

Ethnic identity, collective self-esteem and academic self-efficacy among tertiary education students

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships between ethnic identity, collective self-esteem and academic self-efficacy among students at a higher learning institution. These relationships were examined among a sample of 144 respondents. The multigroup ethnic identity measure, the collective self-esteem scale and the academic self-efficacy scale were used to measure ethnic identity, collective self-esteem and academic self-efficacy, respectively. Positive correlations were found between ethnic identity and academic self-efficacy, collective self-esteem and academic self-efficacy, as well as between ethnic identity and collective self-esteem.

Keywords: academic self-efficacy; collective self-esteem; discrimination; ethnic identity; intergroup relations; self-concept

Previous studies have revealed links between ethnic identity and other aspects of the self-concept such as efficacy and self-esteem, particularly among minority groups (Phillips Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007; Woolf, Cave, Greenhalgh, & Dacre, 2008). These were more pronounced among members of minority groups, who are often subjects of discrimination in their respective contexts. It would be interesting to note the relationship patterns between variables such as those mentioned above in the South African context, considering the limited scope of local research in this area. In spite of the official dissolution of apartheid in 1994, strained intergroup relations or the perceptions thereof persist in contemporary South Africa (Department of Education, 2008; South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), cited in Roefs, 2006). These trends would be expected to enhance self-definitions based on intergroup differentiation among South Africans and, possibly, hold implications for various aspects of the self-concepts of individuals as described in the studies cited above.

Social identity theory (SIT) states that social identity is linked with the elevation of the ingroup's status above other groups, which promotes feelings of superiority among members of the ingroup, thereby leading to high self-esteem (Baron & Byrne, 2003; Turner, 1982). The current study is concerned with the interconnections between collective self-esteem, academic self-efficacy and ethnic identity. Collective self-esteem refers to feelings of esteem relating to membership of a certain group, brought about by the subjective evaluation of the value of the group to which one belongs (Downie, Mageau, Koestner, & Liodden, 2006). Academic self-efficacy refers to individual perceptions regarding the effectiveness with which one can perform academic tasks or achieve academically (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001). Ethnic identity refers to a form of identity that is based on an individual's membership to a certain ethnic group (Aboud, 1981). In the context of this study, an ethnic group refers to individuals belonging to a given social group that differentiates them from others by a combination of race, a common language and shared history, among others (Neff, 2007).

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic Self-efficacy

Individuals play various roles in society, which are demonstrated by the networks in which they are involved. These networks range from interpersonal relationships to groups, organisations and communities, among others. Such differentiation of roles and relationships also means that various capabilities are required for the satisfactory assumption of each of these roles by the individual. Furthermore, the individual has a self-appraisal of his or her worth with regard to the manner in which he or she plays each of the roles. According to Ervin and Stryker (2001), this multiplicity of roles inevitably leads to a multiplicity of identities. This view also places less emphasis on global or general self-esteem, which views an individual as a unitary object (Ervin & Stryker, 2001). Rather, greater emphasis is placed on the role-specific nature of self-esteem, which means that an individual has varying forms of self-esteem relating to each of his or her roles or identities. The current study examines, among others, the extent of academic self-efficacy among tertiary education students. This stance acknowledges that an academic context demands specific capabilities that would enable one to thrive in that context and that, as a result, academic self-efficacy is a form of self-evaluation in such a context.

Major, Quinton, and Schmader (2003) investigated the effects of covert and overt prejudice on self-esteem. In the demonstration of overt prejudice, female participants who were required to demonstrate creativity during their participation in a task were

told that the evaluator of their creative work is male and prejudiced against women. In the covert prejudice condition, however, the participants were simply told that the male evaluator evaluates men and women differently (Major et al., 2003). The results indicated that covert prejudice exerted more negative effects on the female participants' personal self-esteem than overt prejudice did. The justification for this is that covert prejudice is more ambiguous in its delivery and, therefore, participants are slightly uncertain as to whether the negative feedback is indeed due to their poor performance. With overt prejudice, however, poor evaluation could be justifiably attributed to the evaluator's prejudice. On this basis, the self-esteem of individuals was protected by their perception that negative feedback was largely influenced by the evaluator's prejudiced attitudes. Similarly, in a multicultural context, individuals' esteem or academic self-efficacy in an academic context may, ironically, be fostered by the experiences of overt prejudice during intergroup relations.

Collective Self-esteem

Crocker (1999) argues that self-esteem is not necessarily stable across contexts, as various features in each situation result in the continuous construction of self-esteem. Furthermore, it is argued that a member of a social group that is being discriminated against generally carries the "collective representations" (Crocker, 1999, p. 89) or stereotypes associated with his or her group into other situations. These collective representations may be made relevant by the often subtle features of each situation. In this regard, a given situation may consist of various factors that draw attention to stereotypes held against a member of a certain group, thereby contributing to the perceived stigmatisation of the individual. This view suggests that feelings of inferiority regarding the group to which one belongs, or the ingroup, are often a result of discrimination in a larger context, which may negatively affect self-esteem in situations inherent with features that activate the individual's self-conceptualisation as a subject of discrimination. It is in this regard that the current study assumes that collective self-esteem may be compromised in culturally and racially diverse environments that give rise to real or perceived discrimination of a certain group.

The SASAS (cited in Roefs, 2006) indicated that most black respondents perceived white South Africans as being most racist in comparison to other races, whereas white respondents thought the same of black South Africans in general. This stance has implications for such individuals' perceptions of prejudice in a racially diverse context, where they may interpret the behaviour of others as racism, especially when considering that higher learning institutions (HLIs) have been identified as one of the contexts in which racial prejudice is highly prevalent (Department of Education, 2008).

In their study, Wiley, Perkins, and Deaux (2008) investigated the extent to which evaluations by others affect individuals' regard for the ingroup. Their findings indicated that second-generation black participants of West Indian origin in the United States of America believed that others evaluated their group negatively, a perception that was reflected by their low scores for "public regard". In contrast, the scores of these participants with respect to private self-regard were considerably higher, indicating their own evaluation of the group. These findings suggest that participants continue to view their groups favourably, despite their acknowledgement of negative evaluations of the ingroup by members of the outgroups. This phenomenon is referred to as "double consciousness" (Wiley et al., 2008, p. 389). In the same manner, individuals in a multicultural context who have experienced prejudice and are aware of the outgroups' negative perceptions of the group may, nonetheless, hold a favourable view of the group with a largely unaffected collective self-esteem as well as (academic) self-efficacy.

Ethnic Identity and Academic Self-efficacy

In the South African context, ethnicity encompasses both racial and linguistic differentiation, wherein members of a given race group can further be distinguished from one another on the basis of their native language, which subsequently leads to their definition as being distinct ethnic groups. This is especially so considering the distinct cultural practices associated with each language group and the fact that language is also acknowledged as one of the primary subnational identities for many South Africans (Afolayan, 2004; Alexander, 2001; Grossberg, Struwig, & Pillay, 2006).

According to Verkuyten (2009), multiculturalism tends to threaten individuals' self-identity, with individuals in a multicultural context inclined to develop a strong ethnic identity. This, it is argued, could be due to subjective perceptions of the threat of multiculturalism to these individuals' identities. This phenomenon could explain the reported salience of ethnic identity among minority groups in various studies (Abu-Rayya, 2006; Umaña-Taylor, 2004). In relation to this, Korf and Malan (2002) conducted a study on the perceived threat to ethnic identity among a white Afrikaans-speaking sample in post-apartheid South Africa. This was carried out against the backdrop of major changes in the socio-political context which saw Afrikaans-speaking whites moving from a privileged position as a political majority to one with much less social and political power (Korf & Malan, 2002). Respondents for whom ethnic identity served as a central identity and carried much significance in their self-identification, considered the post-apartheid socio-political context as a significant threat to the continuity of Afrikaners as a distinctive ethnic group. In contrast, respondents who did not categorise themselves as having the

Afrikaner ethnic identity as central to their self-definition did not experience threat to the distinctive continuity of the group.

According to Gong (2007), individuals in multicultural societies tend to identify with more than one social group, with Asian-Americans, African-Americans and White Americans holding independent ethnic identities, as well as an interdependent national identity as Americans. The same can be assumed in a South African context, where individuals hold various identities, including a national South African identity, as well as racial and ethnic identities, whose salience is determined by a given context. Ethnic and race identities are strong forms of group identity among South Africans, particularly Black South Africans (SASAS, as cited in Grossberg et al., 2006; SASAS, as cited in Roefs, 2006). This trend highlights the need to examine the salience of ethnic identity resulting from identification with a given ethnic group, as well as how it influences individual functioning, especially in ethnically or racially diverse contexts that are prone to prejudice and discrimination. In the current study, academic self-efficacy has been identified as an important indicator of the perceived ability of individuals to succeed in an academic environment. In view of the above, an investigation into the relationship between ethnic identity and academic self-efficacy in a multicultural HLI would indicate the extent to which individual functioning is related to membership to social groups, specifically ethnic groups, as well as the importance attached to such membership by individuals.

Ethnic Identity and Collective Self-esteem

Umaña-Taylor (2004) suggests that there is a link between individuals' self-esteem and ethnic identity, both of which form part of the self-concept. This observation points to the fact that the various components that make up the self-concept influence one another in many ways. The self-concept refers to all aspects that contribute to self-identification (Baron & Byrne, 2003). If Umaña-Taylor's (2004) above mentioned assumption is true, then collective self-esteem would also be affected by the salience of ethnic identity or lack thereof, especially considering the fact that both are influenced by group membership.

In her study, Umaña-Taylor (2004) found significant differences in the salience of ethnic identity between Latino students from a predominantly Latino school, a predominantly non-Latino school and a balanced Latino/non-Latino school. Students attending a predominantly non-Latino school scored significantly higher than the other two groups on levels of ethnic identity. Umaña-Taylor (2004) concludes that ethnic identity for Latino students, regardless of school context, was relatively high when compared to previous studies with White students, a trend that is supposedly fostered by their status as a minority in the broader social context.

According to Turner (1982), a positive social identity is fostered by, among others, favourable comparisons with other social groups, whereas unfavourable

comparisons may lead to feelings of low prestige and, consequently, a negative social identity. From this view, individuals who have low regard for their ingroup as a result of the perceptions of the outgroups may also concurrently have low ethnic identity and, possibly, low collective self-esteem. This assumption, however, may not hold true for individuals with a strong ethnic identity that is independent of the negative perceptions of the outgroups. These individuals may have already made unfavourable comparisons of their group with others, especially if the group is openly marginalised in the broader social context. Despite this, such individuals may maintain a strong ethnic identity as an expression of commitment to the group. Spencer-Rodgers and Collins (2006) also suggest that the devaluation of one's ethnic group by the outgroups is likely to enhance the salience of ethnic identity. This means that the individual firmly incorporates ethnic identification into his or her self-concept, and is more likely to define him or herself in terms of ethnic group membership in spite of the group's devaluation by others. Such an instance in the South African context is that of Korf and Malan's (2002) study, cited earlier, in which it is suggested that white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans maintained a salient ethnic identity by isolating themselves from the negative aspects associated with their group by the outgroups, focusing on positive aspects of the ingroup.

In the same manner, low regard for the ingroup by members of the outgroups may not negatively affect the former's overall collective self-esteem. This is especially so considering that collective self-esteem is not considered a one-dimensional concept as it incorporates both the outgroups' perceptions of the group as well as the ingroup members' own evaluation of the group. This trend is evident in a study carried out by Wiley et al. (2008), as mentioned earlier, indicating that, for a certain marginalised group, private regard for the ingroup remained high despite the ingroup members' awareness of negative evaluations of the ingroup by members of the outgroups.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Three research questions were posed to guide the research approach and analysis in this study, namely, (a) What is the nature of the relationship between collective self-esteem and academic self-efficacy? (b) What is the nature of the relationship between ethnic identity and academic self-efficacy? and (c) What is the nature of the relationship between ethnic identity and collective self-esteem?

The following main hypotheses were subsequently stated: (a) As collective self-esteem increases, academic self-efficacy increases, (b) As ethnic identity increases,

academic self-efficacy increases, and (c) As ethnic identity increases, collective self-esteem increases.

METHOD

Context of the study

The study was conducted at a public South African HLI. At the time of the study, enrolment figures of the HLI from which the sample was drawn showed that 59% of all registered students were white, followed by black students at 35%, with Indian and Coloured students being the least represented at only 4% and 2%, respectively. It is assumed that the dynamics of intergroup contact or relations in such a diverse environment may have a direct bearing on individuals' self-concept. This assumption led to the conceptualisation of the current study.

Participants

The sample consisted of 144 undergraduate students belonging to various racial and ethnic groups. The majority of the respondents were black (56%), followed by white respondents (38%), as well as Indian, Coloured and respondents classified as "Other", who collectively represented only 6% of the sample. Of all the 144 respondents, 18 failed to provide their ethnicity, which is expressed in terms of spoken language. Figure 1 depicts the composition of the sample in terms of ethnicity. Of the 126 respondents who specified ethnicity, the majority were Afrikaans (19%), followed by Pedi (16%), English and Ndebele at 10% each, Sotho respondents (7%), those who described themselves as "Other" (7%), Tswana and Tsonga respondents at 6% each, Zulu (5%), as well as Swazi respondents (4%). In the minority were Venda respondents and those of mixed ethnicity at 3% each, followed by Xhosa and Indian respondents at 2% each. The respondents were aged between 17 and 30, with 122 (85%), in the majority, aged between 19 and 22, followed by 11 (8%) respondents who were aged 23 or older, while the remainder were less than 19 years old.

Recruitment of participants

In the first round of recruitment for participation in the study, students were informed about the study in a lecture hall during the last 15 minutes of a lecture that they had been attending. Those willing to participate were then given the questionnaire to immediately complete and submit. Students in several undergraduate student residences were also informed about the study and, upon agreeing to take part, were immediately given the questionnaire to complete and submit. The questionnaire included a consent form on which the respondents could indicate their willingness to participate in the study, as well as three measures, which are discussed in detail in

the relevant section. The consent form indicated the purpose of the study, research procedures to be followed and the manner in which the results would be disseminated. Furthermore, it assured respondents of the confidentiality of their responses and that their participation in the study was voluntary.

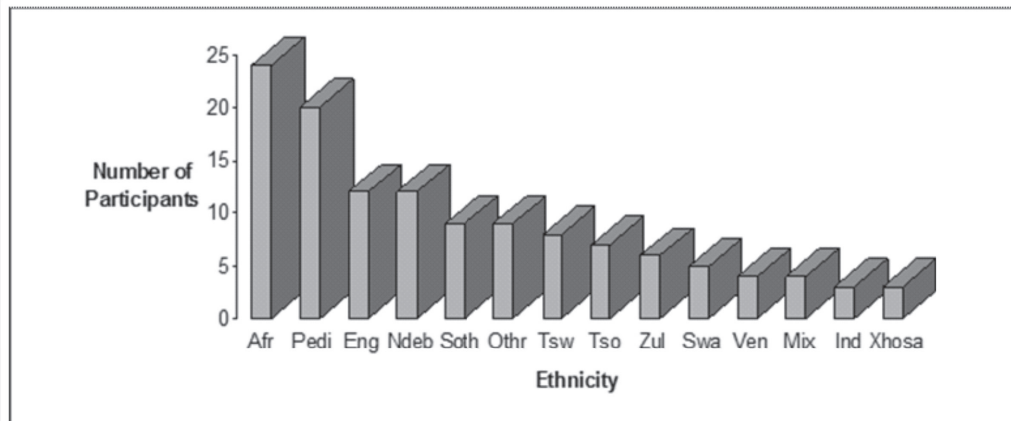


Figure 1. Ethnicity of Respondents

Sampling

The sample was drawn by means of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that may involve the selection of a group of respondents who volunteer participation in the study or are simply accessible to the researcher and, therefore, convenient to include in the study (Black, 1999; Gay & Airasian, 2003). Respondents were included on the basis of their willingness to participate in the study. Other requirements were that the volunteers be registered as undergraduate students at the HLI in question.

Measurement instruments

The MEIM measured ethnic identity and consists of 15 items ($\alpha = 0.86$) with two subscales, namely, ethnic identity search and ethnic identity commitment, with items 12 to 15 only serving to categorise individuals according to ethnic background (Phinney, 1992). Items on the MEIM are on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = “Strongly disagree” to 4 = “Strongly agree”. Phinney (1992) provided evidence for the construct validity of the MEIM regarding its use among an ethnically diverse sample. The race-specific CSES measured collective self-esteem and consists of 16 items ($\alpha = 0.34$) with four subscales, namely, membership self-esteem, private self-esteem, public collective self-esteem and the importance attached to a given identity (Crocker, n.d.a; Crocker, n.d.b). Items on the race-specific CSES are on a

Likert scale ranging from 1 = “Strongly disagree” to 7 = “Strongly agree”. Previous studies have reported this measure as possessing construct validity (Korf & Malan, 2002; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The ASE measured academic self-efficacy and consists of 8 items ($\alpha = 0.74$), on a Likert scale ranging from 1 = “Very untrue” to 7 = “Very true” (Chemers et al., 2001). In the study conducted by Chemers et al. (2001), respondents’ scores on academic self-efficacy correlated positively with recent academic performance and expectations, respectively. This might serve as an indication of the measure’s construct validity, since, theoretically, academic self-efficacy beliefs should exhibit a positive correlation with expectations of academic outcomes and actual performance (Pallant, 2010).

Research design

In this study, a correlational design was employed. The objective of a correlational design is to determine whether a relationship exists between two or more variables, such that a change in one variable is associated with a change in another (Creswell, 2002). This study seeks to determine the nature of the interrelationships among ethnic identity, collective self-esteem and academic self-efficacy, thereby justifying the use of a correlational design.

Data analysis

A standard multiple regression analysis was run through the use of SPSS to determine the correlations between the variables of interest. Multiple regression analysis explores the relationship between one dependent variable and two or more independent variables, although no assumptions about causal relationships between the variables are made (Creswell, 2002; Pallant, 2010). Rather, the researcher merely observes the nature of the relationship(s) between two or more pre-existing characteristics or variables, which leads to inferences about correlation (Black, 1999). In view of this, interpretation of the results will involve the observation of any correlations between collective self-esteem and academic self-efficacy, ethnic identity and academic self-efficacy, as well as ethnic identity and collective self-esteem.

RESULTS

The mean scores of the sample on the ASE (i.e., academic self-efficacy scale), the overall CSES (i.e., the collective self-esteem scale) and the overall MEIM (i.e., the ethnic identity scale) were 5.475 ($SD = 0.785$), 5.209 ($SD = 0.757$) and 3.119 ($SD = 0.473$), respectively. Scores could range from 1 to 4 for the MEIM and from 1 to 7 for the ASE and the CSES, respectively. In comparison with each measure’s mid-point (i.e., 2 for the MEIM and 3.5 for the ASE and the CSES, respectively),

the sample means indicate that, on average, respondents had considerably high academic self-efficacy, collective self-esteem and ethnic identity.

Table 1 portrays the correlations between the ASE and the overall MEIM, the ASE and the overall CSES, as well as the MEIM and the CSES. As hypothesised, there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the overall MEIM score and the ASE ($r = 0.217$; $p < 0.05$). Similarly, there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the overall CSES score and the ASE ($r = 0.213$; $p < 0.05$). The above suggests that as ethnic identity and collective self-esteem increase, respectively, so does academic self-efficacy. These results are similar to those found in international studies, with a strong ethnic identity generally found to have a positive influence on other aspects of the self-concept (e.g., Phillips Smith et al., 1999; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007; Woolf et al., 2008). There is also a statistically significant positive correlation between the overall MEIM and CSES scores ($r = 0.529$; $p < 0.05$). Evidently, the correlation between the MEIM and the CSES is considerably higher than those found between the ASE and the MEIM, as well as the ASE and the CSES. A possible explanation for this is that the constructs measured by the MEIM and the CSES are theoretically related, since both measures are related to ethnic group membership and the subjective evaluation of the ethnic group and importance attached thereto by respondents.

Table 1. Correlation between MEIM, CSES and ASE

		Correlations		
		AS Score	MEIM Overall Score	CSES Overall Score
Pearson Correlation	AS Score	1.000	.217	.213
	MEIM Overall Score	.217	1.000	.529
	CSES Overall Score	.213	.529	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	AS Score	.	.005	.005
	MEIM Overall Score	.005	.	.000
	CSES Overall Score	.005	.000	.
N	AS Score	144	144	144
	MEIM Overall Score	144	144	144
	CSES Overall Score	144	144	144

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to examine whether there is a correlation between collective self-esteem and academic self-efficacy, ethnic identity and academic self-efficacy, as well as between collective self-esteem and ethnic identity. Findings from this study confirmed all three alternative hypotheses.

Statistically significant positive correlations were found between collective self-esteem and academic self-efficacy. In relation to this, Wiley et al. (2008) argue that an individual may maintain a positive evaluation of his or her group, despite negative perceptions of the group by members of the outgroups. In addition, Spencer-Rodgers and Collins (2006) suggest that individuals typically employ self-protective mechanisms to counteract the possibly damaging effects of negative regard for the group by the outgroups. This is so, particularly when taking into account the possible prevalence of negative regard by members of the outgroups or the perception thereof by members of the ingroup during intergroup relations. In this regard, self-protective mechanisms may ultimately strengthen individuals' identification with the ingroup and, subsequently, enhance self-esteem. Self-esteem, in this regard, would involve personal self-esteem, as well as collective self-esteem, because the latter alludes to feelings of esteem stemming from the evaluation of oneself as a member of a given group. On this basis, it could be argued that enhanced regard for the ingroup, as a function of collective self-esteem, also positively affects academic self-efficacy.

The positive correlations between ethnic identity and academic self-efficacy are compatible with findings from similar studies. For instance, Umaña-Taylor (2004) argues that there is a link between individuals' self-esteem and ethnic identity. Similarly, Pilegge and Holtz (1997) concluded that individuals with a strong social identity and a high self-esteem also tend to set high performance standards for themselves and perform better. This also corresponds with the SIT's association of a positive social identity with a positive self-concept, which may be inclusive of self-esteem, general efficacy and, arguably, academic self-efficacy (Baron & Byrne, 2003). In addition, real or perceived discrimination has been consistently shown to positively influence the salience of ethnic identity among members of the groups that are typically subjects of racial prejudice (Abu-Rayya, 2006; Phillips Smith et al., 1999; Spencer-Rodgers & Collins, 2006; Tajfel, 1981; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007). It is also argued that multiculturalism threatens individuals' identity, which may serve as justification for the emphasis placed on ethnic identity by individuals in these contexts (Verkuyten, 2009).

Taking into account the above arguments, in the context of the current study, a racially and culturally diverse context in which racial prejudice is deemed to be prevalent, may have led to perceptions of discrimination by others among members of their ingroup and, subsequently, an elevated ethnic identity among the respondents. The findings suggest that, in general, a high level of ethnic identity makes a significant contribution to the positive perception of oneself as a member of a certain group in a culturally diverse environment. This, in turn, leads to the perception that one can function optimally in that particular context, with perceived academic self-efficacy considered a good indicator of optimal functioning in an educational context.

As expected, a positive correlation was also found between ethnic identity and collective self-esteem. Louw and Edwards (1997) posited that intergroup contact often involves a certain level of depersonalisation. Depersonalisation, in relation to ethnic identity, refers to instances when individuals view themselves in terms of group membership. During interpersonal contact, they may merely distinguish between others only as members of either the ingroup or the outgroups, without considering each person's individual attributes (Turner, 1982). It is in such instances wherein, it is assumed, individuals seek to emphasise their group's superiority by adopting self-serving biases that favour the ingroup and subsequently bring about pride in being a member of that group (Baron & Byrne, 2003). In view of this, collective self-esteem appears to presuppose an individual's identification as a member of a particular group. Similarly, high ethnic identity seems to predetermine an equally high collective self-esteem. This is especially so because collective self-esteem, as discussed, was found to be related to the extent to which individuals place value on their membership of a group, as well as identification as a member of that particular group.

Despite the above arguments and findings from the current study, the SIT acknowledges only the salience of social identity and influence on personal self-esteem with no explicit reference to collective self-esteem. In view of this, some of the general assumptions of the SIT may have to be revised in order to acknowledge the existence of collective self-esteem as well as its inextricable link with social identity. The findings in this study indicate that, as collective self-esteem increases, so does ethnic identity, which is a form of social identity.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Certain limitations regarding some of the aspects of this study have been identified. First, none of the measures, namely, the MEIM, the CSES and the ASE, have been specifically standardised for the South African context. Various studies have, however, reported the MEIM and the CSES as valid, which led to their use in the current study. It was also argued that the ASE exhibits construct validity due to its correlation with theoretically related measures. Second, the analysis revealed that the overall CSES had low reliability, with $r = 0.34$, which means that reliability for this measure cannot be reasonably inferred for the CSES as a whole. However, the CSES subscales showed greater reliability with $r = 0.6$.

Future research relating to this study could prove more conclusive if the limitations described above are addressed effectively. In addition, several recommendations have been put forth in order to further broaden the scope of the current study. For instance, future studies could include personal self-esteem as one of the variables so as to determine its correlation with academic self-efficacy in particular. This would help determine whether academic self-efficacy is simply a contextualised form of

personal self-esteem or a distinct concept that is independent of and not moderated by general self-esteem. In addition, the differences, if any, between members of various race groups with regard to the relationships between the variables specified in the current study could also be explored. Similarly, perceived exposure to prejudice, as well as minority or majority status could account for the correlations found in the current study. Thus, it would be useful to examine the relationships between these and ethnic identity salience, collective self-esteem and academic self-efficacy beliefs.

CONCLUSION

The three alternative hypotheses initially specified in this study all proved true. The findings indicate the extent to which intrapersonal factors such as academic self-efficacy beliefs are informed by self-evaluation in relation to the broader socio-cultural context, demonstrated by ethnic identity salience and collective self-esteem, respectively. In the context of this study, academic self-efficacy reflects individual functioning, whereas collective self-esteem and ethnic identity are variables that are largely informed by the socio-cultural context, which involves the perception of one's standing within a given context on the basis of one's membership to a given group. The correlation found between academic self-efficacy and collective self-esteem, as well as between the former and ethnic identity confirm the findings of international studies. Moreover, the correlation found between ethnic identity and collective self-esteem serves as an indication that both variables are essentially informed by group membership and the significance attached to it by individuals.

Although intergroup relations have, arguably, improved since the official dissolution of apartheid in 1994, South Africans evidently continue to hold distinct social identities which, in turn, carry implications for their functioning as individuals. The findings of this study could improve our understanding of the far-reaching implications of an ethnically, culturally and racially diverse society. This study could also contribute towards social psychological research relevant to the South African context. Future research in this area could further explore other factors that may be related to self-efficacy beliefs, such as personal self-esteem. The scope of this study could be broadened by examining the possible role of perceived exposure to prejudice, as well as majority or minority status in a given context, in mediating the correlations between the specified variables.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



Tsholofelo Angela Thomas holds a Master's Degree in Research Psychology. She is currently lecturing in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria. Her research interest areas are intergroup relations, self and social identity, the psychology of racism, African perspectives in psychology, and language in education.

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