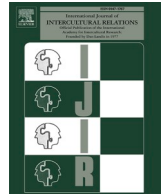




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International Journal of Intercultural Relations

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel

Pan-African solidarity in South Africa: An empirical public opinion analysis

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Intergroup relations
 Supranational identities
 South Africa
 Xenophobia
 Racial attitudes
 Social cohesion

ABSTRACT

Social cohesion issues, such as xenophobia and racism, are major societal challenges for South Africa. What can be put forward to address these challenges? By drawing together separate threads of literature from Pan-Africanism and common ingroup identities, the study puts forward the Pan-African Solidarity thesis: low levels of supranational identification with Africa undermines social cohesion in South Africa and low supranational identifications are caused by local ideational/socio-psychological factors as well as cluing from political elites. This thesis is unique, mass identifications with Africa are understudied and little is known about how people in the country identify with the continent. In order to validate this Pan-African Solidarity thesis, the article will answer three important questions: (i) are mass identifications with Africa in South Africa low?; (ii) are attachment to an African identity associated with anti-minority views?; and (iii) what is driving mass identifications with Africa? An IPSOS funded attitudinal dataset fielded in four of the country's nine provinces was used to answer these questions. Results provide empirical support for the Pan-African Solidarity thesis and found that a continental identity was related to intolerance of different outgroups (e.g., racial minorities, refugees and cross-border migrants). This is consistent with the expectations of the Common Ingroup Identity Model. But the study also makes original contributions to the literature, finding that the formation of continental identifications is informed by South Africa's history of white settler colonialism. Cross-border contact, retrospective sociotropic evaluations, pro-black sentiment and trust in national elites were identified as determinants of citizens' identification with Africa.

Introduction

Since the launch of the democratic dispensation, social cohesion has emerged as a major societal challenge for South Africa. Studies have generally found high levels of interracial antagonism amongst the nation's general population with research showing little change over time (e.g., [Durrheim et al., 2011](#); [Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010](#); [Gibson, 2009](#)). In addition to the problem of racial division, the country has also seen rising levels of anti-immigrant sentiment. Hundreds of xenophobic attacks have been recorded during

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2023.101789>

Received 30 July 2022; Received in revised form 27 February 2023; Accepted 4 March 2023

Available online 14 March 2023

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the past few decades with much of the violence apparently directed at refugees and cross-border migrants. Recent research from the South African Reconciliation Barometer have only confirmed these findings, noting low levels of social cohesion amongst the country's adult population (Moosa, 2021).

What remedy can be put forward for intergroup enmity in South Africa? One possible answer is supplied by the Pan-Africanist movement,³ the *solution* is the propagation of a common continental identity that will help bind the country closer together with itself and the continent. But this answer merely provokes a further question, what is driving the lack of a shared Pan-African identity? Existing social psychology research on European identity and attachment to the European Union (EU) can provide an answer.⁴ Reviewing the more recent approaches, it could be argued that two models can help adequately explain supranational identification with Africa in South Africa. The first is the ideational/socio-psychological model and its focus on the effects of identity and threat perceptions (Clark & Rohrschneider, 2021; Curtis, 2014; Steenvoorden & Wright, 2019). The second concerns the cueing model which posits that citizens use cues provided by political elites to make decisions about whether they should adopt supranational identities (Hadler et al., 2021; Hartevelde et al., 2013; Hooghe & Verhaegen, 2017).

Drawing together the different threads outlined above, the following thesis can be put forward: (i) low levels of public identification with Africa are associated with low levels of social cohesion in South Africa; and (ii) weak continental identification amongst the mass populace are connected to local ideational/socio-psychological and political factors. The goal of this paper will be to test this thesis, which was labelled the Pan-African Solidarity thesis. In order to perform this test, it is essential to answer three important questions about common ingroup identification: (i) to what extent are ordinary people in South Africa attached to their co-continentals?; (ii) are anti-minority views linked with mass attachments to an African identity?; and (iii) what is driving mass identifications with Africa? The study will answer these questions using quantitative public opinion data.

By exploring the three questions outlined above, the article will make a significant contribution to the literature on superordinate identity formation. The existing social psychology research suggests that an attachment to a superordinate identity can decrease outgroup hostility and increase openness to outsiders (Dovidio et al., 2009, 2016; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Huddy, 2001). Continental identifications are understudied in South Africa, and little is known about how they form or whether they influence intergroup relations in the country. Although superordinate continental identifications have been the subject of a growing number of social psychology studies, this emerging research tradition has tended to ignore Africa. Even though common ingroup identifications in South Africa have been the focus of research since the 1990s, existing work has tended to focus on national identity (for a review of this scholarship, see Bornman, 2022).

The article is structured as follows. First, to familiarise the reader with the local context, a brief discussion of social cohesion in South Africa is presented. Second, the relevant literature on common ingroup identities is reviewed, here a focus is placed on how such identities can affect outgroup attitudes. Third, two sets of hypotheses are developed utilising the relevant social psychology literature. The first set concerns whether continental identifications are negatively associated with animosity towards different outgroups. The second focuses on which micro-level factors are correlated with a continental identification amongst the mass populace. Fourth, the data and the methodological approach are discussed. Two analysis sections follow, testing whether the data supports the hypotheses designed for the study. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the findings and theoretical contributions.

The South African context

The territorial boundaries of the South African nation were drawn under white colonisers and were formalised (more or less) by the late 19th century. Concerned with protecting privileged white insiders from people of colour, successive waves of segregationist legislation were passed and aggressively enforced. This culminated in the implementation of the 'apartheid' system in the 1950s.⁵ Designed to systematically disadvantage people of colour, apartheid laws created (and further entrenched) a rigid oppressive racial hierarchy. Although all were subjected to a system of draconian coercion, legislation differentiated Black Africans from other groups of colour (especially 'Coloureds' and 'Indians').⁶ This history of systematic oppression and dispossession promoted interracial hostility and antagonism, creating a poisonous legacy for future generations.

During the 20th century the main opposition to white settler rule in South Africa was the African National Congress (ANC), a political organisation that benefitted from ties to anti-colonial movements elsewhere in Africa. Beginning in the 1960s, the ANC received significant material assistance from post-colonial African states, relying on a shared sense of continental connection.⁷ After a prolonged period of political struggle (both armed and unarmed), the country's first truly democratic elections were held in April 1994. These elections saw the ANC achieve a supermajority in South Africa's first democratic parliament. In the subsequent decades,

³ Although it has roots in the anti-colonial struggles of the prior century, the term 'Pan-Africanism' has been credited to Henry Sylvester Williams in 1900 (for an overview of the intellectual history of the concept, see Eze & van der Wal, 2020).

⁴ For a detailed review of this work see Bruter (2005) and Datler (2016) as well as Blinder and Markaki (2019).

⁵ The space available here for a reflection on the complex history of this repressive system is limited. For a comprehensive review of the system and its history, see Gibson (2009).

⁶ The racial terms used in this paper are taken from modern South African demographic terminology. The author does not support 'race' as a biological construct.

⁷ The ANC had quite a complicated (and frequently difficult) relationship with the Pan-African intellectual movement, and its ideas, during this period. Given the limited space available, however, it is not possible to provide an adequate discussion of this relationship. For a detailed review, and analysis of this topic, see Kondlo (2009).

the party has retained its control (more or less) of parliament, effectively dominating electoral politics in most of the country for decades (Gordon et al., 2018). Once the ANC was in government, and especially after the start of the Thabo Mbeki Administration, continental integration became part of the ruling party's rhetoric. This manifested itself in support for the ongoing political and economic regional integration goals of the African Union (AU).

On the 26th of May 2013, as part of the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration of the AU, the South African government committed itself to the propagation of a supranational 'African' identity amongst its citizens. This commitment was integral to AU's *Agenda 2063*, a blueprint for continental self-determination and unity (African Union Commission, 2015). The document stated that a common 'African' identity was key to building greater political, economic and cultural integration on the continent. The call for a superordinate continental identity is not new, however, and can be traced back to the colonial independence struggles of the early 20th century. Indeed, intellectuals and politicians in Africa have long been involved in a collective project to create a common supranational 'African' identity (Eze & van der Wal, 2020). These Pan-Africanists have traditionally believed that a sense of cross-national community is essential for the success of regional integration on the continent.

The end of the apartheid system saw an expansion of social psychology research on intergroup relations in South Africa. One of the main foci of this research is interracial attitudes and what is driving animosity towards racial others (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010). Much of this work has tracked the impact of changing historical contexts with a special emphasis on whether shifting patterns of intergroup contact have improved interracial tolerance (also see Durrheim et al., 2011). Another focus of this research tradition concerned the study of xenophobia, focusing on identifying predictors of public animosity towards migrants. Although a significant degree of attention was placed on socio-economic factors (e.g., education, employment etc.), some scholars have looked at identity-related factors such as nationalism (for a review, see Kerr et al., 2019). Despite evidence of the growing commitment of the South African government to the regional integration agenda of the AU, social psychology research in South Africa has largely ignored the study of mass identifications with Africa.

The power of supranational identities

'Identity' can be thought of as a person's sense of self and has increasingly been acknowledged as a central driver of human behaviour. Assisted by a number of collaborators, Henri Tajfel developed the Social Identity Theory (SIT) to understand the role that identity plays in intergroup relations. SIT holds that individuals identify with a range of groups and their group identities have attitudinal and behavioural consequences (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). People want to construct positive group identities for themselves, this leads them to build group boundaries that promote distinctiveness in their perceptions of, and relations with, outgroup members. SIT contends that strong group identifications have the potential to encourage conflict (also see Turner et al., 1987). Decades of empirical SIT research has generally highlighted the innate human tendency to allow ingroup solidarity to create outgroup derogation (for a review of this work see Brown, 2020).

Even though past research show that social identities can be a source of conflict, SIT asserts that social identifications can also inspire tolerance and prosocial behaviour. One of the most fundamental components of any group identity is a positive attachment and connection to fellow members of the collective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). People cultivate emotional attachment for their ingroup, leading to a sense of fidelity and responsibility to their fellow ingroup members (also see Huddy, 2001). Feeling connected to others means recognising them as part of your 'moral community', a recognition grounded in the belief that you share similar values with them. Such feelings of connectedness (i.e., a sense of shared fate, cohesion and positive affection) are important because they can lead to the activation of ingroup cohesion and cooperation.

The Common Ingroup Identity Model (CIIM) asserts that reclassifying members of separate subgroups under a single all-encompassing identity will have robust prosocial effects (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). The model was built on the theoretical foundations of SIT as well as self-categorization theory. From the CIIM perspective, a group identification can improve intergroup relations if it allows outgroups to become part of the same ingroup. The model puts its emphasis on the process of identity recategorization, members of different groups are persuaded to associate themselves with a single superordinate group. Empirical research on CIIM has shown that interventions that promote common superordinate identities can, under certain circumstances, foster trust, reduce bias and promote collaboration between groups (for a review, see Dovidio et al., 2009).

Common ingroup identifications in South Africa have been the subject of social psychology research since the 1990s. Scholars were particularly interested in whether strengthening national identity could, as the CIIM would imply, improve interracial attitudes in the country. Results of this research have tended to be critical of the relationship between common ingroup identifications and intergroup attitudes. Research by Gibson (2006), using a 2001 nationally representative survey, concluded that national identifications were not correlated with intergroup tolerance (also see Gibson, 2009). Bornman (2010) explored how the general public identified with the nation using data from three surveys conducted in 1994, 1998 and 2001. She discovered that national identifications had strengthened over the period but little evidence that interracial tolerance improved as a result. A follow-up study by Bornman (2022), while noting falling levels of national pride, confirmed these results. Research on superordinate ingroup identifications in South Africa tended to ignore the role of 'supranational identities' and how these may influence intergroup attitudes.

The advantages and disadvantages of mass identifications with Africa

One of the central arguments made by the Pan-Africanists is that promoting a super-regional African identity will strengthen bonds between people on the continent (Eze & van der Wal, 2020). This supposition is consistent, as discussed above, with SIT (and more specifically the CIIM). But, as the previous section showed, social psychology research in South Africa has cast some doubt on whether

common ingroup identifications will influence attitudes towards outgroups. We can think of this as the first part of the Pan-African Solidarity thesis. This section will outline two hypotheses to test whether a Pan-African identification will have a positive influence on social cohesion in South Africa. It builds on social psychology research on European identifications and how this kind of continental identity drives attitudes towards outgroups.

Scholars have traditionally been interested in whether holding a continental identity can function to improve relations between divergent groups.⁸ The study of such identities, and their influence on intergroup relations, has become a growing field in European public opinion research (for a review, see [Datler, 2016](#)). The findings of this work tend to be consistent with the CIIM and show that holding a 'supranational identification' (i.e., feeling European) is associated with intergroup tolerance (also see [Curtis, 2014](#)). The adoption of supranational identities may be predicted by personality traits. Prior empirical social psychology research by [Curtis and Miller \(2021\)](#) identified an association between European identities and personality traits related to inclusivity and universalism. But if such traits explain the relationship between supranational identity and intergroup tolerance entirely, then we would not expect to see a strong differentiation in effect. In other words, the 'supranational identification' effect on intergroup attitudes should be similar regardless of the minority group involved.

H#1. : Feeling connected to people from the rest of Africa will be associated with positive attitudes towards minority groups.

Social identification with a large geographic space (e.g., a continent) is a cognitive process that requires establishing boundaries between groups based on symbolic markers. Because of the association between a continent and ingroup markers, European scholars have been quite interested in whether an identification with Europe will promote intolerance of non-Europeans (for a review of this research, see [Blinder & Markaki, 2019](#)). It could be argued, based on the principals and assumptions of SIT, that a strong attachment to an African identity will inevitably lead to a more antagonistic attitude towards those groups without the symbolic markers associated with 'Africa' (e.g., whites and Indians). Public opinion seems to show 'blackness' is interwoven, amongst the South African citizen body, with non-conscious cognitive representations of the African continent ([Gordon, 2021](#)). Accordingly, identification with Africa may have a differing effect on public attitudes towards minority groups that are *not* seen as 'black' (also see [Gibson, 2006](#)).

H#2. : Attachment to co-continentals will be associated with negative attitudes towards racial minorities.

Drivers of mass identifications with Africa

The second component of the Pan-African Solidarity thesis concerns the drivers of low levels of identification with Africa amongst South African citizens. The study sought to explain levels of Pan-African attachment in the country by utilising two models that have received significant attention in the European scholarship on supranational identification: (i) the ideational/socio-psychological model; and (ii) the political clueing model. Utilising these two models, five hypotheses on what predicts mass continental identifications in the country were designed for testing. At this stage a number of caveats must be acknowledged. Despite recent developments, the rate of continental integration in Africa is much slower than what is observed in Europe. In addition, party polarisation on the question of Pan-Africanism is much more muted in South Africa than in the EU. Let us now begin this section with those hypotheses derived from the ideational/socio-psychological explanation model.

The adoption of a regional identification may stem from personal experience. Drawing on theories of intergroup contact, scholars have argued that cross-border mobility plays an important role in promoting an identification with Europe. In a longitudinal study of Italian adolescents, [Prati et al. \(2019\)](#) argued that if a person has travelled widely in Europe and engaged in contact with co-regionals then they will be more likely to adopt a European identity. Conversely, people who rarely move out of their local environment and have little co-regional contact tend to be more parochial (also see [Deutschmann et al., 2018](#)). Scholars in South Africa have traditionally been interested in how contact between different groups could influence attitude formation ([Gibson, 2006](#)). For intergroup contact to be successful in promoting attitudinal change, of course, it must occur under certain 'optimal' conditions.⁹ Amongst intergroup contact theorists, friendships are considered optimal as they allow an individual to understand the perspective of a friend's group and empathise with them (also see [Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010](#)). Friendship contact with cross-border migrants should, according to this research, be linked to supranational identity formation.

H#3. : Cross-border friendships will be correlated with feeling more connected to people from the rest of Africa.

Sociotropic considerations are assessments about the state of the collective,¹⁰ and such judgements can act as powerful drivers of identity formation. Uncertainty-Identity Theory, as outlined by [Hogg \(2007\)](#), argues that people react to sociotropic uncertainty by limiting the number of group identifications they hold. The theorem suggests that sociotropy impacts on whether individuals will engage in identity 'retrenchment' (i.e., identifying with a smaller profile of political communities). In their research on European

⁸ The influence of SIT has been especially evident in quantitative research on public identifications with the EU amongst different European populations. For a review and discussion of the importance of SIT to this work see [Mols and Weber \(2013\)](#).

⁹ For intergroup contact to reduce prejudice, scholars believe that it must follow certain basic conditions (such as equality, cooperation, have the capability for genuine acquaintanceship, and be endorsed by social norms and authority). For a discussion of this issue in the South African case, see [Finchilescu and Tredoux \(2010\)](#) as well as [Durrheim et al. \(2011\)](#).

¹⁰ Evaluations are sociotropic, according to [Kinder and Kiewiet \(1981\)](#), when they are based on concerns for the collective (whether it be the national collective or a more localised community). Sociotropy has arisen as an alternative in quantitative political science to more traditional theories that focus on rational choice and material self-interest.

identity, [Steenvoorden and Wright \(2019\)](#) found, using Eurobarometer data, that societal pessimism led individuals to identify less with Europe, fostering a preference for isolationism. Viewing their society as stagnating or in decline produced sociotropic uncertainty which, in turn, mitigated multiple political identifications. In South Africa the period 2009–2019 was, in particular, characterised by low growth, the breakdown of public utilities and political corruption (for a detailed discussion of this period, see [Hausmann et al., 2022](#)). Following Uncertainty-Identity Theory, it could be argued that the socio-economic context of this period may have undermined supranational identity formation in the country.

H#4. : Individuals who have sociotropic concerns about decline will have lower levels of identification with people from other Africa countries.

The premise of SIT is that a central element of an individual's sense of "who they are" is centred on what groups they identify with ([Tajfel & Turner, 1979](#)). Certain symbolic group markers could, therefore, be associated with a supranational identification (also see [Bruter, 2005](#)). A positive attachment to a group should, therefore, lead an individual to a stronger identification with the region associated with that group. In the minds of the South African public, the term 'Africa' has traditionally been associated with 'blackness'. Despite the end of the apartheid system, existing political discourses in the country continue to lend a certain racial certitude to 'Africa' identification ([Matsinhe, 2011](#)). This would lead us to assume that public attitudes towards black people are connected to whether (and how strongly) an individual identifies with the region (i.e., Africa).

SIT would suggest that the influence of symbolic markers on an individual's supranational identification would be mediated by group identity ([Mols & Weber, 2013](#)). This has been demonstrated in South African public opinion research before. [Gordon \(2021\)](#) found that racial attitudes were an important determinant of public support for Pan-African immigration admission criterion. Pro-black sentiment was one of the most salient determinants of popular support for a Pan-Africanist immigration admission policy. But further investigation showed that this relationship differed by which racial group a person identified with. There is an expectation, consequently, that pro-black sentiment will have differing effect on holding a continental attachment for those groups that identified as 'black' when compared to those that do not.

H#5. : Pro-black sentiment will be positively linked with holding a supranational African identity.

The political cueing model contends that the likelihood of an individual developing a supranational identity varies with their evaluations of political institutions. Indeed, this form of trust is often seen as an essential prerequisite for public attachment to a supranational organisation. Quantitative public opinion studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between trust in national institutions and popular identifications with the EU (for a review, see [Hooghe & Verhaegen, 2017](#)). In other words, scholars found that if a person trusted their national political institutions, they were more supportive of the EU and more likely to identify as 'European' (also see [Harteveld et al., 2013](#)). Perhaps this outcome is not unsurprising as political-legal institutions at the national level decide on the process of regional integration in the EU. But this is a top-down construction of supranational identity and a neo-functionalist line of reasoning ([Klingemann & Weldon, 2013](#)).

H#6. : Trusting political institutions will make individuals feel more connected to their co-continentals.

In addition to cues from government, citizens should also take their cues from their political party. Political orientation is a well-known predictor of public attitudes towards supranational identifications in the EU ([Bruter, 2005](#); [Clark & Rohrschneider, 2021](#); [Curtis, 2014](#)). Indeed, the national-supranational dimension of different party platforms in Europe has become more contentious over time and regional integration has turned into an ever more polarising political issue in many European countries ([Hadler et al., 2021](#)). In South Africa support for Pan-Africanism is part of the rhetoric of the modern ANC and has been endorsed by the party's leaders. Consequently, it could be argued that ANC partisans should be more liable to identify with Africa when compared to non-partisans. But, as research by [Gordon et al. \(2018\)](#) has shown, many ANC partisans feel alienated from the ruling party and are only weakly affiliated with it. Given that weak partisans should have less commitment to party ideology, we may imagine that the strength of partisanship will mediate the relationship between party identity and continental identification.

H#7. : Being affiliated with the ruling party will make an individual more liable to identify with people from the rest of the continent.

Data and methods

Dataset: Ipsos migration and refugee survey

IPSOS fielded a survey of public attitudes towards refugees and cross-border migrants in October and November 2019. The survey was designed to provide a representative sample of adult citizens living in four (i.e., Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape, and Gauteng) of the country's nine provinces (henceforth the LKWG population). The sample was restricted to adults (defined as individuals aged 18 and older) who were citizens and living in private residences. The sampling frame employed was constructed using the 2011 census and a set of 300 small area layers (SALs) were produced. Special institutions (e.g., university hostels and old age homes) as well as industrial areas and vacant SALs were omitted from the sample. The final realised sample size was 2004 and benchmark weights were applied to guarantee that the data was representative at the provincial level.

Measurements

The survey included questions on the respondents' demographic characteristics. Using this data, a number of standard economic and demographic dummy variables were created for this study. These dummy variables captured age, gender, population group as well as province of residence. In order to account for socio-economic status, three objective measures were used as proxies: (i) urbanisation status; (ii) educational attainment level; and (iii) labour market status. The last of these is categorised as follows: (i) employed; (ii) unemployed; and (iii) outside labour market. Descriptive summary statistics for the unweighted data are provided in [Table 1](#). Reviewing the composition of the sample, it is clear that it covers the major socio-demographic subgroups within the country.

In order to perform the different tests required to validate the study hypotheses, a number of additional variables had to be created. These are introduced and discussed below:

'Continental connection'

Measuring supranational identifications can be difficult and there has been a diversity of different metrics used in the past to gauge this type of identity (for a review, see [Bruter, 2005](#)). With consideration for this complex history, the study imagines this type of identification as an active, conscious and emotional attachment. Responses to the following question were used to measure continental identification: "[t]o what extent do you feel a connection with other people from the rest of Africa?" Response options ranged from 6 (very strong connection) to 0 (no connection). In the remainder of the analysis, this variable was labelled 'Continental Connection'. Unlike some other measures of supranational identity, holding this kind of attachment does not necessitate the abandonment of other identifications (e.g., national). In addition, the question measures a form of geographical belonging and does not specify an ethnic or racial character to 'Africa'.

Cross-border contact

Survey participants were asked if they had contact (whether acquaintance or friendship) with cross-border migrants. Responses to these questions were utilised to create a three-point categorical variable: (i) no contact; (ii) acquaintance only; and (iii) friendship.

Community progress evaluations

Sociotropic concerns were evaluated using the following question: "[a]ll things considered, would you say the general situation is better, about the same, or worse compared to a year ago for your community?" A three-point categorical variable was generated from responses: (i) the same; (ii) better; and (iii) worse.

Group thermometers

Survey respondents were invited to evaluate different groups on a 11-point (0–10) end-defined response scales that measured whether an individual was negative/cold or positive/warm towards a specific group. The respondent was requested to evaluate people from the following groups: (i) cross-border migrants; (ii) refugees; (iii) white; (iv) Indian; and (v) Coloured.

Black people thermometer

Respondents were required to indicate, on a scale of 0–10, whether they felt negative/cold or positive/warm towards black people.

Political trust

Three items were employed to build an index that measured political trust. Respondents were queried on whether they distrusted or trusted three types of government: (i) national; (ii) provincial; and (iii) municipal. A standard Cronbach alpha test ($\alpha = 0.89$) confirmed that this was a reliable index. The measure was converted onto a 0–10 scale with the higher score representing the higher level of trust.

Political affiliation

Participants were required to indicate: "[t]o which political party in South Africa do you feel closest?" To reflect the diversity of the LKWG political context, answers to this question were coded into six different categories: (i) African National Congress (ANC); (ii) Democratic Alliance (DA); (iii) Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF); (iv) other; (v) no party and (vi) undecided.

Results

Antipathy towards different kinds of minority groups

Reviewing the group thermometers results, the LKWG populace was found to have quite a negative view of refugees ($M=4.99$; $SE=0.081$) and cross-border migrants ($M=4.97$; $SE=0.079$). Members of the LKWG population were, in comparison, somewhat more positive about the Indian ($M=6.18$; $SE=0.077$), white ($M=6.73$; $SE=0.073$) and Coloured ($M=7.19$; $SE=0.067$) groups. This section tested whether feeling connected to people from the rest of Africa was associated with social cohesion amongst LKWG citizens. To test the study's two hypotheses, a linear regression (OLS) approach was utilised, and five regression models were produced for this section. The first two models concerned immigrants and assessed the correlates of attitudes towards two kinds of foreigners: (i) cross-border migrants; and (ii) refugees. The section then looked at antipathy towards racial minorities, investigating determinants of attitudes towards three groups: (i) white; (ii) Indian; and (iii) Coloured.

Table 1
Summary descriptive of background controls variables.

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Gender (ref. male)	0.50	0.50	0	1
Age	35.67	13.72	1	98
Population Group (ref. white)				
Black African	0.75	0.44	0	1
Indian	0.03	0.16	0	1
Coloured	0.14	0.35	0	1
Geotype (ref. urban metro)				
Urban non-metro	0.05	0.22	0	1
Rural	0.25	0.43	0	1
Employment Status (ref. employed)				
Unemployment	0.26	0.44	0	1
Outside Labour Market	0.26	0.34	0	1
Educational Attainment (ref. incomplete secondary schooling)				
Completed Secondary	0.46	0.50	0	1
Tertiary Schooling	0.16	0.36	0	1
Province of Residence (ref. Western Cape)				
KwaZulu-Natal	0.25	0.43	0	1
Gauteng	0.30	0.46	0	1
Limpopo	0.20	0.40	0	1

Source: Ipsos Migration South Africa 2019

Note: unweighted data used.

The outcomes of the five linear regression models are presented in Table 2, and each model controlled for all the background variables listed in Table 1. To allow for a better comparison between independent variables, beta coefficients for each model were produced. Reviewing the model outputs presented, the ‘Continental Connection’ variable was a positive and statistically significant correlate in all six models. This provided support for the thesis that an enhance supranational identification was negatively associated with anti-minority views (H#1). Comparing the different models in the table, the ‘Continental Connection’ variable was most robustly associated with the dependent in the cross-border migrant ($r = 0.551$; $SE=0.053$; $p = 0.000$; $\beta = 0.281$) and refugee ($r = 0.523$; $SE=0.054$; $p = 0.000$; $\beta = 0.261$) models. The differentiated effects of supranational identity noted in this analysis suggest that personality traits are not entirely responsible for study outcomes.

In summation, a supranational identification with Africa was negatively associated with animosity towards foreigners amongst LKWG citizens. Would this finding hold if these models were adjusted to account for perceived impact of immigration? As a robustness check, the two models were modified to include a measure that captured the anti-immigration attitudes of citizens.¹¹ This measure had a statistically significant (and negative) correlation with the dependent in the adjusted cross-border migrant ($r = 0.465$; $SE=0.053$; $p = 0.000$; $\beta = 0.233$) model as well as the adjusted refugee ($r = 0.435$; $SE=0.054$; $p = 0.000$; $\beta = 0.217$) model. In the two adjusted models, the introduction of this index did not substantially alter the observed impact of the ‘Continental Connection’ variable on the dependent.

No evidence was found for the thesis that continental attachments were associated with negative attitudes towards racial minorities (H#2). The reader may expect that, when compared to racial minorities, an attachment to co-continentals will have a differing effect on interracial tolerance amongst the Black African citizen population. To check this thesis, the white, Indian and Coloured models were reproduced for only the Black African population. In comparison with the unadjusted models, and confirming prior expectations, attachment to co-continentals had a somewhat more robust correlation with the dependent in all the modified models. Amongst the Black African majority, in precis, a strong attachment to African identity is negatively associated with antipathy towards racial minority groups. Given these results, we can *reject* the hypothesis that attachment to co-continentals increases negative attitudes towards racial minorities (e.g., Indian and white) without the symbolic markers of ‘blackness’.

Predictors of mass identification with Africa

Only a minority (27%) of the LKWG population told fieldworkers that they felt a strong connection to people from the rest of Africa and 30% said that the connection was weak. The remainder either stated that they had no connection (11%) or had neither a weak nor a strong connection (30%). To better understand this distribution, the main determinants of continental identification will be assessed in this section. Five superordinate group hypotheses were testing, and a multivariate regression analysis was utilised to conduct these

¹¹ A composite index gauging perceived impact of immigration on South African society was produced using three items. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree on whether immigration nowadays is: (i) “responsible for many problems like drug abuse, crime, prostitution, diseases, moral degeneration, unemployment in South Africa?”; (ii) “bad for South Africa, dividing society into sharply contrasting groups of opinions and beliefs?”; and (iii) “bad for South Africa, costing the welfare state and draining resources which could be spent on South Africans?” Responses to these three items were combined into a single 0–10 index. Cronbach alpha testing ($\alpha = 0.78$) confirmed the validity of this measure. A high score on this metric represented a high level of agreement that immigration nowadays is bad.

Table 2
Linear Regression (OLS) on individual thermometer ratings of different subgroups in South African society.

	Refugees		Cross-border migrants		White people		Indian people		Coloured people	
Gender (ref. male)	0.000		0.001		0.014		-0.024		-0.063 *	
Age	-0.034		-0.029		0.049		0.042		0.033	
Race group (ref. Black African)										
White	0.067	*	0.040		0.296	***	0.153	***	0.117	***
Indian	-0.015		-0.030		0.100	***	0.242	***	0.028	
Coloured	0.044		0.045		0.082	**	0.160	***	0.187	***
Education level (ref. incomplete secondary)										
Secondary	0.023		0.022		0.002		0.026		0.040	
Post-secondary	0.050		0.077	*	0.020		0.042		0.042	
Employment Status (ref. employed)										
Unemployed	-0.021		-0.039		-0.007		-0.005		0.040	
Outside labour market	0.035		0.022		-0.007		0.028		0.037	
Geotype (ref. metropolitan)										
Non-metropolitan urban	0.009		0.015		-0.047		0.005		-0.011	
Rural	0.034		0.005		-0.066		-0.025		-0.028	
Pan-African Connection	0.261	***	0.281	***	0.097	***	0.129	***	0.087	**
Number of obs.	1839		1850		1873		1825		1861	
R-squared	0.102		0.107		0.169		0.162		0.124	
Root MSE	2.832		2.762		2.474		2.593		2.396	

* ** p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

Notes: 1. Beta coefficient reported; and 2. Regression model controls for province of residence.

tests. The model specification was determined by the dependent variable (i.e., 'Continental Connection') under discussion, and an ordered logistic regression approach was selected. Five regression models were produced, one to test each of the five superordinate group hypotheses outlined for this study. Each model contained all the background variables listed in Table 1, and outputs of the models are presented in Table 3.

The following independent variables were introduced sequentially into the different models depicted in Table 3: (i) cross-border friendships; (ii) sociotropic concerns; (iii) pro-black sentiment; (iv) political trust; and (v) political affiliation. As a robustness check, the final model contains all the independent variables created for this study. Intergroup contact was a statistically significant correlate of supranational identification in the final model. Being friends with a cross-border migrant improved the log odds ($r = 0.665$; $SE = 0.121$; $p = 0.000$) of being attached to one's fellow continentals (H#3). Acquaintanceship contact also had a positive association with the dependent, but the observed correlation ($r = 0.189$; $SE = 0.162$; $p = 0.242$) was small and not statistically significant at the 5% level. Retrospective sociotropic evaluations of community conditions had a robust correlation with the dependent. Viewing community conditions as either stagnating or worsening decreased the log odds of feeling connected to people from elsewhere in Africa. This outcome implies that societal pessimism had a negative impact on supranational identification (H#4).

Consistent with study expectations, pro-black sentiment was positively linked to feeling more connected to people from the rest of Africa (H#5). However, a one unit increase in this measure only improved the log odds of identifying with people from other African countries by 0.062 ($SE = 0.020$). It was hypothesised that the influence of pro-black sentiment on supranational identification would be mediated by racial identity. A subsequent test was performed to validate the thesis that an individual's race group is an important mechanism linking evaluations of black people with their continental identification.¹² Results showed that pro-black sentiment had a much more robust association with feeling connected to people from the rest of Africa amongst white and Indian citizens when compared to other groups.

Model outcomes in Table 3 provides support for the hypothesis that political trust is positively associated with a supranational identification (H#6). However, the strength of this correlation ($r = 0.091$; $SE = 0.020$; $p = 0.000$) was somewhat smaller than expected. Empirical evidence was found to support the thesis that an affiliation with the ANC impacted whether a person felt connected to people from the rest of Africa. When controlling for a range of socio-demographic variables, affiliating with the ruling party increased the chances of holding a supranational identification (H#7) in Model V. But the size of the correlation was modest ($r = 0.336$; $SE = 0.139$; $p = 0.015$) and it could be argued that the weakness of political affiliation as an observed predictor can be explained by the strength of ANC partisanship in the country. The level of political party attachment was hypothesised to mediate the predictive power of political affiliation. When the model was adjusted to interact political affiliation and scale of partisanship, this thesis was confirmed.¹³ The

¹² The final model was altered to interact the Black People Thermometer variable with race group and the outcome suggests that racial identity played a moderating role here. The negative interaction terms for Black African ($r = -0.147$; $SE = 0.074$; $p = 0.047$) and the Coloured ($r = -0.280$; $SE = 0.121$; $p = 0.021$) groups indicates that the link between pro-black attitudes and supranational identification was weak for certain groups. It would seem that pro-black sentiment was a better predictor of supranational identification amongst white and Indian communities than it was for Black African and Coloured communities.

¹³ Model V was modified to interact the party affiliation variable with a variable that captured the extent to which an individual had a connection with other people from their political party. A positive interaction term was observed for the ruling party affiliation category and this measure of party partisanship ($r = 0.206$; $SE = 0.097$; $p = 0.033$). Partisanship emerged, therefore, as a significant mediator of the effect that ruling party affiliation had on the dependent in the adjusted model.

Table 3
Ordered logistic regression on individual feelings of connectedness towards people from the rest of Africa.

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV		Model V						
Cross-border migrant Contact (ref. none)															
Acquaintance only	0.358	(0.161)	*	0.274	(0.164)		0.246	(0.164)	0.162	(0.159)	0.189	(0.162)			
Friends	0.733	(0.118)	**	0.747	(0.121)	**	0.734	(0.121)	**	(0.122)	**	0.665	(0.121)	**	
Community progress evaluations (ref. better)															
Same				-0.525	(0.123)	**	-0.552	(0.123)	**	-0.493	(0.124)	**	-0.476	(0.125)	**
Worse				-0.706	(0.133)	**	-0.721	(0.134)	**	-0.527	(0.138)	**	-0.530	(0.140)	**
Black People Thermometer							0.068	(0.020)	*	0.064	(0.019)	*	0.062	(0.020)	*
Political Trust										0.095	(0.019)	**	0.091	(0.020)	**
Political Affiliation (e.g., no political party)															
African National Congress													0.336	(0.139)	*
Democratic Alliance													0.181	(0.198)	
Economic Freedom Front													0.324	(0.186)	
Other													0.331	(0.212)	
Uncertain													0.223	(0.235)	
Number of obs.	1898			1857			1845			1829			1829		
Wald chi ²	58	(16)		84	(18)		95	(19)		119	(20)		128	(25)	
Pseudo R ²	0.011			0.017			0.018			0.024			0.025		
/cut1	-2.482	(0.234)		-2.979	(0.250)		-2.438	(0.279)		-1.972	(0.302)		-1.778	(0.316)	
/cut2	-1.363	(0.222)		-1.838	(0.238)		-1.297	(0.273)		-0.818	(0.300)		-0.621	(0.316)	
/cut3	-0.730	(0.219)		-1.196	(0.234)		-0.645	(0.272)		-0.149	(0.300)		0.051	(0.316)	
/cut4	0.559	(0.218)		0.123	(0.232)		0.688	(0.270)		1.211	(0.300)		1.415	(0.317)	
/cut5	1.818	(0.223)		1.406	(0.235)		1.974	(0.271)		2.532	(0.304)		2.739	(0.319)	

*** p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

Notes: 1. Standard linearized errors in parenthesis; 2. Regression model controls for all background variables included in Table 1 (age, gender, population group, geotype, employment status and educational attainment).

findings suggest the impact of political affiliation on identity formation here depends on the degree of party support with strong ANC partisans more liable to identify with Africa than weak partisans.

Discussion

The data presented in this article has significantly contributed to scholarship on the CIIM, moving forward our understanding of continental identifications in South Africa. Given past social psychology research on ingroup common identifications in the country (e.g., [Bornman, 2022](#); [Gibson, 2006](#)), this work shows that an overarching superordinate African identity is related to tolerance of different outgroups (e.g., racial minorities, refugees and cross-border migrants). It is apparent that the 'Continental Connection' variable had a robust (and positive) relationship with attitudes towards these outgroups. The largest correlation was observed for the refugees and cross-border migrant groups. This difference may be due to how the 'imagined migrant' has been constructed in South Africa with these groups frequently perceived to be people from elsewhere in Africa ([Matsinhe, 2011](#)).

Would promoting a Pan-African identification amongst the mass public improve attitudes towards outgroups and strengthen social cohesion in South Africa? Experimental research by [Gaertner and Dovidio \(2000\)](#) shows that superordinate group identification typically precedes improved outgroup evaluations (also see [Dovidio et al., 2009](#)). This past CIIM experimental research, as well as the findings presented in this paper, provides support for the following supposition: promoting a Pan-African identity in South Africa will improve socio-cultural cohesion. But it is important to consider the data limitations of this study. The cross-sectional nature of the data used limits any concrete conclusions that can be made about causality. Future research should utilise a longitudinal structure which can control for baseline levels of outcomes and determine the directionality of the observed relationships.

If interested parties wanted to design interventions to promote Pan-Africanism in South Africa, the data provided in this study will prove useful. Although such interventions may have positive consequences for intergroup attitudes, it is important to recognise the disadvantages that they can have for intergroup relations. Following a review of existing studies, [Dovidio et al. \(2016\)](#) argue that interventions that promote a common ingroup identity may weaken popular demand for interventions to address injustice suffered by minority-group members. The authors conclude that such interventions can ultimately obstruct collective efforts to achieve social change. In addition, minority groups can feel threatened by the promotion of inclusive identities that do not recognise their group's distinctiveness ([Dovidio et al., 2009](#)). If interventions are designed to increase the South African public's identification with Africa, these disadvantages must be considered and suitably addressed.

Concurrent with study expectations, model outcomes show that the relationship between pro-black sentiment and co-continental attachment was mediated by racial identity. Amongst the LKWG population, feeling connected to Africa was more robustly linked to pro-black sentiments amongst certain racial minorities (e.g., white and Indian) than the Black African majority. This result shows that it is important to consider how the history of white settler colonialism may inform symbolic boundary-making and social identity formation amongst different groups. [Gordon \(2021\)](#) argued that internalised narratives about racial transformation may be influencing preferences for Pan-Africanist legislation amongst minorities in South Africa. Could a similar process explain the effect observed in this study? Future researchers need to more closely examine symbolic boundary-making around race in South Africa and how it relates to Pan-Africanism.

Research outcomes showed that, for the LKWG public, friendship contact with cross-border migrants was positively associated with holding a Pan-African identity. This finding seems to provide support for the thesis that encouraging cross-border 'optimal' contact will contribute to a sense of transnational belonging. Such a proposition would be consistent with prior work, cross-border contact has long been seen as a mechanism to encourage the adoption of collective political identities ([Deutschmann et al., 2018](#)). But even though past experimental evidence supports the causal order specified here ([Prati et al., 2019](#)), the research data used is cross-sectional and this limits any definitive judgments about the direction of the observed relationships. To circumvent this issue, future studies on supra-national identity formation could utilise a longitudinal design with controls for baseline levels of outcomes.

Retrospective sociotropic assessments of community conditions influenced identifications with Africa amongst the mass LKWG public, providing some empirical support for the Uncertainty-Identity Theory. Sociotropic assessments were discovered to be an important determinant of attitudes in the analytical models, a finding in keeping with the work of [Steenvoorden and Wright \(2019\)](#) on societal pessimism and group identification in Europe. Societal pessimism has received very little scientific attention, but existing research suggests that political (e.g., corruption) and macro-economic (e.g., jobless) factors predict this kind of societal evaluation ([Steenvoorden & van der Meer, 2017](#)). These findings seem to suggest that sociotropic attitudes reflects objective political and economic contexts. Unfortunately, the data available for this study does not allow the impact of macro-level events on attitude formation to be empirically tested. It is hope that future work will help us understand how macro-level events may amplify or mitigate supra-national attachments amongst the general public.

Conclusion

When seeking to improve social cohesion, there are a number of direct approaches (e.g., improving intergroup contact or reducing inequalities) that are often given consideration. This article considers an alternative approach, the Pan-African Solidarity thesis and, in so doing, contributes to ongoing research into how common ingroup identities improve social cohesion. Study findings are consistent with research expectations, supranational identification was negatively correlated with anti-minority sentiment. The article also mapped Pan-African attitudes, contributing to how we understand the determinants of continental identity in South Africa. It identified local ideational/socio-psychological factors as well as cluing from political elites as major drivers of Pan-African identity formation. The paper also outlined a number of different avenues for further research, highlighting new paths that scholars may follow in

future.

Acknowledgement

Guidance for this study was provided by Benjamin J. Roberts and Jarè Struwig. Special thanks to the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town for their support and encouragement.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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