Indian = Hindu?  

The Development of Nationalist Attitudes among Hindu and Muslim Children in India  

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Introduction

- Many political movements equate nationality with individuals of a certain ethnicity or religion (e.g., Americans are White, Indians are Hindu)  
- Adults internalize these associations, which in turn relates to their support of exclusionary social policies  
- Exclusionary nationalist associations have negative consequences for minority individuals’ national identification  
- India has been a site of religious conflict, with government leaders sometimes equating being Indian with being Hindu²

Research Questions

1) Emergence of religious nationalism  
How early do children develop religious nationalist associations? Does this change across adolescence?  

2) Internal construal: identity & concept of nationality  
How do children incorporate religious nationalist associations with their group identities & beliefs about what making it to be a “true” citizen of their country?  

3) External attitudes: social policy  
Do children’s religious nationalist associations relate to their views on social policy and donation choices?  

Participants

160 Hindu and Muslim children (9-16) at a school in Gujarat, India  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hindu (n=80)</th>
<th>Muslim (n=80)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age in years (SD)</td>
<td>12.43 (1.74)</td>
<td>12.38 (1.91)</td>
<td>0.864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>younger (4th/5th grade)</td>
<td>38 (48%)</td>
<td>41 (51%)</td>
<td>0.873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other (8th/9th grade)</td>
<td>41 (52%)</td>
<td>40 (49%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>39 (49%)</td>
<td>42 (48%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>40 (51%)</td>
<td>39 (52%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedure

Explicit ratings about nationality, identity, and social policy  
Implicit association test on computer  

*order counterbalanced

Results

1) Explicit Religious Nationalism  
Children rate how much they agree with statements about what makes a “True” Indian, including:  
- Treating people of all religions equally  
- Following India’s laws  
- Being patriotic  
- Celebrating Ramzan

Hindu children show an Indian = Hindu association, but Muslim children do not.  
Hindu children’s bias decreases with age for explicit—but not implicit—associations.  
Children’s religion predicts their religious nationalism above and beyond their in-group attitudes.  

2) Implicit Religious Nationalism  
Reaction time provides a measure of how easy it is for children to associate Indian = Hindu compared to Indian = Muslim  

“Hindu or Indian” (on right side) and “Muslim or Foreign” (on left side)  
This pairing switches within subject.

3) Beliefs about Social Policy  
Children rate how much they agree with social policy statements, including:  
- No laws should prevent Hindus (Muslims) from following their customs  
- Leaders in the Indian government should be Hindu (Muslim)  
- Hindu (Muslim) prayers should be taught in school  

Hindu and Muslim children more with more of an Indian = Hindu association agreed more with Pro-Hindu policy:  
- Leaders in the Indian government should be Hindu  
- Hindus are the most powerful group in India  
- The government should provide more benefits to Hindus  
- Hindu songs should be performed on Independence day

Endorsement of Pro-Hindu and Pro-Muslim factors uniquely predicted children’s allocation of votes to Hindu and Islam-focused organizations.

Conclusions

- By elementary school, children may internalize exclusionary nationalist associations  
- Data from Muslim children provides evidence for resilience against this larger national rhetoric  
- Religious nationalist associations uniquely predict concepts of nationality, beliefs about social policy, and donation choices  
- Future work should explore how these associations develop

References


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