an object's superficial appearance and its underlying nature; the ability to track an object's identity over time, even as its appearance changes dramatically; and the ability to defer to knowledgeable adults for the correct naming of an object, regardless of its appearance. Taken together, such abilities allow children to think about the identity of an object as defined by an "inner nature" that remains stable over time, is non-obvious, and resides deep within the object.

Psychological essentialism about social groups Sometimes people will perceive not just inanimate objects and animal species as having immutable essences, but also socially constructed groups such as those based on gender, race, or ethnicity (Gil-White, 2001; Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009; S. O. Roberts, Ho, & Gelman, 2017; Rothbart & Taylor, 1992; Skewes, Fine, & Haslam, 2018; Waxman, Medin, & Ross, 2007; Wilton et al., 2018; Zagefka, Nigbur, Gonzalez, & Tip, 2013). When people think of a national group, a tribe, or an ethnicity in essentialist terms, they will assume the existence of certain essential characteristics that define the group's identity. Moreover, even if a newborn from one such group is adopted by members of another, high essentialists will expect that child to behave in ways characteristic of its biological parents in the original group (Rothbart & Taylor, 1992); in other words, cultural markers of identity are attributed to nature.

Essentialist thinking has measurable consequences for intra- and inter-group dynamics, and has been consistently linked with increased distancing from out-groups, including prejudice (Rivers, 2015). For example, gender essentialism is associated with increased opposition to policies intended to promote gender equality (Skewes et al., 2018), and a similar link has been shown between the essentialisation of LGBT people and homophobic attitudes (Hoyt, Morgenroth, & Burnette, 2019).

Men who are uncomfortable about gender norms violations and are concerned about being misidentified as gay also tend to express more essentialist beliefs about the biological basis of sexual orientation, in an attempt to maintain a strong gender identity (Falomir-Pichastor, Mugny, & Berent, 2017). Conversely, a reduction of gender essentialist beliefs can lead to higher levels of support for the rights of women and transgender people (Wilton et al., 2018).

The explanations people give for their essentialist intuitions can vary from person to person. In general, essentialism does not require clear knowledge about the precise nature of the essence, however even very young children are capable of producing elaborate explanations for where the kernels of identity reside within a person or an animal, and how they work (Gelman, 2003, 2004; Newman & Keil, 2008). Explanations also tend to be culturally specific. As was shown in Chapter 2, in the 18th century a popular way to anchor culture in nature was to invoke the formative influences of the nation's geography and climate, while in modern times the idea of DNA as the kernel of identity has contributed to the spread of genetic determinism among the general population (Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011; Fleising, 2001).

Social essentialism is a particularly relevant factor in the study of national identity and prejudice against outgroups (N. Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2002). In discussing the psychological roots of out-group derogation, Pehrson et al. (2009) have argued that a strong feeling of national identity in itself does not necessarily lead to xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments. What matters instead is how individuals construct or define their nation. Specifically, ethnic nationalism (as opposed to the civic kind) 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 also expressed less pro-immigrant sentiments and more anti-immigrant sentiments. Ethnic nationalism can be seen as one manifestation of essentialist thinking, whereby individual members of the national group are seen as bound together by "a deep quasi-biological connection" (Pehrson et al., 2009, p.63). An ethnic definition of national identity au-

tomatically casts ethnic minorities and immigrants as foreign bodies in the national “organism”, threatening the organic unity and cohesion of the group. As Zagefka et al. (2013) have shown, ethnic (essentialist) beliefs about national identity lead people to adopt two contradictory attitudes: on the one hand, ethnic nationalists reject the possibility that an immigrant can ever become “truly” an equal member of the nation-group (since they define belonging by descent), while simultaneously perceiving immigrants as a threat to national cohesion and demanding more integration.

The essence of essentialism Deep-running disagreements about the structure of essentialism as a psychological construct are reflected in the variety of instruments used to measure it. Bastian and Haslam’s (2006) 23-item measure of social essentialism is comprised of three distinct sub-scales: biological basis of behaviour and personality (e.g., “*The kind of person someone is can be largely attributed to their genetic inheritance*”); discreteness of categories (e.g., “*The kind of person someone is, is clearly defined; they either are a certain kind of person or they are not*”); and informativeness of category membership (e.g., “*There are different ‘types’ of people and it is possible to know what ‘type’ of person someone is relatively quickly*”). Essentialism for racial categories was operationalised along the same three dimensions by Young, Sanchez, and Wilton (2013), while Haslam and Levy’s (2006) measure of essentialist beliefs about homosexuality had additional items about impermeability (how easy it is to enter or leave this category), universality (whether this category exists in all human cultures) and historical invariance. In contrast, Pehrson et al. (2009) measured national essentialism exclusively through beliefs about the genetic basis of nationality, with no reference to the criteria of immutability, fixity or homogeneity.

The relative functional independence of the initial three components of essentialism (biological basis, informativeness, and distinctiveness) has more recently been confirmed in a developmental study on American children’s evolving concepts of nationhood. Hussak and Cimpian (2019) reported that younger children tend to view nationality both as biologically defined and as highly informative (or

as having a high inductive potential); however, while beliefs in the biological basis of nationhood declined sharply with age, a similar decline in the perceived informativeness of nationality was not observed. Instead, belief in the informativeness and discreteness of a social category can be maintained and justified with a range of non-biological (e.g., cultural, geographical, historical) explanations (Hussak & Cimpian, 2019).

Whether or not such beliefs should in and of themselves be called “essentialism” ultimately depends on the individual author’s aims in using the term. On the one hand, constraining the use of “essentialism” to beliefs in the existence of real, physical essences, can enable social psychologists to trace the origins of some forms of magical or supernatural thinking (see for example Meyer et al., 2013, on the belief that organ transplants contain the essence of a person and can transfer some of the personality traits of the organ donor to the recipient). On the other hand, adopting a broader definition of essentialism (one that does not necessarily include belief in an actual identity-conferring essence) has been favoured by some critical psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists, who have written about new forms of non-biological (Barker, 1981) or cultural racism (e.g., Grillo, 2003; Grosfoguel, 2001). This form of essentialism relies on cultural, rather than biological rationalisations, but ultimately it serves to essentialise culture itself. Essentialism in its cultural form is often functionally indistinguishable from the genetic variant – category membership is still viewed as highly informative, immutable, discrete, etc. Given the popularity of cultural essentialism in political life today (e.g., Buhagiar, Sammut, Rochira, & Salvatore, 2018; Moran, 2018; Siebers & Dennissen, 2015; Soyly Yalcinkaya, Branscombe, Gebauer, Niedlich, & Hakim, 2018; Watkins & Noble, 2019), I have opted to use this broader sense of the term “essentialism” for the rest of this thesis, rather than limit it to purely ethnicist or biological rhetoric.

3.1.3.4 The inherence heuristic

A concept related to essentialism is the *inherence heuristic*, proposed by Cimpian and Salomon (2014; see also Sutherland & Cimpian, 2019) as a domain-general cognitive mechanism underpinning essentialist thinking. The heuristic is said to in-

involve three steps: first, an individual notices some pattern or regularity that requires an explanation (for example, “Girls wear pink”), and a shallow memory search is automatically performed. This memory search is quick and automatic, and is likely to retrieve the most salient, stable, and inherent properties of the target object (such as “Pink looks delicate”), as opposed to its more extrinsic, socially- and historically-dependent properties. Then, an explanation is cobbled together using these intrinsic, easily accessible features (for example, “Girls wear pink because it is a delicate colour”), and the individual accepts it without much consideration or revision.

Gelman and Meyer (2014) have argued that the inherence heuristic itself can be explicated by reference to another, even deeper level of information processing: “This distinction between generic patterns and specific instances suggests that the IH [inherence heuristic] may itself be undergirded by a more foundational cognitive bias – namely, a realist assumption about environmental regularities. [...] This alternative interpretation of the data suggests that some of the apparatus described as part of IH may follow from realism rather than underpinning it.” (Gelman & Meyer, 2014, p.490). Although compelling, this argument risks falling into a circular definition that often crops up in cognitive theories of essentialism, and in a certain sense ignores the unique contribution of the concept of the inherence heuristic to the literature on essentialism.

To illustrate this problem, consider the following chain of putative cognitive biases and tendencies invoked to explain some people’s tendency to think in terms of essential properties. At a surface level, many people exhibit a tendency to see a fixed essence beneath changing appearances, to interpret complex phenomena through the lens of an unchanging and inherent nature, to perceive social constructs as natural kinds, and processes as things. Cognitive psychology gives this tendency the label “essentialism”, treats it as a discrete psychological phenomenon that requires explication, and identifies a set of sub-components (such as perceived entitativity, causal determinism, etc.; Gelman, 2003; N. Haslam, 2017). Then, an even “deeper” level of analysis is proposed – at the root of this cluster of cognitive

tendencies or biases there is a simple information-processing algorithm, the “inherence heuristic”. Finally, this heuristic itself is explicated by reference to another, even deeper level of information processing, as in Gelman and Meyer’s (2014) proposal above. The problem with this chain of explanations is that we end up where we started – essentialism is said to be the manifestation of a vague naive realist intuition, which is explained by a putative cognitive bias stemming from the same naive realist intuition that it is meant to explain. In contrast, the idea of an inherence heuristic on its own appears to avoid this infinite regress by positing the existence of an information-retrieval mechanism which is biased towards inherent features. Essentialist beliefs are therefore not an inevitable product of this heuristic, but merely the most likely one.

3.1.3.5 Entitativity

Another concept closely related to essentialist thinking is the perceived entitativity of a social group, understood as its “degree of having the nature of an entity” (Campbell, 1958; in Hamilton, Sherman, & Rodgers, 2004, p.44). In other words, entitativity is the property that distinguishes a coherent, real and unified group, from a mere collection of individuals (Hamilton et al., 2004; Lakens & Stel, 2011). It is the perceived reality of the group as a social agent (or, in Hamilton et al.’s term - its “groupness”) that allows us to easily make inferences about the group as a whole. Since Campbell’s original definition lacked conceptual clarity, some researchers studying prejudice and social stereotyping have often used “entitativity” interchangeably with “group homogeneity” and “essentialism“, while others have sought to carve out distinct meanings for these terms (see for example Yzerbyt, Judd, & Corneille, 2004, for a synthesis). For example, Hamilton et al. (2004) argue that homogeneity is not a necessary condition for entitativity – some members of a group can be highly similar to each other and yet lack the agentic cohesion that characterises social entities, while another group (such as a political movement) can be highly heterogeneous, and yet be perceived as cohesive so long as its members work together and are driven by a common goal. Entitativity thus is “more a matter of perceived interdependence and social influence than mere similarity or

homogeneity” (Hogg, 2007, p.88).

Acknowledging the dissociations between entitativity and homogeneity opens up the question of what other properties of a group determine its perceived entitativity. Lickel et al. (2000) sought to identify these properties in a large cross-cultural study where participants rated 40 social groups (e.g. people from the same family, gender, university, etc.) on a total of 8 measures (such as the group’s size, lifespan and similarity), including a measure of entitativity (“the extent to which it qualifies as a group”). The results of a cluster analysis indicated that people intuitively distinguish between four basic types of social groups; as Hamilton et al. (2004). note, this typology is not determined by any one single property, but is based on a pattern of properties:

1. **Intimacy groups:** small, highly interactive, important to members, impermeable, possess collective history.
2. **Task groups:** small, highly interactive, less important to members, shorter existence, common goals, easier to join or leave.
3. **Social categories:** very large, low in interaction, moderately important to members, long history.
4. **Loose associations:** moderate size, low in interaction, low importance, highly permeable.

These four group types varied in terms of their perceived entitativity, starting with intimacy groups (e.g. a family) at the higher end of the spectrum, followed by task groups (e.g. an airline flight crew or a student campus committee) and social categories (e.g. race, gender, nationality). Hence, highly entitative groups appear to be characterised not so much by internal homogeneity, as by the level of interaction between their members, and their ability to act as a cohesive social agent for the fulfilment of some common goal.

Measures of entitativity reflect this typology: while Lickel et al. (2000) used a single-item measure (“...the degree to which you think [X] qualifies as a group”), Thakkar (2003; in Hamilton et al., 2004) operationalised entitativity in terms of ratings on the scales of how unified the group is, how cohesive it is, how much

members feel a part of it, and the extent to which it “qualifies as a group”. In contrast, Brewer, Hong, and Li (2004) distinguish between groups defined by dynamic properties (common fate, shared purpose, cooperation, effectiveness as a group) and by static properties (fixed characteristics, core essence), hence their measure included these as two distinct axes, plus a third item assessing the group’s general perceived “groupness”. Finally, Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, Hamilton, Peng, and Wang (2007) used a broader set of 14 items to produce a global measure of entitativity derived from various competing conceptual models – including, in addition to the ones mentioned so far, the group’s effectiveness in achieving its goals, and its possession of an unchanging character.

Relationship to perceived continuity and essentialism The similarities and distinctions between entitativity as a concept on the one hand, and both perceived collective continuity and essentialism on the other, are worth exploring at least briefly. Sani et al. (2008; 2007) have argued that PCC is an antecedent of perceived group entitativity — i.e., a group must be seen as temporally continuous before it can be seen as a collective entity, although this directional effect has not yet been demonstrated empirically. The reverse relationship (entitativity preceding PCC) could also be logically justified, as it would be incoherent to speak of a non-entity as continuous through time. The logic here is Cartesian – the power of *Cogito ergo sum* is that a thinking thing must be, first and foremost, a thing; likewise, a thing that persists through time must be, first and foremost, a thing (an entity). As mentioned above, the concepts of essentialism and entitativity have often been used interchangeably, or models of their relationship have varied between research groups. For example, Brewer et al. (2004) describe essentialism as one of two distinct ways of thinking about groups, both of which give rise to the perception that groups act as entities: essence theory (seeing groups as defined by a shared essence and personality traits, and as being clearly defined and temporally consistent) on the one hand, and agency theory (groups are defined by processes of intra- and intergroup interaction, and are hence more dynamic, heterogeneous and context-dependent) on the other. Here Brewer et al. offer a clearly nested structure, with essentialism being merely one

possible mode of thinking that produces perceived entitativity: “The judged entitativity of any particular group will depend on which lens is being used” (p.30). Both the essentialist and the agentic “lenses” influence social perception and render groups apparently more entitative or cohesive, however the essentialist “lens” sees ingroup consistency and fixed personality traits, while the agentic one sees more variation and homogeneity and fluid psychological processes instead of fixed traits.

In contrast, a number of theoretical models have been produced that conceptualise entitativity as giving rise to essentialist thinking: “the more ‘groupy’ a group is perceived to be, the more people view its attributes to be immutable and fixed essences that, for example, reflect biology and genetics” (Hogg, 2007, p.88). For example, N. Haslam et al. (2004) develop a different nested structure, with entitativity being a component of essentialism, alongside a second “natural kinds” component. Likewise, Yzerbyt et al. (2004) propose a conceptual distinction between two levels of perception, “phenotypic” (what a thing looks like) and “genotypic” (what the underlying explanation for its properties is). In the context of this metaphor, entitativity would form part of the “phenotype” of social perception, as it describes a tendency to perceive collections of people as coherent and unified wholes; essentialism adds an implicit theory of causation to this perception, by answering the question of what makes the group cohesive and unified (hence constituting the “genotype” level of perception). Here, in contrast to Brewer et al.’s proposed hierarchy, the perception of unity and entitativity precedes, and does not follow from, essentialist theorising; rather, perceived entitativity is what necessitates the essentialist explanation. Yzerbyt et al. (2004) propose the following synthesis of the competing accounts of the conceptual relationship between essentialism and entitativity:

“Perceived homogeneity focuses on the extent to which group members share attributes. Entitativity focuses on the extent to which a group is seen as real or coherent. Essentialism derives from both of these but it seems to us to imply more. It entails not just a description of a group and what it does, but also a theory of why group membership matters and what it implies [...] This

is a group and its members are similar because they all share an essence that is invariable and immutable.” (Yzerbyt et al., 2004, p.7)

3.1.3.6 Summary

To summarise, the study of the cognitive underpinnings of nationalism requires understanding a number of (perceived) group properties: collective continuity, naturalness, informativeness, discreteness, inherence, and entitativity (or groupness). The precise causal and hierarchical relationships between these constructs have been the subject of debates for many years, and as a result the knowledge base on the subject is still heavily fragmented.

3.1.4 Alignment with social groups: The Social Identity Perspective

The second set of theories that inform this thesis are concerned not with the perception of social groups, but with their dynamic interaction. The following section offers a brief summary of Social Identity and Self-Categorisation Theory, two of the most influential theories in social cognitive psychology. It then delves into Identity Fusion Theory (IFT), a more recent elaboration of these cognitive models, focused primarily on explaining extreme pro-group behaviours.

3.1.4.1 Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) Social Identity Theory emerged in the late 1970s and quickly became the foundation of a rich and diverse tradition within social psychology that is still very much active and evolving nearly four decades later. The initial theory emerged out of earlier experiments demonstrating that the grouping of objects under the same category can warp our perception of them – minimising within-category differences and maximising between-category differences (Spears, 2011). Tajfel and his colleagues extended these insights to the study of social categorisation in their minimal groups studies (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel et al., 1971), which demonstrated that categorising people can enable individuals 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).

These early findings have led some (e.g., Hamilton, 1981, cited in Spears, 2011) to propose that prejudice, such as racism or violent nationalism, can be adequately explained by cognitive processes related to social categorisation and implicit bias, despite Tajfel's theory placing much more emphasis on collective action and social transformation. This tendency to prioritise cognitive over affective, discursive, or social factors has remained a feature of some interpretations of SIT until today.

Social Identity Theory is primarily a motivational theory according to which the main driver of social behaviour is the human need for positive self-esteem. People can act either as individual or as members of social groups (i.e., social behaviour can be either interpersonal or inter-group) depending on their own social status, as well as on the degree of social mobility available to them (Turner, 1999). Under conditions of high social mobility, where people are capable of improving their social standing through their own efforts as individuals, they will be more likely to express their personal identity. Conversely, in a rigidly stratified society, for example one divided along gender, cultural, or racial lines, those in positions further down the social hierarchy will be more likely to band together and to express a collective identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Multiple strategies are then available to them, depending on their cultural, social, and economic circumstances. They may pursue social change, provided that they believe such change is both desirable and achievable, for example when the social order appears unstable; barring this route, they may also choose a different dimension of comparison or a different comparison group, redefine their stigma as a positive status-marker, or redefine their social identity altogether (Spears, 2011).

SIT is often used as a general cognitive theory of social behaviour, regardless of the type of identity that is the object of investigation. Violent nationalism can therefore also be studied within a Social Identity framework: "A social identity theorist, who wished to apply the theory, might say that Nazism arose because the

Germans created dimensions of comparisons with the Jews, in order to produce a positive German self-identity.” (Billig, 2002, p.180). However, Billig has argued that SIT is in essence a theory of social mobilisation and action, rather than hatred and extreme behaviour:

“Social Identity Theory is not a theory of prejudice. It certainly is not a theory of murderous bigotry. It is, at root, a theory of group freedom. It tells of the way that oppressed groups can find ways to challenge groups that have the power to ascribe identities and stereotypes. The most original parts of the theory describe how groups can re-create stereotypes that are applied to them: they can find new dimensions of comparison, alter the valuation of existing traits, collectively oppose powerful outgroups etc. Significantly, the examples that Tajfel tended to use, in order to illustrate these processes, were the black power movement in the United States and the women’s movement. Both were directly overturning ascribed stereotypes and recreating their social identities.” (Billig, 2002, p.179)

Therefore, as Billig compellingly argues, to use SIT as a model of bigotry or nationalist violence would mean conflating the construction of Nazi in-group identity and the mobilisation of marginalised groups in their struggle for emancipation: “any empirically grounded similarities [between these two types of group identity-building] would be trivial as compared with the differences” (Billig, 2002, p.180).

3.1.4.2 Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT)

An elaboration of SIT, Self-Categorisation Theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) focuses on the dynamic relationship between the personal self (those aspects of one’s identity that stem from personal traits, values, experiences, preferences, and attitudes) and the social self (aspects of identity derived from membership in a given group). According to SCT, people categorise their social environment (both other persons and themselves) based on how similar an individual is to a social category’s prototype. Furthermore, people are said to be motivated to achieve group homogeneity and distinctiveness – i.e., they are driven to minimise in-group variation and to maximise inter-group differences. This has led Turner (1999) to

speculate that in some cases one's social self can function to the exclusion of the personal self. In such cases an individual becomes deindividuated, their distinctive personal traits minimised in an effort to become more similar to the idealised version of the group (its prototype). In such cases the relationship between the personal and the social selves comes to resemble a hydraulic system – the salience of the social self reduces the agency and distinctiveness of the personal self, or vice versa.

There are several ways in which SCT differs from SIT. Whereas SIT is a theory of between-group dynamics, SCT provides a more detailed account of the relationship between the individual and the group. Moreover, whereas SIT describes a unitary self whose actions can be placed somewhere along a continuum from *personal* to *collective*, SCT accepts the existence of multiple self-concepts (me as an individual, me as a member of my family, as a representative of my profession, as a member of my nation, as a human being) and attempts to describe the conditions under which a given concept will become more salient. SCT theorists are also more likely to attribute social phenomena to cognitive processes. For example, *depersonalisation* is said to occur when the social identity of the group becomes salient, leading the individual to treat other (including him- or herself) as interchangeable representatives of the group (Spears, 2011).

3.1.4.3 New developments

Subsequent research within the social identity approach has expanded it in several directions. New psychological theories of leadership and the relationship (e.g., A. Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2010; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005) have explored the relationships between a social group and its leaders, and have emphasised the degree to which a leader's power stems from his or her ability to represent a prototypical image of the group. According to SCT, a group can be associated with a variety of stereotypes, hence what the prototypical image (and hence the ideal leader) will be depends on the social context and on the out-group against which they are being compared. Conversely, the question why crowds of people are able to act in a concerted manner in the absence of a leader opened up the possibility

to reconsider the way crowds were treated by classical social psychology (Spears, 2011). New research on the psychology of crowds (e.g., Hopkins et al., 2019; Reicher, 2008b; Reicher, Stott, Cronin, & Adang, 2004) went against the traditional perspective of crowds as irrational agglomerations of people where individuals lose any rational control over their own behaviour, and violence can spread like wild-fire (what is often referred to as the contagion model of crowd behaviour). Instead, Reicher (1987, cited in Spears, 2011) demonstrated that being in a crowd can increase the salience of one's social identity, which can help guide social behaviour; this is why there is typically very little mass violence at peace rallies (where the social identity norms prohibit it), or in the case of riots violence is directed at a socially appropriate target (symbols of oppression like banks and the police, rather than local shops).

Drury and Reicher (1999; 2000; 2009) have also proposed an elaborated social identity model (ESIM) which attempts to map not only the processes through which identity can guide collective action, but also the ways in which collective action can foster and consolidate social identities. Multiple factors are implicated in these processes: a group of people acting together can gain a sense of the efficacy of their power, consolidating group identity; meanwhile, being victimised by a powerful other (such as the police) can also sharpen the boundaries between the in- and the out-group. Spears (2011) notes that this development implies the importance of meta-cognition for group identity – being aware of how the out-group views, stereotypes, and intends to treat "us" shapes how we view ourselves as a group (an idea reminiscent of the Althusserian notion of "interpellation").

Although the social identity tradition has tended to focus more on the role of cognitive over affective processes, attempts have been made to integrate emotions into this broader theoretical framework. An example of this is Intergroup Emotions Theory (Maitner, Smith, & MacKie, 2016), which holds that group membership, as part of the self, holds an emotional significance for the individual, and entails a range of normative processes that impact on one's emotional appraisals of events and groups. Intergroup emotions theorists are particularly attentive to the role of

emotions such as fear, anger, disgust or disdain, but also more benevolent and paternalistic emotions, between high- and low-status groups. The resulting perspective can explain, for example, how sometimes prejudice can be the product of positive, rather than negative, evaluations of the outgroup – such as benevolent sexism, or envious prejudice.

Finally, whereas most of the literature on social identity has examined identity processes in adults, recent studies have assumed a developmental approach to trace the consolidation of both personal and social identities to early adolescence. For example, a recent longitudinal study by Albarello, Crocetti, and Rubini (2018) has explored the association between personal and social identity processes among adolescents, as they experiment with attachment to multiple peer groups (schoolmates, friends), and reevaluate and consolidate prior commitments. The findings have shed light on some of the ways in which personal and social identity processes can be mutually dependent; for example, an increased personal commitment in the educational domain (such as opting to study a particular subject) is related to social identification with the community of students who also study the same subject. In this way even strictly personal choices can become realised, embedded, and validated within a social milieu.

3.1.4.4 Fundamentals of IFT

Identity Fusion Theory was informed partially by SIT, but its understanding of the personal and the social selves as two distinct constructs that stand in some relationship to each other is derived mostly from SCT. Moreover, IFT is more explicitly concerned with explaining extreme progroup behaviour in light of the terrorist attacks in New York in 2001 and Madrid in 2004 (Swann & Talaifar, 2018).

Identity fusion is defined as the “blurring” of the line between an individual’s personal and social self-concepts, to the degree that the two become “fused” and group membership becomes an essential component of one’s personal identity (Fredman et al., 2015; Swann & Buhrmester, 2015; Swann et al., 2009; Swann & Talaifar, 2018). This fusion leads to a visceral sense of oneness and kinship with other group members, and a series of studies have demonstrated that it predicts endorse-

ment of extreme sacrifice in the name of the group (Gómez et al., 2011; Swann et al., 2014, 2009; Swann, Gómez, Dovidio, Hart, & Jetten, 2010). The paradigmatic example of identity fusion is the deep emotional attachment that 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 occur with larger social groups, such as a national or religious community (Fredman, Bastian, & Swann, 2017), where a feeling of oneness and connectedness can be maintained despite the individual being unable to establish deep and meaningful personal relationships with every single group member. It has also been suggested that people can become fused not only with social groups that are of great personal significance to them, but also with ideas and abstract concepts (Fredman et al., 2015).

Research on the consequences of identity fusion has been focused on the propensity of strongly fused people 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 ingroup in a trolley dilemma (Swann, Gómez, Dovidio, et al., 2010). A recent study has 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 (Purzycki & Lang, 2019).

Although the consequences of identity fusion have been explored in detail over the past decade, its origins and 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).

Relationship to national identification As a theoretical concept identity fusion with a group is distinct from social identification and, as Swann and his colleagues (2009) have argued, it cannot be reduced to “identification plus” (p.1008), i.e., to a strong form of social identification with an added element of commitment to the group. The fusion of the personal and the social self-concepts gives rise to at least four psychological phenomena that mark the divergence of identity fusion theory from SCT (Fredman et al., 2015).

The first of these is the *agentic self principle* – the assumption that the personal self of fused people can remain active in the context of pro-group action. SCT assumes that the personal and the social self-concepts are locked in a hydraulic relationship and cannot both be active at the same time – a salient personal identity necessarily suppresses one’s social identity, and conversely, strong social identification will make the individual forego their personal interests and submit to the interests of the group (also known as the principle of functional antagonism; Turner et al., 1987). In contrast, identity fusion theorists propose that strongly fused people maintain the strong agency of their personal self in the context of the group, thus avoiding the depersonalisation that characterises states of strong identification.

This is complemented by the *identity synergy principle*, according to which strongly fused people’s personal and social identities synergistically reinforce each other; in other words, strongly fused people feel that they derive their personal strength from their membership in the group, while they themselves feel an obligation to protect the group and make it stronger through their own actions. In practice,

this means that strongly fused individuals are more likely to endorse extreme sacrifices in the name of the group even when their personal self is made salient, in contrast with strongly identified people, who will do so only if their social self is activated (Swann et al., 2009). Strongly fused people also tend to see the group as functionally equivalent to their personal self, which preserves their sense of personal agency while compelling them to see the wellbeing of the group as equivalent to their own (Swann et al., 2009).

A third point of divergence between identification and identity fusion is the principle of *irrevocability*, according to which strongly fused people see their attachment to the group as permanent and unconditional. When they are discriminated against by other group members, or are outright ostracised, strongly fused individuals become more, rather than less likely, to defend the group against external threat, and to endorse extreme sacrifice to that end (Gómez et al., 2011).

Finally, identity fusion can be differentiated from identification by the perception of *relational ties* that strongly fused people tend to project onto other group members. In SCT, social identification is understood as identification with a group's prototype – an abstract representation of the typical group member against which candidates for group membership are assessed (Rosch, 1988). This means that (when mere identification without fusion is concerned) what the individual identifies with is not so much the collective of individuals that the group is composed of, but rather the totality of the group as an abstraction; their loyalty is to this social representation of the collective, and not necessarily to the individuals themselves, and therefore the ties that bind them to the group are collective rather than relational. In contrast, strongly fused people have a sense of kinship with other group members, which makes them value each one as an individual.

Local and extended fusion An important conceptual distinction ought to be made between two separate manifestations of identity fusion which are dependent on the properties of the target group. The term local fusion refers to identity fusion with a smaller social group that has a high degree of internal interaction, which allows the individual to know and interact with other group members directly, such

as a family or a military unit (e.g., Whitehouse et al., 2014). Fusion with a much larger collective (such as a nation, a social or political movement, or some type of international identity), on the other hand, is referred to as extended fusion. The dichotomy between local and extended fusion does not reflect merely a difference in scale: smaller social units allow for the formation of actual relational ties between group members, while in larger groups, due to their low degree of internal interaction, such ties must instead be projected onto the group when an individual becomes “fused” with it (Swann et al., 2014). Hence, local fusion could arise out of the interactions between group members and their shared experiences, whereas extended fusion will be largely dependent on the way the group is imagined by the individual.

3.1.4.5 Links with essentialism and entitativity

Identity fusion has so far been investigated separately from perceived group essentialism, entitativity, and continuity. An exception here are the studies by Swann et al. (2014), which demonstrated that belief in genetic essentialism increases progroup behaviour among strongly fused individuals. Specifically, their results showed that the perception of familial ties is a strong mediator of the effect of fusion on endorsement of extreme behaviour, and that this mediational effect was even stronger when participants were primed with the idea of shared core characteristics. The same effect was observed regardless of the moral valence of the core characteristics (i.e., participants endorsed extreme self-sacrifice in defence of the nation even when it was defined by shared negative traits), suggesting that identity fusion corresponds to a particularly essentialist imagining of the national community.

One of the aims of this thesis is to map out the still under-researched relationships between the concepts outlined above. Identity fusion theorists have put forward hypotheses about the correlates of identity fusion that could form the basis of a future empirical investigation. Fredman et al. (2015) describe several characteristics of fusion that resemble perceived entitativity – for example, membership in the group or family is seen as permanent, and all group members are expected to act in pursuit of the group’s goals (e.g., Gómez et al., 2011). Likewise, fused people’s

tendency to project familial ties onto other group members (believing that they are “kindred spirits who share deep essential qualities”, Fredman et al., 2015) can be linked with essentialist thinking about the group. Hence, it can be hypothesised that perceived entitativity and essentialism are components of identity fusion, and strongly fused individuals should score high on measures of both constructs.

3.1.4.6 Summary

The theories of social identity (SIT), self-categorisation (SCT) and identity fusion (IFT) discussed above can be placed within the same broad tradition, as they use a very similar conceptual apparatus and attempt to answer related questions about intra- and inter-group dynamics. However, as this review has demonstrated, the social identity tradition is far from homogeneous, and under its umbrella a number of interpretations of the same basic conceptual apparatus have flourished, their points of departure only seldom acknowledged. Because of this, although IFT traces its origins to SIT, it is also marked by a number of subtle but important differences.

The first point of departure is that IFT does not operate with the same motivational model of identity as SIT. Fusion theory describes processes that are for the most part internal to the individual (e.g., the merging of identity concepts, their synergistic reinforcement, the projection of familial ties onto the in-group). An exception can be made for cases of extreme sacrifice in the name of the group, and fusion theory has been marketed as an explanation of precisely such extreme prosocial actions; in general, however, the implications of identity fusion for more mundane, everyday group dynamics are somewhat unclear, especially in comparison with the detailed account provided by SIT.

Likewise, IFT is predicated upon a clear distinction between two related phenomena, identification and identity fusion, which were not treated as separate in the earlier research on social identity. This poses an obstacle to integrating findings from the literature on fusion into the wider social identity tradition, as most research on identity before IFT will have used the term “identification” to refer to some aspects of both phenomena which are here treated as distinct.

At a more conceptual level, IFT is a predominantly cognitive theory of group

dynamics. SIT conceptualises identity *as a mode of action*: the salience of my social identity (for example, being American) entails me acting as a member of my group (me acting as an American, or perceiving my interests as essentially American interests). In contrast, IFT sees identity less as a form of action and more as a mental construct, an image that is initially formed and then altered within the mind. The theory relies heavily on this pictorial theory of identity: it describes the personal and social selves as mental entities, ones that possess boundaries with physical properties (rigidity, permeability), ones that can suppress or reinforce each other, etc. As such, it is open to a number of the classic critiques against cognitive social psychology made, for example, from the discursive approach (see the final chapter for a discussion), and also to the more general criticism that it attempts to explain social processes through what are essentially personal, mental events (Spears, 2011).

IFT does, however, embrace more fully the affective dimension of social identity, which was acknowledged in Tajfel and Turner's original formulation of SIT but was somewhat neglected by later developments in the field. One interpretation of IFT is that it conceives of fusion as more of an affective state (e.g., feeling one with one's nation) that has implications about social cognition. Still, the roles of specific emotions, such as disgust, fear, or envy, have not been fully examined in the context of IFT.

3.2 Social approaches to the psychology of nationalism

The following section reviews contributions to the study of nationhood and national identity made from an alternative tradition in social psychology – one that emphasises the sociological (rather than psychological) side of the discipline and makes use of a vastly different theoretical and methodological apparatus from the one discussed so far in this chapter. This section examines theories of nationhood as an embodied practice and as a discursive construction, drawing upon research on “everyday nationalism” by Edensor and Skey, and on the rhetorical psychology of Michael Billig. It then reviews two influential recent attempts to produce holistic

theories of national identity that straddle the line between the psychological and the sociological approaches, and which have inspired studies mixing different research methodologies: McCrone and Bechhofer's (2015) "Understanding National Identities" on the one hand, and Identity Process Theory (with a particular emphasis on Cinnirella's (2014) elaborated Identity Representations Model) on the other. As most of the theories explored here aim to provide a more general account of social and identity processes, I will present their main tenets and then focus on the relevance they have for the study of nationalism specifically. I will also predominantly use examples concerning national identities in the UK, as this topic will be particularly relevant to the studies reported in Chapters 7 and 11. Finally, in lieu of a summary, this section presents a critical look at the theories discussed in this chapter, and outlines the epistemological and methodological affinities and points of tension between them.

3.2.1 Everyday nationalism

Since the early 2000s some social scientists have shifted their focus from the macro level of theorising (abstracted, universalistic theories of nationalism as a social and political phenomenon) to more localised research into how individuals conceptualise, express, contest, negotiate, and make sense of national identities. This new orientation was motivated by the discursive turn in social psychology (Harré & Gillett, 1994; Harré, 2001; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and a large part of its output came in response to Billig's (1995) *banal nationalism* thesis – that nationalism should be understood as “a form of life which is daily lived in a world of nation-states” (p.68). The new sub-field that emerged has been dubbed “everyday nationalism” and its proponents (e.g., Edensor, 2002; Skey, 2011a; Skey & Antonsich, 2017), have explored the variety of ways in which the nation is reproduced and maintained in the absence of wide-scale national mobilisation and eruptions of nationalist fervour.

Billig (1995) distinguishes between “hot” and “cold” nationalisms: the first constitute passionate eruptions of patriotic feeling, rhetoric, and action, and are observed in societies where national identity is in the process of being forged, or is oth-

erwise threatened and requires mass mobilisation, while the second is the implicit, unseen nationalism of already established nation-states where no such mobilisation is necessary. He described the distinction as the difference between the national flag being waved passionately at a political rally on the one hand, and the flag hanging unnoticed in front of a public building on the other. This “unwaved flag” becomes the focus of everyday nationalism research - its goal is to elucidate the symbols and habits of nationhood that hide in plain sight, and are thus unquestioningly accepted as natural. “Banal nationalism” also led the way for the study of nationhood away from the questions of how a nation came to be and what its characteristics are, and towards the question of how its identity is reproduced in daily life.

Edensor (2002) was among the first to explore how nationhood is expressed and contested in daily life through popular (rather than high, or official) culture. His analysis was focused on a diverse set of contexts and phenomena which had been previously neglected by social scientists, and relied primarily on a qualitative, interpretative methodology, in sharp contrast with much of the positivist-experimentalist social identity tradition examined above. Much of his research was concerned with exploring different social representations (Moscovici, 1983; 1988; 2001 – more on this below) of the nation: how the nation’s geography and landscape are represented in magazines; or how “home” and the feeling of homeliness are constructed as a synecdoche of the nation in popular culture through the representation of domestic practices such as gardening and cooking. Other “unwaved flags” subjected to interpretation within this line of research include the iconography on national currencies (Lauer, 2008; Penrose, 2011; Penrose & Cumming, 2011) and license plates (Leib, 2011), as well as the national press (Yumul & Özkırımlı, 2000) and people’s everyday talk about nations (Antonsich, 2016; Skey, 2011a).

Scholars of everyday nationalism see the human subject as surrounded by markers of nationhood, both in their material culture and their social practices, but that does not mean that the subject is merely a passive receiver of ideological messages. Much attention has been paid to the way in which meaning is conveyed, read, misread, contested, and repurposed within the social sphere. (Edensor, 2002)

gives the example of the way public sculpture and architecture are often designed to convey a singular, clear meaning: post-revolutionary French elites decorated the Champs-Élysées with statues that relied on allusions to classical culture to convey their message, and Soviet elites similarly erected countless monuments to stamp their presence onto the urban landscape. However, neither attempt lasted – in the case of France, changing knowledge and education meant that the ciphers of classical culture were no longer available to the population, and whatever meaning communist elites in Eastern Europe tried to convey was undermined by changing aesthetic conventions, and ultimately by the replacement of the statues of Lenin with those of pre-communist historical figures. In a more mundane example, when the sovereignist Parti Québécois took power in Quebec, they changed the motto on cars' licence plates from the federalist “La belle province” to the Quebec national motto “Je me souviens” (Leib, 2011). In this way everyday life becomes a patchwork of small sites of meaning-making, where meaning is never static but is often constructed and negotiated.

Edensor's early elaboration of the notion of everyday nationalism borrowed the concept of “performativity” from Judith Butler's work on the performance of gender: “By playing with dolls, wearing gendered clothes, and generally adopting the gamut of attributes assigned as “feminine”, girls and women continually “perform” gender” (Edensor, 2002, p.70). Particular attention is paid to the way nationhood is embodied in nationally-coded practices and routines. Knowledge of the national performance is seen as implicit and reflexive, not unlike in a game of football where “knowledge is practical and engaged rather than contemplative” (p.71) - embodied in the player-performer's assumptions, skills, use of space, and know-how, rather than self-aware consciousness. Edensor distinguishes between three types of national performance: first, *popular competencies* describe everyday forms of practical knowledge, such as working with institutions, driving, using public transport, and engaging in leisure activities – all done in ways that are coded as, for example, typically “British”. Second, *embodied habits* are normative kinds of manners or etiquette which determine the appropriate behaviour in different situations – ges-

tures, smiles, body language, the use of communal spaces, engaging in small talk, the proper way to order food at a restaurant, etc. – all implicit ways of performing Britishness. Finally, *synchronised enactments of everyday life* are the myriad daily routines, annual events, and special events that are common to all members of the nation and thus create a community of shared experiences: attending school between given hours, working to a schedule, resting or socialising at given times, observing the siesta or the bank holiday.

3.2.2 Talking (about) the nation: the rhetorical and discursive approaches

It should be noted here that although Michael Billig provided the impetus for the study of everyday nationalism, his own interpretation of the phenomenon has been somewhat different from the way the field has subsequently developed. His original formulation of “banal nationalism” has been criticised by a scholar of everyday nationalism (Skey, 2009) on the grounds that it presumes a passive model of the national audience, treats the nation as a homogeneous community, and does not take the dynamism of everyday life into account. Billig (2009) however has rebuffed this critique, emphasising that the “nation” is indeed made up of “different factions, whether classes, religions, regions, genders or ethnicities” which “always struggle for the power to speak for the nation, and to present their particular voice as the voice of the national whole” (Billig, 1995, p.71). More importantly, unlike Edensor and later Skey and Antonsich (2017), Billig is a social psychologist and works with a specific theory of the human subject in mind, which is derived from discursive psychology, and more specifically from his own rhetorical approach to social psychology (Billig, 1987, 1997).

The discursive turn in social psychology (Harré & Gillett, 1994; Harré, 2001; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) was a response to the earlier cognitive and biological theories in social psychology, and was marked by an increased interest in the role of speech, dialogue, argumentation, and rhetoric in social functioning, at the expense of cognition and information processing: “Human thinking is not based on information-processing, as many cognitive scientists have implied, but it is intrinsi-

cally rhetorical: to think is to be engaged in debate. As such, thinking is primarily a public activity” (Billig, 2009, p.348). The rhetorical approach therefore focuses on the human capacity for rhetoric and argumentation, which Billig argues is constitutive of much of human thought:

“If speakers merely agree with one another, there would be little thinking within language. Our use of language would resemble the communication-systems of other species. (...) We can recognize shapes and sounds; babies can do this before they can speak. But if humans can recognize patterns and shapes without language, so can chickens and guinea-pigs. Experimental psychologists have historically paid enormous attention to skills, such as ‘pattern recognition’ or ‘object perception’, that humans share with other species. By contrast they have paid far less attention to the sort of uniquely human thinking that requires words: for instance, thinking about morality, politics, the course of our lives, the characters of others, what will happen tomorrow.” (Billig, 1997, p.47-49)

Speech, in this tradition, is not seen as the mere translation of some internal mental contents into sound. Rather, these mental contents are often rudimentary, internally contradictory – they become coherent and justified only when articulated into speech, so that often we become aware of what our “real” thoughts are in the process of (trying) to explain them. Thinking, for Billig, is not an inner cognitive process, but something which occurs in dialogical form.

This interpretation of the role of speech in human life has profound implications for the social psychology of nationalism and identity. A theorist working with a classical cognitive model of the mind might assume that a person has a clear idea of what their national identity is; *beliefs* about who belongs in the in-group, as well as *attitudes* towards out-groups, are all internal mental contents that can be accessed by means of asking questions – the person is asked to report on their beliefs and attitudes, and their report accurately reflects the contents of their minds. In contrast, a discursive psychologist will see national identity as a fuzzy concept, one that is indeterminate until the person is asked to elaborate on it. As McCrone and Bechhofer’s (2015) interviews on Scottish and English national identity

demonstrate, people use widely different explanatory frames to define and justify their identity, and sometimes struggle to reach closure. They are often forced to deal with multiple incompatible criteria for nationhood: historical and institutional, the importance of ancestry, the right to self-definition. Moreover, their identity is never defined in a vacuum – people are aware of ongoing debates, controversies, and stereotypes in their society, and will use elaborate rhetorical strategies to claim an identity while simultaneously fending off potential accusations of xenophobia and racism (see Skey, 2011a, for examples of rhetorical “scaffolding” in action). In other words, the psychologist cannot aim to uncover the hidden, mental roots of national identity by studying such “chimeras” as beliefs and attitudes; the rhetorical approach presupposes a very different research methodology, one that explores how identity is articulated, claimed, and justified within a dialogical space, and what strategies people adopt to perform these functions.

In “Arguing and Thinking” Billig (1987) explored in detail how rhetoric makes use of a socially shared store of common-sense ideas (*logoi*, to use his term), many of which can be incompatible or diametrically opposed to each other. For any logos that is accepted as obvious and common sense, one can adduce an equally plausible anti-logos that flips the first position on its head. People are therefore not “trapped” by language, the way some structuralist theorists had argued – they are instead free to use, transform, and negate *logoi* and *anti-logoi* in an open-ended creative process. An example of this can be seen in Condor’s (2010) interviews on English identity in the aftermath of Scottish devolution in the United Kingdom. What she found was that definitions of national identity largely fell along political lines, with anti-EU and populist-leaning inhabitants of England defining themselves as “English, not British”, and more cosmopolitan liberal responders rejecting English nationalism and identifying as British. The problem that arose for the latter group was that their liberal views led them to reject English nationalism as parochial and dangerous, but also dictated that they should support Scotland’s right to self-determination. The logos and the anti-logos – rejecting nationalism and supporting national self-determination – are both common-sense and widely accepted ideas in

British society, and once this *ideological dilemma* (Condor & Gibson, 2007) becomes apparent, responders have to perform complex reparative work in order to build a rhetorical frame in which the two ideas can coexist side by side (see also Condor, 2000, 2006; Condor & Abell, 2006).

At this point an objection concerning the study of nationalism can be raised. Surely nationalism involves much more than cold, rational rhetoric – nationalism is often associated with emotions, whether it is the calm glow of the familiar and the homely, the euphoria of a patriotic celebration, or the feeling of collective humiliation at witnessing the national football team losing an important game. Emotions, after all, are typically seen as instinctive, and therefore pre-verbal. It follows then that the affective aspects of nationhood should fall outside the purview of discursive psychology and would be best studied using classical models of affect, whether they be cognitive or psychodynamic.

Wetherell (2014) has addressed this critique by drawing on earlier work by Schachter and Singer to argue that bodily arousal is not equivalent to an emotional state: “In one context bodily arousal (through the administering of adrenaline) might seem obviously and indubitably to be anger, in another context the same pattern of bodily arousal might seem obviously and indubitably to be happiness” (p.147). Arousal is confusing and meaningless without some social framework within which it can be interpreted – emotion, just like thought, is a socially defined process, one which depends on socially shared, learned, and negotiated meanings and interpretations.

Nevertheless, despite the originality and the important contributions of the rhetorical approach, there is a limit to the usefulness of rhetoric as an explanans before one is forced to retreat into cognitivist theories of social processing. For one, although Billig would have us dismiss the study of internal states or the cognitive mechanisms behind nationalism, it is clear that nationalism is not banal for everybody – people identify with their nation to varying degrees, they make different categorisations, live in different socio-political contexts, and so forth. Such individual differences may well be just as amenable to quantitative social research as to

discursive analysis, if not more.

To summarise, the study of everyday nationalism and of national rhetoric occupies an important place in modern nationalism research and marks a shift away from the internal determinants of nationhood (self-categorisation, affect, etc.) and towards the practice of nationhood in social life. Both approaches rely on different qualitative methodologies, rather than experimentation, and both attempt to get at certain unconscious (or *un-self-conscious*, to avoid the Freudian connotations of the term) aspects of social practice. “Everyday nationalism” theorists look at the material world in which our social lives are embedded, at shared social practices and habits, in order to discover the unexamined props and scripts that make the performance of nationhood possible; meanwhile, rhetorical psychologists look at the discursive tools people use in the process of argumentation in meaning-making surrounding national discourse.

However, despite their shared roots, the two approaches have diverged almost from their inception, and have developed somewhat different methodologies and research foci. “Everyday nationalism” theorists are mostly sociologists or media scholars – not psychologists; they make no claims about the role of individual psychology and are concerned primarily with social practice. Moreover, despite Edensor’s (2002) insistence on the free agency of individual actors, the approach privileges the agency of existing institutions or power structures almost by definition. The bulk of the research on the subject focuses on nationhood in the media, public institutions, education, commodities – all abstract forces that address individuals as a national audience and thus constitute (or interpellate, to use the old-fashioned Athusserian term) the nation as a self-conscious community. Meanwhile theorists of discourse and rhetoric approach the subject with a particular conception of psychology in mind, one that is opposed to cognitivism but nevertheless privileges the creative power of the individual to produce new ideas and arguments. Therefore, contrary to Skey’s (2009) criticism, Billig (2009) insists that we should not expect people with the strongest national identity to passively repeat ideological talking points. Instead, they are more, not less, likely to discuss nationality critically, and

to argue about “ideological dilemmas”.

3.2.3 Identity as ideology: a critical sociological approach

Malesevic (2006, 2019) offers a critical sociological examination of the notions of identity and nationhood, and especially of the way the former is used in the social sciences. “Identity”, like many other sociological concepts, was borrowed from mathematics and formal logic, and Malesevic (2006) argues that while these disciplines can operate with absolute, total concepts (like an absolute zero), such concepts are poorly suited for the social sciences. The concept of identity has utility in mathematics, where absolute difference or absolute identity are possible (e.g., “A is identical to A”, or “3=3”), but in the social realm categories and objects are often fluid, ambiguous, overlapping in some ways but oppositional in others. “Identity” can therefore be interpreted in a multitude of ways depending on the context in which it is used: as a marker of selfhood (my identity is the things that make me a unique individual), as a marker of group similarity (my identity is the things I have in common with the group I identify with), as contingent and fluctuating fragments of the self (each person has multiple identities which can become salient depending on the social context – echoing the social identity perspective), and as forms of social action.

Malesevic also draws upon Gellner’s work to argue that nationhood is a relatively recent invention, the product of a particular type of society (European modernity). Many theorists of nationalism, Malesevic argues, have attempted to draw up a list of the attributes of nationhood (a clearly demarcated homeland, a shared culture, a sense of collective identity, etc.), and in the process have essentialised it. Instead, following Brubaker (2004), he proposes that nationhood and ethnicity should be seen not as an inflexible set of attributes, but as dynamic relationships or categories of social practice: “a set of contingencies, discursive frames, political projects, or organisational routines (. . .) a politicised social action, a process whereby elements of real, actual, lived cultural differences are politicised in the context of intensive group interaction” (Malesevic, 2006, p.27).

In Malesevic’s reading “national identity” becomes a chimera – a “theoretically

vapid [concept] lacking clear empirical referents” (2011, p.273) which obscures more than it illuminates. Rather than seeing nationhood as a form of identity, he proposes that it would be best understood as an ideology – a system of socially produced and widely accepted beliefs and values, through which social organisations (such as nation-states) can forge a degree of ideological unity out of their heterogeneous and diverse members and mobilise them around some shared principles (Malesevic, 2019). In other words, “to articulate a distinctly political claim as a cultural/identity claim is to empty it of its particularistic, divisive and normative content, to make something which is fundamentally conflictual seem much more consensual and natural” (Malesevic, 2006, p.228). Identity is not a causal factor that motivates people to do anything; rather, people can do things, for a whole host of different reasons, by performing identity. The goal of the research should be to ascertain what these reasons are in each individual case, and how they are translated in the language of the national performance – not to obsess over the performance itself.

His analysis (Malesevic, 2006) of the political rhetoric in three societies that markedly differ in their nominal ideologies – communist Yugoslavia, the Islamic republic of Iran, and the liberal democracy of the United Kingdom – demonstrates how in each society the official ideology (communism, Islam, and liberal democracy) is in practice grounded in appeals to nationhood and the sovereignty of “the people”. Beneath the diversity of ideological forms that modern societies can assume, the ideal of organic national unity and popular sovereignty emerges as an omnipresent, hegemonic master-concept.

This raises the question of how nationhood should be studied from the perspective of the social sciences: since identity is interpreted in this reading as a practical, political activity, rather than a cognitive phenomenon, Malesevic (2006) proposes that what social scientists should focus on is the processes which allow the official, universalistic ideology of a society to be translated into particularistic, national terms. He interprets national identity as something created by nationalising states and imposed primarily from the top down. However, some social psycholo-

gists have attempted to produce holistic theories of national identity that take into account the performative nature of social identities while preserving the utility of the concept and developing appropriate methodologies to study it. Two influential examples of such attempts are explored below.

3.2.4 McCrone and Bechhofer's Understanding National Identity

The first recent attempt to conceptualise national identity comes from McCrone and Bechhofer's (2015) "Understanding National Identity", a work of sociology that employs both quantitative and qualitative methods in the context of longitudinal research in the United Kingdom. Like Malesevic, McCrone and Bechhofer (M&B) view the concept of identity as problematic, not least because its technical sense in sociology and psychology often differs from its colloquial usage. It is simultaneously an *emic* (used by participants) and an *etic* (imposed on them by researchers) concept, an explanandum and an explanans, and as such it must be "triangulated" using a variety of methodologies at the same time. Nevertheless, they have argued that the concept of national identity is still very much indispensable in the toolkit of the social scientist, and caution against rejecting it tout court.

M&B also advance the idea that nationhood is both performative and rhetorical, and as such is observable in people's social actions: "National identity is a claims-making process; it is not a question of having a national identity or not. It does not have any kind of straightforward or singular meaning, and might be better thought of as a site within which argument and debate take place" (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2015, p.42). Because it is possible to observe how people self-consciously do identity, it can also be studied empirically, and M&B dedicate most of their book to elaborating on how their diverse research methodology evolved.

M&B report a series of interviews on national identity with English and Scottish people conducted over the span of 12 years. Any common themes that emerged in the process were used to construct surveys that allowed them to study the patterns of responses between the two national groups and between different age cohorts, as well as the changes in these patterns over time. Patterns included, for example,

how people rank different “markers” of nationhood (place of birth, accent, self-identification, contribution to society), whether they prioritise their state identity (British) or national identity (e.g., Welsh), and in what contexts they feel more “national” (watching the national football team, visiting another country, etc.). The resulting research programme successfully combined quantitative methods of social research with insights from the discursive turn in the social sciences.

One of M&B’s aims was to develop tools for the study of identity as something outside of the realm of the “unconscious”, as a self-conscious and context-dependent performance. However, as Fox (in Ichijo, Fox, Aughey, McCrone, & Bechhofer, 2017) has observed, the unconscious is still, albeit implicitly, present in their theorising. Just like in Billig’s rhetorical psychology, habits are the key to understanding how unconscious ideas can exert an influence on people’s behaviour. In this case, some aspects of national identity can be seen as an involuntary reflex, or as the unthinking experience of the world as a world of nations. M&B make this connection explicit when discussing how abstract rules for group membership are articulated in practice:

“Identity rules are probabilistic rules of thumb whereby under certain conditions and in particular contexts, identity markers are interpreted, combined or given precedence over others. They are guidelines, though not definitive or unambiguous ones, to the identity markers people mobilise in their identity claims... **Such rules are generally glimpsed only in their transgression**, where, for example, claims are made which are judged illegitimate” (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2015, p.98, emphasis added).

Fox (in Ichijo et al., 2017) has already commented on the parallels between this idea and Harold Garfinkel’s (1967) classic breaching experiments. “Breaching” is a technique in ethnomethodology that involves the deliberate disruption of everyday social interactions so as to render the implicit norms and scripts behind them visible. More relevant to the context of nationalism, Skey discusses recent breaching experiments conducted by Wise (2009; 2010; cited in Skey, 2011a, p.34) in which people who breached common-sense norms of behaviour at a beach and a

shopping mall in Sydney were judged by locals as “un-Australian”. It is clear then that breaching can be useful in making manifest the un-self-conscious habits of the performance of national identity. However, in the case of M&B’s research, breaching was not attempted as an experimental manipulation. Instead, a similar effect can be achieved through less intrusive methods – sometimes as simple as travelling abroad (e.g., Skey, 2011b), interacting with a foreigner, or filling in a survey. M&B give the example of a Scottish respondent recounting his encounter with an ethnically Chinese man who spoke with a Scottish accent, claimed a Scottish identity, and wore a traditional Scottish tartan. According to their respondent, the encounter made him cognizant that Whiteness is a criterion for Scottishness: “Yeah, but the accent was what really threw me and the kilt, that was too much... If I see a white person who says that they are Scottish I don’t think about it all I just accept it. If I see someone with a different colour who says that they are Scottish I do think about it” (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2015, p.105). Likewise, asking participants to elaborate on why they have a particular identity, rank several overlapping identities, or make a binary choice between them, may force them to scrutinize many of their taken-for-granted ideas about nationhood, and even to engage in reparative work to defend against the resulting sense of ontological insecurity (see Skey, 2011a, p.72).

In this way M&B make an important contribution to the field by rehabilitating the use of surveys for the study of national identity. For example, Fox (in Ichijo et al., 2017) acknowledges earlier critiques of survey methods – that surveys show us identities frozen in time and space, detached from everyday contexts, and cannot show us identities in action. But he nevertheless argues that they can provide valuable insight, on account of the fact that they produce decontextualized and de-personalised data. Decontextualized data demonstrate that national identity has a meaning for people even when they are not performing their identities, and de-personalised data allow us to piece together a sort of “disembodied”, “aggregate” national identity.

3.2.5 A holistic psychological theory: Identity Process Theory and social representations

Identity Process Theory (IPT: Breakwell, 1986, 2001; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014) is an evolving and expanding attempt to create a holistic theory of social identity that incorporates insights from the social identity tradition, but also from the discursive tradition in social psychology. Whereas most other social psychological theories deal with distinct aspects of identity (for example, relationships between the individual and the in-group; or cognitive versus rhetorical aspects of identity), IPT attempts to be holistic in the sense of providing an account of the “total identity of the person” (Breakwell, 2014, p.24) and integrating the cognitive with the emotional aspects of identity (Jaspal, 2015). In this way it may still appear to lie more comfortably in the psychological than in the sociological camp of social psychology, however Breakwell (2014) has argued that the recent integration of Moscovici’s theory of social representations (e.g., Cinnirella’s (2014) Identity Representations Model) allows it to explore the sociological, not just psychological, aspects of identity, and keeps it open to a more pluralist epistemology.

IPT proposes that identity should be understood in terms of both its contents and its value or emotional affect (Jaspal, 2015; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2013). Furthermore, each one of these factors is to be seen not as passive mental content but as the product of dynamic processes of identity management – the key ones being the *assimilation* of new information into one’s identity, the *accommodation* of identity to new information, and the *evaluation* of that identity (e.g., “Being British is good”). These processes are guided by a number of principles or identity motives: the need for continuity, for distinctiveness, for self-efficacy, for self-esteem (Breakwell, 2001), for belonging, for meaning (Vignoles, 2011), and for coherence or compatibility between the different facets of one’s identity (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2013). IPT can therefore provide a very detailed account of (1) the structure of a person’s identity, (2) the value dimensions of its components, and (3) the relationship between identity and social action (Jaspal, 2015).

IPT is not incompatible with Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the social iden-

tity tradition in general, and either makes use of or complements many elements of SIT. Whereas SIT is primarily a theory of intergroup relations, IPT is focused on the processes involved in identity construction; SIT, unlike IPT, is not designed to enquire into the contents or structure of personal identity. IPT also adopts some of the motivational factors identified in SIT (i.e., the need for self-efficacy and distinctiveness) but adds several others to the list; in SIT these motivational factors drive group interactions, whereas in IPT they motivate identification (Breakwell, 2014). Most strikingly, IPT eschews the dichotomy between personal and social identity – for Breakwell these are merely two moments in the same process, as personal identity is often built on social feedback, and aspects of what might be called one’s social identity are over time incorporated into one’s sense of personhood, making the division “purely a temporal artefact” (Breakwell, 2014, p.25).

Another key contribution of IPT has been to prioritise the dynamic nature of identity, particularly by focusing on identities under threat (Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2013). Much like the example of the breaching of taken-for-granted social habits discussed above, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2013) have argued that to understand identity construction, social psychologists should study people’s coping strategies in situations where their identities are threatened. By “coping strategy” Breakwell refers to “any activity, in thought or deed, which has as its goal the removal or modification of a threat to identity” (Breakwell, 1986, p.78), and these may include *passing* (claiming, implicitly or explicitly, a different group identity, and having that claim validated), *compartmentalising* (isolating irreconcilable elements of one’s identity so as to avoid the conflict between them), group action.

A good example of how this more dynamic conception of national identity works in practice can be seen in research on how people manage the tension between social identities that a researcher might interpret as overlapping, such as between being Scottish and being British (Rutland & Cinnirella, 2000), between national and European identity (Rutland, Cinnirella, & Simpson, 2008), or national and ethnic identity (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2013). Nationhood, like all forms of identity, is seen in IPT as functional – it fulfils certain needs and can be built on *instrumen-*

tal attachment (rational, helps realise material goals like social mobility, provides a sense of control and self-esteem) or *sentimental attachment* (emotional, provides a sense of belonging, continuity and meaning). What is crucial here is that different people will often identify with the same social group on the basis of different forms of attachment that fulfil very different identity needs. For example, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2013) have explored how the function of British identity can vary markedly between the White British majority in the UK and British South Asians (BSA). In the case of the former, identification will tend to serve emotional needs and may be easier to achieve, as their national and personal values are more likely to overlap; meanwhile BSA or British Muslims may have to perform reparative work to reconcile the conservative aspects of their ethnic or religious identity with certain stereotypical features of British identity (e.g., individualism, drinking alcohol).

3.2.5.1 Social representations

Moscovici's (1983; 1988; 2001) theory of social representations was another product of the discursive turn in social psychology, and its recent integration into the IPT tradition has provided identity process theorists with the tools to bridge the gap between the psychological and sociological branches of social research. Social representations are loosely defined as socially constructed and shared systems of beliefs – “loosely defined” because according to Billig (1991) Moscovici himself purposely avoided a precise definition of the concept, so as to avoid its reification. As in the cognitive tradition, social representations are concerned with the functions of beliefs and attitudes, but unlike that tradition, beliefs and attitudes are not presumed to be formed by an individual cognising agent that perceives and processes social information; instead, following Vygotsky, Moscovici saw knowledge as constructed and communicated within society. Such shared forms of knowledge allow societies to build shared interpretative and meaning-making frameworks. Strange or complex ideas can thus be reduced to ordinary images set in a familiar context (*anchoring*), and abstractions can be translated into material objects and thus rendered intelligible (*objectification*).

Moscovici's theory is of particular relevance to the study of national identity

as it provides IPT with a way to conceptualise the contents of said identity. For example, Cinnirella (1997) has argued that social representations (of the nation, or of a relevant out-group) set the context and the boundaries of identity construction. When dealing with the question of why British people failed to develop a European identity, unlike other EU-member societies on the mainland, IPT theorists will tend to focus not so much on the strength of European identity as on its contents – the way Europeanness is represented in society. Cinnirella (1997) has shown that Italians see European and Italian identity as compatible and complementing each other – Europeanness serves an instrumental purpose for them, allowing them to reverse Italian decline, combat corruption, etc. In contrast, British people generally do not view their institutions as corrupt or their economy in decline, therefore European identity has little to offer them in terms of identity motives. In other words, identity contents have a higher explanatory utility than identity strength does.

Social representations are also tied to another element of IPT: the study of identity under conditions of threat. As Jaspal and Cinnirella (2013) have argued, social representations will affect how social stimuli are interpreted and evaluated; for instance, the presence of ethnic minority people on a busy London street may be perceived by the ethnic majority as normal and not worth commenting on, but their presence in the countryside and their engagement in activities coded as stereotypically “English” and “White” can be felt to subvert the “natural order of things” (see Skey, 2011a, p.44-45) and therefore as threatening. IPT encourages us to look at how people make use of representations of Britishness to construct their identity, as well as how these representations vary between social groups (e.g., representations of Britishness among first-generation South Asians can include low standards of personal hygiene, hedonism, individualism, absence of dignity; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2013). Which representations become salient can also vary depending on the social context and the identity motives that are active at a given moment, emphasising the agency of individual “identifiers” in constructing their identity:

“For instance, while binge drinking may be regarded as a key ‘custom’ of Britishness by British Pakistanis when the aim is to highlight their disiden-

tification with the nation (Hopkins, 2004), the ‘custom’ may be completely downplayed or ignored by the very same individuals when the aim is, conversely, to affirm their membership in the national group (Jaspal, 2011a).” (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2013, p.162)

A final point worth commenting on here is the way IPT shifts our attention towards the perceived relationships between different social groups, and how these perceptions affect identification. Researchers run the risk of approaching social categories with fixed ideas about how they should be related to each other based on normative or geographical considerations, but these may not correspond to people’s *perceived* category relations. For example, it may sound reasonable to suggest that Scottish people should see Scottishness as closer to European than to Australian identity, but Rutland and Cinnirella (2000) have demonstrated that the opposite is in fact the case. Likewise, even if a person identifies with a social category, we should not assume how that element fits into their overall self-concept. Classical social psychology (e.g., the social identity tradition) assumes that identity is a relatively stable construct, but in IPT the structure of the self-concept is made up of myriad self-perceptions and alignments with different groups; the overall self does not change, but selective activation leads to contextual variability. In effect, as Jaspal and Cinnirella (2013) have demonstrated, it is not enough to study *whether* BSA identify as British, but one must also look at *how* their national, ethnic, religious, etc. identities fit together, and how this mental structure might differ in the ethnic majority.

3.2.6 Theoretical debates and summary

The divide between the positivist-experimentalist and the constructivist-interpretivist branches of social psychology may seem insurmountable, given how often the two paradigms have been defined in direct antagonism to each other. Nevertheless, as I have sketched above, there are multiple points of overlap between them, and well as areas which allow for the triangulation of the same concept from different approaches.

For one, many of these approaches operate with some understanding of implicit

(as opposed to manifest) beliefs about nationhood. One could call these beliefs and ideas unconscious, although in each case what is meant by this is very different from the classic Freudian or psychodynamic notion of the unconscious (I have opted to refer to this latent or implicit mental content as un-self-conscious above). In the case of the cognitivist tradition the latent content is the product of how the mind processes, organises, and retrieves information about the social world, and could potentially be accessed by means of quantitative measures (such as measuring response times on social categorisation tasks, studying differential administering of rewards and punishment towards different social groups, etc.). In the rhetorical tradition “unconscious” refers to any norms, representations, and scripts which have been rendered invisible and unarticulated by the force of habituation: “what is so familiar and habitual that it passes unnoticed” (Billig, 2009, p.249). These habits can either be deconstructed by means of a critical interpretative analysis to reveal the implicit practices of speech, thought, and symbolisation, or they can be undermined directly in a breaching experiment. The final two approaches to studying nationhood discussed above – those advanced by McCrone and Bechhofer (2015) and identity process theorists – are the most open to a mixture of experimental, survey, and interview methods. IPT theorists have used both quantitative (Vignoles, 2014; Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell, 2002a, 2002b) and qualitative methods (Coyle & Murtagh, 2014; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2013), and Cinnirella (2014) has similarly called for a methodological pluralism in the study of identity threat.

Another contested point between the different traditions concerns the social context in which nationalism is studied. In “Banal nationalism” Billig (1995, 2009) argued that established nation-states with modern armies are still the most powerful institutions in the world, and that research should therefore focus on the world’s most powerful and established nationalisms, in particular that of the United States of America. Instead, the bulk of modern research has explored identities in embryonic form, in flux, and under threat: Scotland in the case of McCrone and Bechhofer, Englishness (as a challenger to Britishness) in Condor’s research; explorations of Turkish, Quebecois, Belgian, and Catalan identity (e.g., Crameri, 2000; Leib, 2011;

Yumul & Özkırmılı, 2000). There are benefits and downsides to both approaches. Billig's stated goal contains an implicit social critique: it was to illuminate something that often goes unnoticed in the modern world – the ideologies of powerful institutions, such as the US nation-state, which permeate society so thoroughly that they are often no longer registered as ideological. Meanwhile, most of the theory and research explored above follows (Mercer, 1990, p.43) contention that “identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty”.

Finally, the role and scope of personal agency constitute an important point of friction between the different traditions. The subject of Systems Justification Theory (see the beginning of this chapter) has limited freedom and can be compelled to adopt beliefs and attitudes that they may consciously disagree with by the presence of authority-legitimising symbols. Rhetorical social psychology, however, works with a subject who has more freedom to produce new rhetoric, sometimes through the mere creative inversion of the common-sense ideas imposed by society's dominant ideology. Out of the theories discussed here, Malesevic's appears the most deterministic at first glance, considering that he sees national identities as imposed from the top down by nationalising states. However, his argument is a historical one, not psychological. It explains how nationhood came to dominate the world, and holds that it is the hegemonic ideology today because the nation-state is the hegemonic form of social organisation. This does not mean that people are not genuine in their declarations of national feelings, or that they passively accept nationhood in place of some other genuine, unmet social need they would have had otherwise; rather, people have myriad different social, personal, emotional, and material needs, and these needs are often *expressed in national form* precisely because nationalism is the dominant ideology today. In other words, this theory can exist side by side with psychological explanations of the individual needs that nationhood fulfils.

3.3 A critical re-examination of PCC

Now that several conflicting social psychological approaches to issues of nationalism have been reviewed, I want to return briefly to Sani et al.'s (2007) codification of PCC and to critically examine where it fits along the points of intersection and tension between these approaches. This section will raise some objections to the way PCC is understood in the relevant literature; I will argue that the transition from the strategies identified by Chandler et al. to the quantifiable variable described by Sani et al. leaves PCC open to critique. After this critical review, I will explore some alternative ways of conceptualising continuity that go beyond PCC, inspired by Social Representations Theory, with an emphasis on Cinnirella's (1998) relevant and highly influential concept of collective future selves. It is important to note that the bulk of this thesis deals with PCC as codified by Sani et al., however the critique outlined here will become relevant towards the end of the thesis.

As I have shown in Chapters 2 and 3, many theorists have commented on the central place that beliefs in essentialism and group continuity occupy in nationalist thinking, and some social psychologists have even integrated the concept of self- and group continuity in their models of identity. For example, Vignoles (2011) cite the need for continuity as one of the key drivers of identity formation; and Kahn, Klar, and Roccas (2017) have recently drawn a distinction between groups seen as trans-generational (encompassing past, present, and future generations) and those seen as intra-generational (consisting only of the present generation and lacking temporal continuity beyond that). These are all perfectly valid labels when discussing group continuity more broadly, however I will focus on Sani et al.'s codification of PCC as a two-component construct, because it provides a robust and theoretically sound method for quantifying such beliefs in collective continuity. Moreover, PCC's two-component structure (cultural and historical continuity) presents a good opportunity for studying the differences between different types of (or regimes of constructing) continuity, which could have good predictive value (for more on this, see Study 1 in this thesis). However, this particular conceptualisation of continuity also has some theoretical flaws.

A review of the literature on PCC since the concept was codified shows some important gaps that need addressing. For one, PCC is treated in the literature as an abstract property of social groups that could apply to a variety of social formations (e.g., families, football teams), but research on it is still focused predominantly on national identities (although in rare cases other types of groups have been explored; e.g., Herrera, Sani, and Bowe 2011; Warner, Kent, and Kiddoo 2016). Potential qualitative differences between continuity beliefs about national and other types of groups, or the universal validity of the cultural/historical continuity dichotomy, have not, to my knowledge, been systematically explored, which limits the generalisability of PCC as a construct.

A more important issue is the transition from the essentialist and narrativist strategies identified by Chandler and his colleagues, to the form that this dichotomy takes in later research by Sani et al. Chandler et al. based their classification of continuity maintenance strategies on the rhetorical strategies employed by people in a very specific cultural and historical context (Canadian First Nations adolescents). Moreover, the term “strategy” is crucial here, as it presupposes an active view of the subject, in which adolescents’ self-identity is threatened and they are compelled to engage in reparative action. When the two discursive “streams” identified by Chandler were adapted into the construct of PCC, this involved three important changes:

First, the rhetoric used by a very narrow slice of the population was generalised into a universal construct. Whereas Chandler (1994) arrived at the dichotomy of essentialist and narrative strategies after a careful analysis of his target population (Canadian First Nations adolescents), the same model was adapted into PCC without a systematic analysis of the strategies that most people actually use. First Nations adolescents are an interesting case for the study of personal and collective identity precisely because their position is so unique and unrepresentative of the majority of the population (to whom PCC is generalised). As a result of Aboriginal Canadians’ historical experience of settler colonialism, political and economic dependence, and institutionalised racism in Canada, this culturally diverse popula-

tion have significantly higher rates of complex intergenerational trauma and mental health difficulties (such as PTSD, depression, and higher suicide rates) than the non-Aboriginal majority (Gone, 2013; Olson & Wahab, 2013). These experiences of extreme adversity and social disadvantage are arguably what made them an important group with which to study the ways in which self-continuity acts as a buffer against suicide (Chandler, 1994; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998); but they also mean that findings from this population may not be directly applicable to the rest of the population. Some indication that this is the case comes from Chandler, Lalonde, and Teucher (2004) who note that in one of their studies narrativist strategies (as opposed to essentialist ones) were used by 86% of Native youth and less than 25% of non-Native youth, leading them to conclude that reasoning about personal persistence is very likely to be culturally contingent. It is therefore possible that not just the frequency of the two types of strategies, but also the two-component structure of continuity itself, could vary between national and sub-national groups, and would require separate validation. Second, there was a straightforward extrapolation from individual strategies for maintaining personal continuity onto collective continuity. The question whether continuity operates analogously in the personal and collective contexts is itself worth exploring in more detail. On the one hand, as Sani's 2008 edited volume "*Self-continuity: Individual and collective perspectives*" demonstrates, there is a great deal of overlap between theorising on personal and collective continuity. The straightforward translation of theory from the personal to the collective level can be sanctioned on the grounds of various approaches. Cognitive theorists may point out that people tend to think about personal and group continuity in similar ways: that is, in terms of abstractions such as identity placeholders and essences (see the section on essentialism above, especially Gelman's (2003) contribution to the field). Meanwhile, from a discursive perspective, similar strategies for constructing (dis)continuity can be identified for both personal and collective past and future (as demonstrated by Sani et al., 2007). Similar motivational accounts can be offered: both personal and collective continuity may serve to construct meaning out of events, assign or deny responsibility, etc. An exam-

ple offered by Szpunar and Szpunar (2016) can illustrate such parallels between personal and collective continuity processes: the ability to imagine a shared future together is important both for the endurance of couples and for the acceptance of group mergers¹. Therefore, it could be argued that the translation of personal into collective continuity is made on firm theoretical grounds.

Nevertheless, this application of Chandler's binary classification of continuity strategies has not been explored in sufficient detail. For example, it seems reasonable to suggest that different types of collectives could use different strategies to maintain continuity; a similar analysis of people's rhetorical strategies for maintaining continuity with a religious community or a political movement could very well replicate Chandler's binary schema, but additional modes of maintenance might also be found. Moreover, whereas Chandler identified a whole range of rhetorical strategies, which he subsequently grouped into the essentialist and narrativist categories, the two-component structure of PCC does not allow for such variety, and is inadequate for studying, for example, the different types of strategies within each of the two types of PCC.

The third jump in the transition from the personal continuity of Chandler et al.'s adolescents to Sani et al.'s group continuity was in transforming a discursive construct into a cognitive one. PCC is at least implicitly interpreted in subsequent publications as a cognitive construct (e.g., Sani et al., 2007); in this interpretation perception is privileged over social action (after all, the "P" in "PCC" stands for "perceived"). Hamilton, Levine, and Thurston (2008) also frame group continuity as the product of perceptions constructed by an individual "perceiver", which is a far cry from the adolescents in Chandler's research who were actively arguing for, constructing, and defending their self-continuity. This problem is not unique to PCC as a construct. Billig (2013) gives the example of how the concept of "social categorisation" suffered a similar fate: in Tajfel's early research on minimal

¹For discussion of lower divorce rates for couples who describe their shared lives in terms of the plural "we" rather than a singular pronoun, see Buehlman et al. (1992); Carrere et al. (2000); Cartwright and Zander (1960), all cited in Szpunar and Szpunar (2016). For data suggesting that people reject mergers with groups with whom they lack a sense of shared future, see Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, Monden, and de Lima (2002)

groups, people would be “categorised” into meaningless groups, and as a result began to exhibit in-group favouritism. The categorisation here was a social action, performed by the researchers – they would simply tell the participants that they belonged to group A or B, often depending on a bogus personality test. In contrast, later researchers began to write about categorisation not as a social act, but as an unobservable and automatic mental process. And there are yet other researchers who write about categorisation as a mental object, rather than a process: for example, Cinnirella (1998) writes about the conditions under which “just a single schema or self-categorization” (p.229) becomes salient – in this case categorisation becomes a countable noun, one categorisation among many. It is no longer something that people do, but instead it does things on its own (it becomes salient, competes with other categorisations for control over a person’s behaviour, etc.). This is not just a pedantic point about language or writing style. This conceptual ambiguity threatens to obscure the element of social agency in our theorising, transforming social actions into the properties of an imagined group.

This critique raises the question of whether we should be studying continuity within specific cultural contexts, practices, and social actions, rather than as an abstract property of cognitive representations. Moscovici’s (1983; 1988) Social Representations Theory can indicate several important areas neglected by previous studies on PCC, and thus offers promising avenues for further research on the topic.

3.3.1 Social Representations: A Critique of PCC

Social Representations Theory and the related theories of social identity it inspired were already outlined in the previous section on nationalism. However, this approach can also help us to reinterpret PCC through a more qualitative, sociological, and discursive framework. In particular, Moscovici’s idea that social knowledge is not simply constructed by individual perceivers, but (1) is shared within a society’s culture and (2) is multivocal and contains conflicting and contested representations, opens up the question of how ideas of national continuity are constructed and disseminated by hegemonic institutions (the media and state institutions) and how they are contested from below. This naturally leads to the importance of considering the

role that power relations play in the process of identity construction, as well as the wide range of potential self-representations that individuals and social groups have at their disposal. The following section offers a critical examination of the concept of PCC in light of SRT, and discusses several weaknesses of the quantitative approach, namely: the problem of valence of continuity; the problem of power relations; and the continuity/discontinuity dichotomy.

3.3.2 The problem of valence

In both Chandler's original studies on self-continuity and suicide, and Sani et al.'s (2008; 2007; 2009) research on collective continuity and societal mental health, continuity is taken to be an unalloyed good, and an important psychological need for people. However, according to the standard SIT model people are also motivated to pursue a positive social identity, which raises the question of how the valence of an identity impacts on the working of group continuity. In a recent study by Roth, Huber, Juenger, and Liu (2017), participants whose national identity was framed in a negative way reported increased feelings of identity threat if they also believed in national continuity and identified strongly with their nation. This points to the importance of how the continuous group identity is represented, and what emotional or moral valence such representations are seen to carry. Moreover, such findings indicate that under certain conditions people will be motivated to deny, rather than affirm, collective continuity: simply put, people do not want a past marked by stigma and guilt (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998). This interpretation is entirely compatible with the standard SIT model, according to which people construct or redefine social identities in pursuit of alternatives to the status quo.

Research exploring the views of both perpetrators of historical atrocities and victims of collective trauma demonstrates this complexity. Greenwood (2015) reports a discursive analysis of interviews with people living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was the scene of a racist massacre perpetrated against the city's black citizens in the 1920s. In justifying their support or opposition to the payment of reparations to the victims' descendants, Tulsans employed a variety of strategies that used historical (dis)continuity in different strategic ways. Opponents of repa-

rations referred to the continuous flow of history to represent it "as a timeless and invisible force, something that happens to people, rather than something people create" (p.29); since history is an impersonal flow of events, the white majority could be freed from responsibility for the past atrocity. At the same time they also used the language of discontinuity to disconnect the modern-day inequality between white and black Tulsans from its roots in the century-old historical wrongdoing. This analysis is an example of one alternative way of conceptualising collective continuity: not as a passive product of social perceptions or a dispositional attribute, but something performed by an active subject: "continuities and discontinuities are discursively constructed in talk and strategically employed in pursuit of a particular political agenda" (Greenwood, 2015, p.29).

At the same time, assigning or avoiding blame for past atrocities is not the only thing at stake when collective (dis)continuity is deployed. From the perspective of the victims, as Greenwood (2018) has argued, an experience of collective trauma could potentially have a positive effect on the group identity: new national narratives and social representations, purpose, and values can be found in the wake of the tragedy. Rather than hurry to move on, groups hold on to their trauma, and the victimisation impels them to remember and to make sense of the calamity that has befallen them. The collective self that is pieced together in the process, according to Hirschberger, can strengthen group identity and confer it a sense of shared destiny. As these examples demonstrate, attempts to measure PCC as a purely quantitative construct along the lines of Sani et al. (2007) remain methodologically blind to the constructedness of social identity and the variety of functions that the rhetoric of continuity can serve.

3.3.3 The problem of power relations

If collective continuity should be seen as constructed rather than perceived, another important question arises: who is involved in this process of construction? According to SRT, the nation-state with its educational institutions, as well as the national media and individual politicians, will play a role in constructing and diffusing hegemonic social representations of the national identity. Continuity and temporality

are also pertinent in this context. Obradović and Howarth (2018) note that although social identities are embedded in the past, this should not lead us to accept determinism or the loss of agency – the past is constructed and negotiated in the present, and different “entrepreneurs of identity” work actively to frame national identity in ways that match their political goals by demonstrating continuity with the past (a more detailed discussion of this topic is presented in Chapter 10, where it becomes relevant to a critical interpretation of the empirical studies in this thesis).

But at the same time, the construction of national continuity is not merely an elite process, the sole domain of political leaders and other entrepreneurs of identity. SRT recognises contested and polemical representations, in addition to the hegemonic ones – these are ideas about nationhood that are not widely diffused and accepted uncritically in society, but which offer alternatives to the established versions of group identity and are constructed in dialogue with, or direct opposition to them. Furthermore, Reicher’s (2008a) research on people’s explanations for attending official events like royal coronations or funerals, and for participating in the attendant pageantry, demonstrates the importance of large-scale national events in people’s domestic lives. Parents who had participated in such ceremonies as children wanted their own children to have the same experiences and memories as them. In this way national continuity (objectified in the ceremonies of national tradition and commemoration) becomes a resource for the construction of personal and family continuity (the sharing of analogous experiences of childhood between multiple generations). In this way, Reicher argues, group continuity is not merely imposed from the top down, but often has grassroots popularity.

3.3.4 Continuity/discontinuity – a false dichotomy

A third question that challenges the straightforward quantitative conceptualisation of collective continuity concerns the role of discontinuity. In Sani et al.’s (2007) self-report measure cultural and historical continuity are represented as two continua ranging from low to high. People’s responses of the questionnaire can reflect whether they feel more or less connected to the nation’s past, but what the scale cannot capture is a state in which a person perceives strong continuities and dis-

continuities in the collective identity at the same time. However, as the Tulsans interviewed by Greenwood (2015) demonstrated, such an apparent contradiction is easily found in people's discourses about the past. How can this contradiction be explained?

Once again, Social Representations Theory can provide an answer. As Reicher (2008a) recognises, the construction of the group identity must be perceived as natural and self-evident for it to be accepted by the group members as convincing. Political actors and grassroots movements alike are compelled to (1) use social representations of the group identity that are already widely disseminated in society, and (2) to connect their preferred representations to past events and historical characters. They do this in order to cast the status quo as the inevitable product of natural historical processes; but at the same time, they are motivated to deny continuity with certain aspects of the past that do not fit in with their political aims.

An example of this (cited in Reicher, 2008a) can be seen in the tug-of-war of national identity construction between Czech communists and liberals after WWII. The Czech communists attempted to connect their own political project to the Czech historical tradition of revolution, such as the Hussite wars in the 15th century, and in this way they represented the victory of communism in their country as the culmination of centuries of historical development. However, after the fall of the regime in the 1990s, communism began to be seen in much of the Eastern bloc as a deviation from the "normal" path of development, leading to a historical "dead end"; a return to pre-communist social and institutional forms was widely seen as a return to "normality". The Czech liberals in the 1990s therefore appealed to a Czech liberal tradition to build an alternative sense of continuity with the national past. The important detail in the story is that the Hussite rebellion and the communist era remain historical facts: Czech liberals do not deny their historical authenticity, but simply choose other events on which to build the narrative of their national past. The interplay between continuity and discontinuity is plain to see: while some historical events are cast as essential to the national story, others are rejected as unrepresentative deviations from it. The construction of national continuity itself relies on

certain episodes being cast out as discontinuous. This interplay between the two apparent opposites is also neglected in attempts to study PCC through quantitative measures.

3.3.5 Continuity with potential future selves

A final point of critique that will be discussed here is informed by the literature on potential or possible selves, and the way the dimension of continuity operates on the terrain of such possible identities. Possible selves are defined by Cinnirella (1998) as cognitive representations, part of one's self-schemata, that describe what groups one could have belonged to in the past, or could belong to in the future. He explains that "Individuals will have a variety of possible selves available to them, and those currently salient are part of what has been termed the working self-concept, i.e. that part of the cognitive self-system currently activated" (p.229). This argument sounds convincing and could easily be expressed in social and discursive, rather than cognitivist, terms: people have different ideas about themselves, but some of them might come more easily to mind than others. The fact that these forms of identity are potential gives PCC theorists the ability to talk about continuity with the future, not just the past. Any given society will possess shared representations about what groups people might join in the future (e.g., a European identity is a potential future identity for the member nations of the EU), or about how the same group might change with time. Moreover, the temporal orientation of an identity (towards the past or the future) can also determine which figures people will think of as the group's prototypes and exemplars, and as a consequence where the boundary of membership is drawn.

Cinnirella's (1998) approach can be used to address some of the critiques I raised above. Any potential future self can be either desired or feared, so social psychologists interested in studying national identity should explore the affective content of these social representations of the future. Affective content can also determine whether a group identity becomes sufficiently enduring and efficacious at mobilising collective action: for example, Cinnirella's (1996; 1997, cited in Cinnirella 1998) surveys have demonstrated that some British people have accepted a

potential future European identity, which nevertheless provokes no emotions and carries no deeper meaning for them. Because this identity lacks affective and epistemic contents for the people who have it, they might be only weakly committed to it. Furthermore, power relations and legitimacy also have a place in this integrative approach: social representations can be seen as legitimate or not (depending on where they come from and who endorses them) and can be contested in both everyday talk and the media.

Both Cinnirella's (1998) original conceptualisation of potential future selves, and Szpunar and Szpunar's (2016) more recent elaboration on the phenomenon of collective future thought, emphasise the need for a mixed research methodology, one that is sensitive in equal measure to individual identity-construction motives, to the contents of social representations of potential futures and selves as disseminated by the media, and to people's everyday acts of identity construction and negotiation. Again, attention should be paid not just to the presence or absence of continuity in people's perceptions of the nation, but to the interplay between the specific contents of these representations (concrete dates, figures, events) and their schematic properties: the underlying patterns that structure the emotions associated with the imagined national future (Szpunar & Szpunar, 2016).

3.3.6 Summary

The above critique of PCC from a discursive and social-representational point of view highlighted some weaknesses in the original codification of the concept and pointed to potential directions for future research. Three gaps in the translation of personal to collective continuity were identified: (1) the generalisation from a highly specific social group to the rest of the population; (2) the extrapolation of the same binary structure from personal to collective continuity; (3) the transformation of a discursive construct into a cognitive one. Moreover, I raised three questions that challenged PCC as understood from a quantitative perspective: (1) the problem of the valence of continuity, which current measures of PCC are not sensitive to; (2) the role of power relations and social processes more generally in the dissemination and contestation of continuity-related representations; and (3) the interplay between

continuity and discontinuity. Addressing these issues and limitations is crucial for acknowledging that identity continuity can be constructed socially, not just through individual perceptions, and for understanding the different potential meanings carried, and functions performed, by perceived collective continuity.

Part I

Social Psychological Perspectives

Chapter 4

PCC: Connections with identity fusion and social essentialism

4.1 Introduction

The nation is a uniquely powerful social construct, serving both as the source of ideological legitimacy for a range of social institutions (Roccas & Berlin, 2016), and as an object of social identification for individual group members. At the institutional level, national signifiers are displayed everywhere from institutional buildings to consumer goods, mass media and pop culture, reproducing the image of the nation through routine and unexamined repetition (Billig, 1995). At the individual level, meanwhile, ordinary people make use of the explanatory frameworks of nationalism in their everyday discourses (Kyriakidou, Skey, Uldam, & McCurdy, 2018; Skey, 2011a, 2018; Skey & Antonsich, 2017), contributing to “the unimaginative representation of nations as concrete, unified entities, and [defining] place, self and other in national terms” (Skey, 2011a, p.64). This presents an interesting paradox about the way national identification functions on a psychological level. On the one hand, the nation as a category of identity is omnipresent in everyday life; but on the other, unlike other social groups with which a person might come into contact on a daily basis, it cannot be seen or interacted with directly — due to its sheer size, no single individual can develop a direct relationship with even a small fraction of the entire nation. Instead, the nation as a community has to be mediated

(or imagined, in Anderson's (2006) famous formulation) through symbols, national narratives, rhetorical tropes, etc.

People have always invented narratives about the polities they belong to, but it was only in the 19th century, with the rise of Romantic nationalism as a political movement, that these narratives started serving as the foundation of political projects in Europe, and have remained instrumental ever since (Huizinga, 2014; Leerssen, 2006; Smith, 1986). Such narratives may describe the "birth" of the nation as a concrete historical event, or they might take a primordialist/perennialist position and locate its origins deep in the mists of prehistory; yet they all share a fundamental belief in collective continuity — the idea that the nation functions as a collective entity, with successive generations sharing the same values, traits, aspirations, and with the experiences of each generation constituting mere episodes in a centuries-long national story. Such *perceptions of collective continuity* (PCC) were classified by Sani et al. (2007) into historical (belief that the group's past forms an intelligible narrative, with periods of ascendancy and decline following a historical trajectory over multiple generations) and cultural (belief in the shared values and traits of the group) subcategories.

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, when people's trust in the endurance and continuity of their nation is undermined, this leads them to adopt more anti-immigration views in an attempt to protect the nation's distinctiveness (Jetten & Wohl, 2012). Similarly, people's attitudes towards both friendly and hostile out-groups are magnified when they are led to believe that these groups are more continuous (Warner et al., 2016). 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. 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.

4.1.1 PCC and Social Essentialism

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

In addition to these putative correlates of PCC, we propose that beliefs in collective continuity are also underpinned by *social essentialism* — a general tendency among some individuals to think of social groups as ontologically real “natural kinds” (Gelman, 2003; N. Haslam, 2017; N. 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”; the accounts people give of the precise nature of this essence can vary depending on the kind of discourse they are embedded in: from beliefs in a “national spirit”, “mana”, or the effects of geography and climate on the national character (Perkins, 2016), to lay theories about DNA determining human personality (Fleising, 2001; Nelkin & Lindee, 2010). The conceptual links between social essentialism and PCC are easy to notice — essentialist thinking relies on a set of early childhood cognitive abilities (Gelman, 2003), such as the ability to distinguish between an object’s appearance and its true identity or function; and the ability 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 over time 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 their own (and other) nations. Hence, we propose that PCC is related to a generalised readiness to perceive social groups in essentialist terms.

4.1.2 PCC and Identity Fusion

Identity Fusion Theory (Swann & Buhrmester, 2015; Swann et al., 2014, 2009; Swann, Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse, & Bastian, 2012) takes as its starting point the distinction between the personal and the collective identity already established by Tajfel and Turner (1979) in their Social Identification Theory (SIT). In SIT, 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’, with the boundary between the self and the group becoming blurred (Swann et al., 2009). This blurring of the line 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 (Swann et al., 2014).

A key aspect in which identity fusion differs from identification is the projection of “familial ties”, or the perception of the group as fictive kin (John et al., 2012; Swann et al., 2009). A person who identifies strongly with France, for example, may attach great importance to, and take pride in, being French (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; M. Evans & Kelley, 2002; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; 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 with 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, also believe that all members of their nation share certain “essential” characteristics (Swann & Buhrmester, 2015) and should act together to accomplish the group’s goals. Such individuals express a greater willingness to sacrifice themselves to protect other group members, compared with weakly fused people (Swann et al., 2014; Swann, Gómez, Huici, Morales, & Hixon, 2010).

There are clear parallels between identity fusion (as a type of relationship with the social group) and perceived collective continuity (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 small (such as a family, a military unit, or a group of firefighters), or 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 projection of familial ties onto a particular representation of the group that emphasises its shared goals across time (cultural continuity), and its shared historical trajectory, or destiny (historical continuity) – i.e., fusion should require a high-continuity representation of the group.

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).

Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical considerations outlined above, we predict that PCC will be positively correlated with participants’ endorsement of essentialist beliefs (H1), and

with the degree to which they are fused with their nation (H2). To test the link with essentialism, we 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 (H2). 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.

4.2 Study 1

4.2.1 Methods

Participants

Respondents were recruited on the online platform Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in exchange for a small fee. Data was collected from 499 respondents, of which 307 (44.6% female, $M_{\text{age}}=37.1$, $SD_{\text{age}}=12.4$) remained after exclusions (incomplete responses = 94, failed two attention checks = 69, duplicate IP addresses = 29). Participation was open to all MTurk workers regardless of nationality, with a majority of the respondents in the final sample being from the USA ($N=204$, 53% female, $M_{\text{age}}=39.26$, $SD_{\text{age}}=13.2$) and India ($N=88$, 27% female, $M_{\text{age}}=31.66$, $SD_{\text{age}}=8.16$). The study received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee at Royal Holloway, University of London.

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 presented in a randomised order.

Perceived collective continuity 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 α of .80 (.77 and .82 for the History and Culture subscales, respectively), and Sani, Herrera and Bowe (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*”, “*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 α 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.

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 conducted a multiple regression on PCC with age, sex, and social essentialism as predictors. For hypothesis 2, a similar multiple regression was conducted predicting PCC scores from age, sex, identity fusion, and national identification.

4.2.2 Results

Reliability analyses

A reliability analysis revealed that all measures had a good degree of internal consistency (Table 3.1). Out of the two subscales of PCC, historical continuity had a much lower internal consistency (Cronbach’s α =.682) than cultural continuity (α =.891) 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 also conducted a factor analysis on the PCC measure to confirm its two-factor structure.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .882 (above the recommended value of .6) and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at $p < .001$. All items from both subscales except the two reverse-coded ones (items 6 and 12) loaded on Factor 1. Factor 2 broadly coincided with the historical continuity construct: four out of six items from the historical continuity subscale also loaded on it (items 2, 4, 6, and 12). The other two historical continuity items (8 and 10) only loaded on Factor 1, and no cultural continuity items loaded on Factor 2. The analysis thus confirms the two-factor structure of the data.

Gender, nationality and age effects

Initial comparisons showed that on average males scored higher on the measures of identity fusion (Males: $M(SD) = 4.79(1.54)$, Females: $M(SD) = 4.40(1.43)$, $U = 9432$, $p = .012$) and PCC (Males: $M(SD) = 5.13(.80)$, Females: $M(SD) = 4.81(.84)$, $U = 8918$, $p = .002$); after analysing the separate components of the PCC measure, the effect was maintained only for Cultural continuity (Males: $M(SD) = 5.11(1.00)$, Females: $M(SD) = 4.66(1.15)$, $U = 8963$, $p < .001$), 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 average fusion scores ($U = 3990$, $p < .001$), total PCC scores ($U = 5124.5$, $p < .001$), and scores on the Cultural continuity component of PCC ($U = 3768.5$, $p < .001$) compared with those in the United States.

Correlations

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for all measures are reported in Table 4.1. Although scores on all measures were ratio data and thus technically met the conditions for a parametric test, I was wary of the fact that they were all derived from the means of multiple ordinal measures. Since no clear guidelines exist on whether to use a parametric or non-parametric test in such cases, I opted for a more conservative approach to minimise the chance of a Type II error, and calculated the correlations using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. All correlation coeffi-

cients reported in Table 4.1 are thus Spearman's *rho*. PCC was correlated with both essentialism ($r_s = .13, p < .05$) and identity fusion ($r_s = .51, p < .001$), and there were also weaker but still significant correlations between social essentialism on the one hand and fusion and identification on the other. Additional comparisons showed that age was correlated with national identification ($r_s = .22, p < .001$) and perceived historical (but not cultural) continuity ($r_s = .16, p = .002$).

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 showed that essentialism is a significant predictor of PCC even after controlling for sex and age. Two further exploratory regressions were conducted on the cultural and historical components of PCC. All results are summarised in Table 4.2.

Hypothesis 2

To determine whether national identity fusion would predict PCC above and beyond national identification, we conducted multiple regressions on total PCC scores and the cultural and historical continuity subscales, with age, sex, identification, and fusion as predictors. The results, summarised in Table 4.3, revealed that identification predicts beliefs in national continuity on both PCC components above and beyond sex and age. The coefficient for identity fusion was also significant for the cumulative PCC scale, indicating that fusion predicts its own share of the variance in PCC scores that cannot be accounted for by mere national identification. When the cultural and historical components of PCC were examined separately, fusion had a higher standardised coefficient ($\beta = .483$) than identification ($\beta = .157$) as a predictor of cultural continuity, but did not contribute any unique variance to historical continuity above national identification.

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics, internal consistency and intercorrelations (Spearman's *rho*) between Perceived Collective Continuity, social essentialism, identity fusion, and identification.

	M	SD	α	1	1a	1b	2	3	4
1. Perceived Collective Continuity	4.98	.83	.852	–					
1a. Cultural Continuity	4.91	1.09	.891	.89**** ^a	–				
1b. Historical continuity	5.04	.84	.682	.82****	.49****	–			
2. Social Essentialism	3.40 ^b	.57	.819	.13*	.22****	.13**	–		
3. Identity Fusion	4.62	1.5	.943	.51****	.59****	.23****	.17*	–	
4. National Identification	4.99	.87	.835	.57****	.48****	.50****	.13*	.59****	–
5. Age	37.12	12.35	—	.09	.003	.16**	.03	-.017	.22****

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

^b 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 from which they were adapted.

Table 4.2: Multiple regression analyses on Perceived Collective Continuity (PCC; both full scale and subscales) with sex, age, and social essentialism as predictors.

Predictors	PCC				Cultural PCC				Historical PCC			
	B	SE B	β	t	B	SE B	β	t	B	SE B	β	t
Intercept	3.397	.319	—	10.644	2.977	.417	—	7.146	3.816	.327	—	11.680
Sex	.326**** ^a	.092	.195	3.538	.474****	.120	.216	3.936	.179	.094	.106	1.892
Age	.008*	.004	.121	2.192	.004	.005	.049	.884	.012**	.004	.177	3.154
Essentialism	.323****	.080	.221	4.045	.445****	.104	.233	2.233	.201*	.082	.137	2.456
Model	R ² _{adj} =.09****, F(3, 303)=10.44				R ² _{adj} =.09****, F(3, 303)=11.12				R ² _{adj} =.05**, F(3, 303)=5.94			

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

Table 4.3: Multiple regression analysis on Perceived Collective Continuity (PCC) with participants' sex, age, strength of national identification, and identity fusion as predictors.

Predictors	PCC				Cultural PCC				Historical PCC			
	B	SE B	β	t	B	SE B	β	t	B	SE B	β	t
Intercept	2.236****	.243	—	9.187	2.053****	.313	—	6.550	2.419****	.264	—	9.179
Sex	.272****	.243	.162	9.187	.335**	.101	.153	3.312	.209*	.085	.124	2.455
Age	.003	.003	.042	.877	.001	.004	.015	.321	.004	.003	.064	1.239
Identification	.357****	.057	.368	6.293	.199**	.073	.157	2.725	.515****	.061	.529	8.381
Fusion	.153****	.032	.274	4.750	.353****	.041	.483	8.510	-.047	-.084	-.084	-1.349
Model	R ² _{adj} =.36****, F(4,302)=43.40				R ² _{adj} =.38****, F(4,302)=47.37				R ² _{adj} =.25****, F(4, 302)=26.52			

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

4.2.3 Discussion

The primary aim of the study was to investigate two potential correlates of the perceived collective continuity (PCC) of national groups. It was predicted that PCC would be related to both social essentialism and identity fusion, and that its relationship with fusion would be independent of mere national identification. The results of the regression analyses supported both hypotheses, and also revealed that the cultural component of PCC was more strongly related to identity fusion, while the historical component was more strongly correlated with national identification.

These findings suggest that the cultural and historical components of PCC are functionally distinct in their relationships with feelings of attachment to the nation. Future studies can explore this distinction in more detail, as well as the more general question of any causal effects between fusion, PCC, and social essentialism. Theoretically, 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” defined by a fixed, immutable nature; this point makes theoretical sense, as 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 between social essentialism and PCC 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 children start out as indiscriminate essentialists, exploring a world full of mysterious new objects and attributing their properties to inherent essences; however, as they grow and develop more sophisticated knowledge of the world, individuals 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 similar interplay between cognitive and cultural factors can be observed in the link between PCC and identity fusion. This study revealed a large difference in average identity fusion scores between US and Indian participants, with the latter

being much more likely to score towards the upper end 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 Fredman et al., 2017; Swann et al., 2009 for similar studies with Spanish and Israeli samples, respectively). On the one hand, this can be interpreted as a psychological phenomenon, with Indian participants projecting much stronger familial ties onto their nation than their American counterparts do. However, the potential effect of the dominant discourses about nationhood in both societies should also be taken into account. 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 that type of discourse in a given society. In effect, people in some cultures may be more likely to speak of “dying” for their “brothers” because such language represents the normal way of expressing patriotism in that culture, and not necessarily because it reflects a deeper psychological commitment to the nation.

4.3 General discussion

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 precondition of 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 entirely possible that a different underlying cause exists that affects both essentialism and PCC.

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. This question is explored in more detail in Chapter 8. The possible causal effect of PCC on identity fusion is also explored in detail in Chapter 7.

Chapter 5

Link between fusion and PCC: Mediation analysis

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4 we found that individuals who perceive their nation as highly continuous also tend to have a more strongly essentialist view of human nature, as well as a higher degree of identity fusion (a visceral sense of oneness) with their nation. Furthermore, the question of whether there are any causal relationships between perceived collective continuity (PCC), essentialism, and fusion remains open. This chapter will build upon these findings by (1) arguing on theoretical grounds that identity fusion could contribute to PCC, (2) by linking fusion and PCC with the perceived entitativity of national groups in a correlational study, and (3) by testing a mediation model in which a hypothetical effect of fusion on PCC is mediated by entitativity. This effect will be further tested for in the next chapter in two experimental studies.

The literature on PCC (Herrera et al., 2011; Sani et al., 2008, 2007, 2009) and identity fusion theory (Gómez et al., 2011; Gómez, López-Rodríguez, Vázquez, Paredes, & Martínez, 2016; Swann & Buhrmester, 2015; Swann et al., 2014, 2009, 2012) provides certain clues about the relationship between these variables, which can be used to inform a hypothetical model in which identity fusion with a group increases the perceived continuity of the group. In particular, according to identity

fusion theory, strongly fused people tend to perceive other group-members as fictive kin (Gómez et al., 2011; Swann et al., 2009). Family or kinship groups tend to be seen as having an objective basis (e.g., shared origins or genes), as more enduring over time, and as more entitative than other groups (Lickel et al., 2000). It then follows that, to the extent that fused group members perceive the in-group as a family, they should also perceive it as more entitative – i.e., as a closely-knit unit with shared goals and interests. It is therefore theoretically plausible that when a person becomes fused with a social group and begins to see it as more family-like, the group also begins to appear more entity-like, and hence more temporally enduring.

A clear distinction should be drawn in this model between identification and identity fusion, which are very similar concepts, both reflecting an alignment with a social group. The utility of treating the two as separate constructs comes from the fact that fusion is conceived as involving the projection of familial ties onto the group, which is putatively absent in identification. As Swann et al. (2009) have argued, identity fusion is not merely a particularly strong form of identification with the group, or “identification with a dash of commitment” (p.1008). Instead, fusion is said to be characterised by a sense of kinship and deep moral obligation towards other group-members, whereas identification can operate purely on the level of attachment to an identity category. For example, a British person who identifies strongly with Britain, but scores low on identity fusion, may attach great importance to his British identity, while not feeling a particularly strong emotional attachment to other British people (Swann et al., 2009).

Furthermore, Sani et al. (2008) have argued that a higher degree of perceived continuity has a number of beneficial effects on society, such as improving collective self-esteem and reducing social alienation and anomie. They theorised that this effect is carried by an increase in the perceived entitativity of the group, i.e., the perception of the group as a cohesive collective entity (Campbell, 1958; in Castano, Yzerbyt, & Bourguignon, 2003); when a group is seen as temporally continuous, it is also seen as more cohesive and capable of acting in pursuit of its goals, and

hence individual members begin to derive a greater sense of pride from belonging to it (Sani et al., 2008).

5.2 Study 2

Based on the above review, we can expect that identity fusion with the nation can lead to an increase in its perceived entitativity, and hence to increased PCC. The correlational study reported here tested a mediation model predicting PCC from fusion, with the relationship being mediated by perceptions of national entitativity. A secondary hypothesis was that, since fusion and national identification are functionally distinct forms of alignment with national groups, they would also differ in terms of their relationship to PCC. Specifically, if the relationship between fusion and PCC is mediated by the projection of familial ties and hence by entitativity, as has been argued here, then the same path should not be available for identification, which does not entail a projection of familial ties. Hence, it was predicted that entitativity would not mediate the relationship between identification and PCC. The analysis plan was pre-registered on AsPredicted.org and is available through the following link: <https://aspredicted.org/cg8rk.pdf>

5.2.1 Methods

Participants

A similar international sample to the one used in Study 1 (Chapter 3) was recruited on Amazon MTurk in exchange for a fee; the only country restriction was the exclusion of participants resident in India, due to the unusually high rate of incomplete responses and failures on the attention check found in the Indian subset of the sample in Study 1. Prior to recruitment, a power analysis conducted with G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner Lang, 2009) indicated that at least 348 valid observations would be required to detect a small to medium effect size ($f^2 = .05$) in a multiple regression with three predictor variables (error probability $\alpha = .05$, power = .95). Due to the high attrition rate we aimed to recruit well above this minimum sample size to account for exclusions (total recruited respondents N=516). We then excluded any incomplete responses (N=14), duplicate IP addresses (N=2), respondents who failed

both attention checks (N=64), and participants who entered invalid values for their nationality in the demographic questionnaire, such as “Latin” or “Human” (N=28). The final sample size was N=408 ($M_{age} = 37.9, SD_{age} = 13.2, 51.5\%$ females).

Materials and Procedure

Identity fusion, national identification and PCC were measured with the same instruments used in Study 1. A new measure of entitativity was also developed, which was designed to discriminate between entitativity and essentialism as two closely related but distinct constructs (see *Entitativity scale construction* below). All measures were presented in a fixed order, determined by the direction of the predicted effect: the measures of identification and identity fusion were presented first in a randomised order; then PCC (as the proposed mediating variable); and finally entitativity.

All items in the measures of entitativity and PCC that included mentions of a particular nation group were programmed to reflect the nationality entered in the demographic questionnaire. For example, American respondents saw items like “*Despite our differences, Americans are united on the most fundamental matters*”, while Polish participants saw “*Despite our differences, Poles are united...*” instead. This was done to make these items sound more natural than the original measures, which referred to “members of my nation”.

Entitativity scale construction: The measure of perceived group entitativity was based on Haslam, Rothschild and Ernst’s (2000) model of essentialism, in which entitativity is conceptualised as a component of essentialism (alongside perceptions of the essentialised object as a “natural kind”) and covers four distinct aspects: Informativeness, Underlying reality, Similarity, and Exclusiveness. In addition to these four components of entitativity, we included Unity (understood as the ability to act together) based on the findings of Lakens and Stel (2011) who demonstrated that observers attribute more entitative properties to groups that move and act synchronously. Hence, the initial version of the entitativity measure contained 5 items, one for each component. We supplemented these items with an additional reverse-coded item for each component, resulting in 10 items in total rated from

1="Strongly Disagree" to 7="Strongly Agree" (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Full measure of perceived national entitativity

Dimension	Item
Unity	1. Despite our differences, Americans are united on the most fundamental matters.
	2. Different Americans have very different beliefs and goals, so we cannot really act as one.
Informativeness	3. People from around the world can be very different, but once you know that someone is American, that can tell you a lot about what they are like as a person.
	4. The fact that someone is American doesn't tell you much about them.
Underlying reality	5. 'American' is not just a label – there is something real (whether it is in our blood or in our culture) that makes Americans a real group.
	6. 'American' is a social label, but beneath it there is no deeper heritage, culture or values that give it a deeper meaning.
Similarity	7. Americans have more in common with each other than with people from other countries.
	8. Americans are not very similar to each other – one can have just as much in common with people from around the world as with other Americans.
Exclusivity	9. You cannot be a real American if you belong to any other nation.
	10. You can be a real American even if you belong to another nation at the same time.

5.2.2 Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's α , and correlations between fusion, identification, PCC, and entitativity are reported in Table 5.2. As in Study 1, we found that the

four variables were intercorrelated, with entitativity having a marginally stronger correlation with fusion ($r_s = .62, p < .001$) than with identification ($r_s = .59, p < .001$). As in the previous study, cultural continuity was more strongly related to fusion ($r_s = .51, p < .001$) than to identification ($r_s = .49, p < .001$), although this difference was much less pronounced here; meanwhile, historical continuity was more strongly related to identification ($r_s = .40, p < .001$) than to fusion ($r_s = .16, p < .001$).

Table 5.2: Descriptive statistics, internal consistency and intercorrelations (Spearman's *rho*) between identity fusion, identification, PCC, and perceived national entitativity.

Variable	M	SD	α	Fusion	Id.	PCC	PCC (Cult.)	PCC (Hist.)
Fusion	4.45	1.53	.942	1				
Identification	4.89	.99	.861	.670 ^a	1			
PCC	5.01	.85	.851	.422	.522	1		
PCC (Cultural)	4.95	1.13	.892	.514	.495	.914	1	
PCC (Historical)	5.08	.84	.673	.161	.400	.785	.494	1
Entitativity^b	4.23	1.09	.830	.621	.587	.547	.585	.311

^a All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

^b Cronbach's α and correlation coefficients are for the reduced measure of entitativity (excl. items 6, 9, and 10)

Validating the measure of entitativity

Scores on the new measure of perceived national entitativity were normally distributed (Figure 5.1). A reliability analysis of the initial 10 items of the entitativity scale revealed an $\alpha = .781$ and showed that items 6, 9 and 10 were not strongly correlated with the rest of the scale. Upon reducing the instrument to the final 7 items, it was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha = .830$). A subsequent exploratory factor analysis using oblique rotation and listwise deletion revealed that all items load on a single

factor at eigenvalues greater than 1. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .801 (at a recommended level of .6 or above) and Bartlett's test of sphericity was highly significant ($\chi^2(21) = 980.76, p < .001$), indicating that the data from the reduced entitativity scale (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8) were suitable for structure detection. Together, these findings indicate that the scale captures a single construct as intended, and all subsequent analyses used the reduced version of the scale.

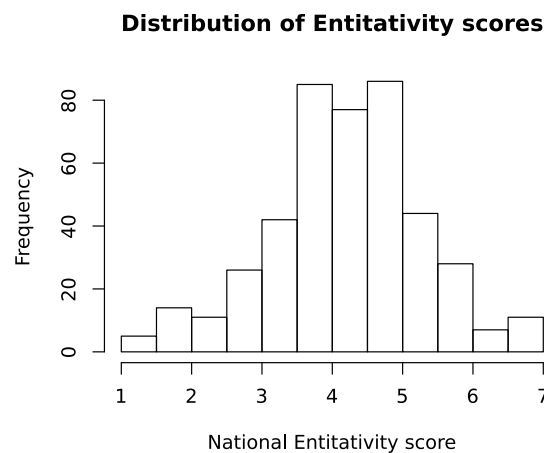


Figure 5.1: Distribution of the scores on the 7-item measure of perceived national entitativity (N=408).

Testing for a mediated relationship with entitativity

Two separate mediated regression analyses were performed following the steps recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986), one with fusion and the other with identification as predictors of PCC, and entitativity as a mediating variable in both (Figure 5.2).

Model 1: Predicting PCC from identity fusion :

The first step of the model revealed a nonzero total path of identity fusion on PCC (path c: $b = 0.235, SE = 0.024, p < .001$). Nonzero coefficients were also found for the paths between fusion and entitativity (path a: $b = 0.455, SE = 0.027, p < .001$), and between entitativity and PCC (path b: $b = 0.393, SE = 0.04, p < .001$).

A test for indirect effects revealed a significant indirect path coefficient (path $a \times b$: $b = .178, SE = .022, CIs(95\%) = .137, .223$, and using the formula $P_M = (a \times b)/c$, it was calculated that this indirect path accounts for approximately 76% of the total relationship between fusion and PCC. After accounting for the indirect path, the direct path from fusion to PCC was reduced in absolute size but still statistically significant (path c' : $b = .057, SE = .028, p = .046$), consistent with partial mediation. Together, these results indicate that entitativity is only a partial mediator, accounting for most, but not all, of the hypothetical effect of fusion on PCC.

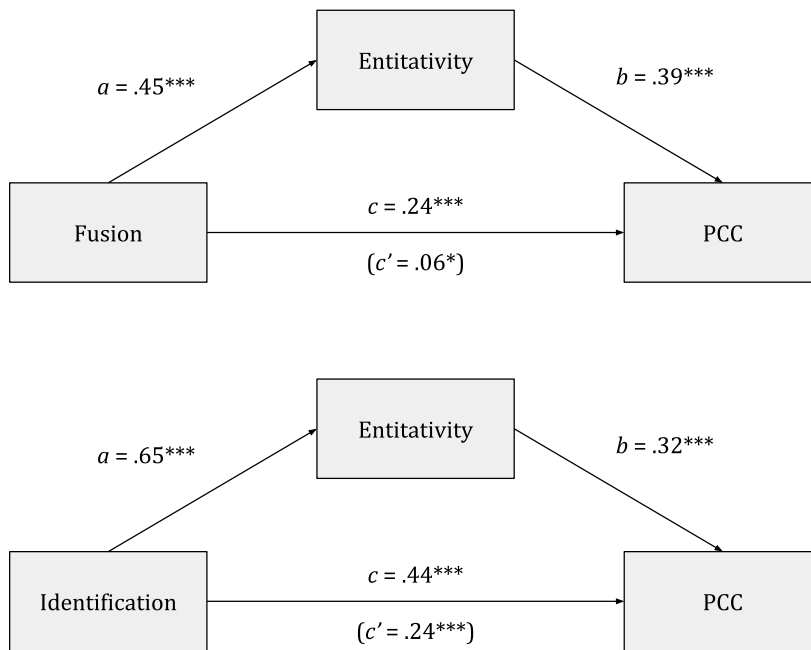


Figure 5.2: Summary of the two mediation analyses testing whether perceived entitativity mediates the relationships between identity fusion or identification and PCC. Note: $* < .05, *** < .001$

Model 2: Predicting PCC from Identification :

A similar analysis was performed on a model with national identification as the predictor and entitativity as the mediator (Figure reffig:med-entitativity, bottom). The total path from identification to PCC was nonzero (path c : $b = .442, SE = .036, p < .001$). The paths between identification and entitativity (path a : $b = .648, SE = .043, p < .001$), and between entitativity and PCC (path b : $b = .318, SE = .037, p < .001$) were also nonzero, and the indirect (mediation) path was significant (path $a \times b$: $b = .205, SE = .029, CIs(95\%) = .149, .264$). This in-

direct path accounted for approximately 47% of the total path from identification to PCC. However, as in Model 1, a decreased but still highly significant direct path from identification to PCC was found after accounting for the mediated path (path $c' : b = .236, SE = .04, p < .001$). This model is also consistent with a partial mediation, although the results also indicate that entitativity mediates a larger proportion of the relationship between fusion and PCC than between identification and PCC.

Exploratory analyses: Regressing cultural and historical continuity on fusion and identification

Identity fusion and identification were shown in this study, as well as in Study 1, to have different relationships with the two components of PCC. Therefore, we performed similar mediation analyses with the cultural and historical components of PCC as the outcome variables, in order to test whether entitativity mediates the link with fusion in one component but not the other. The results are summarised in Figures 5.3 and 5.4 and show little qualitative difference in the mediation paths between fusion and identification on the one hand, and cultural and historical PCC on the other. All direct paths (c') were significant, with the exception of the mediated path from fusion to historical PCC (path $c' : b = -.05, n.s.$). However, given that the total path was relatively small in the first place (path $c : b = .09, p < .05$), it is unlikely that this finding is meaningful in itself. All other direct paths were decreased in size but still statistically significant after accounting for the indirect path through the mediator, consistent with partial mediation. Hence, we found no reliable evidence of functionally independent relationship between fusion and PCC (vis-à-vis identification and PCC) mediated by entitativity.

5.2.3 Discussion

In Chapter 4 identity fusion and national identification were both found to be correlated with perceptions of the nation as a historically continuous group (PCC). Here the relationships between these variables were modelled based on the argument that for a group to be seen as temporally continuous, it must first be seen as a social

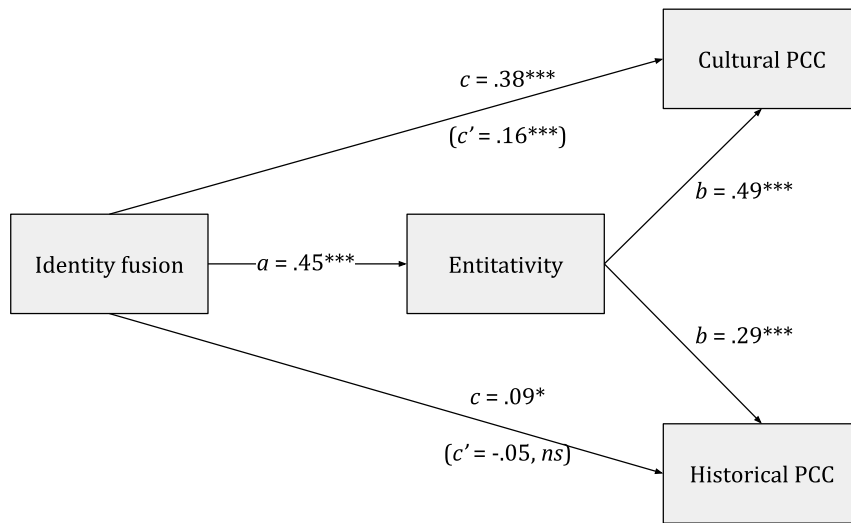


Figure 5.3: Two exploratory mediation models showing that perceived national entitativity partially mediates the link between fusion and cultural PCC, and fully mediates the link between fusion and historical PCC.

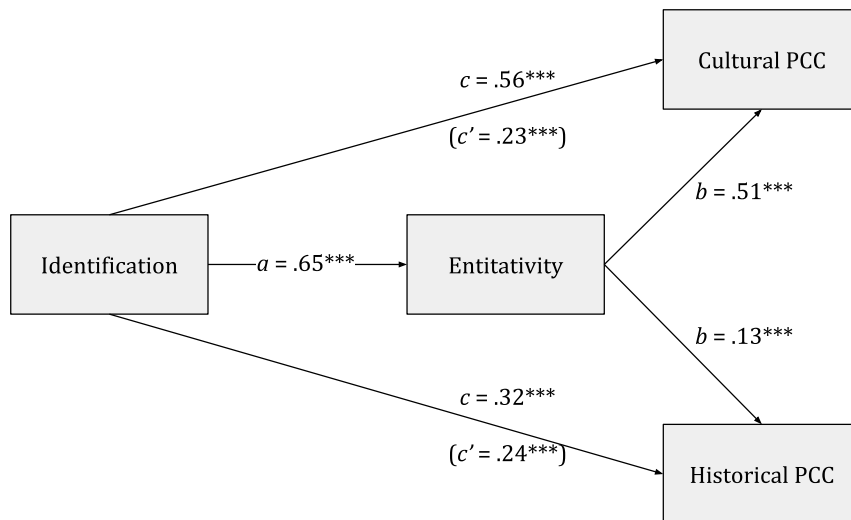


Figure 5.4: Further mediation models showing that national entitativity partially mediates the links between identification and the two components of PCC.

entity. A further aim of the study was to provide preliminary evidence for a causal effect of fusion on PCC by demonstrating that the link between the two constructs is fully mediated by entitativity. Furthermore, because strongly fused people tend to perceive their in-group as a fictive family (and hence as a social entity), it was predicted that entitativity would mediate only the link between fusion and PCC, and not that between identification and PCC. The results of the present study replicated the findings of Study 1, showing strong correlations between identification, fusion, and PCC, and confirmed the earlier finding that fusion is more relevant for cultural continuity, and identification for historical continuity. However, they did not support the prediction that the relationship between fusion and PCC would be fully mediated by entitativity, and instead partial mediation was found for both predictors.

Consistent with the study's hypothesis, it was found that entitativity mediates a larger proportion of the total relationship between fusion and PCC (76%) than it does for the link between identification and PCC (47%). This can be interpreted as partial support for the idea that the link between fusion and PCC is more dependent on perceived national entitativity than the one between identification and PCC.

The theoretical models discussed in this chapter were based on the assumption that the way people imagine their in-group (e.g., as highly entitative, or highly continuous) stems directly from the type of relationship they have with that group (identification and/or identity fusion). This correlational study was not designed to test directly for a causal effect of either fusion or identification on PCC, hence we conducted a series of follow-up studies specifically designed to address this question. Chapter 6 reports two experiments which tested for an effect of social essentialism and fusion on PCC, and Chapter 7 reports an experiment testing for an effect in the opposite direction, by priming participants with a highly continuous image of the nation (PCC) and examining the effect of this manipulation on fusion and identification.

Chapter 6

Does social essentialism contribute to PCC?

6.1 Introduction

The broad aim of this research project is to explore the cognitive underpinnings of a specific, intuitive, form of nationalism, namely the intuition that nations as social groups are somehow ontologically real – “natural kinds” – rather than mere sociopolitical constructions. Similar forms of social cognition have been investigated in the context of implicit ontologies of race, sex, and other forms of identity, a line of research which has demonstrated that some people perceive such social groups as akin to biological species whose properties are determined by some deep, inherent, and enduring essence (see Chapter 2). We have used two psychological constructs to capture this type of implicit theory about the ontology of national groups — psychological essentialism, which reflects the perception of the essential and natural character of nations, and perceived collective continuity (PCC), which reflects the perception that the national “essence” (be it cultural or genetic) has remained unchanged for many generations.

Chapters 3 and 4 represented an attempt to map out the relationships between such perceptions of the nation (as a natural kind and as highly continuous) on the one hand, and two forms of relating to the nation on the other — namely, national identification and identity fusion. Two correlational studies were reported which

demonstrated that PCC about the nation is correlated with essentialist thinking about social groups in general, and with both forms of relating to the nation (fusion and identification). Furthermore, we proposed a causal effect of essentialism on PCC, such that essentialist intuitions about the characteristics of social groups increase the perceived plausibility of narratives about the collective continuity of said groups. The next logical step then was to test this hypothesis by manipulating essentialist thinking and testing for an effect on PCC.

6.1.1 Testing for a moderating effect of identity fusion

Theoretical connections have also been drawn between social essentialism and identity fusion. Whitehouse (2018) has argued that beliefs in the shared culture and values of the group (especially ones that have come to be seen as sacred) can motivate extreme self-sacrifice for more strongly fused people – i.e., fusion moderates the link between cultural essentialism and extreme sacrifice. Swann, Gómez, Dovidio, et al. (2010) have also drawn a connection between essentialism and fusion, describing fusion as “feelings of shared essence and oneness with the group. Such feelings, like the feelings of shared essence that mothers have with their children, compel fused persons to organize their individual agency [...] around group membership” (p.1177). It is generally accepted in social psychology that individuals are motivated to seek and maintain membership in groups that are enduring and confer a high social status on their members (Hoyle, Kernis, Leary, & Baldwin, 1999; Tajfel, 1974, 2010; Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Gollidge, & Scabini, 2006); therefore, if perceptions of shared essence and kinship are an integral component of identity fusion, it seems plausible that strongly fused individuals will be particularly motivated to confirm the essential nature of their in-group. Therefore, we expected that strongly fused individuals would be more accepting of social essentialist beliefs compared with weakly fused individuals, meaning that the manipulation of social essentialism would have a stronger effect on national PCC for strongly fused participants.

6.1.2 Manipulating social essentialism

To manipulate participants' endorsement of social essentialist beliefs, we chose an established priming technique developed by Williams and Eberhardt (2008) and used by Swann et al. (2014) in their studies on identity fusion. In one of Swann et al.'s experiments (Experiment 2), participants were presented with a news article reporting that scientists had discovered the genetic basis of race (the control condition had an identical article arguing that race is not based on biological similarities). The manipulation is said to activate individuals' biological essentialist thinking toward their in-group, which makes strongly fused people more willing to sacrifice their wellbeing in defence of their in-group (Swann, Gómez, Dovidio, et al., 2010, p.914).

It should be emphasised that participants were not primed with the idea that they shared the same genes with other members of their nation, but rather with the idea of genetic essentialism *per se* (the idea that social groups in general have a material, biological basis). The explanation for this effect offered by Swann and his colleagues is that emphasising the underlying biological nature of social groups increases the perception of in-groups and out-groups as biological, natural kinds, which participants then extrapolate onto their nation as well. The extension of essentialism onto the national in-group is assumed to occur intuitively and outside of conscious awareness, rather than being argued for explicitly in the vignettes.

As Swann, Gómez, Dovidio, et al. (2010) have argued, identity fusion stems from a belief in some shared "core" characteristics that define group identity; their precise nature and valence can vary between different cultural contexts: "If it is the perception of *sharing* core characteristics with other group members that makes group membership especially meaningful for fused persons, then the precise basis of this sense of sharing and communality should not matter" (Swann et al., 2014, p.914; emphasis in original). Swann et al. defended this theory by demonstrating that the priming of shared cultural values yielded the same pattern of results for fused participants (in terms of willingness to sacrifice oneself for the group) as the priming of shared genes, and, more importantly, the results were maintained

even when participants were led to believe that their shared values had a negative valence. In other words, the “active ingredient” in the manipulation is the belief that the underlying basis of group identity (its “essence”) is deep, stable and somehow real — it does not have to be strictly biological.

6.2 Study 3: Priming genetic essentialism with an American sample

In Study 3 we manipulated the salience of genetic essentialist ideas to determine whether essentialist thinking contributes to perceived national continuity. We also measured participants’ degree of identity fusion with their nation group to determine whether fusion moderates the effect of essentialism on PCC (Figure 6.1).

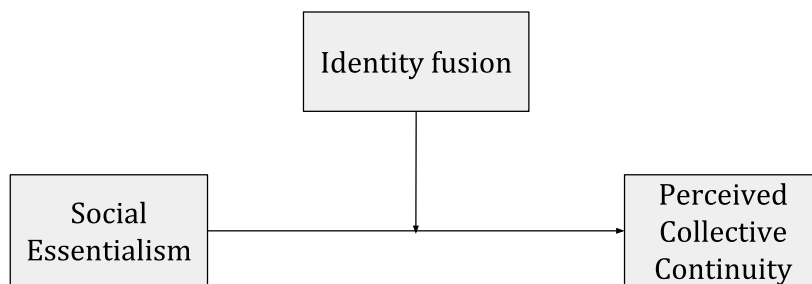


Figure 6.1: A conceptual model of the effect of social essentialism on PCC, moderated by identity fusion.

6.2.1 Methods

Participants

Determining sample size and inclusion criteria: An a-priori power analysis for a multiple regression with three predictors (manipulation of essentialism, identity fusion, and their interaction) was conducted using G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). The results indicated that at least 250 observations would be required to detect a small to moderate effect ($f^2 = .07$) 95% of the time with an error probability $\alpha = .05$. Allowing a 30% margin for exclusions, observations from 323 participants were collected through Amazon MTurk. Due to the large variability in fusion scores between different nationalities found in the first correlational study on

fusion and PCC (see Chapter 3), we decided to focus on a single national context and made the survey available only to IP addresses in the USA. As an additional measure, participants were informed prior to signing up that the study would explore American nationals' views of their national identity, and that only American nationals should complete the survey.

Final sample: After excluding incomplete responses (N=25), non-US nationals (N=6) and respondents familiar with the manipulation (N=6), the final sample was N=286 ($M_{age} = 37.58, SD_{age} = 12.71, 60.5\%$ females).

Materials and Procedure

Upon signing up, participants had to complete a demographic information form, indicating their age, sex, nationality, and ethnicity. To avoid confusion, the last two items were accompanied by examples: “*What is your nationality? (e.g., American, Indian, French...)*”; and “*What is your ethnicity? (e.g., White/Caucasian, Black, Latino, etc.)*”. Finally, a single-item measure of political orientation (1=Socially liberal, 10=Socially conservative) was added, which was to be used in follow-up analyses to control for the potentially confounding effect of political ideology (e.g., it is highly likely that conservative political views will correlate with social essentialism and measures of nationalism like fusion and PCC).

Participants were then randomly assigned to either the experimental (high essentialism) or the control (low essentialism) condition. As a manipulation of genetic essentialist beliefs, they were asked to read a vignette presented as an article from the scientific journal *Genes* (adapted from Williams & Eberhardt, 2008), with the following instructions: “*The following article was published in a popular science journal. Please take as much time as you need to read the full text carefully*” (emphasis in original). The vignettes in both conditions had an identical presentation and writing style, and included the same technical details about geneticists conducting research on the genetic basis of race. The only difference between the two conditions was the type of discovery that the article was reporting on: “*Scientists Pinpoint Genetic Underpinnings of Race*” in the high essentialism condition, and “*Scientists Reveal that Race Has No Genetic Basis*” in the control. The vignettes

are represented in full in Appendix A.

After reading the vignette, participants completed a manipulation check, the 8-item Lay Theory of Race Scale (No et al., 2008), to determine whether reading the high essentialism vignette led to a corresponding increase in genetic essentialist beliefs compared with the low essentialism condition. No et al. report good internal consistency for the scale across several pilot studies (mean alphas were greater than .830). Sample items include “*To a large extent, a person’s race biologically determines his or her abilities and traits*”; “*A person’s race is something very basic about them and it can’t be changed much*”; and “*Races are just arbitrary categories and can be changed if necessary*” (reversed). Items are rated on a 6-point scale from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree” and a mean score is calculated, with higher scores indicating a more essentialist view of race, and lower scores indicating a more social constructionist view.

Finally, all participants completed self-report measures of identity fusion (Gómez et al., 2011) and perceived collective continuity (Sani et al., 2007), in this order, and were debriefed. This order of presentation was chosen to match the hypothesised causal chain from essentialism to PCC, with fusion as a mediator.

It should be noted, however, that a separate measure of national identification was not included in the study protocol. Study 1 (in Chapter 4) had already demonstrated the functional difference between identity fusion and national identification: fusion was more strongly related to cultural PCC ($r_s = .59$) than identification was ($r_s = .48$), and conversely, identification was more strongly related to historical PCC ($r_s = .50$) than fusion was ($r_s = .23$). After these results, I opted to treat fusion as a functionally distinct variable, and because the focus of the study was on fusion, not identification, I opted to measure only the former and not the latter. This was done because, in order to separate the effects of the two variables, two sets of analyses would have had to be performed, one with fusion as the moderator and one with identification, and the number of analyses can easily multiply in any post-hoc comparisons that I chose to run (as in the correlational Study 2). This would have necessitated adjustments to the alpha level to reduce the chance of a Type I error - a

standard procedure in statistic when performing multiple comparisons (Chen, Feng, & Yi, 2017). However, while such corrections address the problem of the increased Type I error rate, they also increase the rate of Type II errors, as the corrected alpha level can be too low to detect a statistically significant but small effect (Sinclair, Taylor, & Hobbs, 2013). Therefore, this theoretically unjustified doubling of the number of analyses would have in turn increased the risk of a Type II error and thus made it harder to discriminate between true and false negative results, and to make inferences from any non-significant analyses.

The strategy that Sinclair et al. (2013) advocate for social scientists is to avoid corrections for multiple comparisons, in order to avoid missing any potentially meaningful findings. However, since the functional difference between fusion and identification had already been established in previous chapters, and in the rich literature on identity fusion in general (Gómez et al., 2011; Swann et al., 2014, 2009; Swann, Gómez, Huici, et al., 2010; Swann et al., 2012), I sought to avoid the large number of comparisons in planned and post-hoc analyses that had complicated the interpretation of the results of Study 2, and opted to measure only identity fusion.

6.2.2 Results

Scale reliability and descriptive statistics

A reliability analysis showed a good degree of internal consistency for all three self-report measures: Lay Theory of Race scale $\alpha = .770$, identity fusion scale $\alpha = .935$, and PCC scale $\alpha = .758$. One item from the PCC scale contributed to its relatively low internal consistency, especially in the Historical continuity component ($\alpha = .446$) (item 6, reverse-coded: “*There is no deeper connection between past, present, and future events in my country*”). Cronbach’s alphas and correlation coefficients for all measures are reported in Table 6.1, revealing that the three measures (racial essentialism, fusion, and PCC) are correlated with each other. Interestingly, scores on the Lay Theory of Race scale were positively correlated with beliefs in cultural continuity but not with historical continuity.

Main analysis

To determine whether the shared genes manipulation was successful, an independent samples t-test was conducted on the Lay Theory of Race scores with priming condition as the independent variable. The test showed that participants in the high essentialism priming condition endorsed genetic essentialist beliefs about race at a higher rate ($M = 3.82, SD = .79$) than those in the low essentialism (control) condition: ($M = 3.30, SD = .95$): $t(284) = 5.17, p < .001, d = .61$. On that basis the manipulation was considered to be effective.

Table 6.1: Descriptive statistics, reliability statistics, and zero order correlations between the Lay Theory of Race scale, identity fusion with America, and PCC. Values in the correlation matrix are Spearman's *rho*.

	M	SD	α	Race	Fusion	PCC	Cult. PCC
1. Race	3.56 ^a	.91	.770	—			
2. Fusion	4.59	1.38	.935	.145** ^b	—		
3. PCC	4.96	.79	.758	.112*	.440***	—	
3a. Cultural PCC	4.83	1.05	.849	.164**	.501***	.867***	—
3b. Historical PCC	5.13	.68	.589	-.014	.125*	.671***	.262***

^a The Lay Theory of Race measure uses a 6-point rating scale. All other measures use a 7-point scale.

^b * $p < .05$, ** $< .01$, *** $< .001$

To test for an independent effect of the essentialism priming manipulation on PCC scores, an independent-samples t-test was conducted, however it revealed no difference between the high ($M = 4.93, SD = .70$) and low essentialism ($M = 4.87, SD = .71$) conditions ($t(284) = .733, p = .46$). A further comparison showed that the manipulation of essentialism did not have an effect on fusion scores, with no significant difference between the high ($M = 4.99, SD = .79$) and low essentialism conditions ($M = 4.93, SD = .79$), $t(284) = .599, p = .55$.

Finally, to test the main experimental hypothesis that the manipulation of essentialism would have an effect on PCC moderated by identity fusion, we con-

Table 6.2: Perceived collective continuity (PCC) predicted from a manipulation of genetic essentialism, identity fusion, and their interaction (US sample, N=286).

Predictor	Coeff. (SE)	β	t	p
Intercept	3.89 (.137)	—	28.266	.001
Essentialism (priming condition)	.003 (.039)	.004	.075	.940
Identity fusion	.224 (.029)	.434	7.821	.001
Essentialism \times Identity Fusion	.023 (.039)	.033	.598	.550

ducted a moderated regression analysis in which PCC scores were predicted from the manipulation condition, identity fusion scores, and their interaction, $R^2 = .191, F(3, 263) = 30.66, p < .001$ (Table 6.2). Of the three predictors, only fusion had a significant effect on PCC scores ($b = .224, SE = .029, p < .001$), and no effect of the essentialism priming condition was detected, either on its own or as a moderator of the effect of fusion.

6.2.3 Discussion

Based on earlier research by Lickel et al. (2000) and Swann et al. (2014), we predicted that the perceived continuity of one's nation would be increased by the salience of essentialist thoughts, and that the effect would be stronger for individuals with a high degree of national identity fusion. The manipulation of genetic/racial essentialism was found to have a significant effect on the manipulation check, but did not result in increased PCC scores. As expected from the findings of the previous two correlational studies, fusion was strongly correlated with PCC. This experiment therefore did not find evidence of the effect of essentialism or identity fusion on PCC that was hypothesised in Chapter 4.

One potential explanation for the lack of a significant effect could be that the manipulation of essentialism led participants to think in essentialist terms only about racial groups (as measured by the essentialism questionnaire) and not about their nation. One implicit assumption behind the priming manipulation was that exposing participants to the idea that human nature is determined by a deep, unchanging essence (i.e., one's genetic heritage) would make genetic essentialist concepts and explanations for social phenomena more easily accessible, and thus in-

crease essentialist beliefs about the in-group. However, it can also be argued that the priming manipulation did not have an effect on PCC due to the way respondents conceptualised their national identity. American national identity is often described as predominantly civic rather than ethnic, and as rooted in ideas about shared values and culture rather than shared genetic heritage (Citrin, Wong, & Duff, 2001; Schildkraut, 2007; Wright, Citrin, & Wand, 2012). Therefore, it is possible that the manipulation only affected essentialist beliefs about racial groups, which can be seen as having a genetic basis, but did not extend to the nation, which for American respondents is more of a civic and multi-ethnic community than a genetically or ancestrally defined one.

The above explanation runs contrary to Swann et al.'s (2014) hypothesis that the precise contents of the shared characteristics are irrelevant to the projection of familial ties. However, it should be pointed out that Swann and his colleagues never tested the idea that values and traits are mutually exchangeable as primers of social essentialism. Instead, they reported a series of three studies in which Chinese and Indian participants were primed with the idea of genetic essentialism, using a manipulation that was identical to the one in the present study, while American participants were exposed to a manipulation of shared values, rather than genes. While Swann et al.'s reasoning was that this would demonstrate the functional equivalence of the manipulations of shared genes and values, their results are also consistent with a model in which genetic essentialism only invokes feelings of kinship for participants who understand their national identity in genetic (ethnic) terms.

Hence, we conducted a follow-up experiment with Indian participants, whose national identity is usually expressed in more ethnic terms than American identity is, and used the same priming method to manipulate essentialist thinking.

6.3 Study 4. Priming genetic essentialism with an Indian sample

The analysis plan for this study was pre-registered and is available through the following link: <https://aspredicted.org/hr984.pdf>

6.3.1 Methods

Participants

A total of 443 participants with IP addresses restricted to India signed up for the study on Amazon MTurk in exchange for a fee. After exclusions for duplicate IP addresses (N=21), incomplete surveys (N=37), failure on the attention checks (N=84), and familiarity with the procedure (N=38), the final sample size was N=263 (73.8% male, $M_{age} = 32.52$, $SD_{age} = 9.06$).

Materials and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental and control conditions and were asked to read the corresponding vignette (the same vignettes were used as in the previous experiment). As in Study 3, they then completed the Implicit Theory of Race scale, the verbal fusion scale and the PCC scale, in that order, with references to national groups adapted to “Indian” and “India” instead of “American” and “America”.

6.3.2 Results

The descriptive statistics, consistency analyses and intercorrelations matrix are presented in Table 6.3. Scores on the measures of identity fusion and PCC were generally higher among Indian participants compared with American ones, while Implicit

Theory of Race scores were almost identical.

Table 6.3: Descriptive statistics, reliability statistics, and zero order correlations between the Lay Theory of Race scale, identity fusion with India, and PCC. Values in the correlation matrix are Spearman's *rho*.

	M	SD	α	Race	Fusion	PCC	Cult. PCC
1. Race	3.53 ^a	.77	.728	—			
2. Fusion	5.86	.97	.893	.133** ^b	—		
3. PCC	5.56	.70	.804	.133**	.557***	—	
3a. Cultural PCC	5.85	.77	.837	.135**	.612***	.871***	—
3b. Historical PCC	5.28	.80	.575	.132*	.384***	.883***	.553***

^a The Lay Theory of Race measure uses a 6-point rating scale. All other measures use a 7-point scale.

^b * $p < .05$, ** $< .01$, *** $< .001$

Manipulation check: An independent samples t-test showed that participants in the high essentialism condition had higher racial essentialism scores ($M(SD) = 3.70(.67), N = 132$) than those in the control condition ($M(SD) = 3.37(.88), N = 131$), $t(261) = 3.381, p = .001, d = .42$; indicating that the priming manipulation was effective.

Planned analysis: To assess the combined effect of the priming manipulation and identity fusion on PCC, we included the two predictors and their interaction in a linear regression model (Table 6.4). The overall model was significant ($R^2 = .267, F(3, 259) = 31.52, p < .001$), however only identity fusion had a significant effect on PCC scores, while the manipulation of essentialism and the interaction were both non-significant.

Further analysis: As the sample in this study was predominantly male and younger than the one in Study 3, we conducted a post-hoc linear regression to control for these variables. The overall model was significant ($R^2 = .270, F(5, 257) = 18.918, p < .001$), but the regression analysis (Table 6.5) showed no effect of sex, age, the manipulation of essentialism, or the Essentialism \times Fusion interaction.

Table 6.4: Perceived collective continuity (PCC) predicted from a manipulation of genetic essentialism, identity fusion, and their interaction (Indian sample, N=263).

Predictor	Coeff. (SE)	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.538(.229)	–	15.423	<.001
Essentialism (priming condition)	-.012(.035)	-.026	-.331	.741
Identity fusion	.353(.039)	.516	9.149	<.001
Essentialism \times Identity Fusion	-.027(.037)	-.030	-.710	.478

Table 6.5: Perceived collective continuity (PCC) predicted from sex, age, the manipulation of genetic essentialism, and identity fusion (Indian sample, N=263)

Predictor	Coeff. (SE)	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.538(.229)	–	15.262	<.001
Sex	.052(.081)	.035	.651	.516
Age	-.001(.004)	-.016	-.303	.762
Essentialism (priming condition)	-.012(.036)	-.018	-.342	.733
Identity fusion	.354(.039)	.507	9.025	<.001
Essentialism \times Identity Fusion	-.028(.038)	-.041	-.742	.459

6.3.3 Discussion

Study 4, like the original experiment in Study 3, found no evidence for an effect of the manipulation of essentialism on PCC. The manipulation check in both studies showed that the manipulation had successfully shifted participants' self-reported racial essentialist beliefs, but no effect on perceived national continuity was found, either independently or moderated by national identity fusion.

The participants in Study 4 were predominantly male, which could have biased the results, as sex differences have been observed in both fusion and PCC scores (see Study 1, Chapter 4). An attempt was made to control for this by including sex in the regression analysis. An additional control was introduced at the planning stage by opting to present the measures of fusion and PCC in the order of the hypothesised causal effect, rather than randomise and counterbalance them. The former option was chosen to account for a potential priming effect of the outcome measure on the mediator variable. An additional strength of the study was that the methodology was pre-registered and the sample size was determined in advance based on an a-priori power analysis, thus reducing the possibility of Type I error.

6.4 General discussion

Studies 3 and 4 did not support the hypothesis that essentialist thinking contributes to perceptions of national continuity. One interpretation of these findings would be that this is a true negative result, i.e., that generalised essentialist thinking in reality does not contribute to PCC. Still, an alternative interpretation could be that the lack of an effect is the result of an unsuccessful manipulation of essentialist thinking about the national group. The manipulation check did show a significant difference between the experimental and the control conditions, suggesting a successful priming effect, however both the vignettes and the manipulation check referred specifically to *racial* essentialism (i.e., the biological basis of racial categories). Therefore, it could be argued that the outcome of the manipulation check reflects a shift in participants' essentialist beliefs about race, but not about nationality. Moreover, it is also possible that the successful manipulation check was the result of demands effects rather than a genuine shift in racial essentialist beliefs.

In a paper published after Studies 3 and 4 were conducted, Whitehouse (2018) argued that a group's shared values and culture could promote identity fusion between its members, but the relationship between the two could be more complex than previously thought. His argument is that an emphasis on shared beliefs on their own will foster a "doctrinal" form of religiosity and group identification (attachment to the group identity), rather than a sense of kinship with individual group members). What is necessary for fusion to occur, according to Whitehouse, is for these shared beliefs, traditions, or values, to become "personalised" – for example through collective rituals, shared memories, or rallies that promote the idea of shared ancestry.

To summarise, Studies 3 and 4 did not find support for the hypothesis that social essentialism contributes to PCC, either on its own or in combination with identity fusion. The next experimental study in the series tested for a relationship going in the opposite direction – i.e., a causal effect of PCC on identity fusion.

Chapter 7

Does PCC foster identity fusion?

7.1 Introduction

Chapters 3-5 provided a broad outline of a theoretical model according to which perceptions of collective continuity (PCC) are the product of identity fusion with the collective, as well as of a domain-general proneness to essentialist thinking. Although the series of studies reported in the previous chapters have shown consistent correlations between these variables, attempts to demonstrate a direct causal effect of fusion or essentialism on PCC have not yielded the expected results. Considering these outcomes, the next logical step in this research programme would be to explore an alternative hypothesis, that PCC can foster national identity fusion. While the initial model predicted that a particular relationship to the in-group (identity fusion) affects the way the group is represented in the mind (making it appear more enduring and temporally continuous), the new hypothesis proposed here implies a reversal of this causal chain – individuals who perceive their in-group as more continuous could be driven to ‘fuse’ their identity with that of the group (provided that they already identify strongly with it).

Given that relatively little is known about the antecedents of national identity fusion or the conditions under which it occurs, the possibility that fusion can be promoted by perceptions of collective continuity cannot be discarded at face value. Moreover, such a model could account for the observed pattern of intercorrelations between fusion, identification, PCC and social essentialism (see the correlational

data reported in Chapter 4). Moreover, there is another, perhaps more important reason why it is worth exploring this hypothesis in more detail, and that is the centrality of narratives in the construction of national identity, which will be explored in the following section.

7.1.1 Neglecting narratives in the study of national continuity

When introducing PCC as a construct, Sani et al. (2009) commented on a conspicuous gap in the most influential psychological theories of collective identification, such as Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Social Categorisation Theory (Turner et al., 1987) – namely, their foregrounding of perceived group properties such as cohesion and internal homogeneity as explanatory concepts, at the expense of the temporal dimension of group identity. The neglecting of collective continuity in such social cognitive theories of identity is certainly a limitation, as Sani and his colleagues rightfully point out. However, it is mirrored by another gap in cognitive theories of collective continuity – the neglected role of narratives as a vehicle for high-continuity representations of social groups. In most research on PCC since Sani et al.’s (2007) codification of the construct, PCC has been conceptualised as an abstract representation existing in the mind of the individual perceiver. Put simply, it is assumed that the individual has a representation of a social group in their mind, and this representation is treated as an independent mental object that the person can examine upon request, and the properties of which can be assessed by means of introspection. By asking a person to turn their attention to the properties of this mental object, they can provide researchers with some quantifiable characteristics of the national representation, for example how continuous it is (or enduring, entity-like, homogeneous, etc.). Significantly, this representation or mental object is treated as something detached from concrete historical narratives or social practices. Researchers do not ask participants to recount parts of their national history in order to observe how continuity is achieved in practice in the narrative; the belief that national history forms part of an “unbroken stream” is assessed not based on how individuals talk about and construct their national past, but based on their declarative self-knowledge about the properties of the national narrative.

To elaborate on this point and why it may constitute a limitation of our understanding of perceived national continuity, it would be useful to refer again to the work of Michael Billig (1995, 1997), whose writings on social psychology and in particular nationalism have highlighted the importance of rhetoric and narrative over purely cognitive processes. In *“Banal Nationalism”* Billig (1995) argues that the idea of the nation is omnipresent in the modern world, while at the same time remaining unnoticed in many everyday situations. “Banal” nationalism is observed when people take nationhood to be a natural feature of everyday life, not worthy of being noticed or commented on. Billig’s examples of this banal, mundane marking of the existence of the nation came from the most unexpected sources – not so much speeches and political analyses, but advertisements, weather forecasts, and popular media. To give just one similar example of banal nationalism, one British TV presenter recently introduced a programme on low-calorie champagne thus: “When it comes to delicious food, us Brits love our grub. But do we really know what we are putting on our plates, or where it actually comes from?”; and later in the programme: “First up, champagne. We glug around 30 million bottles a year, which can be quite bad for the waistline.”¹ In this example a particular pattern of consumption is described in implicitly national terms, as opposed to regional, cultural or class terms; the presenter does not need to elaborate on who “we” are – the idea that a collective “we” exists and consumes as an entity is presupposed as universally shared common sense. The viewers are not presented directly with the claim that British people are a collective entity that lives and consumes in a similar manner – that idea is only implicitly suggested in the deixis “we”. Similarly, in discussions about immigration, people often talk about migrants “coming here” either legally or illegally; again, “here” is immediately understood in national rather than geographical terms, collapsing the varied geography of the nation-state into a single point and requiring no further elaboration. The nation becomes a bounded, homogeneous space where “we” live, as opposed to “them” who are “there” (Hart, 2014, p.163-186).

¹Channel 4’s *“Food Unwrapped”*, Season 15, Episode 9.

For Billig this cultural practice of simultaneously marking and hiding the nation is important in that it allows certain ideas about nationhood to remain unarticulated and thus unexamined. To use the above examples, if we were to ask people directly to what extent they agree that the population of the United Kingdom tend to consume in a particular way, or that the entirety of the country is affected by a particular sociological trend, they would be more likely to scrutinise these ideas critically and analytically. They may come to the conclusion that this pattern of consumption is more characteristic of a particular social class, age group, or another demographic; or that the particular sociological trend is rather restricted to specific areas in specific urban centres, and is not characteristic of the country as a whole. By obscuring these questions behind the unassuming labels “us” and “here”, rhetoric allows us to construct social representations without explicitly arguing for them. And since the listener is never presented directly with the question whether the population and the territory of the UK are homogeneous enough for any meaningful generalisation to be made about them, the homogeneity of the “us” and the “here” is never put up for questioning – it is simply “smuggled in” as part of the narrative.

To return to the question of perceived national continuity, Billig’s rhetorical perspective reveals how ideas about national continuity can be embedded within widely shared narratives without forming part of an individual’s declarative self-knowledge. Just like a TV presenter can talk about how “we” behave “here” without subjecting these classifications to a conscious and rigorous evaluation, a person might repeat a highly continuous national narrative without ever realising that he has come to believe in the continuity of the nation over its discontinuity; the narrative presents national continuity as common sense, hence the alternative position never appears as a possibility. In other words, perceived collective continuity can be seen as a function of the narratives that a group tells about itself and accepts as common sense, and not merely as a property of the mental representation of the nation that a person can access and describe objectively through introspection.

A notable exception is a recent study by Warner et al. (2016), in which the

perceived continuity of specific national and religious out-groups was manipulated by exposing participants to short texts recounting historical tales about the out-group's past. Unlike superficially similar priming manipulations, in which certain relevant concepts are included in a text to make them more easily accessible in the mind of the reader (for example, the manipulation of genetic essentialism used in Chapter 4), the use of a historical narrative to influence PCC is much more faithful to the real-world processes by which individuals form and express their attitudes. In most real-world talk about nationhood, individuals are not told explicitly that they carry the traditions of their ancestors, nor do they express this idea directly. Instead, the implicit message is contained within historical narratives that present past generations of the same nation as acting in accordance with prototypical ideas about the national "character" and "essence", or is embedded within narrative arcs that link the past with the present, like acts in a play. Without a national narrative to serve as an illustration and a reference point, beliefs in national continuity on their own would be too abstract and devoid of content to be accepted as intuitive and self-evident².

7.1.2 Continuity as a feature of national narratives

This theoretical "blindness" to the importance of narrative appears to be limited to the study of nationalism from a cognitive perspective. Morden (2016) argues that while the social sciences have only recently taken the narrative turn, the field of nationalism studies "has been unusually open to incorporating narrative, and this has been true for long enough that some casual invocation of the importance of narrative reads as almost platitudinous" (p.448). One of the best known early exponents of this idea was Ernest Renan, who in his 1882 lecture "*What is a nation?*" argued against geographically, linguistically, and racially based notions of nationhood. Instead, he proposed that:

²If it is true that a sense of continuity must always be accompanied by some narrative structure, it can be argued that the reverse is also true – a coherent narrative almost by necessity creates a sense of continuity about the entities it describes. For example, Wickham (2016) comments on the difficulty that historians of medieval Europe face when trying to present a coherent historical narrative without injecting a false sense of continuity and thus projecting modern national identities into the Middle Ages.

“A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute the soul of this spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to preserve the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. Man, Gentlemen, does not improvise. The nation, like the individual, is the outcome of a long past of efforts, sacrifices, and devotions.” (Renan, 1882/1990, p.19)

Renan also emphasised that this feeling of collective continuity has to be socially constructed through the propagation and acceptance of shared narratives, and more importantly, by the exclusion of certain historical facts from such narratives:

“[T]he essence of a nation is that all of its individuals have many things in common and also that they have forgotten many things. No French citizen knows whether he is a Burgundian, an Alan, a Taifale, or a Visigoth, yet every French citizen has to have forgotten the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, or the massacres that took place in the Midi in the thirteenth century.” (Renan, 1882/1990, p.11)

“*Imagined Communities*”, Benedict Anderson’s (2006) seminal work in the field of nationalism studies, explores the question of how nations came to be imagined historically. Although the book’s main thesis is often misconstrued as the idea that national communities are “simply imagined”, in the sense that they are somehow not real (Eriksen, 2016), Anderson himself argued that any community has to be imagined as an abstraction once it grows beyond the point where direct interactions between all individual members become impossible. One of Anderson’s main arguments is that modern nationalism was made possible by the rise of mass printing in the Early Modern period, which opened up new possibilities for communities of educated co-nationals to construct and disseminate shared narratives. For Anderson, therefore, the mode of imagining the community is crucial for understanding collective identity, and in the case of nationalism its mode of imagining has historically been bound to the production and dissemination of elaborate national narratives.

To sum up, theories of national identity from the perspective of social and

political psychology are only now catching up to what has been generally well understood in other fields – that narrative can serve as a unifying paradigm (Morden, 2016) or a “root metaphor” (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012) for theories of social identity. It is therefore important to consider the relationship between national continuity and national essentialism not just as purely cognitive phenomena (i.e., as the properties of a mental object called “my nation” that I hold in my mind), but as functions of how people talk about the nation, as elements or characteristics of the historical narratives out of which national identity is built.

7.1.3 Essentialism and collective continuity in national narratives

Study 1 in Chapter 4 yielded a positive correlation between essentialist thinking and PCC. However, in that study we measured essentialist beliefs about people’s traits in general, rather than the essentialisation of a specific national group. Hence, to the extent that the correlation was between a more generalised tendency to essentialise and a domain-specific perception of a single social category (PCC), we argued on theoretical grounds that the direction of causation is more likely to flow from essentialism to PCC, rather than the other way around. In other words, the roots of this relationship can be sought in an underlying proneness to essentialist thinking, with PCC being one concrete manifestation of this cognitive tendency in the domain of national groups.

The relationship between essentialism and PCC is therefore of great theoretical interest for our understanding of the cognitive processes that underpin the endurance of national identities, and as such invites further investigation. Both constructs describe particular ways of constructing and representing the identity of social groups in the mind, with a critical difference: essentialist thinking produces representations of objects endowed with a fixed and unchanging essence (Gelman, 2003; N. Haslam, 2017), whereas high-continuity social groups are typically imagined as united by the transmission of some “core” values and traditions, and by a shared historical trajectory. In the case of essentialism, a person can essentialise a group of people even if he cannot point to what the essence is, or whether it is cultural,

genetic, chemical, or spiritual. The essence can act as a “placeholder” (Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011; Gelman, 2003; Jylkkä, Railo, & Haukioja, 2009; Medin & Ortony, 1989; Newman & Keil, 2008) in the absence of a more sophisticated explanation for what is the basis of the group’s seemingly natural properties.

The distinction between PCC and essentialism can be illustrated with a practical example, such as Huizinga’s (1959/2014) discussion of the Balkan nationalisms that emerged in parallel with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century:

“As a result of their hopeless ethnic confusion in a large central area all these peoples feel irredentism in its most painful form and are dominated by a strong urge toward expansion: Greater Serbia, Greater Bulgaria, Greater Greece. The Greeks, the Bulgarians, and the Serbs have each of them at some time exercised hegemony over the peninsula and held the others in subjection. But in order to form a link with that great past they all have to skip over a long period of common enslavement under the Turk. This gives something of a mythical character to their national ideals: Stephen Dushan and Czar Simeon have much of the traditional national hero about them. Among the two Slavic peoples, the strongly romantic inclination natural to the race also helps to make their historical recollections an especially active factor in their national life.” (Huizinga, 1959/2014, p.93)

Here Huizinga interprets the behaviour of nationalities as political actors in terms of two sets of concepts in the same paragraph: one describing nationality as a historical construct, the other – as the product of an essential national character. To an extent his remarks anticipate the discursive turn in social psychology in the late 20th century (Billig, 1987; Harré, 2005; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The national identities of the Balkan successor states are described here as constructed through narratives and mythical figures, and the process of construction as challenging and requiring political efforts. The “long period of enslavement” represents a caesura in their national history, an obstacle to the establishment of narrative continuity, which requires some reparative action to be overcome. However, at the same time Huizinga relies on essentialist notions of natural character, in which different

peoples are endowed with distinct “natural inclinations”, the expression of which requires no such effortful actions. Huizinga distinguishes between the continuity of the Balkan nations – which he sees as a product of social actions, shared narratives and beliefs – and their national “essence”, a timeless “natural inclination”. Implicit in these writings is Huizinga’s belief that the perceived continuity and the essence of the nation can be functionally independent – some nations can have essential traits while lacking cultural or historical continuity. To illustrate this point using Huizinga’s interpretation of historical events: it was only when individual educated Slavs began compiling national histories of the Balkans that the Slavic nations acquired a degree of perceived continuity; before this period of nation-building, the stateless Slavic peoples had their (ostensibly) essential national character (the “inclinations natural to the race”), but lacked a sense of cultural or historical continuity with the past.

7.1.4 From collective continuity to identity fusion: a moderation model

So far in this chapter, I have suggested that it is possible that perceptions of national continuity may foster identity fusion with the nation – the opposite model to the one discussed in Chapter 4, and one that requires a different theoretical justification. Although the precise mechanisms by which individuals become strongly fused with a group are still not well understood, the outline provided by Swann et al. (2009) gives some indications that such a model is at least theoretically plausible.

In Swann et al.’s account, national identification is seen as the tendency to define one’s self-concept by reference to one’s belonging to the nation. For example, a French person who identifies strongly with his nationality will see “being French” as an important component of his self-identity. What identity fusion involves, above and beyond mere identification, is the perception of the group as a fictive family, and as an extension of the personal self; it involves both the sense of some deep, ontological connection with other in-group members that characterizes essentialist thinking, and the feeling of a shared mission and destiny that is a component of PCC.

Therefore, social identification without fusion does not entail specific beliefs about the actual basis of group membership, and simply reflects the importance of membership for the individual's self-identity. However, if a person with an already strong collective identity is led to believe in the continuity and endurance of some essential group characteristics, this could in turn foster a sense of shared destiny and mission with other group members. Increased PCC could thus foster identity fusion, provided that the individual already strongly identifies with the in-group and is prone to holding essentialist beliefs about it. In other words, PCC may have an effect on identity fusion, moderated by (1) the strength of that person's national identity, and (2) their proneness to essentialist thinking (see Figure 7.1 for an illustration of this model).

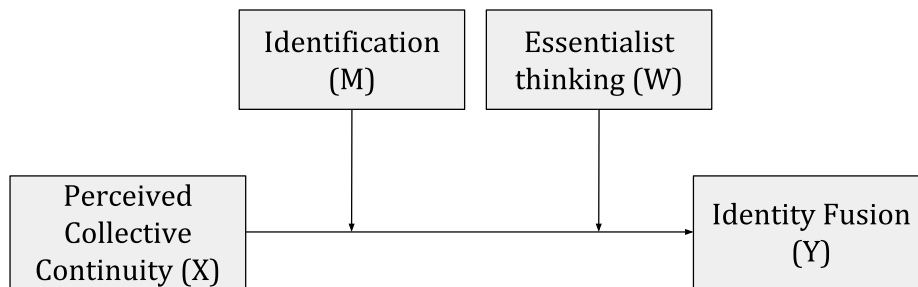


Figure 7.1: Conceptual diagram of a double moderation model of the relationship between PCC, identity fusion, identification and essentialist thinking.

7.2 Study 5

In order to test this hypothetical model, we designed a study in which we attempted to manipulate the degree to which participants perceive their nation as culturally and historically continuous in order to foster a temporary state of identity fusion with the nation. We predicted that higher PCC would produce higher identity fusion scores, and that this effect would be moderated by the strength of participants' identification with the nation and their proneness to essentialist thinking. Furthermore, we sought to explore the practical implications of this effect by measuring participants' willingness to sacrifice themselves in defence of their nation, since endorsement of extreme sacrifice is a well-established correlate of identity fusion

(Swann et al., 2014). Hence, this study tested four main predictions. **Hypothesis 1:** Identity fusion scores would be higher in the High Continuity condition than in the Low Continuity condition. **Hypothesis 2:** The effect of the PCC manipulation on fusion would be moderated by social essentialist thinking (i.e., essentialist thinking about social categories in general, and not only about national groups), and by national identification (**Hypothesis 3**). **Hypothesis 4:** Participants in the High Continuity condition would express stronger endorsement of extreme sacrifice in defence of the nation, and this relationship would be mediated by their identity fusion with the nation. The analysis plan was pre-registered and is available through the following link: <https://aspredicted.org/kj2ne.pdf>

7.2.1 Methods

7.2.1.1 Participants

This pre-registered study was advertised on the online platform Prolific Academic, where participants were invited to complete the survey in exchange for a small fee, and participation was restricted to British nationals currently residing in the United Kingdom. A total of 313 participants were recruited based on an a priori power analysis conducted with G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). It was determined that a minimum of 272 participants would be necessary for a t-test to detect a small to medium effect size ($d = .4$, alpha error probability = .05, power = .95); to that we added a 15% margin for potential exclusions (N=41). After pre-registered exclusions for incomplete or duplicate responses (N=21) and failures on the attention check (N=10; two items instructing participants to select a specific response to indicate that they were reading the questions), the final sample included in the analysis was N=282 (212 females), split between the high continuity (N=140) and low continuity (N=142) conditions, with a mean age of 34.8 years (SD=10.9).

7.2.1.2 Materials and Procedure

Manipulation of PCC: Upon signing up for the study participants were taken to the survey page and were asked to complete a short demographic form. They were then informed that what they were about to read was a short excerpt from the book

A Short History of England (Jenkins, 2011), which they were instructed to read carefully. Depending on the condition they were randomly assigned to, participants were presented with a vignette elaborating on the idea that the culture, values and national traits that define Britishness have either remained unchanged for many generations, or have changed profoundly in recent memory. The two vignettes (Appendix B) followed the same basic structure and differed only in some key words depending on the argument they were defending. The language used in the vignettes was intended to reflect the phrasing used in established measures (Sani et al., 2008, 2007, 2009) and manipulations (Warner et al., 2016) of perceived collective continuity. Upon reading the vignette, participants were asked to complete Sani et al.'s (2007) measure of PCC as a manipulation check.

After the manipulation and the measure of PCC, participants completed Gómez et al.'s (2011) 7-item verbal identity fusion scale, Bastian and Haslam's (2006) measure of essentialist thinking, and Henry, Arrow and Carini's (1999) measure of national identification adapted for British respondents. Finally, they were given a five-item questionnaire measuring willingness to fight and die in defence of their country (Swann et al., 2009); sample items: "*I'd do anything to protect Britain*", "*I would fight someone physically threatening another British person*".

7.2.1.3 Design and Analysis

The study had a between-subjects design, with a binary independent variable (perceived collective continuity manipulation: low continuity vs high continuity) and a continuous dependent variable (identity fusion). The primary hypothesis (H1) about the effect of PCC on identity fusion was tested using an independent-samples t-test. Two additional moderated regression analyses were conducted to test two of the secondary hypotheses, with social essentialism (H2) and national identification (H3) as moderator variables of PCC's effect on fusion. Finally, a third mediation analysis was planned to test for an effect of PCC on participants' expression of willingness to perform extreme sacrifices for the good of their nation, mediated by identity fusion (H4).

7.2.2 Results

The descriptive statistics and correlations are summarised in Table 7.1. As in previous studies, positive correlations were found between fusion, identification, and PCC. Endorsement of extreme sacrifice was correlated with fusion, identification, and essentialist thinking, and with the Cultural (but not with the Historical) component of PCC. Essentialist thinking was correlated with Cultural continuity, as well as with endorsement of extreme sacrifice, but not with fusion or identification.

Table 7.1: Study 5: Descriptive statistics and correlations (N=282)

	PCC (Total)	PCC (Culture)	PCC (History)	Fusion	ID	EssT	EES
PCC (Total)^a	(.829) ^b	–	–	–	–	–	–
PCC (Culture)	.897*** ^c	(.853)	–	–	–	–	–
PCC (History)	.812**	.499**	(.628)	–	–	–	–
Fusion	.263**	.289**	.135*	(.928)	–	–	–
ID	.136*	.117*	.116*	.535**	(.793)	–	–
EssT	.135*	.189**	-.003	.069	-.022	(.787)	–
EES	.090	.162*	-.026	.389**	.169**	.165**	(.883)
M	4.67	4.76	4.59	4.01	4.82	3.36	-1.55
SD	.8	1.06	.78	1.3	.73	.5	1.15

^a PCC = Perceived Collective Continuity; ID = Identification; EssT = Essentialist Thinking; EES = Endorsement of Extreme Sacrifice.

^b Figures in parentheses give internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's α . All other values in the correlation matrix are Spearman's ρ .

^c * $p < .05$, ** $< .01$, *** $< .001$

7.2.2.1 Manipulation check

To assess whether the manipulation of perceived collective continuity was successful, we compared the average PCC scores between participants in the high continuity and the control conditions. An independent samples t-test confirmed that participants who read the high-continuity vignette reported higher average PCC scores ($M = 4.99, SD = .63$) than those who read the low-continuity vignette

($M = 4.35, SD = .83$), $t(262) = 7.33, p < .001, d = .872$ (equal variances not assumed). The effect appeared to be greater for the cultural component (Control condition $M = 4.37$, High PCC condition $M = 5.16, t(261) = 6.64, p < .001$) than for the historical (Control condition $M = 4.33$, High PCC condition $M = 4.84, t(280) = 5.69, p < .001$). The manipulation had no effect on the measure of identification, however it did have a small but marginally significant effect on essentialist thinking (Control condition $M = 3.30$, High PCC condition $M = 3.42, t(280) = 1.958, p = .051$, Cohen's $d = .24$).

7.2.2.2 Main analysis

No difference in identity fusion scores was found between the two conditions (Control condition $M(SD) = 3.95(1.40)$, High PCC condition $M(SD) = 4.08(1.19), t(280) = .811, p = .42$). There was thus no support for the primary hypothesis (H1).

To test hypotheses 2 and 3, we conducted a moderated regression on identity fusion using Model 2 of A. F. Hayes's (2017) PROCESS macro for SPSS, with the manipulation of PCC as the predictor, and essentialist thinking and national identification as the two moderators. The analysis showed no effect of the manipulation of PCC ($b = .1.276, SE = 1.234, p = .302$), and no effect of the interactions PCC \times Essentialism ($b = -.318, SE = .264, p = .229, R^2 \text{ change} = .004$) and PCC \times Identification ($b = -.009, SE = .180, p = .959, R^2 \text{ change} < .001$), hence no evidence of a moderated effect of PCC on identity fusion was found.

The final planned analysis was not carried out, as mediation assumes an effect of the predictor (PCC) on the mediator (fusion), which was not found in the preceding analyses.

7.2.3 Discussion

The studies reported here and in previous chapters have consistently shown that perceptions of (national) collective continuity correlate with both identity fusion and social essentialism, however the precise nature of these relationships remained to be investigated. The present study builds upon these findings by testing one hypothet-

ical causal explanation – namely, that perceptions of collective continuity interact with national identification and essentialist thinking to foster identity fusion with the ingroup. The primary aim was to investigate whether a manipulation of PCC can produce a change in participants' identity fusion with the nation, and to test for a moderating effect of identification and essentialism. A secondary aim was to demonstrate that this effect extends beyond declarations of attachment to the nation, and into an increased readiness to sacrifice oneself for the group, as predicted by identity fusion theory. The results indicate that the experimental manipulation did have an effect on participants' perceptions of the continuity of British national identity (PCC), however this did not produce a measurable change in identity fusion or in endorsement of extreme sacrifices. Furthermore, no effect of the PCC manipulation on fusion was detected at different levels of national identification and essentialist thinking.

As in the studies reported in previous chapters, measures of identification, fusion and PCC were all positively correlated; more interestingly, when PCC was broken down into its two components, only cultural continuity was correlated with essentialist thinking, and not historical continuity; a similar pattern was found in Study 1 (Chapter 3, Table 3.1), where essentialist thinking was correlated with both components of PCC, but more strongly with cultural than historical continuity. This finding is in line with Sani et al.'s (2007) hypothesis that cultural continuity fulfils for group identity the same role as essentialism does for personal identity: “[Cultural continuity] is concerned with the perceptions that core values, beliefs, traditions, habits, mentalities, and inclinations are trans-generationally transmitted within the group. That means that the group is perceived as having deep, essential cultural traits that have a degree of permanence.” (Sani et al., 2007, p. 1120), whereas the analogous dimension for personal identity is linked with “the perception that the self has a deep, inherent essence that remains the same through time, despite obvious physical and psychological changes that people sustain in their life-span.” (p. 1119). These findings could be interpreted as indicating that cultural continuity is particularly sensitive to essentialist thinking in a way that historical

continuity is not.

As in the first two correlational studies (Chapters 4 and 5), identity fusion was more strongly correlated with cultural than with historical continuity; however, this time the correlations between identification on the one hand and cultural and historical continuity on the other were very similar in strength. While this could indicate that previous findings about fusion and identification being related to different components of PCC are not consistently replicable, the lack of a difference in this case is likely due to an effect of the experimental manipulation.

One strength of the present study is that it makes use of a realistic manipulation of perceived collective continuity. Discussions of national narratives are most widely disseminated to a general audience in popular history books or articles in the press, hence the vignettes were designed with a similar format and style of presentation in mind. This format was specifically chosen over alternative manipulation paradigms, such as subconscious exposure to subtle national identity-related cues and symbols (e.g., Carter et al., 2011; Hassin et al., 2009), in an effort to create a maximally realistic simulation of the way such narratives are encountered in everyday discussions of nationhood.

Although this study did not yield the expected results, it is worth commenting briefly on its broader aims and on the pitfalls of reductionism. It is not the goal of this research enquiry to produce a generalised theory reducing all facets and forms of nationalism to a set of psychological phenomena without regard for the cultural context. Rather, the broader aim is to find some higher-order cognitive processes that can be shown to interact with the multitude of different forms that a national narrative can take. National narratives are deeply heterogeneous, with profound differences in terms of the emotional valence placed on key episodes, the degree of homogeneity with which the nation is presented, the overall direction of the narrative arc, etc. (László, 2014). Differences can be observed not only between, but also within, national communities – the question of what is the “correct” national narrative can become a matter of contention between various subgroups within the same nation. This heterogeneity across cultural contexts prevents any easy generalisa-

tions about how narratives in general function as carriers of identity, but Chapter 10 will cover some recent attempts to integrate cognitive psychological theories with an understanding of the role of narratives in identity building.

Part II

Cognitive Perspectives

Chapter 8

Does a heuristic cognitive style predict social essentialism?

8.1 Introduction

As described in Chapter 3, there has been considerable disagreement in the literature about the precise nature of psychological essentialism. Gelman (2003), viewing essentialism from a developmental perspective, has argued that it is the product of several cognitive abilities that emerge in early childhood (such as distinguishing between appearances and deeper reality, tracking an object's identity through time, etc.). In contrast, Cimpian and Salomon (2014) have suggested that essentialism could be underpinned by a single cognitive "shortcut" which they have termed the inherence heuristic. The heuristic is said to lead people to attribute an object's traits to inherent, rather than contingent, properties.

Cimpian and Salomon's proposal is particularly exciting because it allows researchers to integrate psychological essentialism as a concept into the wider literature on dual-process theories. Heuristics figure prominently in dual-process and dual-system theories as cognitive shortcuts in decision making, and are associated with more intuitive and less analytical reasoning (Epstein, Pacini, Denes-Raj, & Heier, 1996; J. Evans, 2008; Shiloh, Salton, & Sharabi, 2002). The following sections provide some background to dual-process theories of human cognition, as well as to the concept of cognitive styles. The possibility of a link between the inherence

heuristic and a general preference for an intuitive thinking style is then discussed in light of these theories.

8.1.1 Dual-process theories of human cognition

People often express the conviction that there is some fundamental duality to human psychology – we sometimes say that we are in two minds, or that there is a conflict between our head and our heart, between our reason and our feelings. For more than a century the Freudian notion of a conflict between unconscious desires and a rational consciousness has been deeply embedded in popular discourses (Epstein, 1994; Moskowitz, Skurnik, & Galinsky, 1999), and since the 1980s (e.g., J. Evans, 1984, 1989) various theories of dual cognition have lent support to the view that such a duality is indeed a fundamental feature of the way we process information, make decisions, or relate to other people. As J. Evans (2006) explains, this conclusion was warranted by the apparent inconsistencies in people’s performance on a range of logical tasks – the same individuals that exhibited a high capacity for logical reasoning while solving one problem often underperformed when working on another. Given that a static capacity for rationality could not reliably predict performance on these tasks, the hypothesis emerged that there are multiple cognitive processes at play, functioning independently of each other, and often producing conflicting results.

However, there has been considerable disagreement in the literature regarding what these processes are, or how many of them exist. The earliest models described them as domain-specific, relevant to performance in particular tasks or domains of cognition, such as impression formation, prejudice, and the relationship between attitude and behaviour (Sherman, Gawronski, & Trope, 2014). Although some tri- and tetra-process models have also been proposed (e.g., Conrey, Sherman, Gawronski, Hugenberg, & Groom, 2005; Sherman, 2006; Stanovich, 2009), dual-process theories have been by far the most popular. As Gilbert (1999) explains,

“Psychologists who champion dual-process models are usually not stuck on two. Few would come undone if their models were recast in terms of three processes, or four, or even five. Indeed, the only number they would not

happily accept is one, because claims about dual processes in dry psychology are not so much claims about how many processes there *are*, but how many processes there *aren't*. And the claim is this: There aren't one." (Gilbert, 1999, p.4, emphasis in original).

A further point of contention is the functional organisation of these processes: in some models they are functionally independent, while in others they are seen as organised into sets of systematically intercorrelated dyads (Sherman et al., 2014), so that process A in domain X is functionally similar to process B in domain Y. These "multiple psychological dualities" (Sherman et al., 2014, p.8) are said to form two distinct clusters: one is composed of processes which are deliberative, slow, cognitively demanding, and work with information independently of its context; conversely, the second cluster of processes are intuitive, fast, less resource-demanding, and make use of contextual information (J. Evans, 2008; Sherman et al., 2014; Stanovich & West, 2000, 2008).

Dual-system theorists describe these correlating clusters of processes as *analytical* and an *intuitive* cognitive systems, respectively; the two are said to be domain-general (i.e., not confined to particular cognitive tasks), to work in parallel, and to underpin many basic cognitive functions, such as problem-solving, information processing, and categorisation (Epstein, 1994; J. Evans, 2006; Kahneman, 2003; Stanovich & West, 2000). The intuitive processing system involves quick, preconscious, affect-driven judgements, requiring very little cognitive control and often relying on heuristics – cognitive shortcuts in problem-solving that produce judgements based on intuitions derived from previous experience, rather than on a deliberate rational analysis of the problem (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982). In contrast, the analytical system is slower and imposes a taxing processing load on one's cognitive capacity, relying heavily on a limited amount of working memory resources (J. Evans, 2006; Kahneman, 2011; Stanovich & West, 2000). Intuitive thinking has the advantage of speed and effortlessness at the expense of nuance and, occasionally, accuracy – in situations where the answer to a problem is counter-intuitive and requires conscious deliberation and calculation, answers pro-

duced by the intuitive system are more likely to be incorrect or otherwise biased. For example, Tversky and Kahneman (1983) famously demonstrated that people intuitively perceive a given situation as more likely if it is described in more specific, as opposed to more general, terms (known as the conjunction fallacy); another bias, produced by the availability heuristic, leads people to overestimate the likelihood of statistically rare but emotionally salient events (such as acts of terrorism or shark attacks).

Based on this description, it might seem reasonable to assume that analytical processing is associated with rational, objective, and factual thought, while intuitive processing would be the opposite – more easily swayed by emotions and less influenced by facts, with all the negative associations this implies. Indeed, analytical thinking is often associated in common parlance with objectivity or rationality, which are generally seen as desirable qualities. However, Pennycook, Neys, Evans, Stanovich, and Thompson (2018) have argued that an analytical processing style can perpetuate biased reasoning too, for example through rationalisation (or motivated reasoning). The analytical/intuitive dichotomy should therefore not be seen as a value-laden classification.

The relationship between the analytical and intuitive systems is complex and multifaceted. Many models assume a default-interventionist relationship between the two, wherein the intuitive system functions preconsciously and involuntarily, generating its output by default; this output can only be suppressed *ex post facto*, by the individual choosing to engage, with varying success, in analytical reasoning (Sloman, 2014). In contrast, Epstein's Cognitive Experiential Self Theory (CEST) describes a parallel-competitive structure (J. Evans, 2008), in which the two systems (rational and experiential/affect-driven) simultaneously produce conscious beliefs and preconscious schemas derived from past affective experiences, and thus function in parallel to jointly affect reasoning and behaviour (Epstein, 1994; Pacini & Epstein, 1999). However, according to CEST, only the rational system requires conscious reasoning, while the experiential system is preconscious and non-verbal, which could explain why we are consciously aware of a single unified process which

sometimes appears to produce conflicting output.

8.1.2 From cognitive processes to dispositional thinking styles

Moreover, although the intuitive and analytical systems operate together within each brain, individuals often exhibit a general preference for one system over the other across different contexts, with what has been described as a trait-like regularity and stability (Phillips, Fletcher, Marks, & Hine, 2016). The primacy of one processing system over the other manifests in a particular *dispositional thinking (cognitive) style* – a habitual pattern in how an individual learns, perceives, organises, and retrieves information, solves problems, and relates to other people. Many potential cognitive styles have been proposed, some of them extensively researched – such as field dependence vs. field independence (Pithers, 2002; Witkin & Goodenough, 1977), holistic vs. analytical processing (J. Evans, 2006), impulsivity vs. reflectiveness (Strack & Deutsch, 2004), and risk taking vs. caution (Kogan & Wallach, 1964, cited in J. Hayes & Allinson, 1994), among others (J. Hayes & Allinson, 1994). Research on cognitive and learning styles in the late 1990s and early 2000s produced an abundance of theoretical models and technical terminology, and the resulting body of work on the subject was heavily criticised by Coffield, Moseley, Hall, and Ecclestone (2004) for its inconsistency and lack of empirical support. However, in the decade and a half since then, the existence of many of these styles has been experimentally validated through the combination of neuroimaging and eye-tracking techniques (Bendall, Galpin, Marrow, & Cassidy, 2016), indicating separate neural pathways and different patterns of activation corresponding to, for example, visual as opposed to verbal cognitive styles. Furthermore, some researchers have argued that, due to the conceptual similarities among many of the proposed cognitive styles, most of them can be subsumed under a spectrum from ‘intuitive’ to ‘analytical’ (Allinson & Hayes, 1996; J. Evans, 1984; Kahneman, 2011).

A clarification is due here, to distinguish the concept of cognitive style from the superficially similar idea of cognitive capacity. When psychologists describe cognitive style as a trait-like disposition, it might be tempting to view it as synonymous with a general capacity for rational thought – i.e., a person who has a pre-

dominantly analytical cognitive style must be more “rational” than someone with a more intuitive style. However, the two terms are better seen as describing two related but distinct concepts. Cognitive capacity refers to a person’s ability to engage in conscious analytical thought, while cognitive style refers to a person’s disposition, or preference, for using that capacity when thinking (Pennycook, 2014). In other words, “While cognitive ability is largely given for adults, cognitive style is a choice, i.e. a problem could be tackled either in a fast, intuitive-believing style or a slow reflective-analytical style” (Strulik, 2016, p.36).

8.1.3 The role of cognitive style in essentialist thinking

The distinction between analytical and intuitive cognitive styles has been applied to the study of social-psychological phenomena, such as social categorisation and stereotyping, but unlike cognitive psychologists using dual-process/dual-system models, social psychologists tend to be less interested in questions concerning the underlying cognitive architecture. Instead, dual-system theories have been refocused to address issues related to consciousness, free will, and the representations of knowledge, such as social representations and implicit attitudes (J. Evans, 2008). More specifically, intuitive (or heuristic) thinking has been shown to produce simplifying assumptions about people’s membership in social categories – when group membership is uncertain, people tend to prefer simple, one-cause explanations for individual traits, place much more importance on negative evidence than on positive, and interpret likelihood as certainty (Greifeneder, Bless, & Fiedler, 2018; Johnson, Kim, & Keil, 2016). According to Cimpian and Salomon, essentialist thinking is similarly the product of intuitive, simplifying assumptions about abstract social categories, stemming from an over-reliance on the intuitive over the analytical cognitive style:

“... just as with other heuristics, it is likely that there are substantial individual differences in the extent to which people accept the output of the heuristic ... For example, people with greater cognitive abilities or more reflective cognitive styles may be more likely to override the typical output of the [inherence] heuristic—among other things, they may be more motivated to

produce accurate judgments and thus to scrutinize the first thought that comes to mind.” (Salomon & Cimpian, 2014, p.3)

In other words, Cimpian and Salomon argue that the essentialist intuitions produced by the inherence heuristic are a universal phenomenon that occurs whenever snap categorisation has to be performed; as in other default-interventionist models, individual differences in the acceptance of such intuitions arise only at the next stage of the process, when the output of the heuristic is either accepted uncritically, or replaced with a more nuanced explanation for group membership. Cimpian and Salomon also report a negative correlation between reliance on the heuristic and a measure of participants’ need for cognition, which is consistent with the hypothesis that the output of the heuristic can be suppressed through more effortful, analytical information processing.

To summarise, there is an ongoing debate about the nature and cognitive underpinnings of social essentialism. One prominent proposal is that it stems from a heuristic associated with an intuitive, context-dependent, and less cognitively demanding processing style (Gelman & Meyer, 2014). The present studies sought to test this hypothesis.

8.2 Study 6. Cognitive style and essentialism: Experimental study

The following study investigated the hypothetical link between cognitive style and social essentialism. If essentialist thinking is explained at least in part by an inability to suppress the output of the inherence heuristic, it is more likely to arise as the result of intuitive (heuristic-driven) reasoning than analytical reasoning. Therefore, in Study 6 the attempt was made to manipulate participants’ cognitive style by priming them to rely on either intuitive or analytical thinking. We predicted that participants in the intuitive priming condition would report having stronger essentialist beliefs about people’s personality traits, compared with those in the analytical priming condition.

8.2.1 Methods

8.2.1.1 Participants

Sixty-three psychology students at Royal Holloway, University of London, took part in the study in exchange for course credits. The target sample size ($N=56$) was based on an a priori power analysis for a t-test detecting a large effect size (Cohen's $d = .08$, $\alpha = .05$, power = .90) and was comparable to the sample of $N=57$ used in Gervais and Norenzayan's (2012) cognitive style priming study. Out of these 63, four participants were excluded from the analysis for failing the attention check, resulting in the final sample of 59. The age range was 18-34 years ($M = 19.5$, $SD = 2.6$), with a composition of 46 females and 13 males. Participants were randomly assigned to either the Analytical ($N = 28$) or the Intuitive ($N = 31$) priming conditions.

8.2.1.2 Materials and Procedure

Participants were briefed in groups of 2-5 and were told that they would be asked to write a short paragraph describing how they solved a problem using either logical reasoning or their intuition, and would then be asked to complete a questionnaire on social attitudes. They were naive as to the nature of the experimental manipulation and the aim of the study.

Manipulation task: At the time of conducting this experiment, there were a number of influential studies that purported to demonstrate the effectiveness of a range of priming techniques in manipulating a person's preference for one cognitive style over another, at least temporarily. Some of these techniques relied on imagery and subconscious associations, such as Gervais and Norenzayan's (2012) experiments in which participants were exposed to the image of Rodin's sculpture *The Thinker*, or had to complete a word rearrangement task containing words related to analytical thinking. Other manipulations can be more overt – for example, Shenhav, Rand, and Greene (2012) asked participants to write a short text about a time they successfully solved a problem by using either their instinct or logical reasoning, depending on the priming condition. Given that this particular priming paradigm

has been used successfully in other experiments informed by dual-process theory (e.g., Ma, Liu, Rand, Heatherton, & Han, 2015; Rand, Brescoll, Everett, Capraro, & Barcelo, 2016; Rand, Greene, & Nowak, 2012; M. E. Roberts et al., 2014), we decided to use an identical task to manipulate cognitive style. However, it should be noted that the state of the literature has changed considerably since conducting the present study, and the implications of these developments will be examined in more detail in the Discussion below.

In the first part of the survey, participants were asked to write a short paragraph with the following instructions: “*Please think carefully and describe a time when you solved a problem by ...*”, where the instructions specified either “... *using logical thinking and reasoning*” or “... *using your intuition and following your instincts*”, depending on the condition to which they were randomly allocated (Analytical or Intuitive, respectively). Since the participants were all first year undergraduate psychology students, they were unlikely to be familiar with the manipulation at that stage of their studies; when after completing the experiment they were asked whether they had heard of this type of task before, all of them reported that they had not.

Essentialism scale: After the manipulation task, participants completed the dependent measure, which was Bastian and Haslam’s (2006) “Biological Basis of Essentialism Scale” (the same measure of social essentialism as used in Chapter 3).

Attention check: As a form of attention check, the essentialism scale included a single item with the instruction “*Please skip this question to show that you have read this far.*” Participants who responded to that question were disqualified from the final analysis. Upon completing the survey, participants were debriefed and were given the option to withdraw their data (none chose to do so).

8.2.1.3 Design and Analysis

The study had a between-subjects experimental design, with Priming (Analytical vs. Intuitive cognitive style) as the independent variable, and social essentialism as a continuous dependent variable. Reverse-coded items were recoded for the analysis, average essentialism scores were calculated from the questionnaire data, and

an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare scores between the two priming conditions.

8.2.2 Results

Mean scores on the measure of social essentialism were normally distributed (as shown in Figure 8.1), and appeared to be marginally higher in the intuitive thinking condition than in the analytical thinking condition (Table 8.1).

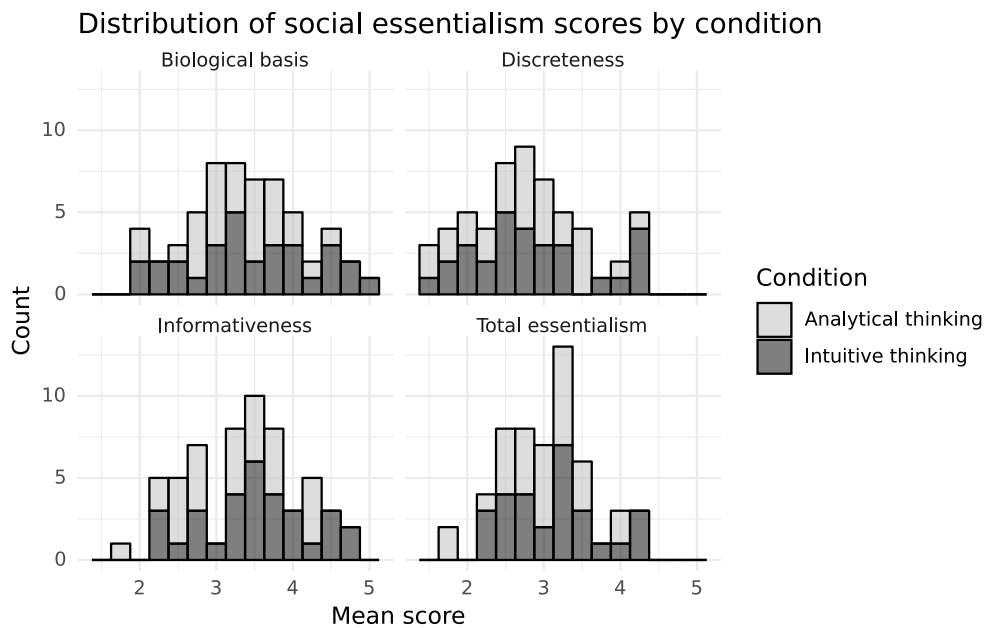


Figure 8.1: Histograms of mean scores on the verbal measure of social essentialism, including a break-down by scale component.

However, an independent t-test showed no statistically significant difference in total essentialism scores between the two conditions: $t(52.21) = -1.16, p = .253$. Likewise, no difference was found in terms of scores on the Biological basis ($t(52.70) = -1.13, p = .265$), Discreteness ($t(54.50) = -.42, p = .679$), and Informativeness ($t(55.57) = -1.63, p = .109$) subscales.

8.2.3 Discussion

In Study 6 participants were primed to use either analytical or intuitive reasoning. As Table 8.1 shows, mean essentialism scores appeared slightly elevated in the Intuitive priming condition, however the difference was not statistically significant, hence the results did not support the experimental hypothesis.

Table 8.1: Descriptive statistics for the social essentialism scores by priming condition and by sex.

		<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
<i>Condition</i>	Analytical thinking (N=28)	2.98	3.08	0.52	1.83	4.04
	Intuitive thinking (N=31)	3.15	3.17	0.62	2.25	4.33
<i>Sex</i>	Females (N=46)	3.08	3.12	0.57	1.83	4.33
	Males (N=13)	3.01	2.98	0.61	1.88	4.25

One possible explanation for the lack of a significant result could be that the manipulation of cognitive style was not successful in affecting participants' disposition to use either intuitive or analytical thinking. On the one hand, the priming paradigm used in the present study had already been demonstrated as effective in previous experiments, down to the specific text used in the manipulation task (e.g., Ma et al., 2015; Rand et al., 2016, 2012; M. E. Roberts et al., 2014; Shenhav et al., 2012). On the other hand, no replication attempts have been made to date confirming the findings of these studies using the same paradigm. Only one of the experiments reported by Rand et al. (2012) was replicated, partially, by Bouwmeester et al. (2017) (see also Rand et al., 2016), however that particular experiment did not use cognitive priming. Most notably, Gervais and Norenzayan (2012) had demonstrated that cognitive style could be manipulated using a variety of techniques – from presenting participants with cognition-related imagery (the above-mentioned photo of *The Thinker*), to using a non-typical (disfluent) font for the dependent measure questionnaire, which ostensibly required more conscious effort to read (see also Seufert, 2018; Seufert, Wagner, & Westphal, 2017). Hence, at the time of conducting Study 6, the efficacy of the priming paradigm we decided to use, alongside a range of other techniques in the same vein, seemed well established.

It should be noted that Study 6 was conducted during the high point of the current replication crisis in experimental psychology (see Chapter 1), in which social priming effects in particular came under severe scrutiny (e.g., Cesario, 2014; Klein, 2014). To give but one high-profile example, a recent analysis (Schimmack, 2017) of the experimental studies referenced in Chapter 4 of *Thinking, Fast and Slow*

(2011), Daniel Kahneman's best-selling book on dual-system theories, showed that 11 out of 12 experiments had low replicability.

The reasons why many social priming studies failed to replicate are multiple and complex. Non-replicability can be partially attributed to priming effects being culturally contingent, as Gervais and Norenzayan's (2018) attempt to demonstrate a link between analytical thinking and atheism across different cultures has shown. To an extent, it could also be attributable to procedural differences (Cesario, 2014). For example, some recent successful replications (Payne, Brown-Iannuzzi, & Loersch, 2016) used much shorter intervals (in the range of milliseconds) between the priming stimulus and the behavioural measure, whereas in the past it had been argued that a delay of up to a few minutes was necessary for the priming to be effective, as the stimulus has to be pushed out of conscious awareness (e.g., Burke, Martens, & Faucher, 2010).

However, it is likely that questionable research practices (QRPs) and publication bias are the major factor behind priming studies' low replicability. Gervais and Norenzayan's (2012) original priming experiments investigating the role of cognitive style in religiosity are particularly illustrative here. Their findings also failed to replicate in a high-powered multi-site study by Sanchez, Sundermeier, Gray, and Calin-Jageman (2017). The principle investigator himself expressed concerns (Gervais, 2017) about the small sample sizes in the original experiments, as well as about some questionable methodological choices that lowered the study's reliability (e.g., using face-valid but untested stimuli, and attempting to capture a complex construct with a single-item dependent measure).

Today we are much more aware of the extent of publication bias and of the harmful consequences of QRPs for the general trustworthiness of the empirical literature. To the best of my knowledge, there are no published experiments that specifically attempt to replicate Shenhav et al.'s (2012) findings using the same methodology (which served as the basis of the priming manipulation used in Study 6). However, an identical priming manipulation failed to produce an effect on analytical cognitive style in a study by Yilmaz and Saribay (2016). To sum up, in

view of the replication crisis and the state of the literature on experimental social psychology in 2019 (e.g., Camerer et al., 2018), the possibility that the manipulation actually has no, or even a very small effect, has to be considered – published evidence of an effect notwithstanding.

Another limitation of the study was the relatively small sample size ($N=59$, compared with Shenhav et al.'s (2012) $N=373$), as well as the sample composition, which had a pronounced gender imbalance (78% females) and a very narrow age range (68% of participants fell within just two and a half years from the mean age of 19.5). Therefore, the data did not allow for additional exploratory analyses to be made in terms of sex and age effects on social essentialism, which would have required a wider variability in age, as well as essentialism data from a larger number of male participants.

Accordingly, we decided to run a follow-up study with a larger and more age-diverse sample to investigate whether individual differences (Phillips et al., 2016) in disposition towards relying on analytical and intuitive reasoning correlate with essentialist thinking.

8.3 Study 7

This study was designed to look for a correlation between cognitive style and essentialist thinking. At this stage, only circumstantial evidence exists for this hypothesis, such as the correlations reported by Salomon and Cimpian (2014) between scores on their Inherence Heuristic Scale (IHS) and two constructs measuring cognitive style. They found that IHS scores were negatively correlated with need for cognition and positively with need for closure, suggesting that people who accept the output of the inherence heuristic have a lesser preference for effortful thinking and a greater need for simple, unambiguous and clear explanations – findings which are in line with the predictions of dual-system theories.

However, other studies have shown that need for cognition and closure are only weakly correlated with the two poles of the analytical/intuitive cognitive style dichotomy (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Epstein et al., 1996), and could therefore

be viewed as imperfect proxy measures of cognitive style. Hence, we decided to use a more direct measure — an updated version (developed by Thomson & Oppenheimer, 2016) of the Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT), originally developed by Frederick (2005). The original CRT consists of a series of logical and mathematical problems, constructed in such a way that they suggest an intuitive solution that is actually not correct. To take one of Frederick's (2005) original tasks as an example:

If it takes 5 machines 5 minutes to make 5 widgets, how long would it take
100 machines to make 100 widgets?

Answer: _____ minutes

Here the problem is structured in such a way that it suggests a simple pattern (5–5–5; 100–100–x) which immediately causes an intuitive answer to spring to mind: 100. However, this intuitively obvious answer is also mathematically incorrect. Unlike a complex algebraic equation, which does not suggest a quick intuitive answer and requires an effortful calculation in order to be solved, the widgets problem is ambiguous — it suggests two possible routes to arriving at an answer, intuitive and analytical. Furthermore, the correct solution is not technically difficult to reach — it does not require an advanced understanding of mathematics, for example — but it does require the ability to suppress and re-evaluate the immediately available, intuitive answer.

The CRT has been shown to have good predictive validity; for example, Toplak, West, and Stanovich (2011) demonstrated that it predicts performance on a range of reasoning problems (measuring proclivity for heuristic thinking and cognitive biases) better than other individual differences in cognitive functioning, such as cognitive ability and executive functioning. Furthermore, the CRT is not simply a measure of IQ or cognitive ability: although it partially overlaps with direct (Toplak et al., 2011) and proxy measures of intelligence (such as SAT scores; Frederick, 2005), it is a better predictor of heuristic thinking than measures of pure cognitive ability are, and is also related to thinking dispositions that are distinct from intelligence — such as proneness to superstitious thinking, open-mindedness, and tendency to consider future consequences in decision-making (Toplak et al.,

2011). Finally, intuitive thinking as measured by the CRT has been shown to predict reliance on paranormal explanations for anomalous experiences (Ross, Hartig, & McKay, 2017), lending support to the idea that cognitive style has tangible effects on people's explicit beliefs about the world.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the CRT captures the inclination to suppress or review the output of miserly, heuristic-driven thinking, which is conceptually very similar to the intuitive/analytical cognitive style dichotomy that is predicted to be implicated in social essentialism. However, there are two main obstacles that prevent the straightforward use of the original CRT for the purposes of this study. First, the fact that it consists of logical problems whose solution relies on numerical ability has led some to argue that the CRT has little utility outside of the study of strictly numeracy-based biases (Welsh, Burns, & Delfabbro, 2013), and that numerical ability on its own may be a stronger predictor of rational decision-making than cognitive reflection (Campitelli & Gerrans, 2014; Sinayev & Peters, 2015; although cf. Pennycook & Ross, 2016 for a critical analysis of these claims). Second, as Thomson and Oppenheimer (2016) point out, since its publication in 2005 the CRT has been used extensively in psychological tests and surveys, as well as in popular science books and other media - leading to the legitimate criticism that participant pools may have become polluted (i.e., participants may already be familiar with the measure, thus undermining its predictive utility; but cf. Bialek & Pennycook, 2018). Hence, the CRT-2 (Thomson & Oppenheimer, 2016) was developed as an updated version of Frederick's original measure, consisting of four logical problems that do not require any numerical ability to solve. At the time when the present study was conducted (early 2016), the CRT-2 had just been published, and participants would not have had enough time to become familiar with the individual items. By measuring participants' responses to the CRT-2, the goal was to obtain a more accurate reflection of their proclivity to use heuristic or intuitive thinking in ambiguous situations, compared with alternative measures of cognitive disposition (such as the Need for Cognition and Need for Closure scales). Furthermore, conducting the study with a larger and more gender-balanced online sample

Table 8.2: Cognitive Reflection Test-2 items (Thomson & Oppenheimer, 2016) with intuitive and correct answers

<i>Item</i>	<i>Intuitive</i>	<i>Correct</i>
1. If you're running a race and you pass the person in second place, what place are you in?	First	Second
2. A farmer had 15 sheep and all but 8 died. How many are left?	7	8
3. Emily's father had three daughters. The first two are named April and May. What is the third daughter's name?	June	Emily
4. How many cubic feet of dirt are there in a hole that's 3' deep x 3' wide x 3' long?	27 or 9	0

than Study 6 would allow testing for any gender- and age-related effects, which was not possible in the previous experiment. We predicted that scores on the CRT-2 (reflecting a more analytical cognitive style) would be negatively correlated with social essentialism scores.

8.3.1 Methods

Participants

Respondents who completed the online survey in Study 1 (Chapter 4) were also asked to complete the CRT. The sample composition (N=305, after excluding two participants for missing responses on the CRT measure) is described in detail in Study 1 (Chapter 4).

Materials and Procedure

The participants completed a total of five measures, presented in a randomised order: the CRT, an 18-item measure of social essentialism (Bastian & Haslam, 2006), and three additional measures of national identity, identity fusion, and perceived collective continuity. Items within each scale were also randomised. The CRT consisted of four questions, each one phrased in a way that hints at an intuitive but wrong answer (8.2).

Design and Analysis

Responses to the four CRT items were coded as either correct or incorrect, and a total CRT score (Min=0, Max=4) was calculated by adding up the four individual items. Higher scores indicate a greater disposition to suppress the output of intuitive thinking.

8.3.2 Results

CRT scores were normally distributed, with only 18% of participants getting the lowest possible score of 0, and 7% scoring the maximum 4 out of 4. Means and standard deviations for all measures are summarised by group in Table 8.3. Mean social essentialism scores remained unchanged for low CRT scores (0-2 correct responses: $M(SD) = 3.45(.50)$ to $3.43(.49)$), but appeared to decline for high CRT scores (4 correct responses: $M(SD) = 3.23(.73)$). However, the planned non-parametric correlation analysis did not reveal a significant correlation between total CRT scores and social essentialism: $r_s = -.086, p = .132$. A subsequent exploratory analysis of the three components of the social essentialism scale showed a significant negative correlation only for discreteness ($r_s = -.137, p = 0.017$, which would not be significant when the critical value is Bonferroni-corrected to $< .0125$), but not for biological basis ($r_s = -.068, p = .236$) or informativeness ($r_s = -.007, p = .901$).

Further exploratory analyses tested for correlations between CRT scores and identity fusion and PCC, as the latter two are hypothesised to be expressions of essentialist nationalism (Chapters 2 and 3). Higher CRT scores (i.e., more analytical thinking) were found to correspond to lower identity fusion ($r_s = -.234, p < .001$) and lower cultural continuity ($r_s = -.155, p = .007$), but not to historical continuity ($r_s = 0.102, p = .077$) or total PCC ($r_s = -.046, p = .426$).

Table 8.3: Social essentialism, Identity fusion, and Perceived Collective Continuity scores broken down by number of correct responses on the Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT)

CRT ^a	N	Essentialism		Fusion		PCC		Cultural PCC		Historical PCC	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
0	56	3.45	0.50	5.19	1.40	5.18	0.78	5.22	1.10	5.14	0.77
1	80	3.41	0.58	4.66	1.57	4.79	0.95	4.81	1.25	4.79	0.91
2	84	3.43	0.49	4.62	1.46	5.01	0.74	4.98	0.90	5.05	0.75
3	63	3.34	0.67	4.23	1.44	5.01	0.83	4.78	1.06	5.25	0.84
4	22	3.23	0.73	4.09	1.40	4.86	0.90	4.61	1.17	5.16	0.92

^a Scores on the CRT measure range from 0 to 4 correct answers.

8.3.3 Discussion

The results did not yield conclusive support for the prediction that analytical thinking (as measured by high CRT scores) would be negatively correlated with social essentialism. Mean essentialism scores were marginally lower for people who answered all 4 CRT questions correctly compared with those who answered none, and this trend fits the study's hypothesis. However, this decline was not statistically significant, and only the Discreteness component of the essentialism scale showed a significant correlation with performance on the CRT. Furthermore, respondents who scored high on the CRT were found to have lower identity fusion and cultural continuity scores, which was not predicted at the outset of the study but again fits the prediction that intuitive thinking (i.e., poor performance on the CRT) would produce more essentialist social cognitions via the inherence heuristic.

Moreover, respondents who scored high on the CRT were found to have lower identity fusion and cultural continuity scores. This would have been consistent with the hypotheses advanced in previous chapters that both fusion and PCC depend on social essentialism, which was theorised here to be itself a product of intuitive thinking. However, the lack of a significant relationship between intuitive thinking and essentialism in Studies 6 and 7 does not provide support for such a mediation model.

8.4 General discussion

A dual-system approach has the potential for explaining social essentialist beliefs as the product of heuristic-driven social cognitions. Study 6 found no support for the hypothesis that intuitive (or heuristic, as opposed to analytical) thinking would lead to stronger social essentialist beliefs, and a subsequent correlational study did not show a significant relationship between responders' proneness to intuitive thinking and essentialist beliefs. Only one component of social essentialism – the discreteness of social categories – was found to be related to intuitive thinking, but although the effect was in the predicted direction, it was not statistically significant after correcting for the number of post-hoc comparisons.

One explanation for the pattern of the findings in both studies could be that a measure of essentialist thinking requires a concrete referent. The version of the questionnaire used in the two studies presented here did not refer to an identifiable target social group for participants to essentialise. Therefore, it is possible that the questionnaire measured their declarative self-knowledge about their own essentialist biases (which is naturally going to be limited and highly dependent on one's capacity for introspection), rather than their actual essentialist beliefs about a specific social group. The study design could be improved by selecting a dependent measure that references particular in- or out-groups.

An additional explanation could be that a causal relationship between intuitive cognitive style and social essentialism does exist, but manifests only under particular circumstances. Specifically, Salomon and Cimpian (2014) have acknowledged that people's use of inherent traits to explain social reality is selective and context-dependent, and have attributed this inconsistency to people's capacity to "block" or "revise" the output of the inherence heuristic. However, Yzerbyt and Demoulin (2014) have retorted that so far no evidence has been presented in support of this hypothesis: "one should expect that when blocking or revising is hindered, say, because participants are under cognitive load, intuitions based on the inherence heuristic should pop up again. Such empirical evidence is not offered by [Cimpian and Salomon]" (p.506). This is certainly a compelling argument, and one which provides an opportunity to test a concrete prediction made by dual-system theory more broadly: that people are more likely to think in essentialist terms when working with limited cognitive resources, under conditions of high working memory load. This hypothesis was tested in Study 8.

Chapter 9

Does high cognitive load promote national essentialism?

9.1 Introduction

After Study 6 found no effect of the manipulation of intuitive thinking on social essentialism, a follow-up experiment was designed to test for the same effect by manipulating cognitive load rather than cognitive style. The concept of cognitive load refers to the demands exerted by a particular task on a person's cognitive capacity (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011). This type of load can be *intrinsic* (i.e., originating in the properties of the task being performed), *extraneous* (stemming from factors not related to the task), or *germane* (i.e., demands imposed by the construction of schemas in novel tasks) (Korbach, Brünken, & Park, 2018). Experimental manipulations of cognitive load can involve the manipulation of both intrinsic load, for example by making participants complete a task within a very restricted time frame, and of extraneous load, typically by introducing a secondary task to be performed in parallel to the primary one, which places additional demands on the individual's working memory resources (Seufert, 2018).

Early research on the effects of information load on cognition was inspired by attempts to understand the factors that facilitate or impede learning (e.g., Sweller, 1988, 1994, 2018), and Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) was specifically developed to improve instructional design (Sweller et al., 2011). Since its origins, CLT has

gained popularity outside of the context of education, from the study of intuitive physics (Lau & Brady, 2018) to the emerging cognitive science of morality and moral judgements (e.g., Greene, 2015; Rubin et al., 2019). But this theoretical framework has been particularly useful for social cognitive research because it can be easily integrated into the existing literature on dual-process theories of cognition (see Chapter 8).

System 2, or analytic and deliberative, thinking is generally described as more effortful and resource-heavy, hence it is less likely to occur in cases where working memory capacity is already limited. For example, in the literature on moral cognition, utilitarian judgements (which require a dispassionate cost-benefit analysis) are associated with analytic reasoning, while deontological judgements (which are rule-based and hence less deliberative) are associated with intuitive thinking (Bialek & De Neys, 2017). Similarly to the default-interventionist mechanics behind the inherence heuristic, the two systems do not so much work in parallel, as System 2 utilitarian judgements require the suppression of immediately generated System 1 deontological judgements (Bialek & De Neys, 2017, p.148). Moreover, higher working memory capacity has been linked with more deliberative and utilitarian moral reasoning, and conversely, time pressure and increased cognitive load have been shown to decrease people's capacity for utilitarian judgements (Bago & De Neys, 2019; but see also Moore, Clark & Kane, 2008, Suter & Hertwig, 2011 and Conway & Gawronski, 2013, cited in Bialek & De Neys, 2017).

Based on previous research findings from the literature on CLT, people should be more likely to rely on intuitive thinking (i.e., less likely to revise the output of the intuitive processing system) if they are placed under higher cognitive load. We therefore decided to use a standard concurrent numerical task to manipulate the cognitive load under which participants would be completing the measure of social essentialism. We expected that a high cognitive load would lead to an increased reliance on heuristic thinking, and hence – to higher essentialism. Furthermore, since intuitive thinking is associated with faster processing, we opted to measure participants' response times, and expected that response time would moderate the

effect of cognitive load on both measures of essentialism. Finally, to address the problem of the lack of a concrete referent in the measures of essentialism in Studies 6 and 7, we developed two new measures of essentialist thinking, using personality traits and national groups as referents.

9.2 Study 8

The hypotheses, target sample size, and planned analyses for this study were pre-registered and can be viewed here: <https://aspredicted.org/4j5g7.pdf>

9.2.1 Methods

Participants

A target sample size of 67 was determined through a power analysis for a multiple regression with three predictors (cognitive load, completion time, and their interaction) and a predicted moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$, power = 0.8, error probability rate $\alpha = .05$). Undergraduate psychology students at Royal Holloway, University of London were offered to take part in the study in exchange for course credit, and recruitment stopped once we had passed the target sample size. In the end, a total of seventy-two participants completed the study (Age: $M = 18.8$, $SD = 0.9$).

Materials

Two face-valid questionnaires, measuring essentialist thinking about personality traits and nationality, respectively, were developed using Bastian and Haslam's (2006) tripartite model of essentialism. The original questionnaire measures three components of essentialist thought about social categories – their biological basis, informativeness, and discreteness.

First, we adapted these three components to create a scale measuring essentialist beliefs about personality types (e.g., biological basis: “*With enough scientific knowledge, we can trace people’s fundamental personality traits to their genes.*”; informativeness: “*It is possible to know about many aspects of a person once you become familiar with a few of their basic traits.*”; discreteness: “*People can behave in ways that seem ambiguous, but the central aspects of their character are*

Table 9.1: Measures of essentialist beliefs about personality traits and nationality.

Personality	Nationality
<p><i>Biological basis</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. With enough scientific knowledge, we can trace people’s fundamental personality traits to their genes. 2. People’s basic personality traits can be largely attributed to their genetic makeup. 3. Although people may change over the course of a lifetime, they also carry a set of fundamental personality traits since birth. <p><i>Informativeness</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. It is possible to know about many aspects of a person once you become familiar with a few of their basic traits. 5. When getting to know a person it is possible to get a picture of the kind of person they are very quickly. 6. Generally speaking, once you know someone in one or two contexts it is possible to predict how they will behave in most other contexts. <p><i>Discreteness</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. People can behave in ways that seem ambiguous, but the central aspects of their character are clear-cut. 8. A person is either a certain “type” or they are not; personalities are not partial. 	<p><i>Cultural basis</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each nation is defined by its unique culture, values and traditions. 2. Regardless of our differences, we are defined by our shared traditions and values. 3. There are certain fundamental traditions and values that define us as a nation. <p><i>Informativeness</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Once you know what someone’s nationality is, that can tell you a lot about what they are like as a person. 5. Once you know several people from the same nationality, it is easy to find some fundamental similarities between them. 6. It is possible to guess a lot about someone’s character or interests based on their nationality. <p><i>Discreteness</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Although people may have ancestors from different countries, their basic nationality is only one. 8. Everyone belongs to some nation; you cannot not have a nationality. 9. You either belong to one nation or to another - there is no in-between.

clear-cut.”).

The same questionnaire structure was then used to create a second scale, measuring essentialist beliefs about nationality. In order not to become confined to purely genetic manifestations of essentialism (see Chapter 3), in the measure of essentialist nationalism the “biological basis” component was replaced with a “cultural basis” one (e.g., “There are certain fundamental traditions and values that define us as a nation.”). Responses on both questionnaires were recorded on a Likert scale from 1 (“Completely Disagree”) to 7 (“Completely Agree”). The full measures are presented in Table 9.1.

Cognitive load was manipulated through a concurrent working memory task

(e.g., de Fockert & Bremner, 2011; Longstaffe, Hood, & Gilchrist, 2014) in which participants were asked to remember either seven (high load) or two (low load) digits while filling in the measures of essentialism.

Procedure

Upon arriving at the lab, participants completed a demographic questionnaire, including self-reports of their age, sex, nationality, and ethnicity. Each participant was seated in front of a computer screen and was given a detailed briefing, in which they were told that the study would investigate the relationship between their working memory and social cognitions, and were given the opportunity to ask questions or withdraw. They were then asked to complete a practice trial which familiarised them with the procedure, before completing the real memory task.

Before each block of questions, participants were shown either a two-digit or a seven-digit number for 15 seconds, which they were instructed to memorise. The number then disappeared from the screen and participants were instructed to work through a block of questions; each block consisted of 3 questions from the measures of essentialism (apart from the Discreteness block from the measure of personality essentialism) and the order of presentation was randomised. At the end of each block, participants were asked to type in the number they were shown at the beginning. There were a total of six blocks (one for each component of the two questionnaires) and different numbers were presented at the start of each block. The completion time for each block was also measured. Upon completing all six blocks, participants were fully debriefed and given the opportunity to ask questions and withdraw their data.

Design and analysis

The study had an experimental design with one between-subjects IV (cognitive load: high vs. low) and two DVs (personality and national essentialism). The order of presentation of the measures was randomised, such that half of the participants completed the measure of personality essentialism first and nationality essentialism second, and the order was reversed for the other half. The order of presentation of the blocks (Biological/cultural basis, informativeness, Discreteness) within each

questionnaire was also randomised. Completion times (in seconds) were measured for each block using the survey platform Qualtrics's in-built functionality; completion times for all twelve blocks were then aggregated and a mean completion time was calculated for each participant. To test the hypothesis of a moderated effect of cognitive load on the two measures of essentialism, personality essentialism and national essentialism were regressed on the manipulation of cognitive load, mean completion time, and their interaction.

9.2.2 Results

Reliability and structure of the measures of essentialism

The 8-item measure of personality essentialism had a good internal consistency with a Cronbach's α of .739. The 9-item measure of national essentialism had a somewhat lower consistency of .55. One item in particular (Item 8: *A person is either a certain "type" or they are not; personalities are not partial.*) correlated poorly with the rest of the scale, and was subsequently dropped from the analysis. The resulting 8-item had an α of .626.

We then performed two exploratory factor analyses with oblique rotation and pairwise deletion to validate the factor structure of the two measures. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .704 for the personality essentialism measure, and .602 for nationality essentialism (at a recommended level of .6 or above) and Bartlett's test of sphericity was highly significant (personality: $\chi^2(28) = 117.9, p < .001$; nationality: $\chi^2(36) = 107.4, p < .001$), indicating that the data from both scales were suitable for structure detection. Personality essentialism scores clustered around two factors (based on Eigenvalues greater than 1), rather than the expected three, but these two factors mapped neatly onto the "Biological basis" (Component 1: items 1, 2 and 3) and "Informativeness" dimensions of the scale (Component 2: items 4, 5, and 6, but unexpectedly also item 7). Factor loadings are presented in Table 9.2

The factor analysis for the measure of national essentialism matched the expected factor structure. Items 1, 2, and 3 ("Cultural basis") loaded clearly on Component 1; items 4, 5, and 6 ("Informativeness") loaded on Component 2; and items

Table 9.2: Principal components analysis revealing a two-factor structure to the measure of personality essentialism

Essentialism item	Component 1	Component 2
<i>Item 1</i>	0.802	0.132
<i>Item 2</i>	0.801	0.291
<i>Item 3</i>	0.663	0.230
<i>Item 4</i>	0.311	0.791
<i>Item 5</i>	0.258	0.706
<i>Item 6</i>	0.205	0.686
<i>Item 7</i>	0.159	0.748
<i>Item 8</i>	0.494	0.423

7 and 9 (‘Discreteness’) loaded on Component 3 (Table 9.3). Based on the consistency and factor analyses, the two measures were taken to have good validity.

Table 9.3: Principal components analysis revealing a three-factor structure to the measure of national essentialism

Essentialism item	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
<i>Item 1</i>	0.610	0.376	-0.358
<i>Item 2</i>	0.554	0.251	0.196
<i>Item 3</i>	0.591	0.399	-0.380
<i>Item 4</i>	-0.444	0.730	-0.126
<i>Item 5</i>	-0.265	0.761	-0.031
<i>Item 6</i>	-0.236	0.778	-0.174
<i>Item 7</i>	0.341	0.299	0.652
<i>Item 9</i>	0.008	0.389	0.753

Descriptives

Personality essentialism scores had a mean of 4.27 ($SD = .68$) out of 7, ranging from 1.63 to 6.25. National essentialism scores had very similar parameters ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .58$, range: 2.71 – 5.71), and both measures were normally distributed. Average completion times per block of 3 questions were 25.6 seconds ($SD = 7.77$) in the High Load condition and 24.38 seconds ($SD = 7.44$) in the Control condition.

Main analysis

First, a linear regression was performed on personality essentialism scores, with the manipulation of cognitive load (high vs. low), mean completion time (in seconds), and their interaction as the predictors. The manipulation was not shown to have an

effect on personality essentialism scores. However, completion time was revealed to be negatively correlated with personality essentialism ($b = -.028, SE = .010, p = .008$), meaning that longer response times corresponded to less essentialist beliefs about people's personality traits. The full results of the moderation analysis ($R^2 = .019, SE = .420, F(3, 68) = 3.099, p = .032$) are summarised in Table 9.4.

Table 9.4: A moderation analysis predicting personality essentialism from cognitive load, completion time, and their interaction.

	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	4.978	.266	18.723	.000
Condition	.213	.266	.803	.425
Time	-.028	.010	-2.756	.008
Condition × Time	-.010	.010	-.978	.331

In a second moderation analysis national essentialism was regressed on the manipulation of cognitive load, mean completion time, and their interaction. The analysis (Table 9.5) did not show an effect of any of the predictor variables on the outcome measure, and the overall moderation model was not significant ($R^2 = .019, SE = .348, F(3, 68) = .444, p = .772$).

A final exploratory analysis revealed that the two measures of essentialism were positively correlated ($r_s = .395, p < .001$), indicating that participants who essentialised personality traits also tended to essentialise national groups.

Table 9.5: Results of a moderation analysis predicting national essentialism from cognitive load, completion time, and their interaction.

	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	4.504	.242	18.613	.000
Condition	.207	.242	.856	.395
Time	-.006	.009	-.650	.517
Condition × Time	-.006	.009	-.688	.494

9.2.3 Discussion

The results of the present study did not support the hypothesis that a manipulation of cognitive load leads to more essentialist intuitions. Hence, no evidence for the link between intuitive or heuristic thinking and essentialism was found.

A methodological criticism could be raised against the use of new, untested measures of essentialist thinking for the dependent variables in this experiment. While it is true that the questionnaires had not been validated independently prior to the study, they followed the structure and the wording of earlier measures of essentialism (Bastian & Haslam, 2006) very closely, and had good face validity. A post-hoc factor analysis demonstrated that both measures generally conformed to the tripartite (Biological/Cultural basis, Informativeness, Discreteness) structure of the construct.

A more substantial weakness of the study is that the expected effect size may have been significantly larger than any real effect that could reasonably be predicted for this kind of experiment. While we expected to find a moderate effect of the manipulation, it has recently become clear that even successful replications of psychological research tend to find smaller effect sizes than those reported in the original publications (van Aert & van Assen, 2018); likewise, samples of approximately 50 participants, which at the time of conducting Studies 6 and 8 were not uncommon in priming studies (e.g., Gervais & Norenzayan, 2012), would today be considered insufficient. Hence, in hindsight, the power analysis for the present study may not have been conservative enough, and the study may not have had sufficient power to detect a real but smaller effect.

Finally, a more general conceptual critique can be directed at some of the theoretical assumptions behind Studies 6-8. In their response to Cimpian and Salomon (2014), Yzerbyt and Demoulin (2014) expressed scepticism towards the idea that different instances of essentialist thinking can be traced back to a single cognitive mechanism (i.e., the inherence heuristic), proposing instead a motivational account of essentialism. According to this interpretation, people are motivated to essentialise social categories to achieve specific social goals, such as justifying either positive or negative attitudes towards an out-group, or building trust in the endurance of the in-group. The arguments for viewing essentialism through a motivational lens cited by Yzerbyt and Demoulin (2014) are compelling: people are more likely to essentialise outgroups than themselves or their loved ones, and the valence of the

traits being essentialised (positive or negative) can also affect the likelihood of a person expressing essentialist beliefs. Likewise, Ryazanov and Christenfeld (2018) and Hoyt et al. (2019) have also discussed how essentialism can be strategically deployed for different purposes, from achieving in-group distinctiveness to out-group derogation.

The broad implications of this critique for research on the inherence heuristic are that a comprehensive cognitive theory of essentialism should concern itself not only with questions about information-processing, but also with motivated and socio-affective cognition. It also raises the question of how agency should be viewed and incorporated into models of social cognition. The studies reported in previous chapters have been informed by a strictly cognitive understanding of essentialism, derived primarily from perceptual models of cognition. According to this view essentialist beliefs are the product of largely mechanistic processes (e.g., an intuitive vs. analytic cognitive style, or high vs. low working memory load). In contrast with this model, some theorists (e.g. Billig, 1987, 2002; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) have argued that people should not be viewed as passive cognisers, but instead as skillful rhetoricians who can strategically construct or argue against social categories:

“Speakers can use language flexibly, and, thus, are not restricted merely to minimizing within-category differences or between-category similarities (Edwards, 1991). Indeed, with language we can both categorise in our judgements as well as particularise, not to mention talk critically about our categories (Billig, 1987a). All this makes the use of categories in language very different from the use of perceptual categorization.” (Billig, 2002, p.176)

Seen from this angle, essentialism becomes a rhetorical or discursive, and not purely perceptual, phenomenon. The implications of this conceptual shift for the current investigation of national identity, essentialism, and perceived continuity will be explored in the following two chapters.

Part III

Narrative Perspectives

Chapter 10

Notes on a narrative approach to nationalism

10.1 Structuring identity through narrative

Shared narratives can play a number of important roles in the construction of national identity. One of their primary functions is to provide what Liu and Hilton (2005) have termed the group's charter — an account of the nation's origins and purpose in the world, which also “help[s] define the timeless essence of a group” (p.538). When a nation has a single “hegemonic” version of its past and national history — one that is more or less universally accepted by most members of society — that charter can have important implications for how the nation chooses to act on the international stage, how to justify the existence and actions of its institutions, etc. Liu and Hilton (2005) offer the example of how British society today interprets Britain's policy of appeasement towards Germany in the 1930s as a diplomatic failure (“the Munich fiasco” of 1938). This social representation provides an important historical lesson that defines British identity (“Britain has always stood up to tyrants”) and provides a justification for military interventions abroad (Liu & Hilton, 2005). At the same time, the Munich analogy can also be used to hold political actors accountable for perceived transgressions — references to ‘appeasement’ and ‘Munich’ are regularly used in the British media and in political debates to condemn what are perceived as cowardly or unprincipled actions (Hughes, 2013;

Rasmussen, 2003).

In addition to providing historical ‘lessons’ to guide the nation’s actions in the present, narratives also help establish and justify the boundaries of collective identity. The foregrounding of particular characters and events is naturally accompanied by the exclusion of others, which are not considered representative of the group’s essential traits; in this way narratives can be used to draw the boundaries of the nation along different lines, and to determine the precise contents of collective identity (Liu & Hilton, 2005).

10.1.1 Nuclear episodes and metanarratives

Psychologists who study personal identity from a narrative perspective have drawn a distinction between nuclear episodes – individual moments in a person’s biography, and metanarrative – the overarching trajectory that describes a person’s general life story, encompassing multiple individual episodes (McAdams, 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013). Individual events constitute distinct episodes whose full meaning can be grasped only through their relation to the overarching narrative, which gives these events a sense of causal and thematic coherence (McAdams, 2001).

Morden (2016) extended this framework from personal onto national identities, and suggested that national metanarratives tend to follow the outlines of four “prototypical” plots. The *comic mythos* is structurally similar to classical comedies about the triumph of romantic love in the face of paternal authority; it tells the story of a nation that rejects parochial, anachronistic traditionalism, and reinvents itself by embracing reason and progress. The *romantic mythos* draws from the archetype of the heroic conqueror, and presents a nation struggling to achieve prosperity and freedom against an external enemy. The *tragic mythos* is structured around a national “chosen trauma”, a profound feeling of injustice, and the expectation of an impending cosmic catastrophe. Finally, the *satiric mythos* describes a world in which all heroic ideals are inverted and parodied against the dark reality of a collapsed social order; social institutions are seen as dysfunctional and oppressive, and there is a general sense that the cosmic catastrophe has already occurred. László and his colleagues (2002; as cited in László, 2014) provide an example of

such an overarching trajectory in the case of the Hungarian national metanarrative, where “initial victories are followed by defeats while defeats are not followed by victory, redemption or restoration. This was in contrast to the history of the Germans, for example, who could recount that although they had lost the Second World War, they had won the peace after the war by means of the Marshall plan and their subsequent economic recovery” (László, 2014, p.94).

Morden’s framework is interesting not simply because he offers a typology of the abstract narrative trajectories that characterise concrete national narratives, but also because he argues that each nation’s past can be described in terms of more than one of these metanarratives: “A comic narrative can give way to tragedy, when the civic nation is seen to have been undone by minority claims-making. The romantic stories of a nation emerging from under a colonial yoke can turn ironic, when the promise of postcolonial prosperity is failed. Nor does a single mythos go unchallenged within a nation at a given time. [... People and events] can be recast in differently expressed narratives and re-dedicated to different purposes” (Morden, 2016, p.460). In this way, past and future events can be given widely differing interpretations depending on how they are integrated into a particular narrative trajectory. For example, aggression directed against an out-group can be framed as morally justified if it is embedded in a narrative of historical injustice and retribution on behalf of the in-group; conversely, a similar act of aggression directed at the in-group can be framed as historically inevitable if embedded in a narrative that stresses the cyclical repetition of historical events.

10.1.2 Creative use of the national repertoire

A critical examination of the narrative construction of national identity should consider the creative nature of this process. The construction of identity means that familiar events and characters from the national repertoire are not simply reproduced uncritically and unreflectively, but are instead actively rearranged and reinterpreted by the interlocutors so as to build a cohesive narrative conveying a sense of motivation, agency, and purpose. Of course, to call this process “creative” is not to imply that such narratives can be written and rewritten at a whim, or that any narrative is as

plausible and convincing for the individuals comprising the nation as any other. If it is true that historical figures and events can be used to construct different versions of the group's past, it is equally true that not all such figures are interchangeable or have the same importance in a society's historical repertoire (Liu & Hilton, 2005). By "repertoire" we are referring to "these historical discourses that have developed over time, and have been afforded legitimacy and significance within the in-group context" (Obradović & Howarth, 2018, p.O25), which also constrain the range of possible innovation in the construction of new national narratives. Or, to use an oft-quoted passage from *The 18th Brumaire*. . . :

Men make their own history, but not of their own free will [...] The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living [who] timidly conjure up the spirits of the past to help them; they borrow their names, slogans, and costumes so as to stage the new world-historical scene in this venerable disguise and borrowed language. (Marx, 1852/2010, p. 146)

The construction of national narratives therefore requires the creative use and repurposing of the available rhetorical 'materials' in the nation's repertoire. An example of this can be seen in Obradović and Howarth's (2018) analysis of the discursive strategies at play in different political speeches concerning Serbia's national identity. During the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, different political figures used a key historical event (Prince Lazar's martyrdom in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389) to position themselves as the true representatives of the Serbian people, whom they described as caught in a new struggle for survival. According to the narrative proffered by the Milošević government, the struggle was against NATO troops and "international interests" working to destabilise and "dismember" Serbia, while speakers for the democratic opposition framed it as a struggle against the government's authoritarianism which "relies on Kalashnikovs and whose full wit and power lays in Kalashnikovs" (Drašković, as cited in Obradović and Howarth, p.O30). The myth of Serbian martyrdom in Kosovo creates a narrative of national victimhood, which different political actors can mobilise in support of their politics, each presenting himself as a new Prince Lazar, once again protecting his nation from

death and destruction. However, over the next decade this “lingering sense of international stigma and unfairness” (p.031) began to pose an obstacle to Serbia’s new course towards rapprochement with the international community and membership in the EU.

10.1.3 Attributing agency, emotion and cognition

The above approaches to the study of national narratives focus on the contents of the text and the different rhetorical strategies that the speakers can adopt in order to create and express new forms of meaning. An alternative approach to that would be an analysis of national narratives rooted in cognitive psychology, such as those undertaken by Hogan (2011) and László (2014).

Rhetorical framing can be achieved through the strategic attribution of emotions, cognitive states, and locus of control on either the in-group or the out-group, as demonstrated by László’s (2014, pp. 77-97) analysis of the Hungarian national narrative as expressed in textbooks and folk interpretations of history. His analysis demonstrated that Hungarians tend to describe themselves as playing an active role in positively viewed events (e.g., “The Hungarian troops *occupied* Bácska. . .”), whereas negative events tend to be framed more passively (e.g., “Hungary’s role-taking in the war *resulted* in a tragedy”; p. 71¹). Similarly, a capacity for emotions (e.g. “Hungarians mourned/respected/felt sorry. . .”) and cognitive states (“Hungarians expected/intended/remembered. . .”) can be strategically attributed to different groups in order to generate empathy with their perspective or to (de)humanise them. In László’s analysis, emotions like fear, hope, enthusiasm and disappointment were attributed to Hungarians much more frequently than to other nationalities, which made the perspective of the in-group appear more human and invited empathy. When cognitive states were attributed to outgroups, in approximately 90% of the cases these were framed as negative (e.g., “The Germans led by Hitler *hated* the Jews and thought it would be best to exterminate the entire people”). Such patterns in the attribution of agency, emotions and cognition suggest that the Hungarian national narrative is organised around collective victimhood and the shifting of blame

¹All emphases in original

for historical catastrophes away from the in-group. However, it is important to recognise that the same historical events that make up this narrative could be reintegrated into a different narrative with a different trajectory, one that produces an alternative version of Hungarian identity.

Hogan's (2011) analysis focuses on how the structural features of a narrative can interact with our cognitive and affective processing systems to construct shared representations of the social world. Much like with László, these structural features – e.g., narrative beginnings and ends – end up reinforcing ideas about the proper attribution of agency, and hence, of morality. But in Hogan's reading, different narratives constitute more than rival rhetorical strategies directed at concrete social and political goals (although they certainly can and do perform such functions). Instead, by “emplotting” the world – by thinking of historical events as plot lines with clear start and end points – narratives help us to make sense of what are otherwise complex streams of causality lacking a beginning or an end. Therefore, “when we tell stories or think in terms of stories, our minds pluck out causal sequences from the complex of events (selection); bound those sequences (segmentation); and bring them into comprehensible relations with one another (structuration)” (p.173). By setting the starting point of the narrative at a singular event, narratives can frame certain events as primary and uncaused, and others as a justified consequence. A primary violent act directed at the in-group is perceived as irrational and unjustifiable, while violence perpetrated by the in-group in retaliation is framed as a just response.

Furthermore, the transformation of causal sequences into plot lines can guide the attention of the reader away from events and details that are framed as routine, and focus it onto ones framed as noteworthy, non-routine, and demanding judgement. To the extent that attention is guided by emotional arousal, national narratives create a perception of historical continuity by inviting emotional responses and moral judgements from the reader; conversely, “as soon as there is no longer anything that inspires or sustains our emotional response, the story is over. There are no new causes, in our subjective sense of causality, thus there are no new effects”

(p.184). In other words, Hogan's approach can be understood as a form of affective narratology: "nationalism cannot be understood in separation from narrative, which itself cannot be understood in separation from our emotion systems" (p.168).

10.1.4 Future directions

The above discussion was an attempt to chart some future directions for the study of perceived collective continuity, particularly in the context of national identity. As conceptualised by Sani et al. (2007), perceived continuity is one among many characteristics of cognitive representations of social groups (such as perceived homogeneity, entitativity, or cohesion), but to my knowledge no research to date has explored, for example, PCC as embedded and expressed in emplotted narratives, or its function in different rhetorical strategies. I have outlined a number of promising narrative approaches to social cognition that are sensitive to the role of plot structure and emotion in the construction of collective identity, which could prove useful in bridging the gap between the purely cognitive and the discursive branches of social psychology.

Chapter 11

High-continuity rhetoric in national identity

11.1 Introduction

The United Kingdom's 2016 referendum on remaining in the European Union provoked a round of debates about Britain's national identity and its relationship with the rest of Europe.¹ In the build-up to the referendum, commentators often attempted to put Britain's predicament in a historical context, whether defending the view that "... *the very story of Britain has always been one of migrants*" (Shabi, 2017), or, taking the opposite side, arguing that "... *Britain is not, despite some claims, a 'nation of immigrants'. By historic standards, this island is notable for the astonishing geographic stability of its population*" (Samuel, 2017). Historical parallels could be found in arguments over multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism: "... *Much like the Roman Britons who put mosaics and columns in their villas – Britain's first metropolitan elites, perhaps – we have incorporated many foreign influences with gusto.*" (Samuel, 2017). Even Prime Minister David Cameron adopted a rhetoric of historical continuity with the past in his defence of Britain's membership in the EU: "*From Caesar's legions to the Napoleonic Wars. From*

¹This chapter was accepted at the *British Journal of Social Psychology* as a Stage 1 Registered Report entitled "'We have always been...': Does high-continuity political rhetoric impact perceptions of national identity?". The registration protocol is reproduced here in full, with the exception of a section on the concept of collective continuity, which originally formed part of the introduction of this report and has instead been incorporated into the literature review in Chapter 3.

the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution to the defeat of Nazism. We have helped to write European history, and Europe has helped write ours” (Cameron, 2013).

Such arguments share a common assumption about the importance of the past in determining Britain’s identity in the present. And, as was mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, national narratives have historically played a fundamental role in defining the parameters of a nation’s identity (Bhabha, 1990; Geary, 2003; Hobsbawm, 1992; László, 2014; Thiesse, 1999). The aim of the study proposed here is to investigate whether language that emphasises a group’s transgenerational continuity can change the perceived boundaries of the group’s collective identity. Our main hypothesis is that people will be more likely to endorse a particular version of their national identity when it is presented using high-continuity language, as opposed to low-continuity language. If supported, this will provide evidence that the rhetoric of collective continuity in public discourse can be used to define the contents and meaning of national identity for individual group members.

11.1.1 Narratives and the construction of identity

By referring to the “construction of collective identity”, we make use of the insights gained from a rhetorical approach to social psychology and nationalism (Billig, 1987, 1995), according to which attitudes, concepts and identities are constructed through rhetorical oppositions and are given meaning not only by the position that is being argued for, but also by the position being rejected. For example, defining American national identity as civic, multicultural, and multi-ethnic, implicitly positions the person holding this definition against the alternative – an ethnic definition of nationhood, which in the United States is historically centred around White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant identity (Huntington, 2004). Similar examples can be adduced for any national identity, pointing to the plurality of possible contents behind such seemingly straightforward identity-labels as “British”, “French”, “Turkish”, for example. National identity has to be “imagined” (Anderson, 2006), i.e., constantly represented or mediated through symbols (flags, anthems, public figures and institutions), rituals (national holidays, commemorations), and narratives (stories

about the national past expounded in books, TV programmes, formal education, articles in the press). Due to the need for symbolic mediation, the meaning of a group's identity can fluctuate as groups adopt different assemblages of signs and narratives. In other words, the above-cited references to Caesar's legions, the Industrial Revolution and past historical experiences with immigration can be interpreted as attempts to mobilise symbols and narratives already available in society's cultural repository to argue for or against competing views of what it means to be British.

11.1.2 PCC and Social Essentialism

By turning their attention to the study of collective continuity, social psychologists have been working to map out the relationships between PCC and other, already established constructs. Sani et al. (2007) have demonstrated that people who perceive their nation as more continuous across time also tend to identify with it more strongly and to feel greater pride in being part of it. Furthermore, Herrera and Sani (2013) and Smeekes et al. (2015) have argued that individuals are motivated to identify with high-continuity groups, as such groups are perceived as more stable, enduring and ontologically real. This perceived objective reality of social groups is referred to in the literature as social essentialism – a set of social cognitions through which large ethnic, religious, racial, and cultural groups come to be perceived as highly homogeneous, and as having rigid boundaries and an immutable nature (Gelman, 2003; N. Haslam, 2017; Medin & Ortony, 1989). Although some of the best known historical examples of national essentialism – such as 19th century romantic nationalism – were suffused with ideas about “blood ties”, “the national spirit”, and other explicit references to the group essence, essentialist thinking can also function on the level of implicit beliefs and intuitions about social groups (N. Haslam, 2017; N. Haslam & Levy, 2006; Lyndon, Crowe, Wuensch, McCammon, & Davis, 2016). What characterises all cases of essentialism is the implicit belief that people from the same race, ethnicity or nationality, share the same inherent essence that determines who they really are. For example, individuals who think about their own nation in essentialist terms also believe that immigrants can never become fully integrated, as they do not possess the deep inherent nature that determines ingroup

identity (Zagefka et al., 2013); people who hold essentialist beliefs are thus more likely to be hostile towards asylum seekers and to support actions intended to curb immigrations (Pehrson et al., 2009).

Highly essentialised social groups are also perceived as more entitative, or resembling a collective entity – being able to act in an organised and unified manner, and sharing the same goals and needs (Campbell, 1958; Lickel et al., 2000). Perceiving a group as highly entitative is an important condition for its essentialisation (in addition to perceiving it as having a biological basis and as highly impermeable; Yzerbyt et al., 2004; and, as Warner et al., 2016 have demonstrated, entitativity is also a direct consequence of the perceived continuity of social groups. Warner and her colleagues led participants to believe that a set of outgroups (religious and organisational, in addition to national) were either temporally continuous or discontinuous, and found that increased PCC led to more positive attitudes to outgroups seen as friendly, and to more negative attitudes to groups seen as hostile; in both cases the effect was mediated by an increase in the perceived entitativity of the group, suggesting that pre-existing attitudes are magnified when the group is seen as more cohesive and enduring. Another piece of evidence suggesting a link between collective continuity and social essentialism (through entitativity, as a component of essentialism) comes from Lickel et al.'s (2001; 2000) research on people's lay theories of social groups. After conducting two studies examining the intuitive taxonomy used by Americans and Polish participants when describing social groups along several dimensions (such as group size, homogeneity, duration, amount of interaction between members, permeability of boundaries), Lickel and his colleagues concluded that the perceived continuity and endurance of a group also made it appear more entitative.

PCC and social essentialism can therefore be thought of as two distinct but complementary forms of social cognition: individuals are motivated to identify with groups that feel both stable (i.e., highly essentialised) and enduring (i.e., highly continuous), and thus capable of providing a sense of security (Herrera & Sani, 2013). Jetten and Wohl (2011) demonstrated the importance of PCC for fostering

a sense of confidence and security in the group's endurance when they primed a sample of English respondents to believe that English history was either highly continuous or discontinuous. Their results showed that, among those respondents with a strong national identity, a lack of collective continuity led to an increased anxiety about the group's future, as well as an increased opposition to immigration.

In addition to such motivational accounts of collective identification, we want to argue that PCC has an important role to play not only in regulating the strength of national identity, but, at a more fundamental level, in providing that identity with a concrete meaning. For example, if I believe in a national narrative about Britain that emphasises some intransient, core British traits and values, manifested in different historical contexts across many generations, then these traits and values will appear to me as the "essence" of Britishness, and will define "what it really means to be British". In other words, the essence of British identity is revealed in those aspects of the national character that are (perceived as) continuous and unchanging.

11.1.3 Essentialism in High-Continuity Language

To understand how high-continuity language could facilitate the essentialization of social groups, we can turn to Gelman's (2003) theory that essentialist thinking is the product of a set of cognitive tendencies and abilities that develop in early childhood: the ability to distinguish between superficial appearance and underlying reality; to make inferences from a cluster of properties; to attribute a hidden, immutable nature to some objects (causal determinism); to perceive an object as self-identical even as some of its properties change (identity tracking); and to defer to adults for the correct naming of objects. All of these tendencies can also be found in high-continuity narratives about social groups. For example, the *underlying reality/superficial appearance* distinction: if I come to believe that there are some core British traits that appear again and again in different situations across many generations, this would require at least an implicit belief in some deep, hidden property of British people that transcends situational circumstances and personal relationships between individual group-members. Or, to give another example, *identity tracking*: if I come to believe that a social group can exist for centuries, beyond the lifespan of any

single individual, I need to also accept that there is something about this group that is more than the sum of its individual group-members, some unobservable essence that makes the group what it is and ensures its continuity. Finally, Gelman's idea of essentialism as a product of *deference to experts* (in the sense of more knowledgeable adults) also has parallels in high-continuity narratives. In this case the "experts" are not just parents, but also films, books, TV programmes – any social context in which individuals are invited to think about the world as divided into groups called "nations" (Billig, 1995). The degree of importance accorded to nationality as a form of identity can vary widely between different cultures, however in everyday language national signifiers are casually and routinely used to label individuals, objects and places (Skey, 2011a), which invites the individual to develop an intuitive essentialist view of nationality.

11.1.4 The present study

The aim of the present study is to test the hypothesis that high-continuity narratives will be more successful than low-continuity ones in defining the contents of national identity. The current historical moment in the United Kingdom offers a rare opportunity to explore this subject, as the 2016 referendum has opened up fresh debates about Britain's place in Europe and the changing meaning of British national identity. To answer the research question, we will use a 2x2 factorial design in which participants will be asked to read a piece of political rhetoric attempting to define British identity in relation to European identity. We will manipulate two aspects of the text:

1. *Argument (European vs. Separate identity)*: half of the vignettes will present the argument that British identity is fundamentally European, and that British people are also Europeans, while the other half will argue that British identity is separate from the European, and that British people are not Europeans.
2. *Rhetoric (High vs. Low continuity)*: half of the vignettes will make their argument using references to Britain's temporal continuity and links with past generations, whereas the other half will highlight the discontinuities in British national history and the uniqueness of modern British identity compared with the past.

Participants will be randomly assigned to one of the four conditions and upon reading the corresponding vignette will be asked to complete a measure of the identity overlap between Britain and Europe, ranging from the two being separate and mutually exclusive identities on one end of the spectrum, to Britain being nested within Europe as a part of the “European family” on the other end. We expect that the argument made in the vignette regarding Britain’s identity (European vs. Separate) will be convincing only when it is presented using high-continuity rhetoric, hence we predict: 1) a main effect of Argument – participants in the European Identity condition will report higher perceived proximity between Britain and Europe than those in the Separate Identity condition; and 2) an Argument \times Rhetoric interaction, such that the effect of the argument will be more pronounced when it is expressed in High-Continuity rhetoric compared with Low-Continuity rhetoric.

11.2 Study 9

11.2.1 Methods

11.2.1.1 Participants: Recruitment and inclusion criteria

Observations will be collected from 866 participants. According to an a priori power analysis for a 2x2 ANOVA the minimum sample size needed for detecting a small effect ($f^2 = .10$) with 80% power ($\alpha = 0.05$) is $N=787$; an additional 10% ($N=79$) will be added for potential exclusions, resulting in the target sample size of $N=866$. Participants will be recruited on the online platform Prolific.ac and will be asked to complete the survey in exchange for a fee of £0.60. In the context of the United States, race has been shown to have a small but statistically significant effect on people’s definitions of nationhood (ethnocultural, liberal, civic republican or integrationist; Schildkraut, 2007), hence the present study has to take into account the possibility of a similar effect in the British context. While we believe that the question of ethnic differences in definitions of British identity is an important one, it would require a much larger sample size in order to be explored meaningfully, and hence falls beyond the scope of the present study. Therefore, to simplify the study design, the study will be open only to British nationals identifying as White British

and currently living in the UK.

Recruitment method: Online surveys have been used extensively in social psychological research for the past decade as they offer access to a large participant pool and are designed to facilitate large-scale data collection. Respondents recruited through online platforms like Amazon MTurk and Prolific Academic tend to be more diverse and representative of the general population than the university student samples typically used in psychological research (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), and these platforms also provide researchers with a variety of sampling tools, enabling them to reach their target demographic much more easily. As of 2016, Prolific Academic's participants pool were generally less familiar with experimental manipulations and produced higher quality data than those on MTurk (Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti, 2017). However, a downside of this sampling method is the potentially higher number of inattentive responders, and consequently, the lower quality of the collected data, compared with more traditional methods of data collection. One solution to this problem is the use of various forms of attention checks to determine whether a participant is reading all questions carefully. In our experience with similar online surveys, the rate of inattentive responses from online samples is roughly equivalent to those obtained from undergraduate students completing the surveys in the presence of a researcher, and can easily be accounted for by adding a 10% margin for exclusions to the target sample size, as we have done here. We will also give respondents the opportunity to elaborate on their answers at the end of the survey, the way they would be able to if the survey was conducted in person.

Identity check: Although participants will be filtered based on nationality and country of residence at the recruitment stage, a further nationality and ethnicity check will be added based on the demographic information participants will provide in the survey itself. Only participants who self-identify as White British will be included in the analysis.

Attention check: Participants will be asked two multiple choice questions to determine whether they have read and understood the corresponding vignette: "Ac-

ording to the author of the text you just finished reading, in the past Britain used to be ... (a part of Europe / separate from Europe)”, and “According to the author of the text, today Britain is ... (a part of Europe / separate from Europe)”. Those who fail to answer both questions correctly will be excluded from the analysis.

Incomplete responses: Participants who fail to answer one or more questions will be excluded from the analysis.

11.2.1.2 Materials

Manipulation: The materials will consist of four articles elaborating on the nature of British national identity and Britain’s relationship to Europe. One pair of articles will argue that British identity is fundamentally European and that Britain is a fundamental part of Europe, while the other will take the opposite view – that British and European identity are fundamentally different and mutually exclusive. Each argument will be defended using either High Continuity or Low Continuity rhetoric. The resulting four articles (Appendix C) will be maximally similar in all other respects (e.g., rhetorical style, structure, and imagery) and will be based on fragments from real speeches about the UK’s membership in the European Union delivered by British Prime Ministers David Cameron and Theresa May; the sections of the text that serve as a manipulation of perceived collective continuity will use language adapted from Sani et al.’s (2007) measure of PCC, as well as from a similar manipulation procedure developed by Warner et al. (2016).

Dependent measures: The perceived proximity between British and European identity will be measured using an adapted version of Jimenez et al.’s (2016) Dynamic Identity Fusion Index (DIFI) – a web-based measure of the proximity between two identities, visualised as overlapping circles. Participants will be shown two circles, a bigger one labelled “Europe” and a smaller one labelled “Britain”, and will be asked to click and drag the “Britain” circle to the position that best represents how closely they believe the two identities are related. The measure generates two types of output, distance between the centres of the circles and overlap of their surfaces. For the purposes of the analysis, only the former will be used as a dependent variable. The lowest possible score on the proximity measure is -100

and indicates the farthest possible distance between British and European identities. Higher scores correspond to increasing proximity between the two circles; at 0 the outlines of the two circles are touching without overlapping. Scores from 0 to 125 entail an increasing degree of proximity, but now with an increasing degree of overlap between the two identities. The maximum score is 125 and indicates that the "Britain" circle is in the middle of the "Europe" circle.

Other measures: Sani et al.'s (2007) 12-item PCC scale will be adapted to reference Britain and will be included as a manipulation check. For the exploratory analyses, we will also: (1) record the completion time for this measure, as previous studies (Herrera & Sani, 2013; Sani et al., 2009) have shown that PCC can provide a cultural buffer (a form of psychological defence) against death awareness, consistent with terror management theory (TMT; Burke et al., 2010; Greenberg et al., 1990; Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1989; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991. According to TMT, threats to the integrity of the cultural buffer should lead to slower response times (e.g., Arndt, Greenberg, Simon, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1998; Greenberg, Porteus, Simon, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1995), so we expect to see longer completion times for high identifiers in the low continuity condition. (2) We will include a measure of national identification, understood for the purposes of this study as the importance of nationality for an individual's self-identity. The national identification measure will consist of 6 items (Appendix B) adapted from the "Attachment" subscale of national identification developed by Roccas, Klar, and Liviatan (2006). This instrument was chosen as it matches most closely the concept that we intend to measure here (i.e., perceiving one's membership in the group as an important part of one's identity), and does not conflate this form of identification with the glorification of the in-group.

11.2.1.3 Procedure

Upon signing up, participants will be directed to a briefing page describing what their involvement in the study will entail, and will be asked to complete eight items measuring how important their national identity is to them. The items will be taken from the "Attachment" component of Roccas et al.'s (2006) measure of national

identification with Britain. They will then be asked to read the following instructions: *“The question of Brexit and Britain’s place in the European Union has been politically divisive, and many people tend to hold strong views on the matter. Some people prefer to distinguish between the European Union (EU) as an institution on the one hand, and Europe as a cultural and historical community of nations on the other. This is why we have divided the rest of the questions in this survey into two parts: Part 1 will ask you about your views on Brexit and the EU as an institution; Part 2 will ask you about your thoughts on Europe as a community, not about the EU.”* We believe this distinction is necessary to minimise the effect of any deeply entrenched views on Brexit that some respondents may have.

In Part 1, participants will be asked the following questions about Brexit and the European Union:

1. Did you vote in the 2016 referendum on whether the UK should leave or remain in the European Union? (a) Yes – I voted REMAIN; (b) Yes – I voted LEAVE; (c) I did not vote – but back then I would have voted REMAIN; (d) I did not vote – but back then I would have voted LEAVE. (e) I did not vote and had no opinion either way.
2. How would you vote in a similar referendum if one were held today? (a) I would vote REMAIN; (b) I would vote LEAVE; (c) I cannot decide; (d) I would not vote. In your opinion, what impact do you think that Brexit will have on the United Kingdom? (1=“Extremely negative”, 7=“Extremely positive”, 0=“Don’t know / Cannot decide”)
3. How would you describe your attitude towards the European Union as it exists in practice? (1=“Extremely negative”, 7=“Extremely positive”, 0=“Don’t know / Cannot decide”)
4. How would you describe your attitude towards the idea of the European Union (regardless of how it functions in practice)? (1=“Extremely negative”, 7=“Extremely positive”, 0=“Don’t know / Cannot decide”).

In Part 2, participants will be assigned randomly to one of the four conditions and will be asked to read carefully the corresponding vignette with the instructions: *“The text below is an excerpt from a speech delivered by a British official on a visit to Italy. The speech concerned Britain’s relationship not just with the European Union, but with Europe as a “family of nations”. Please read the text carefully as*

you will be asked some questions based on it on the next page". On the next page participants will be instructed to fill in the Perceptions of Collective Continuity scale (Sani et al., 2007) as a manipulation check.

Upon completing the PCC scale participants will be asked to complete the measure of proximity between being British and being European. First, to train them how to use the DIFI tool, they will be shown a set of images with the two circles labelled "Britain" and "Europe" in varying proximity to each other, along with captions explaining what type of relationship is represented in each image. For example, the caption under the image where the distance between the two circles is the greatest will read: "*Culturally and historically, Britain is completely separate from Europe. British people are not a part of the European family. If you are truly British, you cannot also be European*"; the caption under the image where the two circles overlap completely will read: "*Culturally and historically, Britain is fundamentally European. British people are a very important part of the European family. If you are truly British, that means you are also a European.*"

After the training stage, participants will be presented with the DIFI along with the following instructions: "Please click and drag the smaller "Britain" circle to the position that best captures how you see the relationship between being British and being European. You can use the example graphs above for reference."

Finally, respondents will be asked to provide some basic demographic information (age, sex, nationality, ethnicity, country of birth, political orientation from socially liberal to socially conservative, and highest educational qualification achieved). They will then be taken to a debriefing page and will be remunerated for their participation.

11.2.1.4 Vignette development and piloting

An early version of the survey containing only the four vignettes and the DIFI task was piloted with approximately 20-25 participants per condition to test comprehension rates and the technical functionality of the DIFI prior to launching the full survey. Responses on a single forced choice question asking participants to summarise the main argument made by text indicated a comprehension rate of around

90% for the high continuity / European identity condition, which dropped to only 10-20% for the low continuity conditions. In light of this the vignettes were simplified by removing a long introductory paragraph at the start of each vignette, and ensuring that the key argument of each text was stated clearly at the beginning. Appendix C contains the resulting shorter and clearer vignettes, which were all found to have comprehension rates of 85-95%.

11.2.1.5 Design

The study design will have two independent variables – Continuity (High vs. Low) and Argument type (European vs. Separate identity), resulting in four conditions: (1) High Continuity and European identity, (2) Low Continuity and European identity, (3) High Continuity and Separate identity, and (4) Low Continuity and Separate identity. The dependent variable will be the perceived proximity between British and European identity.

11.2.2 Analysis plan

Manipulation check: First an independent t-test (or non-parametric equivalent if parametric assumptions are not met) will be used to determine the effectiveness of the manipulation of continuity. Participants in the High Continuity conditions (regardless of Argument type) are expected to score higher on the PCC measure than those in the Low Continuity conditions.

Main analysis: To examine the research question, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance will be assessed. Provided they are met (a non-parametric equivalent will be used if they are not), we will conduct a two-way ANCOVA with the following parameters:

- **DV:** Perceived proximity between British and European identity;
- **IV1:** Rhetoric (High vs. Low continuity);
- **IV2:** Argument (European vs. Separate identity);
- **Covariates:** National identification, voting behaviour in the 2016 referendum, voting intention today, age, and level of education (the last two have

been shown to influence the way people conceptualise their national identity; Schildkraut, 2007)

The analysis will test the effect of the Argument \times Rhetoric interaction on perceived proximity to Europe. We predict a significant main effect of Argument, such that the perceived proximity will be higher in the “European identity” condition than in the “Separate identity” condition. We also predict a significant Argument \times Rhetoric interaction, such that the effect of the argument will be greater in the High-Continuity Rhetoric condition than in the Low-Continuity Rhetoric condition.

Interpretation of the results: An Argument \times Rhetoric interaction will be interpreted as evidence that PCC can play a role in defining the boundaries of the in-group. If a main effect of Argument is found, but no effect of Rhetoric, this will be interpreted as participants expressing the same views as those in the vignette (possibly as a result of a demand effect), regardless of the use of collective continuity. If a main effect of Rhetoric is found, but no effect of Argument, that can be interpreted as a failure to redraw the boundaries of the group, with the perceived proximity to Europe being affected only by Britain’s perceived temporal (dis)continuity. Subsequent explanations for this effect (barring the possibility of a Type I error) can be derived from previous studies on motivated social cognition and PCC. A positive correlation between national continuity and proximity to Europe can be interpreted in light of Jetten and Wohl’s (2012) finding that higher ingroup continuity leads to less ontological anxiety about the group’s future; participants in the High Continuity Rhetoric condition will thus feel more secure about Britain’s vitality as a nation and will be less motivated to increase Britain’s distinctiveness vis-à-vis Europe. Conversely, a negative correlation (low British national continuity leading to closer proximity to Europe) can be interpreted as the product of motivated social cognition: individuals are motivated to identify with a high-continuity social group, so if they are led to believe that Britain’s continuity is uncertain, they will be motivated to seek membership in an alternative, more enduring social group – Europe. Both hypotheses are only tentative at this stage and, should the data point in this direction, can be explored in a future follow-up experiment.

Exploratory analyses: We will conduct additional exploratory analyses to test for a potential link between the control variables (age, level of education) and the dependent variable. Specifically, we will conduct a hierarchical regression on perceived proximity to Europe, with age, sex, level of education, and political orientation in Step 1, and national identification in Step 2. Based on the available demographic data on the voting patterns in the 2016 referendum, we expect perceived proximity to Europe to be correlated with level of education and liberal political beliefs, and inversely correlated with age, although we cannot predict whether there will be an effect of sex or identification.

We will also test for an effect of the Rhetoric manipulation on the completion time of the PCC scale moderated by national identification. We expect that the low continuity manipulation will lead to longer completion times than the high continuity manipulation, and the effect will be more pronounced for high identifiers than for low identifiers. This analysis will be carried out both with and without the inclusion of the control variables (age, sex, and level of education).

Finally, we will test for a potential difference in the effect of the manipulation between the two subscales of the PCC (Historical and Cultural continuity). The vignettes that we created for the manipulation differ on the cultural continuity component (i.e., they argue that British identity today is either identical or radically different to the identity of past generations), but they all present their arguments using a form of national narrative (either a narrative of continuity or a narrative of change). Hence, we expect that (1) participants in the High Continuity Rhetoric condition will have higher PCC scores on both subscales than those in the Low Continuity condition, and (2) the manipulation will have a larger effect on the Cultural continuity component of the PCC measure, than on the Historical continuity component. To test (1), we will first conduct a one-way MANCOVA, with Rhetoric (High vs. Low continuity) as the independent variable, historical and cultural PCC as dependent variables, and the following covariates: age, level of education, national identification, voting behaviour in the 2016 referendum, and voting intention today. If a significant effect is found, we will follow this up by conducting two AN-

COVAS looking for an effect of the Rhetoric manipulation on each PCC subscale, with the same covariates (2). We will also repeat the analysis without the inclusion of the control variables.

11.2.3 Results

Data was collected from 866 respondents; 20 were excluded after they reported technical issues with the DIFI task, where the moveable circle would freeze and would not allow them to record their answer. Another 53 were excluded for failing the attention/comprehension check after the vignettes, and one respondent was excluded after no data was found to be associated with their response. Thus, the remaining sample consisted of 792 participants, 314 men (Age: $M=36.2, SD=12.7$) and 476 women (Age: $M=38.4, SD=13$), with sex data missing for two respondents.

Voting intention

Of this sample, 456 reported voting to remain in the EU in 2016, of whom 91% would vote to remain and 4% would vote to leave if a new referendum were held today (late March 2019). Another 233 reported voting to leave the EU in 2016, of whom 11% would vote to remain and 77% would vote to leave today. Finally, there were 156 participants who did not vote in the 2016 referendum, of whom 61% would vote to remain and 14% would vote to leave today.

In the total sample, 64% would vote to remain today, and 26% would vote to leave, with another 4% reporting they would not vote (the rest not being sure). A larger percentage of women would vote to Remain today (Remain: 66%, Leave: 24%) compared with men (Remain: 60%, Leave: 30%).

Voting intention by education group (Fig. 11.1) indicates that higher levels of education correspond to an increased likelihood of voting to remain in the EU if a new referendum were held today.

Testing assumptions

PCC scores were normally distributed ($M = 4.88, SD = .79$) and the assumption of equal variances between the two Rhetoric conditions was met.

Scores on the measure of perceived proximity between British and European

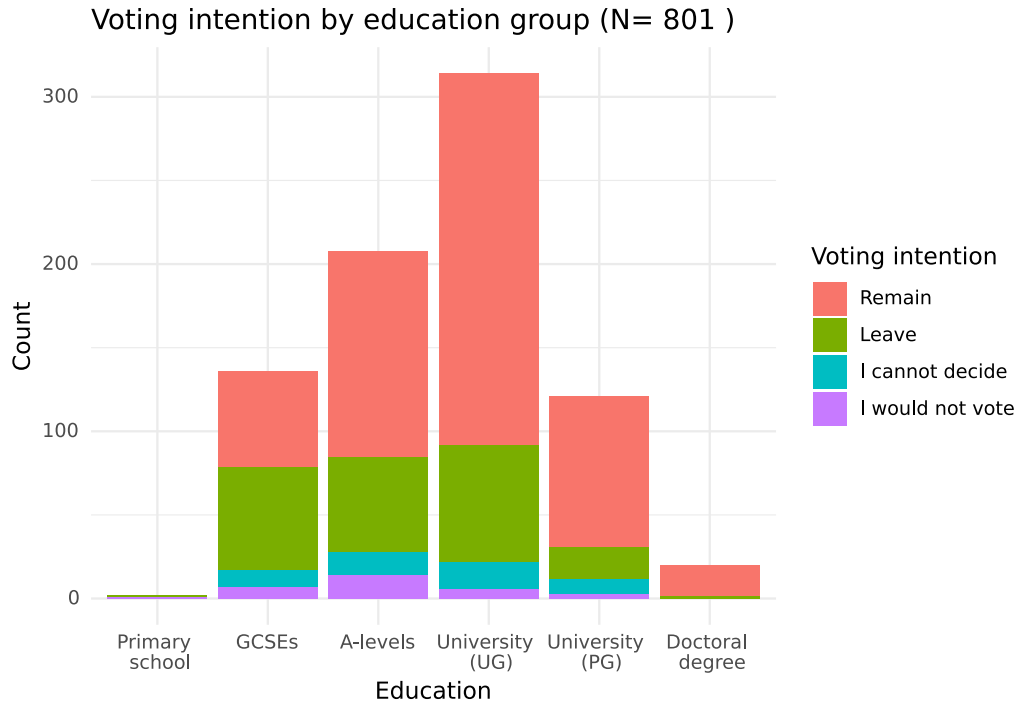


Figure 11.1: Voting intention by level of education

identities were not normally distributed, hence the assumption of normality was violated. There were five distinct cluster points in the distribution of proximity scores, at -100, -50, 0, 50, and 125 (the last one being the upper limit of the scale), and the rest of the datapoints fell along a bell curve with a mean at the 50 point mark (Figure 11.2). This pattern is most likely explained by the participants following the example of the illustrations on the training page, where the circles were shown in these exact four locations, in effect treating the DIFI as a categorical, rather than continuous measure.

Levene's tests on perceived proximity revealed that the assumption of equal variances was met for Rhetoric type ($F(1, 789) = 1.412, p = 0.235$), but not for Argument type ($F(1, 789) = 8.205, p = 0.004$).

We then tested the assumption of homogeneity of the regression slopes for the continuous covariates (identification and age). The regression slopes for identification were homogeneous in the two Rhetoric conditions ($F(1, 829) = 0.017, p = 0.897$), but differed between the two Argument conditions ($F(1, 829) = 5.409, p = 0.02$), as shown in Figure 11.3). Likewise, a significant Age \times Rhetoric interaction was

found, indicating that the regression slopes for age between the two rhetoric conditions were heterogeneous.

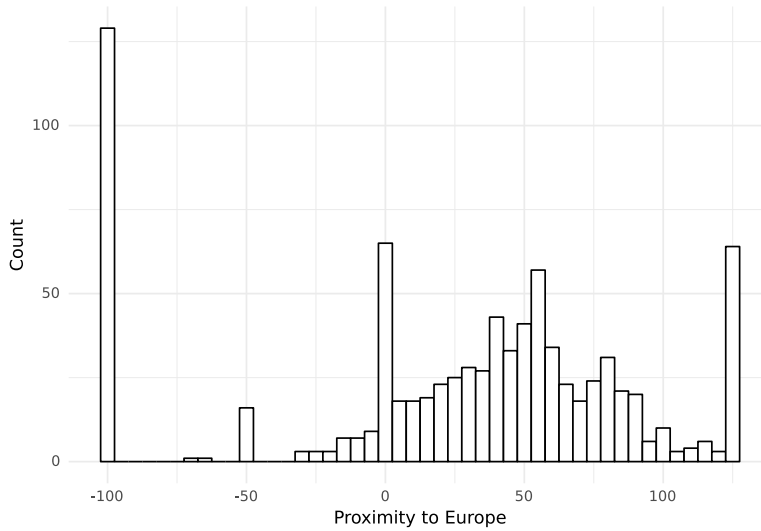


Figure 11.2: Distribution of proximity scores

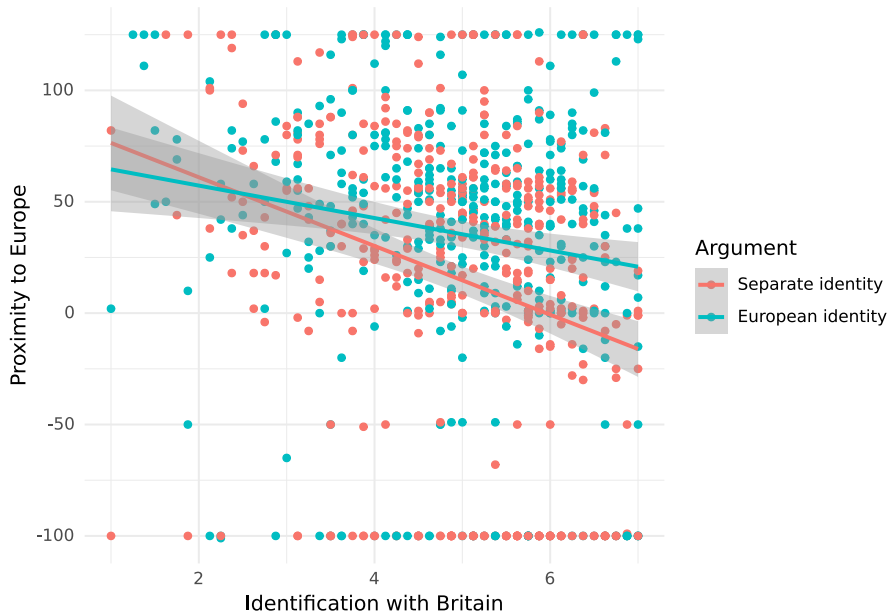


Figure 11.3: Comparison of the relationship between identification and proximity in the two Argument conditions

As the data did not meet the assumptions of the planned analysis, we followed Field and Wilcox’s (2017) recommendations for conducting a robust version of the general linear model based on an M-estimator using iteratively reweighted least

squares estimation.

Manipulation check

No difference in self-reported PCC was found between the High Continuity ($M(SD) = 4.888(0.785)$) and Low Continuity Rhetoric conditions ($M(SD) = 4.886(0.79)$), $t(825) = -0.021, p = 0.983$. Similarly, no difference was found for the two components of PCC, cultural ($t(833) = -0.716, p = 0.474$) and historical continuity ($t(831) = 1.076, p = 0.282$)

Main analysis

Participants' voting behaviour in the 2016 referendum and voting intention today were dummy-coded. A two-way robust ANCOVA (bootstrapped at 5000 samples) was then conducted to compare the effect of Argument \times Rhetoric interaction on the perceived proximity between British and European identities whilst controlling for identification with Britain, age, level of education, voting behaviour in the 2016 referendum, and voting intention today. As predicted, there was a significant main effect of Argument ($b = 14.161, SE = 6.164, t = 2.297, p = .022$): participants in the European identity condition perceived British and European identities to be closer to each other ($M = 38.45, SD = 59.2$), compared with those in the Separate identity condition ($M = 18.03, SD = 66.93$). Since positive scores on the DIFI indicate some degree of overlap (where 0 = no overlap, and 100 = complete overlap), the average scores in both conditions indicated some degree of compatibility between the two identities. As expected, no main effect of Rhetoric was found ($b = -0.790, SE = 6.087, t = -0.130, n.s.$). However, no evidence for the predicted Argument \times Rhetoric interaction was found either ($b = 8.589, SE = 7.868, t = 1.092, n.s.$).

We then conducted post-hoc comparisons of proximity scores between the two argument conditions and between the two rhetoric conditions. As recommended by Field and Wilcox (2017), we used Yuen's (1974) modified t-test for independent trimmed means (means trimmed at the recommended 20% and bootstrapped at 5000 samples). A significant difference in proximity to Europe was found between the two arguments when the rhetoric emphasised high continuity

($t(389) = -4.160, p < .001$, trimmed mean difference = -21.80) but not for low continuity ($t(390) = 1.293, p = 0.204$, trimmed mean difference = -10.60). This indicates a clear trend in the predicted direction, however the difference in the effects of rhetoric between the two types of argument does not quite reach statistical significance in the interaction, as shown by the ANCOVA above.

Exploratory analyses

To test for a link between the control variables and the DV, we conducted a hierarchical regression on perceived proximity between British and European identities, and added as predictors age, sex, level of education, and political orientation in Step 1, and national identification in Step 2. Out of the predictors in Step 1, only education ($b = 10.373, SE = 2.206, t = 4.701, p < .001$) and political orientation ($b = -9.051, SE = 1.019, t = -8.883, p < .001$) were significant. Identification had no effect on proximity scores above and beyond that ($b = -3.069, SE = 2.229, t = -1.377, p = 0.169$).

We then conducted a regression analysis using the same robust GLM method recommended by Field and Wilcox (2017) to test for an effect of the Rhetoric manipulation on completion time of the PCC measure, moderated by identification. There was no effect of Rhetoric ($b = -6.131, SE = 8.749, t = -0.701, p = 0.484$), and no Rhetoric \times Identification interaction ($b = 1.971, SE = 1.756, t = 1.122, p = 0.262$). The same pattern was observed after adding the control variables to the regression model, indicating that, contrary to the predictions of Terror Management Theory, the manipulation of national continuity did not lead to slower response times for participants with stronger national identities.

Finally, we followed up the manipulation check by conducting a one-way MANCOVA on historical and cultural PCC with Rhetoric as the predictor, and age, education, identification, voting behaviour in 2016, and voting intention today as the covariates. Pillai's Trace, a robust MANCOVA test statistic, was used to interpret the results. All covariates except voting intention had a significant effect, however the primary predictor, Rhetoric, did not (Pillai's Trace = $.004, F(2, 723) = 1.605, p = .202$). The effect of Rhetoric type was still non-significant after exclud-

ing the covariates (Pillai's Trace = .003, $F(2, 775) = 2.031$, $p = .357$), meaning that cultural and historical continuity scores were not affected differently by the type of rhetoric used in the vignettes.

11.2.4 Discussion

The present study's contribution to the existing literature is twofold. First, it expands upon previous research on PCC by exploring the effects of high collective continuity in the form of a realistic national narrative, rather than in the form of explicitly declared beliefs. Second, it aimed to test the prediction made from a rhetorical perspective that the contents of group identity can be changed, and the boundaries of the in-group can be redrawn, through the use of high-continuity political rhetoric. This attempt is significant in itself, since rhetorical and discursive psychology typically take an interpretative, discourse analysis-driven approach to studying the human subject in dynamic social interactions; this often comes at the expense of the experimental methods favoured by cognitive social psychologists. Hence, this study represents an attempt to bridge the gap between the two traditions.

The results did not provide support for the study's main hypotheses. A clear trend in the predicted direction was discernible: post-hoc comparisons showed that the argument that British people are Europeans was convincing when expressed in rhetoric emphasising the cultural and historical continuity of British identity, but not when expressed in rhetoric arguing against that continuity. However, the planned analysis showed no effect of the Argument \times Rhetoric interaction, indicating that the difference shown by the simple comparisons did not reach statistical significance.

A major strength of the experimental design is that it made use of a realistic manipulation that closely resembled the format in which many arguments about national identity are delivered in the real world: political speeches and newspaper columns. Furthermore, unlike the subliminal priming techniques used in some social psychological research, including chapters 6, 7, and 9, no assumptions were made about the underlying mechanisms by which the manipulation exerts its effect (e.g., by subliminally activating associative networks in the subject's memory). In-

stead, by presenting a simple political argument, the vignettes could be engaged with consciously by the participants, and their validity did not hinge upon the legitimacy of priming manipulations, which has recently been called into question (see Chapter 1).

The Dynamic Identity Fusion Index (DIFI) was also an appropriate tool to use as the dependent measure to capture the perceived proximity between British and European identities. The DIFI is based on a pictorial measure of identity fusion, an intuitive depiction of the relationship between two forms of identity, and as such it fits the rhetorical-spatial model described by Discourse Space Theory (DST; Hart, 2014). According to DST, when engaging in discourse people open up a “mental space” in which the identities and actors described in the discourse are represented spatially: a coordinate system can be built in which “here” corresponds to the in-group (“us”), which is associated with normality and morality; conversely, if one wants to associate the out-group (“them”) with abnormality and immorality, that can be achieved by rhetorically positioning it “there”, on a distant point in this abstract coordinate system. DST’s central claim is that meaning construction is an embodied process, “ultimately rooted in cognitive systems responsible for locating objects in the physical space surrounding the body” (Hart, 2014, p.165). The DIFI would therefore be particularly well suited to capture the intuitive positioning of British identity vis-à-vis Europe.

At the same time, the study also had certain limitations that may pose an obstacle to interpreting its findings. First, some confusion about the meaning and boundaries of British identity were evident in the feedback left by some participants after completing (or being screened out of) the study. Several participants were automatically screened out prior to completing the survey for not meeting the nationality criteria because they did not identify as British, but as English, Scottish, and Welsh. Who identifies as British in the UK, and who identifies with its constituent nations (and even narrower, regional identities) to the exclusion of British identity, is a complex question that could not be taken into account in the design of the study. However, in a certain sense it also cuts to the core of the issue of how

seemingly stable identity labels such as "British" can refer to a multitude of shifting and fluid identity contents. Another participant reported that he was screened out after responding that he does not identify as British because, in his words, he *is* British, and what he identifies as cannot change that (i.e., he seemed to interpret nationality not as an identity but as a fact of nature). In effect, we had clear evidence of some participants pushing back against what they perceived to be the framing of the questionnaires, and trying to reframe them. Therefore, although it was beyond the scope of this study to factor in the idiosyncratic meaning that group identity can have for individual members, that could be an important perspective to take in future research.

Reicher (1988), commenting on Billig's (1987) rhetorical social psychology, argued that what is missing from the rhetorical approach is an appreciation of the element of power in social relations. While Billig conceived of discourse as the clash between different rhetorical positions (*logoi* and *anti-logoi*), Reicher countered that different positions in society have unequal power to express or challenge rhetorical positions. For example, certain types of rhetoric (e.g., the framing of a national identity) are supported by the machinery of the state, or by academic institutions, and can be amplified at the expense of alternative forms of rhetoric. This factor was not fully taken into account in the design of the present study. Our vignette was presented as coming from someone in position of authority (a politician), but who is speaking and whether they are perceived as speaking on behalf of the in-group is an important variable to incorporate in any future research on this topic.

Chapter 12

General Discussion

12.1 Summary of the aims, rationale, and findings

Nationalism has proven to be the single most powerful and enduring political force in the modern world. In the span of just over two centuries it has conquered the entire globe and reorganised states and societies around the principles of national sovereignty and government in the name of a national political community. Its unstoppable march across Europe since 1789, and across all of what used to be called the Third World in the wake of decolonisation, has posed something of a conundrum to sociology and political theory. As we have seen, some theorists have viewed national communities, or something resembling their modern form, as a perennial feature of human societies almost since the beginning of recorded history. Others, meanwhile, have paradoxically explained nationalism's endurance through its very recency: modernists hold that nationalism arose relatively recently in historical time in response to certain modernising social transformations, and yet, they claim, it remains the dominant political form precisely because it is rooted in these objective characteristics of modernity (such as industrial capitalism, mass communications, and mass social mobilisation). Nationalism has also posed problems for psychologists who seek to understand how nationhood operates on a smaller scale: how national identities are formed and maintained, what purposes they serve, and how they shape people's relationships to the social world.

As the review of the psychological literature in Chapter 2 demonstrated, psy-

chologists have produced a plethora of theoretical approaches to the study of nationalism. However, due to the fragmentary nature of our discipline, these approaches do not always talk to each other, and are often erected upon mutually incompatible theoretical foundations. I have discussed two dominant approaches within social psychology – the psychological and the sociological – however at the outset the former informed the bulk of the theoretical and methodological apparatus with which I approached this research project. My goal was to apply current psychological theory to two key components of implicit nationalism: *social essentialism* and *perceived collective continuity*. I selected these two factors after reviewing the wider literature on nationalism and determining that regardless of its political dimensions or philosophical claims, some implicit beliefs in the reality and continuity of national groups have been an inescapable presence in most nationalist thought since its emergence in early modernity.

The choice of essentialism and PCC as the objects of investigation followed naturally from this attempt to isolate the individual, psychological dimensions of nationalism from its wider social, cultural, and political determinants. My focus on socio-cognitive theories of group identity also reflected this conceptualisation of implicit nationalism, as I judged them to be particularly well equipped for the empirical study of unconscious mental processes, such as implicit biases and social identity processes. However, as the research that forms the empirical part of this thesis progressed, it also began to enter a dialogue with the more sociological branch of social psychology, and that was reflected both in the design of my later studies, and in my general interpretation of my findings, which I will outline in detail in this chapter.

The overarching aim of this thesis, briefly stated, was therefore to explore the cognitive underpinnings of implicit nationalist belief, with a particular focus on essentialist thinking and PCC, and to integrate these free-floating constructs into existing psychological theories (such as SIT, IFT, and Cognitive Load Theory). The main question I sought to answer was: to what extent are nationalist beliefs underpinned by implicit cognitive tendencies such as essentialist thinking, perceived

national continuity, and an intuitive cognitive style? In the (chronologically) final two studies in this series, Studies 5 and 9, I posed an additional question: is high-continuity rhetoric implicated in how people align themselves with (Study 5) or represent (Study 9) their national in-group? With this addition I sought to extend the scope of my experimental research from the purely cognitive theoretical foundation that informed the rest of the thesis towards a more integrative approach that takes certain insights from discursive or rhetorical psychology into account. However, the development of a systematic approach towards bridging multiple theoretical approaches, which have been developed in direct opposition to each other, would have been far beyond the scope of this research project. My goal towards the end of the thesis was therefore merely to compensate for the theoretical monologism that this project had started with, and to sketch out some promising avenues for future development.

This final chapter is dedicated to summarising and interpreting the findings of the empirical studies reported in Chapters 4-11. Alongside providing an overview of the individual studies, their findings will be discussed in relation to the general aims of the thesis, and the limitations of the present research will be considered. Finally, the chapter will summarise the contributions of this thesis and will discuss how it can inform future research.

12.2 Findings

12.2.1 Study 1

Study 1 was designed to test for associations between PCC, social essentialism, and identity fusion. I argued that there is a theoretical overlap between the three constructs, but despite some speculation regarding the links between fusion and essentialism (e.g., Swann & Buhrmester, 2015) and PCC and essentialism (Sani, 2008; Sani et al., 2008, 2007, 2009), no studies had demonstrated such a connection empirically. At this stage, the three constructs were seen as reflecting individual differences in social cognition or group perception which could in turn determine attitudes and actions towards social groups (both towards one's nation and towards

salient out-groups), and therefore it was important to explore systematically any potential relationships between them. The study was exploratory and was intended to provide preliminary evidence for these links, which would be used for more detailed theory building at a later stage in the research project. An international sample, predominantly from the US and India, completed self-report measures of the three constructs in an online survey.

Study 1 fully achieved its aims: scores on the three constructs were found to be positively correlated with each other. This finding was made more intriguing by the fact that the measure of essentialism captured essentialist beliefs about human personality traits, rather than about national groups, which meant that the correlation could not be attributed to an element of patriotism underpinning scores on essentialism and PCC. This was interpreted as preliminary evidence for a relationship between PCC and a generalised tendency towards essentialist thinking, in light of the cognitive perspective outlined above, according to which PCC could be viewed as the product of a particular (essentialist) form of social cognition. However, this finding should also be interpreted cautiously due to the relatively modest correlation coefficient, which suggested that most of the variance in PCC was attributable to factors outside of this putative bias towards essentialism.

Additionally, Study 1 demonstrated the functional difference between fusion and mere identification vis-à-vis essentialism and the two components of PCC: fusion was more closely related to social essentialist beliefs and to cultural (essentialist) continuity than national identification was. These findings were broadly consistent with accounts of identity fusion proposed by Swann and Buhrmester (2015) which suggest that identity fusion with a group is accompanied by the perception of that group as a family, and of a shared essence that binds all group-members with the same identity.

Finally, the exploratory analyses suggested that the two types of PCC (cultural and historical) were also functionally distinct from each other: cultural or essentialist continuity was more strongly correlated with essentialism and identity fusion than historical or narrative continuity was. The two types of continuity were con-

ceived by Chandler et al. (Chandler, 1994; Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Chandler et al., 2003) as two distinct rhetorical strategies that people use to maintain continuity, however in subsequent research by Sani et al. (2008; 2007; 2009; Sani, 2008) the differences between them were neglected as PCC (as a composite construct) became the object of investigation. Study 1 therefore provided an important and rare indication that there is predictive value in considering the two strategies in isolation, and taken together the study's findings suggested multiple important avenues for future exploration.

However, before moving on to the next step in this research project, some limitations of the first exploratory study should be discussed. First, Study 1 relied entirely on self-report measures for the four key constructs it was designed to look into (PCC, social essentialism, identity fusion, and identification). While this is arguably not a major limitation for constructs such as fusion and identification, which are meant to reflect subjective attitudes and therefore lend themselves to survey research, one could raise the objection that the measure of social essentialism may not have captured the type of essentialist thinking that was to be the focus of my entire research project. This objection can rest on two arguments:

- i That the essentialism questionnaire lacked a clear referent (it referred only to "people" in general, rather than to concrete in- or out-groups), and therefore that a general essentialist bias cannot be inferred directly from scores on it. This criticism carries some weight, especially in light of more recent research on motivated cognition and strategic essentialism more specifically (e.g., Hoyt et al., 2019; Ryazanov & Christenfeld, 2018), which suggests that people can deploy complex strategies of ascribing or denying the essential nature of social groups, depending on the implications this could have for intergroup dynamics. This line of reasoning would suggest that using the same questionnaire but with a specific reference group and within a specific (social, historical, political) context may produce very different scores even if it were completed by the same participants.
- ii That a self-report measure like the essentialism questionnaire merely reflects

a participant's explicit attributions, and is therefore insufficient to capture the kind of cognitive *processes* that this thesis is interested in; to address this point, further experimental studies would have to be conducted, specifically Studies 6-8, which involved either measurements or direct manipulations of cognitive style and cognitive load.

A second criticism that could be raised against Study 1 is that it was not designed to take into account any cultural differences between national identities. The choice of methodology for this study lay in the tradition of epistemological positivism, which has as its aim the formulation of general laws of human behaviour, and one result of this was the attempt to find certain extra-cultural associations between the variables of interest. However, as post-hoc analyses at the level of distinct national groups (US and India) demonstrated, these groups were heterogeneous both in terms of demographic variables such as sex and age, but also in terms of the four key variables of interest. A targeted sampling approach to ensure the homogeneity of distinct national groups in the sample could have eliminated the first problem and may have provided more direct evidence for the cross-cultural differences observed in terms of the four main variables.

These limitations – the choice of a self-report measure of general essentialism and the lack of sensitivity to cultural differences – invite a more cautious interpretation of the study's findings, however it should be noted that both were addressed through design changes in my subsequent studies. Despite these limitations, Study 1 fits into the aims of this thesis by providing evidence for the association between the key constructs of interest, and by allowing for the generation of hypotheses about potential causal relationships between them that could be tested in subsequent studies.

12.2.2 Study 2

Before delving into the experimental side of my research, I conducted a follow-up study (Study 2) to look for further correlational evidence for the association between fusion and PCC. In Study 1 I suggested that the projection of familial ties that accompanies identity fusion with a group could lead to the perception of that group as

more entity-like, which could contribute to perceptions of increased group continuity. I therefore conducted this second correlational study to explore the possibility that perceptions of national entitativity mediate the hypothesised relationship between national identity fusion and PCC. A secondary hypothesis was that, based on my findings from Study 1, fusion and identification with the national group would be functionally distinct vis-à-vis PCC, and therefore vis-à-vis national entitativity. Results suggesting that only the path between fusion and PCC is mediated by entitativity, and the path between mere identification and PCC is not, would be taken as the basis for further hypothesis-generation about the causal relationship between fusion and PCC.

This time the hypothesis was supported only partially – entitativity was found to be a partial mediator of the relationships between fusion and PCC and between identification and PCC. Entitativity accounted for a larger proportion of fusion's link to PCC than identification's, however the expected clear-cut distinction between fusion and identification was not found, which problematised the interpretation of these findings.

Although similar in design to Study 1, specifically in its reliance on the online survey format for data collection and on self-report measures of the constructs under investigation, Study 2 nevertheless contained some important improvements. First, to eliminate the problem of the lower rates of attention and survey completion that were evident in the Indian sub-set of the sample in the previous study, participants located in India were excluded at the recruitment stage. This decision was taken in an attempt to improve the quality of the data collected and, in this way, to improve my ability to make inferences from the data. Nevertheless, it still posed the same limitation as in Study 1, where no systematic attempt was made to explore how continuity, entitativity, or national identities operated within concrete nationalities. Second, a new measure of national entitativity with a concrete referent (participants' national identity) was developed specifically for this study based on established theories of the internal structure of the construct. The scale was designed to capture five underlying components of entitativity (the perceived

unity, informativeness, underlying reality, similarity, and exclusivity of the group), and was judged to have good face validity, good internal consistency and to reflect a single overarching construct. In these respects, Study 2 represented a step towards overcoming the abovementioned limitations in Study 1 associated with the measure of general essentialism lacking a concrete referent.

Nevertheless, one limitation of Study 2 was that it was beyond its scope to test for the predictive validity of the measure of entitativity. That may have been impossible to do, however, as there is general disagreement about the precise nature and structure of entitativity as a construct; and, although it is generally agreed that entitativity is meant to reflect the perception that a group is “entity-like”, the precise relationship or boundary between entitativity and other similar concepts like essentialism is up for debate (e.g., see debates on the topic in Yzerbyt et al., 2004, and the discussion on entitativity in Chapter 3). “Entitativity” as a term has a clear enough definition (i.e., a group is entitative if it is seen to have the properties of an entity), but beyond this description there is considerable variation in terms of what the precise list of entity-like properties is, how they are operationalised, and as a consequence what outcomes they can be said to predict. Therefore, my response to the criticism concerning the missing predictive validity of the new questionnaire would be that the face validity of the measure (the degree to which it meets the universally agreed upon definition) should be the key property on which the measure should be judged.

A second, more substantial limitation of Study 2 is that any clear evidence for the predicted role of entitativity in the association between fusion and PCC still would have been only correlational, and would not be sufficient to support the claim that a causal relationship exists between the two. That would have to be tested at a later point, and addressing the question about the relationship between fusion and PCC became the focus of the subsequent three experiments (Studies 3-5).

Taken together, Studies 1 and 2 laid the groundwork for the rest of the studies on PCC and identity fusion reported in this thesis. However, they also had several limitations, the most important of which was that they were not designed to test

for any of the causal effects that I was proposing. Both studies also used international samples recruited online, and apart from some post-hoc tests for gender and nationality, my analyses did not pay enough attention to cultural differences in how nationhood was conceptualised between participants from different countries. It became increasingly clear that this had been an oversight as my understanding of nationhood and its related identity processes began to incorporate more insights from discursive social psychology; however, at the time of conducting Studies 1 and 2, I was operating under the assumption that the constructs I was studying were influenced by purely cognitive processes, and therefore could be straightforwardly generalised across cultures.

12.2.3 Studies 3 and 4

In Studies 3 and 4 (Chapter 6) I attempted to test some of the causal relationships that I had discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. With them I sought to determine (1) whether essentialist thinking contributes to perceptions of national continuity, and (2) whether this effect is moderated by the individual's degree of identity fusion with the nation. These predictions were derived from a strong cognitivist interpretation of group dynamics (i.e., the increased availability of essentialist ideas leads to a more essentialised mental representation of one's nation, which increases its perceived continuity), and represented the natural next step in testing some of the ideas about the relationships between the key variables that I developed out of the first two correlational studies.

The experimental manipulation consisted of having participants read an online article that either supported or rejected the idea of genetic determinism of human characteristics. The article had been used verbatim in previous successful manipulations of essentialist thinking and the manipulation was chosen for these experiments based on its demonstrated efficacy. Both experiments had an identical design and procedure, the only difference between them being the nationality of the sample: Study 3 involved only participants recruited from the United States of America, while Study 4 involved only participants recruited from India. The choice to recruit from the two largest national groups on the online survey platform *Amazon MTurk*

was made purposely to fulfil two needs at the same time: first, to ensure that specific national groups were selected in an attempt to address the lack of attention to national differences in Studies 1 and 2; and second, to ensure that both studies could tap into large enough participant pools to guarantee a sufficiently high statistical power while accommodating potential exclusions for inattention and incomplete responses.

These experiments did not support the prediction that essentialist thinking contributes to perceived national continuity, either independently or moderated by identity fusion. These null results could be attributed to a variety of causes. The most obvious one is that this was in fact a true null effect and that essentialist thinking does not contribute to higher PCC, regardless of a person's degree of fusion with the in-group. An alternative explanation could be that the null effect is the product of an unsuccessful manipulation of essentialist thinking. On the one hand, this is contradicted by the successful manipulation checks in both experiments, which indicated higher essentialist beliefs about race in the experimental (high essentialism) condition compared with the control condition. However, it could be argued that the manipulation check (No et al.'s (2008) *Implicit Theory of Race Scale*) only measures essentialist attitudes towards race as a social category, and not towards the target national group, and that therefore a difference between the two conditions as measured by this scale only reflects essentialism about racial groups and not about nationalities.

The scale had been used in previous studies to gauge the efficacy of the same article used as a manipulation here, which lent the scale some legitimacy as a form of manipulation check. But the underlying argument of the above critique (that the scale measured only racial or genetic essentialism, and is not informative about the manipulation of essentialist thinking in general) is hard to evaluate, because it points to a theoretical weakness, not a methodological one. If one starts with the assumption that essentialist thinking is an underlying (domain-general) cognitive bias, then manipulating it should produce equivalent essentialist beliefs about both racial and national groups. However, the abovementioned alternative approach which sees

essentialism as a form of discourse that might be deployed against, for example, racial groups but not national ones, or against one nationality but not another, implies that a significant difference between Implicit Theory of Race scores should not automatically be taken as evidence for a manipulation of essentialist thinking in general. Indeed, such an approach would reject the very idea of “essentialist thinking in general”. Therefore, responding to this argument in full would entail justifying one theoretical approach over the other (e.g., the discursive over the cognitive), which was beyond the scope of the two experimental studies reported here. However, it is important to note that an emphatic rejection of the cognitive view of essentialism would discredit not only the manipulation check, but the manipulation itself, as this implies that the article should manipulate essentialist thinking about participants’ national group specifically, rather than domain-general genetic essentialism.

Studies 3 and 4 therefore represented a logical continuation of the research project outlined in this thesis. After two correlational studies (Studies 1 and 2) demonstrated associations between essentialist thinking, fusion with the nation, and perceived national continuity, the next logical step was to formulate a coherent theoretical account of the relationship between them and to test for any causal connections. As I have argued here, the main limitations that might prevent drawing concrete conclusions from the results of these two studies have less to do with the concrete methods used, than with the general ambiguity about how essentialism should be understood and studied, resolution of which was beyond the scope of the planned studies.

12.2.4 Study 5

Study 5 continued this line of research by testing the prediction that higher PCC can foster identity fusion with the in-group (an effect going in the opposite direction to the one hypothesised in Studies 1-4). Although this reversal of the direction of the proposed effect might seem like a small step forward from the previous two experimental studies, it rested upon a subtle but important theoretical shift in my approach to the subject of this thesis. This hypothesis was made plausible by a narrativist in-

terpretation of collective identity construction, according to which beliefs about the reality (essentialism) and continuity (PCC) of a social group are embedded in narratives about the group's past. This shift can be seen in the choice of manipulation used in this experiment: instead of the priming paradigm in Studies 3 and 4, which was meant to increase the salience of ideas of genetic essentialism and thus foster essentialist thinking about groups and individuals alike, the experimental manipulation here consisted of having participants read a vignette that simply argued for or against the transgenerational continuity of the participants' nation. In other words, here PCC was interpreted not as a cognitive bias to be primed or activated, but as a characteristic of the description of the nation's past, a move which eschewed some questionable theoretical assumptions that had to be made in previous experiments.

For this study I suggested that increased perceptions of national continuity could foster a feeling of shared destiny with the other group members and thus promote identity fusion, especially for people who already identify strongly with the nation and endorse essentialist beliefs. However, although the manipulation of PCC led to higher PCC scores and was therefore judged to have been effective, it did not produce the expected increase in identity fusion scores. The planned moderation analyses also showed no effect of the interactions $PCC \times Identification$ and $PCC \times Essentialism$ on fusion, and the lack of a significant effect of the manipulation did not allow for the final planned analysis, which would have tested whether the predicted increase in identity fusion would lead to a corresponding increase in endorsement of extreme sacrifice (an already established consequence of identity fusion). These null results do not provide evidence that high-continuity narratives are sufficient to foster national identity fusion.

In Study 5 I attempted to overcome some of the limitations of the previous studies outlined above. A naturalistic manipulation of PCC was chosen with a clear referent (British identity), unlike the articles used to manipulate essentialism in Studies 3 and 4. The presentation of the pro- and anti-continuity arguments was made in the style of a historical narrative, not unlike what can be found in a popular book or a newspaper opinion piece, which ensured the verisimilitude of the manip-

ulation and eliminated some of the concerns about the internal validity of previous manipulations. Moreover, although it was similar in form to those manipulations, the use of the vignette in Study 5 did not rely on cognitivist assumptions about, for example, certain patterns of thought becoming “activated” or more salient as a result of reading the text. Instead, in line with a more rhetorical approach to social psychology outlined in Chapters 7 and 10 which provided the justification for this epistemological shift, the vignette was intended to present a straightforward argument about the continuity of British identity. In that respect, the design of this study did not have to make the same assumptions that had made the interpretations of any null findings more difficult in previous studies, which was a major step forward in the overall research programme.

However, some limitations or omissions could still be identified in Study 5. For one, the independent variable was only binary, and consisted of an experimental (high-continuity) condition, and an alternative (low continuity) condition. As my exploratory correlational studies have demonstrated, treating the two components of PCC (cultural and historical continuity) as distinct constructs might have predictive value when studying their links to identity fusion, as cultural continuity was shown in Study 1 to be more strongly correlated to fusion ($r_s = .59$) than historical continuity was ($r_s = .23$). Based on these findings the objection can be raised that a 2×2 design, in which both types of continuity were manipulated, would have been more appropriate.

A further criticism stemming from the above is that, in addition to being unable to tease apart the effects of the two components of PCC, the experimental design did not include an effective manipulation of historical continuity. Indeed, the arguments made in the two vignettes emphasised the continuity or discontinuity of national character, values, and markers of identity such as language, which are all examples of cultural rather than historical continuity. One could therefore argue that the experimental condition may have presented only a partial manipulation of PCC, which implies that the null result could be the product of a Type II error and that a comprehensive manipulation of both cultural and historical PCC may have

been necessary to produce a change in participants' degree of identity fusion.

My response to this critique is twofold. First, a manipulation of historical continuity would require a control (low historical continuity) condition but implementing that is easier done in theory than in practice. Historical continuity as defined by Sani et al. (2007) reflects the belief that a group's past forms a coherent narrative, a series of interconnected episodes woven together into something resembling a dramatic structure. Unlike cultural continuity, which is something that a text can argue for explicitly (e.g., "We have preserved our traditions and beliefs"), historical continuity is in the eye of the beholder: if an author were to recount a series of historical episodes and insist that there is no connection between them, some readers could nevertheless perceive some narrative or thematic thread running through them. Indeed, the mere act of recounting familiar episodes from history risks making salient the kind of traditional national narratives that people are exposed to from childhood. Therefore, if one was to design a "low historical continuity" condition, one would be all but forced to avoid talking about history altogether; such a vignette would be so different from the high continuity experimental manipulation that it would not work as an adequate control. A second response to the above criticism is that, even if the manipulation of PCC in Study 5 was overly focused on cultural at the expense of historical continuity, this omission does not invalidate the experimental manipulation altogether. Because cultural continuity was shown in Study 1 to be more relevant to fusion than historical continuity was, it is reasonable to assume that the manipulation was still designed to tap into the type of PCC that was predicted to be the most relevant for fostering fusion. In other words, since historical PCC was so weakly associated with fusion, manipulating it directly is unlikely to have produced a significant effect where a manipulation of cultural PCC failed to do so.

To summarise, Studies 3-5 formed a coherent attempt to build on the findings of the exploratory study conducted at the beginning of this research project. Two distinct hypotheses derived from an interpretation of the existing literature on identity fusion and PCC were tested: that a bias towards essentialist thinking can increase perceived national continuity, and that increased perceived national conti-

nunity can foster identity fusion with the nation. Neither of the hypotheses was confirmed, and thus this series of five studies did not provide evidence for any causal effects between fusion, PCC, and essentialism. In this way these three studies fit with the general aims of the thesis by occupying an intermediary space: through them I sought to answer the main research question of the whole thesis, which was whether certain cognitive tendencies, such as thinking about social groups in essentialist terms, beliefs in national continuity, and intuitive cognitive processing, can be considered the psychological underpinnings of nationalism. The inability to demonstrate a causal link between essentialist thinking and PCC, and between PCC and identity fusion (a visceral form of national belonging distinct from mere national identification) offered at least partially a negative answer to that question. At the same time, these studies also problematised and deepened my treatment of the subject, primarily because it was not clear to what extent questionnaire measures of essentialist thinking, which require explicit self-knowledge about one's beliefs, can be taken to reflect the putative cognitive processes that this thesis aimed to explore.

The next part of the project was therefore an elaboration on some of the findings, themes, and criticisms that emerged out of the first half of the thesis. This was done in two ways: in Studies 6-8 I attempted a much more direct exploration of essentialist social cognitions and nationalism, while in the final two chapters (10 and 11) I outlined an alternative approach to the questions of essentialist nationalism and national continuity – one informed by the study of discourse and national narrative and practice.

12.2.5 Studies 6-8

Studies 6-8 formed another coherent block in that they took a different approach to the study of social essentialism, one influenced more heavily by cognitive theories of information processing. I predicted that a more intuitive or heuristic cognitive style would correspond to more essentialist beliefs about social groups. In Study 6 I used a simple manipulation validated in previous studies on information processing styles, however I found no effect on social essentialism. I then tested for a naturally occurring association between cognitive style and essentialism in Study 7,

in which I sought to measure participants' dominant cognitive style by means of a cognitive reflection test, but no such association was found. Finally, I conducted one final experimental study (Study 8), in which I attempted to affect participants' cognitive style by proxy, by manipulating the cognitive load under which they were completing the dependent measures. The results showed no evidence that a higher cognitive load (and hence a more intuitive cognitive style) leads to more essentialist thinking about nations or social groups in general.

These three studies present their own set of limitations that are distinct from the ones found in Studies 1-5. The validity of the priming manipulation used in Study 6 was subsequently called into question by later failed replication attempts, along with a huge swath of the literature of social priming. Due to budgetary restrictions, not enough precautions were taken to ensure the efficacy of the experimental manipulations in Studies 6 and 8 (e.g., pilot studies with sufficiently large samples could have determined the efficacy of the priming tasks and provided baselines for the expected effect sizes). Likewise, both studies suffered from small sample sizes that limited the interpretability of the results. Null effects could therefore be attributed to (i) the sample sizes in Studies 6 and 8, which were appropriate compared with similar experimental studies published at the time, but in light of subsequent revelations about the extent of the replication crisis are likely to have been insufficient to detect a potentially small effect size and may have resulted in a Type II error; (ii) the use of manipulations of cognitive style (especially in Study 6) which were based on an established experimental paradigm which was also called into question at a later point; and (iii) a real null effect – in other words, that intuitive social processing is not in fact related to, nor does it contribute to, either social or national essentialism.

Out of the three studies, the correlational Study 7 was perhaps the most methodologically robust, as it used an established and reliable measure of its predictor variable, and also benefited from a sufficiently large sample. The lack of an association between the measure of cognitive style (analytical vs. intuitive thinking) and essentialist beliefs therefore lends support to conclusion iii. above – that essentialist thinking should not be attributed wholly to a single bias towards intu-

itive processing. Nevertheless, this series of studies leaves open a small avenue for future research: it could be argued that the measure of essentialist beliefs reflects a person's entrenched or explicit beliefs about the ultimate causes of differences in personality or national traits. This would mean that any experimental manipulation is less likely to shift these beliefs (because they are entrenched), and that they are subject to social desirability bias (because they are explicit). A follow-up study could test for similar effects and associations to the ones in Studies 6-8, but use a measure of essentialism in which participants have to make social attributions in realistic situations under a manipulation of cognitive style or under conditions of cognitive load, rather than rely on their self-reported tendency to make such attributions.

12.2.6 Study 9

In Study 9 I returned to some of the theoretical and methodological issues I had grappled with in the first half of the thesis. Its research question was based on an understanding of national identities as fluid and open to redefinition, especially through the use of historical narratives, as outlined in Chapter 10. This theoretical chapter described the reconceptualization of some of the theoretical constructs that I set out to study in the present thesis. More specifically, I argued that theoretical abstractions like essentialism, entitativity, and group continuity were best understood as properties of the way people talk about groups, rather than as properties of mental representations of groups. For instance, to study national continuity one should observe whether, under what conditions, for what purposes, and through what means people will describe their national group as highly continuous. This is not only a move forward in response to Billig's (2013; 2019) exhortation to translate static concepts into the language of social actions, but is simultaneously a return to Chandler's original conceptualisation of self-continuity as a rhetorical strategy, something that people construct in an argumentative context driven by specific motivations, rather than as a passive perception.

Study 9 therefore constituted an attempt to bridge the purely cognitive perspective that informed the bulk of this thesis, and some of the insights of discursive,

rhetorical, and narrative social psychology. However, it did not mark a fundamental change of course from the rest of the thesis in methodological terms, as it remained a quantitative, experimental piece of research. Its continuity with previous studies in the series, notably Study 5, in which a similar manipulation of national continuity was expected to affect people's alignment with their nation, meant that its contribution to the aims of this thesis was more incremental. Some directions for future research that depart more markedly from the established pattern in the first half of the thesis will be explored later in this chapter.

Study 9 was designed to test the idea that high-continuity narratives are more successful at defining the contents of national identity compared with low-continuity ones. Participants identifying as British were asked to read a vignette describing the relationship between British and European identity, and their perceptions of the proximity and overlap between the two were measured as the outcome variable. The vignettes varied both in terms of the Argument they made ("British people are fundamentally Europeans" vs. "British people are fundamentally un-European") and the Rhetoric used to justify it (High vs. Low continuity) in a 2×2 design.

Several analyses were planned to test for the efficacy of the Argument \times Rhetoric interaction, as well as several complementary hypotheses concerning the effect of the demographic variables on perceived proximity to European identity, and of identity threat (expressed in the continuity manipulation) on the completion time of the scale. However, the manipulation check showed no difference in self-reported PCC scores between the two Rhetoric conditions, which indicated that the Rhetoric manipulation had been unsuccessful. The main planned analysis showed no effect of the predicted interaction. Post-hoc analyses indicated what can be interpreted as a trend in the predicted direction: the argument that British people are Europeans was convincing when expressed in rhetoric emphasising the continuity of British identity, but not when expressed in rhetoric arguing against that continuity. However, given the null effects of the manipulation check and the main analysis, this apparent trend should be interpreted with great caution.

The null results in Study 9 are therefore most likely due to an unsuccessful manipulation, a fact which itself requires an explanation, especially considering that the study relied on a type of manipulation which had been validated in earlier experiments on PCC (e.g., Warner et al. 2016; see also Study 5 in this thesis). In fact, I have argued that one strength of the study design was that the manipulation of the IVs was naturalistic, in the sense that it did not rely on the priming of subliminal social cues, but instead closely resembled the format in which many arguments about national identity are delivered in the real world: political speeches and newspaper columns.

One plausible explanation for the lack of an effect on the perceived continuity of British identity is that an unintended conversational implicature could have produced a compensatory reaction in some participants, and made them suspicious or outright dismissive of the vignette's arguments. The vignettes that were used as a manipulation in Study 9 touched on the question of Brexit and Britain's place in Europe: issues that were both politically sensitive and had deep implications for the much wider, polarising debate in the UK about the nature and future of British identity. It is possible that some participants did not take the text's arguments about the continuity of British identity at face value, and read into them a much wider set of positions than what was explicitly present in the text. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that some participants adopted a more critical attitude to the arguments expressed in the vignette, which could have resulted in a less effective manipulation.

Although this is certainly a plausible explanation, it is practically impossible to ascertain its veracity. If we were to assume this discursive (rather than cognitive) approach to interpret the potential effects of the manipulation, it would become harder to comment on participants' interpretation of the vignettes without interviewing them directly (a cognitive explanation of social priming manipulations does not suffer from this limitation, because it holds that certain ideas can become "activated" or be made salient without the participant's awareness, and hence the problem of interpretation is not as pronounced). Moreover, this explanation in itself poses the question why the manipulation of collective continuity was successful in

other studies (including Study 5) but not in this one, given that the target group (i.e., the nation) whose continuity was manipulated remains just as important. Perhaps it was the added topic of Brexit, which was present in Study 9 but not in Study 5, that was decisive and provoked the participants' distrust and opposition to the text. If that is the case, I would present again my argument, which I also made in Chapter 11, that Brexit provides a unique moment of rhetorical indeterminacy when it comes to British national identity (e.g., the uncertainty of what Brexit means in real terms, or the coexistence of mutually incompatible arguments in the rhetoric of the Leave campaign, such as the combination of national/isolationist and globalist/free-trade ambitions). This should make British identity more, rather than less, amenable to reformulation, compared with less turbulent moments in Britain's history. If the aim of the study was to explore the effects of what Billig (1987) has termed "witcraft", or the construction of novel rhetorical positions, then the uncertain and mutable signifier that is Brexit should present a perfect terrain on which to achieve that aim.

Another explanation of the null effect of the continuity manipulation points in the opposite direction – to a shallow engagement with the text, rather than a critical interpretation of its implications. Research on mnemonic processes has drawn attention to the way that encoding and recall of information depends on deep (semantic) processing, as opposed to shallow (graphemic or phonemic) processing (Craik & Tulving, 1975; Lockhart, Craik, & Jacoby, 1976; Schallert, 1976). As was discussed in the notes on the development of the stimuli in section 11.2.1.4, the initial version of the manipulation texts had very poor comprehension rates, especially for conditions other than the high continuity, European identity manipulation; shortening the vignettes and moving the key message of the text to the beginning significantly improved comprehension, suggesting that participants were not paying sufficient attention to the texts beyond the first two short paragraphs. Therefore, one cannot dismiss the possibility that, even with the improved comprehension rates for the final version of the vignettes, participants were still engaging with them on a shallower level than what would have been necessary to change how they thought about their identity.

To summarise, despite their gradual evolution, the nine empirical studies reported in this thesis form a cohesive whole, both theoretically and methodologically. Studies 1 and 2 demonstrated associations between the key concepts that this research project was focused on: perceived national continuity, national identity fusion, and social essentialism, and provided valuable directions for future research, especially with regards to the functional difference between cultural and historical continuity, and the potential contribution of social essentialist beliefs to identity fusion and high-continuity group representations. Studies 3 and 4 tested the hypothesis that essentialist thinking contributes to perceptions of national continuity, and Study 5 tested the hypothesis that high-continuity narratives promote identity fusion. Studies 6-8 further explored the link between essentialist thinking (this time measured or manipulated directly, rather than through endorsement of essentialist beliefs) and perceived social and national continuity. Finally, Study 9 tested the effect of high-continuity rhetoric on shifting the boundaries of group identity. Taken together, the consistent null results across the reported empirical studies indicate that a purely cognitive approach to issues of social identity construction is unsatisfactory, and point to the necessity of applying a variety of theoretical and methodological paradigms to the study of this subject.

12.3 Contributions and Limitations

This thesis makes several incremental but important contributions to the existing literature on socio-psychological and cognitive theories of identity. First, it maps out the relationships between several psychological concepts relevant to the study of nationalism and national identities: psychological essentialism, perceptions of collective continuity, and identity fusion, and it establishes theoretical links between Identity Fusion Theory and the research surrounding PCC. As demonstrated in the theoretical chapters (2 and 3), essentialist thinking about nations and beliefs in their transgenerational continuity are the fundamental building blocks of the psychology of nationalism, however no systematic research project to date has explored the connections between them. In addition to outlining the points where these concepts

overlap in theory, this thesis proposed two interpretations (a cognitive and a narrative one) on how this overlap can be conceptualised and studied more specifically. In the process it has provided a detailed exploration of how these concepts can fit into existing theories of social identity, such as SIT and theories derived from discursive and narrative perspectives, as well as into dual-process theories of social cognition.

An additional contribution of the thesis is to provide a systematic research programme where the relationship between these concepts can be studied empirically. As I have suggested above, although *ex post facto* explanations for the consistent lack of significant effects and ineffective manipulation in most of the empirical studies can be put forward, this consistency in itself points to the conclusion that experimental methods, which are widely used in research on related topics, might not be well suited to the study of social identity. In this way, the thesis also raises questions about the validity of priming paradigms in socio-psychological research.

Finally, the thesis contributes to the development of an alternative approach to the study of social identity construction, which can combine insights from both cognitive/experimental and discursive/interpretivist social psychology. Bridging the gap between these two approaches is an unenviable task, and one that is certainly beyond the scope of the present thesis. However, I have outlined some promising avenues for future developments in this direction in Chapter 10, which can form the basis of a combined cognitive-narrative approach. This could involve the study of how agency and capacity for emotions are either attributed or denied to specific groups in the framing of national narratives (e.g., László, 2014); or how the structural features of a story (beginnings and ends, overarching narrative, selection of events, pacing) can interact with our cognitive and affective processing systems to construct shared representations of the social world.

Nevertheless, this thesis also suffers from some limitations and oversights in terms of planning and execution that, although not major, are worth discussing in some detail. I am going to use this discussion to also explore some deeper methodological and epistemological issues pertinent to the social psychology of national-

ism that I have only briefly touched on in previous chapters.

One of the more ground-level issues with planning was the less than total consistency in the demographics questionnaire that participants had to complete before each study – for example, in some studies I measured their political orientation (from socially liberal to socially conservative), but not in others. Once I began to adopt open research practices like pre-registration of all study hypotheses and variables, I became much more conscious of the way demographic data would fit into each planned study, whereas in the past these details had been overshadowed by the main study hypothesis.

Another oversight was the missed opportunity to follow up on the functional difference between the cultural and historical components of PCC that was revealed in Study 1. The series of empirical studies that followed this initial exploration had already been planned in advance, which did not allow for substantial diversions of research funding to pursue these findings in more detail. This is certainly a gap that future research on PCC can address.

Taken together, the nine studies reported here represent an evolving attempt to apply social and cognitive theories of identity and social perception to understanding national essentialism and perceived national continuity – the two components of implicit nationalism. The initial correlational studies demonstrated an interesting relationship between beliefs in national continuity and generalised social essentialism. However, the series of null or ambiguous findings in the experimental section of the thesis demonstrated the difficulty of applying strict cause-and-effect models to complex questions of identity and political rhetoric. It also highlighted the difficulty of isolating and studying the cognitive aspects of these questions apart from the broader discursive and cultural contexts in which they are embedded.

As this research project was evolving, I attempted to overcome these limitations by incorporating more insights from rhetorical and discursive social psychology, which was most evident in the final study in the series; this shift, however, brought new obstacles with it, such as the difficulty of reconciling two approaches, the cognitive and the discursive, marked by deep-rooted epistemological and onto-

logical differences in how they understand not just nationalism or social identity, but the very workings of the human mind. Cognitive social psychology assumes that the workings of the human mind are best described in terms of processes, stores, mental representations, and algorithms – i.e., that the workings of the mind are essentially pre-verbal, and that speech only describes and externalises what are basically internal mental states. This entails a Cartesian, pre-social view of the human subject, and in turn allows for the production of the kind of universalistic theorising that characterised the earlier studies in this thesis (Studies 1, 2, and 6-8). In contrast, discursive psychology understands thought as speech directed inwards (Billig, 1997), and therefore works with a concept of the human as a speaking subject, constituted by (and not just expressed through) speech. A discursive-rhetorical analysis of national identity therefore requires more particularistic theorising and ground-level analysis. Resolving this conundrum was far beyond the scope of this thesis.

12.3.1 On the peculiarities of British national identity

Another point worth commenting on concerns the nature of national identities in the context of the United Kingdom, where the research for this thesis was conducted. As discussed above, this research project was driven by a predominantly cognitive conception of social identity, with the result that I have tended to treat different national identities as exemplars of the same universal phenomenon; from this assumption it followed that a general psychological theory of nationalism should be equally applicable to any nationality, regardless of the cultural and social context. However, fitting the British national identity into this framework posed a significant obstacle.

The obstacle, simply put, is that British and English national identity are notoriously difficult to disentangle, and their contents can vary depending on personal usage and social context. The United Kingdom is a union with one overarching identity, the British, comprised of four countries with their own national identities (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland). Out of these, English identity occupies a unique place vis-a-vis Britishness. As Kumar (2010) notes, English identity has been submerged under British identity for most of the existence of the

UK, and as such has not developed all of the trappings of a fully articulated national identity separate from the British. On the other hand, the British Isles have been dominated by the uniquely powerful influence of the English language, law, and institutions, making Britishness much more intimately tied to Englishness than to, for example, Welshness. Kumar (2010) compares the other nationalisms on the British Isles to those of Eastern Europe, formed in opposition to foreign domination and hence committed to differentiating themselves from the oppressor. In contrast, English identity has always been subordinate to the imperial project, and England has always projected power outwards, which explains the relative absence of a conscious English nationalism and the lack of clarity about the foundations of English identity.

Kumar's (2010) treatment of the enigma of the "missing" English identity came roughly a decade after the implementation of devolution in the UK, or the transferring of significant decision-making powers from Westminster to the national parliaments and assemblies of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. In the aftermath of devolution, some feared that the absence of an exclusively English national parliament would spur resentment among the population of England, and potentially hasten the break-up of the United Kingdom. However, when this backlash failed to materialise, Condor (2010) attempted to provide an explanation for this apparent political disengagement with national politics among the English.

Condor's (2010) argument was that the most common explanations for the missing backlash (e.g., apathy among the English, failure to recognise their interests in national terms, a lack of national identity) were unfounded. Instead, her interviews with people across England revealed that they made use of four distinct rhetorical strategies, in which national identity was enmeshed with deeper political and social commitments.

The first of these used the language of *popular nationalism*: its exponents defined nationhood in exclusively ethnic terms, rejected multiculturalism, the dominant liberal values system, the EU, and Britishness (they tended to define themselves as "English, *not* British"). They also tended to see national self-definition as

a good in itself, even if it hurts English material interests. The second group expressed a more *localite frame*, marked by a concern for concrete regional issues and avoidance of general concepts of Englishness or national issues. The third and most common position was that of *reasonable pragmatism*, based on a concern for the normative values of liberal democratic citizenship and pluralism, and a suspicion of overtly national politics (which were seen as antithetical to civility and individualism). These respondents did not generally see the lack of an English parliament as unfair: sensitive to the power imbalance between the nationalities of the UK, they supported Scottish national politics as a matter of minority rights, which do not apply to the English. The final rhetorical strategy was that of *liberal cosmopolitanism*: a principled opposition to all nationalism as backward and parochial; however, this strategy led some to reject Scottish nationalism too – a rejection of minority rights which required some rhetorical reframing to be brought in line with liberal principles (e.g., through the adoption of a class-based rather than a national-based interpretation of the issue).

This brief detour through the peculiarities of British/English national identity illustrates the difficulty of treating “identity” as an abstract category within a purely cognitive framework, and in particular of dealing with these identities in the context of the present thesis. Condor’s (2010) research demonstrates how questions of national identity become enmeshed into issues of political identity (such as one’s identity as a liberal or a populist nationalist), as well as into much deeper issues of political ideology, engagement, and meaning-making. This is particularly relevant to the final two studies dealing with PCC and national narratives in this thesis - Studies 5 and 9. Both relied on short vignettes presenting different versions of a British national narrative in order to manipulate PCC, but were not designed to deal with the multiple points of intersection between British and English identity, or between one’s national identity and one’s political positions. Study 9 also focused on issues of European identity and Brexit, which, as Condor’s work has demonstrated, may be difficult to divorce from national identity (e.g., for those who identify as English and explicitly not British), and also from issues around the EU, liberal values, and

multiculturalism.

12.4 Conclusions

The core of this thesis was conceived in 2014 as an attempt to apply current social psychological theories of identity to the study of implicit nationalism. Since then, the push for higher-powered studies, pre-registration and other open science practices, has changed the landscape of experimental psychology considerably. Some of the changes have arguably led to a positive cultural shift in psychological research – pre-registration and the open sharing of research data are increasingly becoming the norm, with a growing number of journals accepting Registered Reports for peer review. Other changes, however, require a more nuanced evaluation. For example, the push for higher sample sizes has precipitated a mass turn to online surveys, which are less costly and time-consuming than traditional lab experiments (Sassenberg & Ditrich, n.d.). This can be seen as a rather controversial development. Apart from the clear technical issues with which it presents us (e.g., having most social psychological research being done on a subjects pool of professional survey responders), online survey research is much more conducive to an approach that sees psychology as mostly internal to the subject, but poses an obstacle for investigating aspects of human psychology that require some form of social interaction or argumentation. This is a particularly pertinent question, as several studies in this thesis did benefit from the opportunity to collect a large set of data using online methods, and I will return to this specific point later in this chapter.

Alongside these field-wide transformations over the past few years, and largely as a result of carrying out the research that formed the empirical part of this thesis, my understanding of social psychology and identity (and with them nationalism) also underwent a dramatic evolution. In hindsight, it was spurred on by factors that were both internal to this research project (e.g., my attempts to interpret unexpected results, or to map out the relationships between abstract constructs like essentialism and identity fusion, and to link them to real-world phenomena), and external to it (e.g., my increasing familiarity with the discursive and critical psychology tradition,

which seemed to offer a resolution to some of the impasses that a purely cognitive approach had presented me with).

12.4.1 Conceptualising essentialism

The first factor that drove this development was the general conceptual confusion about essentialism in the literature – confusion not simply restricted to its factor structure, a question I touched upon in Chapter 3, but also regarding the very nature of the phenomenon under investigation. In some papers, “essentialism” refers to a cognitive process by which one comes to view objects, people, and social groups, as having an inherent and unchanging nature. In others (e.g., Pehrson et al., 2009; Zagefka et al., 2013) the term refers to the belief that group identity is natural (or biologically determined). In others still (e.g., Meyer et al., 2013), “essentialism” also covers the superstitious belief in a physical essence, for example the belief that you can inherit another person’s personality characteristics by means of an organ transplant.

I resorted to limiting my usage of the term to the first of the three definitions, with the intention of attempting to integrate the other two at a later stage in my doctoral research project. The initial studies reported in Chapters 4-6 were informed by more mechanistic or computational theories of social cognition, in which it seemed appropriate to discuss, for example, the structure and components of essentialism in the abstract, as a universal cognitive process that functions in much the same way across different contexts. As my research progressed, however, it was becoming increasingly clear that, although different usages of the term appear to have something in common (an explicit or implicit belief in an identity-conferring essence), there was no clear way in which they could be subsumed under the same unifying theory.

Since then, articles have been published discussing “strategic essentialism”, or the use of essentialist rhetoric to achieve particular social goals, such as ingroup distinctiveness and homogeneity (Hoyt et al., 2019; Ryazanov & Christenfeld, 2018). The idea that essentialism is a property of how one *speaks* about social groups, rather than purely the product of automatic cognitive processes, gradually shifted

the focus of my attention as a researcher away from questions concerning the “structure” of essentialism as a construct, and towards the role of essentialist rhetoric and narratives in the construction of national identity (Chapters 7, 10, and 11).

12.4.2 The role of rhetoric

There was a second factor that led to a gradual shift in my thinking from the purely cognitive theorising with which this thesis started: my increasing awareness of the role of rhetoric in the formation and functioning of social identities.

Even within the rigidly defined parameters of an automated online survey, some participants would attempt to challenge identity categories that at first reading seemed unproblematic. For example, one participant reported their national identity as “human” – perhaps a gesture meant to indicate a refusal of national categorisation; in other cases there was some confusion about the difference between nationality, race, and ethnicity. Initially, I interpreted these occurrences as the result of a miscommunication on my part and attempted to correct them by providing examples for each one, but nevertheless, some would still end up using, for example, religious or racial identities as national.

Then, in my final study on the proximity between British and European identities (Chapter 11), I received feedback from several UK nationals who said they had been filtered out of the survey after they reported that they do not self-identify as British, but as English, Scottish, or Welsh. One participant insisted that he did not *identify* as British, because he *was* British, which for him was a matter of nature, not identity. Another said they wanted to select “White Scottish” from the list of identities, but since that was not available, they chose “White European” over “White British”. Even more interestingly, all of them got in touch with me to demand to be allowed to take part in the survey nevertheless because, as some of them put it, they had an interest in the subject of Britain’s place in Europe, or wanted to have their views on Brexit and the EU heard. In other surveys I would sometimes get feedback from respondents who stated that the answers were too limiting for them, or were worried that their responses could be misinterpreted and wanted to clarify their position on a particular question (e.g., “I wanted to answer ‘Yes, but...’”).

The possibility of a miscommunication and misinterpretation of the survey questions notwithstanding, these participants were explicitly arguing against what they perceived to be the rhetorical framing of the question, and were attempting to reframe it themselves. On the one hand, this posed a methodological problem for the studies I was conducting, because the study design assumed that these survey questions were tapping into some self-contained, decontextualised attitude that a participant has in their mind (e.g., whether group X possesses essence-like properties or not). The possibility that participants would respond in relation to (what they perceived to be) the rhetorical framing of the survey, or that they would even attempt to challenge and redefine it, was not factored in my methodological choices. On the other hand, it pushed my thinking more in the direction of a discursive approach to identity, according to which the categories and processes of social identity are primarily rhetorical, in addition to psychological. This has also allowed me to reframe some of the conceptual questions around psychological essentialism, perceived group entitativity, and identity fusion, that I attempted to tackle with this thesis.

12.4.3 Précis of rhetorical social psychology

I have cited Michael Billig's work a number of times in this thesis, but have avoided discussing the implications of his critique of classical social psychology until this chapter. I was already familiar with Billig's work on nationalism (Billig, 1995) at the planning stages of my doctoral research, and his ideas about "banal" nationalism, or the implicit ideology of nationhood, became the main issue I aimed to tackle with this thesis. However, the implications of his critique became apparent to me after I had finished working on Studies 6-8, which had assumed a purely cognitive model of social identity processes. Becoming better acquainted with the theoretical and methodological issues in social psychology raised by Billig, as well as by Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Reicher and Hopkins (2001), enabled me to reinterpret some of the questions regarding the nature of essentialism, national identity, and collective continuity, that I had been grappling with since the start of this research project.

Billig's work forms part of a wider discursive turn in the social sciences that started in the 1990s and sees human beings as primarily meaning-making animals, rather than as information-processing ones. Discourse and the ability to justify one's positions are foregrounded at the expense of perception and categorisation. Billig (1997), following Wittgenstein's later work on language games, draws a distinction between earlier psychodynamic and cognitive models of the mind, according to which thought is an internal process and language is merely its expression, and the discursive or rhetorical approach, according to which thought *is* language¹. It should be noted that Billig acknowledges that there are certain elements of thought that are non-verbal – such as pattern recognition, object perception, etc., that humans share with other animals. But the uniquely human ability to think about morality, politics, and the course of our lives, requires the rhetorical articulation of thoughts (Billig, 1997, p.47). Furthermore, it requires the ability not only to accept other people's claims about the social world (for example, about who is and who is not really "one of us"), but to negate these claims, and to *justify* that negation. The abilities to justify and criticise require original, creative utterances and rhetorical formulations, which no mechanistic information-processing system can provide.

The implications of this critique for the psychology of social identity are profound. First, in addition to categorisation (the cognitive process that was the foundation of Social Identity and Self-Categorisation Theory), Billig (1987) argues for the existence of an equally important but opposite process – *particularisation*, or the articulations of exceptions to a category. The categories into which humans carve up the social world, the in- and out-groups of classical social psychology, are still there, but they are not automatically given to us. The boundary of the in-group is not automatically determined by the properties of our cognitive perceptual processing systems, but is first and foremost a rhetorical construct. In Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, and Levine's (2006) words, "social identities are not simply per-

¹As expressed by Plato in *The Sophist*, "Thought and speech are the same: only the former, which is the silent conversation of the soul with itself, has been given the special name of thought" (cited in Billig, 1997, p.46)

ceptions about the world as it is now but arguments intended to mobilise people to create the world as it should be in the future” (p.53). This point is particularly pertinent for the theory of identity fusion, which takes the existence of the in-group for granted and avoids problematising the existence or parameters of group identity.

Second, certain psychological phenomena that classical social psychology has tended to cast as internal, computational processes, can be reinterpreted as rhetorical or discursive events, achieved in a (real or imagined) interaction between different rhetorical positions². From this perspective, essentialism is no longer seen as something occurring “in the mind” – a cognitive process that can be activated under certain conditions that causes us to produce an essentialised representation of a person or a social group. Instead, it can be seen as a feature of how we talk about social groups. In the process of attempting to study essentialism as a cognitive process, abstracted from its real-world dynamics, it became increasingly clear that essentialism is better seen as something that people *do* in their social interactions, rather than a purely cognitive process that happens to them.

12.4.4 Final comments

As was mentioned in the Discussion of Study 9, a critique raised by Reicher (1988) against social psychology (both cognitive and rhetorical) is that it often ignores the role of power relations and social structures in identity dynamics. This critical point is relevant to the studies that form part of this thesis, and should be factored into future research on the topic.

By escaping the social world and placing participants in the lab or in front of the computer screen, my aim was that of any experimental social psychologist: to study certain processes, patterns of thought, or instances of decision-making in isolation, in order to understand them better. However, as the examples cited above show, the rhetorical context cannot be fully removed in an experimental context; we can attempt to cover it up, or to ignore it, but participants will still interpret some intention, or some rhetorical framing, behind even the most neutrally phrased

²See for example Billig’s (1997) reinterpretation of psychological repression as a dialogic phenomenon that relies on what are essentially conversational skills.

questionnaire or computer task. In Reicher's (1988) words, people do not simply talk, they talk *to* – and this prevents us from drawing any easy generalisations about how they structure their social world based on their responses in the lab.

In the process of conducting the research for this thesis, some of the assumptions and limitations of cognitive social psychology, both theoretical and methodological, became increasingly clear to me; this pushed me to seek a way of fusing the cognitive and the rhetorical approaches to social psychology, two traditions that may seem like they lack the shared language that would enable them to enter into a dialogue with each other. In the last three chapters, I have attempted to outline, albeit not in a systematic form, what such a synthesis might look like: it would focus less on abstract cognitive processes, and more on people's active role in articulating, constructing, and contesting the social world they inhabit; but it would also take into account the psychological dimensions of discourse and rhetorical construction – for example, the way narratives and rhetoric interact with our cognitive and affective processing systems to build these representations of the social world.

Appendix A

Studies 3 and 4: Vignettes

Vignettes taken from Williams and Eberhardt (2008) used in the manipulation of essentialist thinking

A.1 Essentialism condition

“Scientists Pinpoint Genetic Underpinnings of Race.”

CHARLOTTESVILLE—Scientists working on mapping the origins of life through the Human Genome Project have uncovered some genetic codes that they believe can be used as indicators of racial background.

“Up till now, [we] weren’t able to determine a person’s race based just on DNA,” said Robert Kaminsky, a University of Virginia scientist and lead author of the study, which was just released in the prestigious journal *Gene*. “But now we’re able to use some of the genetic cues to skin color and other physical features to guess at what a person may look like, based on a very small genetic sample.”

Dr. Kaminsky and a graduate student, Lisa Faridany, along with colleague Anthony Schmidt of the Georgetown Medical Center, have been working for several years on mapping the genotypic expressions involved in skin color and other phenotypic physical features. They have focused particularly on the melanocortin 1 receptor (MCR1) gene, which is implicated most powerfully in skin color. The present study explores the link between this gene and the phenylalanine hydroxylase protein, which is involved in melanin production, in varying amounts for different racial groups.

The researchers used skin, blood, and other tissue samples from hospital patients whose race was indicated in their charts, but was kept hidden from lab members until the

genetic analyses were complete.

“We found that once we had a good idea of where the genetic components to some of these key physical features were located, we were able to correctly guess the patients’ racial backgrounds 69% of the time, which is well above chance rate,” Dr. Kaminsky said. “And with Black and White patients in particular, our success rates were even higher.”

Their results add to the growing body of evidence that so much of who we are as people can be traced to our genetic origins— including race.

“This doesn’t mean that there aren’t environmental influences on race, just like everything else,” Dr. Kaminsky cautioned. “But in the end, we obtain our genetic material from our parents, so we generally inherit their race along with everything else.”

He pointed to evolutionary theories as to why humans might have evolved to have different physical appearances. For example, the melanin that produces a dark skin color among people of African heritage may have served as a life-saving protection against strong sun exposure, he said. And among people living in what is now Northern Europe, their relatively lesser access to sunlight was aided by fairer skin, which allows for greater absorption of Vitamin D.

Dr. Kaminsky and his colleagues are continuing their contribution to the Human Genome Project with current work on the genetic underpinnings of depression and other mood disorders.

A.2 Control condition

“Scientists Reveal That Race Has No Genetic Basis”

CHARLOTTESVILLE—Scientists working on mapping the origins of life through the Human Genome Project have definitively demonstrated that no genetic codes can be tied to racial background.

“Up till now, there was a big question [in the scientific community] about whether we could determine a person’s race based just on DNA,” says Robert Kaminsky, a University of Virginia scientist and lead author of the study, which was just released in the prestigious journal *Gene*. “But now we know the answer— there are no genetic markers that indicate what racial group a person belongs to.”

Dr. Kaminsky and a graduate student, Lisa Faridany, along with colleague Anthony Schmidt of the Georgetown Medical Center, have been working for several years on map-

ping the genotypic expressions involved in skin color and other phenotypic physical features. They have focused particularly on the melanocortin 1 receptor (MCR1) gene, which is implicated most powerfully in skin color. The present study explores the link between this gene and the phenylalanine hydroxylase protein, which is involved in melanin production, in varying amounts for different people.

The researchers used skin, blood, and other tissue samples from hospital patients whose race was indicated in their charts, but was kept hidden from lab members until the genetic analyses were complete.

“We found that even when we had a good idea of where the genetic components to some of these key physical features were located, we were able to correctly guess the patients’ racial backgrounds only 27% of the time, which is really no better than chance rate,” Dr. Kaminsky said. “There’s just no one cue or set of cues that indicates, say, whether someone is Black or White.” Their results add to the growing body of evidence that although genes do play an important role in who we are, social and environmental factors may in many circumstances be even more powerful.

“This doesn’t mean that there aren’t hereditary components to physical appearance,” Dr. Kaminsky cautioned. “We do inherit our physical appearance from our parents, but the practice of classifying people into racial groups based on certain patterns of physical appearance is entirely cultural in origin. There’s just no genetic basis for it.”

He pointed to evidence that each racial group has more variability within the group in any given physical dimension, such as skin color, than exists between any two groups. He also added that racial classification is a relatively recent development in human history—even though people’s physical appearances have been relatively stable over time, the categories into which people are classified change constantly according to the political climate.

Dr. Kaminsky and his colleagues are continuing their contribution to the Human Genome Project with current work on the genetic underpinnings of depression and other mood disorders.

Appendix B

Study 5: Vignettes

High collective continuity	Low collective continuity
<p>England's history, its triumphs and disasters, must be the most consistently eventful of any nation on earth. Its origins lie in the Dark Ages, in the occupation of the eastern shores of the British Isles by the Angles and the Saxons. The English were themselves invaded by Vikings and by Normans. But they kept their Anglo-Saxon culture and language through all subsequent incursions. They quickly evolved a common system of government, a common law, and a common language that have endured the test of time. The English spoken by our ancestors even 700 years ago sounded remarkably similar to our modern language. Throughout this time, British people maintained the shared values, beliefs and attitudes that define them as a nation. Many of the institutions that have defined our society have existed and evolved for centuries. These institutions have for centuries protected British core values like individualism, liberty, and tolerance.</p> <p>Since then we have seen a remarkable continuity from one generation to another, until the present day. Major phases of Britain's history are thus linked to one another in a way that makes a historian's job so much more interesting.</p> <p>Today, the British are characterised by specific practices and beliefs that connect them to the past, and distinguish them from other modern people from all over the world.</p>	<p>England's history, its triumphs and disasters, must be the most consistently eventful of any nation on earth. Its origins lie in the Dark Ages, in the occupation of the eastern shores of the British Isles by the Angles and the Saxons. The English were themselves invaded by Vikings and by Normans, whose culture left a deep mark on British society. And the changes didn't end there. It took centuries for a recognisably English language to develop. The language spoken by our ancestors as recently as 200 years ago would sound baffling to us today. Go back even a few generations and it becomes unrecognisable. Throughout this time, the shared values, beliefs and attitudes that define the British as a nation have changed profoundly. Many of the institutions that have defined our society have emerged only recently. These institutions, along with modern British values like individualism, liberty and tolerance, would have appeared foreign to the people living here only a few generations ago.</p> <p>Since then we have seen many waves of profound changes in the fabric of British society from one generation to another. Major phases of Britain's history are not linked to one another, which makes a historian's job so much more difficult.</p> <p>Today, the British are characterised by specific practices and beliefs that distinguish them from the past, and link them more closely with other modern people from all over the world.</p>

Appendix C

Study 9: Vignettes

C.1 High continuity rhetoric

Argument: European identity

“I believe that when we as Europeans come together in a spirit of ambition and innovation, we have it within ourselves to do great things. That shows us that if we open our minds to new thinking and new possibilities, we can forge a better, brighter future for everyone.

Today Europeans are working together to meet the challenges of climate change, deal with the migration crisis, and guarantee better rights and working conditions for everyone. When we look ahead and think about our place in Europe, we see shared challenges and opportunities in common.

And we must also remember that the British have always been an integral part of Europe.

Over the years, we have maintained our traditions, values and ideals as a nation. Since time immemorial, everything about our culture and values has linked us with the rest of Europe.

We have the character of a European nation – forthright and passionate in defence of our freedoms.

From the Scottish Highlands to the snowy Alps, from the Baltic coast to the meadows of Ireland, and from the bustling City of London to the ports of Amsterdam and the proud towns on the Rhine, Europeans have always been connected to each other.

From Caesar’s legions to the Napoleonic Wars. From the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution to the defeat of Nazism, we have always been Europeans.

We have helped to write Europe's history, and Europe has helped write ours."

Argument: Separate identity

"I believe that when the people of Britain come together in a spirit of ambition and innovation, we have it within ourselves to do great things. That shows us that if we open our minds to new thinking and new possibilities, we can forge a better, brighter future for everyone.

Today Britain is working to meet the challenges of climate change, deal with the migration crisis, and guarantee better rights and working conditions for everyone. When we look ahead and think about our place in the world, we see shared challenges and opportunities in common.

But we must also remember that the British have always been separate from Europe.

Over the years, we have maintained our traditions, values and ideals as a nation. Since time immemorial, we have had our unique values and culture that make us different from Europe.

We have the character of an island nation – independent, forthright, passionate in defence of our sovereignty.

From the Scottish Highlands to the cliffs of Dover, and from the English countryside to the bustling City of London. From the Reformation and the birth of our national Church to the Napoleonic Wars. From the industrial revolution and the rise of the British Empire to the defeat of Nazism. We have always been British, not European. Europe has its own path to follow, just as we have ours."

C.2 Low continuity rhetoric

Argument: European identity

"I believe that when we as Europeans come together in a spirit of ambition and innovation, we have it within ourselves to do great things. That shows us that if we open our minds to new thinking and new possibilities, we can forge a better, brighter future for everyone.

Today Europeans are working together to meet the challenges of climate change, deal with the migration crisis, and guarantee better rights and working conditions for everyone. When we look ahead and think about our place in Europe, we see shared challenges and opportunities in common.

It is certainly true that, in the distant past, Britain used to be a distinct culture, sep-

arate from European civilisation. But we must also remember that despite our historical differences, today the British are an integral part of Europe.

Over the years, our traditions, values and ideals as a nation have changed profoundly. In spite of the things that may have divided us once, today everything about our culture and values makes us Europeans.

Today we have the character of a European nation - forthright and passionate in defence of our freedoms.

From the Scottish Highlands to the snowy Alps. From the Baltic coast to the meadows of Ireland, and from the bustling City of London to the ports of Amsterdam and the proud towns on the Rhine - today we are all Europeans. Europe is part of who we are, just as we are part of Europe.”

Argument: Separate identity

“I believe that when the people of Britain come together in a spirit of ambition and innovation, we have it within ourselves to do great things. That shows us that if we open our minds to new thinking and new possibilities, we can forge a better, brighter future for everyone.

Today Britain is working to meet the challenges of climate change, deal with the migration crisis, and guarantee better rights and working conditions for everyone. When we look ahead and think about our place in the world, we see shared challenges and opportunities in common.

But we must also remember that the British have always been separate from Europe.

Over the years, we have maintained our traditions, values and ideals as a nation. Since time immemorial, we have had our unique values and culture that make us different from Europe.

We have the character of an island nation – independent, forthright, passionate in defence of our sovereignty.

From the Scottish Highlands to the cliffs of Dover, and from the English countryside to the bustling City of London. From the Reformation and the birth of our national Church to the Napoleonic Wars. From the industrial revolution and the rise of the British Empire to the defeat of Nazism. We have always been British, not European. Europe has its own path to follow, just as we have ours.”

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