

# Relationship between Critical Consciousness and Multiculturalism? A comparison across four countries

Wibke Eickmann & Elke Murdock (University of Luxembourg)  
contact: wibkeratna.eickmann@studio.unibo.it



## Background

The goal of this study was to explore the relationship between Critical Consciousness (CC) and Multiculturalism Ideology (MCI) in four different countries - France, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, and Malaysia - which represent very different policy approaches to cultural diversity. The aim was to gain insights if and how opinion about diversity and the perception of less privileged members of society are linked and to contribute to the growing body of research on social inequity awareness (Schwarzenthal et al, 2019).

**Critical Consciousness** describes the reflection about inequalities in society and action taken to address them (Freire, 1973; Jemal, 2017; Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). Components of CC include **Critical Reflection**, the awareness of social inequalities (Perceived Inequality) and support for equality between groups (Egalitarianism); **Political Efficacy**, the perceived ability to effect social or political change (Internal Political Efficacy) and the perceived responsiveness of the

government to people's needs (External Political Efficacy); **Critical Action** (Sociopolitical Participation), describes the action people take individually or collectively to address issues perceived to be unjust. It can be differentiated between conventional forms, such as voting, and protest forms of action (Diemer, Rapa, Voight, & McWhirter, 2016; Godfrey & Grayman, 2014; Jemal, 2017; Watts et al., 2011).

**Multiculturalism Ideology** (MCI) describes the "appreciation of the value of cultural diversity for a society, and a need for mutual acceptance and accommodation that promotes equitable participation" (Berry, 2016, p. 416f). The few studies exploring MCI and constructs similar to CC found positive relations regarding support for policies concerning minority rights and lower prejudice (Urbiola, Willis, Ruiz-Romero, Moya, & Esses, 2017; Ward & Masgoret, 2008) and greater awareness of structural discrimination and increased interaction with people from a different background (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006).

## Research Questions

- Are Critical Consciousness and its components and Multiculturalism Ideology correlated?
- Do correlations differ across the four countries?
- Do the four countries differ regarding scores on Critical Consciousness components?

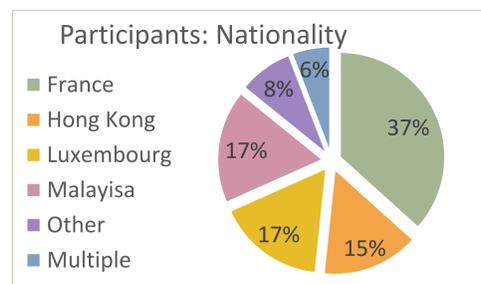
## Methods

**Data collection:** March to May 2020; online questionnaire available in English, German and French

### Measures:

- Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS) (Diemer, 2014), subscales: Perceived Inequality, Egalitarianism and Sociopolitical Participation
- Political Efficacy Short Scale (PEKS) (Beierlein, Kemper, Kovaleva, & Rammstedt, 2012), subscales: Internal and External Political Efficacy
- Multiculturalism Ideology Scale (MCI) (Berry & Kalin, 1995)

**Sample:**  $N = 120$ . 69.2% female, 3 diverse,  $M_{age} = 26.40$  ( $SD_{age} = 9.71$ ). University degree: 84.9%. 7 participants with more than one nationality were excluded from the analysis of countries.



## Results

Multiculturalism Ideology (MCI) was highly positively correlated with Perceived Inequality and Egalitarianism and highly negatively correlated with External Political Efficacy (total sample). The correlation patterns between CC components and MCI differed across countries. Correlations between MCI and Egalitarianism were highly significant for France, Luxembourg, and Malaysia but not for Hong Kong. The relation between MCI and Perceived Inequality reached significance for France only, while the negative correlation with External Political Efficacy was only significant in the Luxembourgish sample.

Mean scores for CC components and MCI did not statistically differ across the four countries. Sociopolitical Participation was in general quite low, while the highest scores were observed for Egalitarianism.

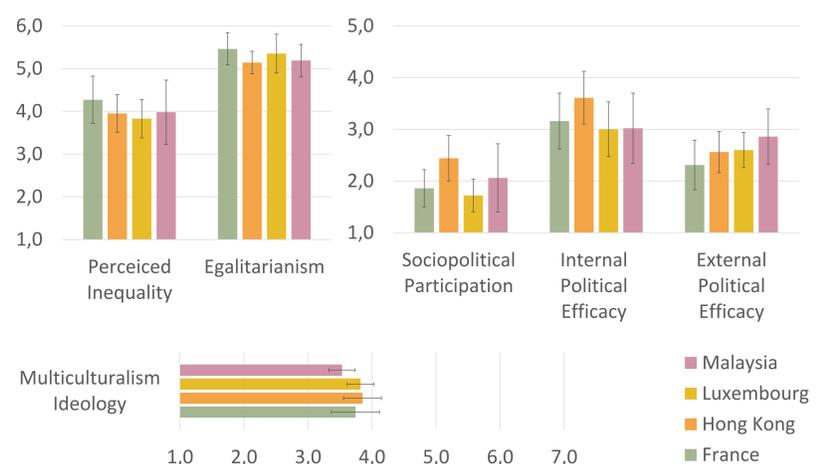
### Correlation between Critical Consciousness dimensions and Multiculturalism Ideology by country

Critical Consciousness	Multiculturalism Ideology				
	Total	France	Hong Kong	Luxembourg	Malaysia
Perceived Inequality	.24**	.47**	.09	.27	.03
Sociopolitical Participation	.16	.08	.36	.34	-.02
Egalitarianism	.48**	.59**	.31	.56**	.57**
Internal Political Efficacy	.11	.11	.33	-.03	.06
External Political Efficacy	-.27**	-.10	-.35	-.52*	-.36

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

\* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

### Mean and Standard Deviation of Critical Consciousness components and Multiculturalism Ideology by country



### References

- Beierlein, C., Kemper, C. J., Kovaleva, A., & Rammstedt, B. (2012). and oppression. *Child Development Perspectives*, 10(4), 216-221. Ein Messinstrument zur Erfassung politischer Kompetenz- und Einflussüberzeugungen: Political Efficacy Kurzskala (PEKS).
- Berry, J. W. (2016). Diversity and equity. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 22(3), 413-430.
- Berry, J. W., & Kalin, R. (1995). Multicultural and ethnic attitudes in Canada: An overview of the 1991 national survey. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement*, 27(3), 301.
- Diemer, M. A. (2014). *Critical Consciousness Scale - Formatted for Use*.
- Diemer, M. A., Rapa, L. J., Voight, A. M., & McWhirter, E. H. (2016). Critical consciousness: A developmental approach to addressing marginalization.
- Godfrey, E. O., & Grayman, J. K. (2014). Teaching citizens: The role of open classroom climate in fostering critical consciousness among youth. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 42(11), 1801-1817.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness* (Vol. 1). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Jemal, A. (2017). Critical consciousness: A critique and critical analysis of the literature. *The Urban Review*, 49(4), 602-626.
- Schwarzenthal, M., Moffitt, U., Jang, L., & Schachner, M. (2019). Discussing Social Inequality at School: Classroom Climate and Adolescents' Critical Consciousness. ECOP Conference, Athens, Greece.
- Urbiola, A., Willis, G. B., Ruiz-Romero, J., Moya, M., & Esses, V. (2017). Valuing diversity in Spain and Canada: The role of multicultural ideology in intergroup attitudes and intentions to reduce inequalities. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 56, 25-38.
- Verkuyten, M., & Martinovic, B. (2006). Understanding multicultural attitudes: The role of group status, identification, friendships, and justifying ideologies. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30(1), 1-18.
- Ward, C., & Masgoret, A.-M. (2008). Attitudes toward immigrants, immigration, and multiculturalism in New Zealand: A social psychological analysis. *International Migration Review*, 42(1), 227-248.
- Watts, R. J., Diemer, M. A., & Voight, A. M. (2013). Critical consciousness: Current status and future directions. *New directions for child and adolescent development*, 2011(134), 43-57.

## Discussion

The relationships between MCI, Perceived Inequality and Egalitarianism are in line with previous research findings on multiculturalism and social inequity research. Although not reaching statistical significance, findings regarding Sociopolitical Participation are in line with studies which found a correlation between higher motivation for social change and support for multiculturalism (Urbiola et al., 2017).

The present study showed a negative correlation between MCI and External but not Internal Political Efficacy. This pattern may be explained by the observation of multicultural policies not adequately put into practice. Those who favour multiculturalism may experience politicians to be less responsive to the needs of diverse cultural groups, and thus have a lower external but not internal political efficacy.

Interestingly, the mean scores for the components of CC are very similar across the four countries. The correlations between MCI and CC dimensions in each country were broadly similar to those obtained in the entire sample, though the correlation between MCI and Perceived Inequality was larger for European than for Asian countries.

The finding suggests that CC may develop quite independently of cultural influences, as perception of unequal treatment and status differences between groups is an issue prevalent in all societies.

## Limitations

- No direction of influence between MCI and CC can be inferred. Further research could address this question.
- Explorative study due to the small sample size and relatively homogenous sample of young, educated people.
- Partly non-validated translations of measures.
- Interpretation of the situation in Hong Kong and Malaysia from a European perspective.