

SCOTTISH INFERIORITY

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THE CONCEPT OF SCOTTISH INFERIORISM

Theorists such as Beveridge and Turnbull (1989), Young (1979) and Nairn (1977) have outlined ways in which the Scots have seen themselves or been described by others as backwards, having an inferiority complex or being less articulate than the English. However, in this literature little or no material evidence is given to support these assertions.

McCrone (1992) notes that the Scots have retained a distinct civil society despite British state domination from the south, and that this distinction is articulated in assertions of national identity. On a similar note Mackintosh (1982) argued that, 'with dual nationality, there is a simple alternative if the pride in being British wanes; just be Scottish. It is an "opt out" solution which allows each person to imagine the kind of alternative to the disappointment of being British which he or she wants.' This alternative pride which these authors discuss was shown to exist in a Scotsman newspaper 1991 opinion poll where 40% of Scots declared themselves 'Scottish not British', another 29% 'more Scottish than British' and another 21% 'equally Scottish and British'.

This 'fiercely Scottish' identity exists, however, alongside acute awareness of the country's dependence on the outside world. The Caledonian Antiszygy or Schizophrenia alleged to result from this is manifested according to Nairn in assertions of superiority hiding deep seated beliefs in inferiority. That the

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Scots believe in their own inferiority is demonstrated in the survival of the myths of inarticulacy, drunkenness, provincial insecurity, sexual inhibitions and ethnic prejudices. Popular consciousness becomes fixed as inferior, embodied in Kitsch symbols, slogans, songs and tartanry. While acknowledging these as vulgar, in the absence of alternatives, Scots take comfort from them and adapt them as reasons for pride and satisfaction. McCrone argues that the Kailyard and tartanry have created in Scots a feeling that their culture is inferior next to Anglo-British culture. Instances of this in the media in the form of regressive cultural terms (or their alternatives in the form of Billy Connolly or Rab C. Nesbit which are guilty of sexism and anachronism) deform Scottish culture; the deformation, McCrone argues, is tied to cultural dependence on English power. Further, he argues, the assumption that Scottish culture is inferior is dependant on the notion that a search must be made for a distinctive Scottish culture in order that a Scottish 'society' can be claimed to exist. Discussing vulgar tokens of Scottish identity and calling them 'Scotch Myths', McArthur (1981) argues that these have had hegemony over Scots' perceptions of themselves to such an extent that they have a systemic quality. The semiotics of Scotland are, McArthur says, 'regressive in cultural terms, and in their political manifestations lock us into subordination and dependency'.

The topic of inferiorism is taken beyond assumptions of its actuality by those writers who attempt to account for its origins in Scotland's social history, as in the work of Beveridge and Turnbull (1989). Fanon (1967) argues that central to the process of colonisation is the depiction, by the coloniser, of the colonised culture as impoverished, backward, inferior and primitive. Fanon writes, 'every effort is made to bring the colonised person to admit the inferiority of his culture.' Once self-doubt is created, resistance to foreign rule is weakened, while for the coloniser self-justification is achieved with a belief that were it not for his interventions the colony would slide backwards into barbarism. 17th century traveller-diarists with English-based judgements such as those drawn from Brown (1891) depicted Scotland as pre-civilised. The Scots intelligentsia, wishing to separate themselves from such labelling, denounced their own lower orders, aped the manners and language of the English gentry and migrated in body or spirit to the wider Anglo-British culture. Thus Scottish civil society survived in the bosom of the British state, but its British 'head' was split from its Scottish 'heart', argues Nairn (1977), leaving a Scottish cultural void in which parochialism flourished. Without demonstrating that it exists, Young too (1979) finds explanations for the phenomena of inarticulacy. He holds that an authoritarian social ethos coloured by repressive Presbyterian attitudes and 'the complete surrender to English culture' accounts for the inarticulacy he supposes is characteristic of

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the Scottish people. McCrone (1992) offers an analysis of the inferiority complex of the Scots as emerging from cultural and economic mergers with England. He writes that by embracing Anglicisation in the guise of cultural improvement for Scotland, the Scottish bourgeoisie hoped to gain access to the markets of Britain's empire. They were aided in this, he goes on, by philosophers and novelists such as Scott whose writings assumed a self-evident relationship between Scottish economic prosperity and the imposed diffusion of English learning. McCrone concludes from this that the Scottish Enlightenment was subordinate to metropolitan capitalism yet crucial to modernisation, that national dependence led to native self-doubt and the easing of transference of political control.

This image of the Scots is seriously discussed, and the roots of the myth investigated as the above review of the literature demonstrates. The political force of the myth is clear: it is, Beveridge and Turnbull write (1989) 'a political component of an ideology which functions to undermine the self-belief of a dependent people.'

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

What is not clear from the literature is that there is any evidence that the Scots do feel inferior to the English or suffer from Nairn's 'Antisyzygy'. In response to the weaknesses discussed above I set out to investigate by experiment whether Scots really consider their fellow citizens to be inferior to their English neighbours. If it could be shown that the Scots do not judge their fellow nationals to be inferior to the English then the assumption of their schizophrenic nature could be challenged.

To this end an experimental study of inferiorism amongst the Scots was undertaken in a design which used forty Scottish adult subjects who were asked to put in rank order their preferences from four authors/storytellers which they read/heard telling a selection of children's stories. Distinctive Scottish/English names and voices were used as the independent variables. Four English accents (two male, two female) and four Scottish accents (two male, two female) were tape recorded reading four children's story books. Each of the readers introduced themselves by distinctively Scottish/English names, as appropriate, at the beginning of each recording. In the second experimental condition the same aliases were used as authors of the stories. The subjects hearing these recordings and reading the stories were asked to list in rank order their preferences among these storytellers/authors.

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To control for the possibility that some story or stories were intrinsically superior to others, or that the sex of the reader/author was influential, and hence ensure that the only systematic variable was the nationality of the storyteller, both sex and the story being told were varied. The stories were mixed so that each was recorded by both an English person and a Scottish person. (Stories 1 and 2 by men, 3 and 4 by women.) To ensure gender was not varied systematically each story was then hand-written and signed as authors by the distinctively Scottish/English names. (Stories 3 and 4 by men, 1 and 2 by women). Forty subjects who considered themselves Scottish were then randomly allocated to one of the four independent groups to eliminate systematic differences between conditions.

RESULTS

A rank order of preference given by each subject to their experimental story selection was grouped into scores:

4 points for a 1st place.

3 points for a 2nd place.

2 points for a 3rd place.

1 point for a 4th place.

In group A (who heard the stories played on tape),

story 1 by Scottish Male James MacDonald got a total of 12 points;

story 2 by English Male Charles Moore got a total of 29 points;

story 3 by Scottish Female Ann MacLeod got a total of 27 points;

story 4 by English Female Caroline Reynolds got a total of 32 points.

In group B (who also heard the stories played on tape),

story 1 by English Male Brian Alexander got a total of 36 points;

story 2 by Scottish Male Duncan Stewart got a total of 20 points;

story 3 by English Female Liz Porter got a total of 30 points;

story 4 by Scottish Female Morag Campbell got a total of 14 points.

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In group C (who read the hand-written stories),

story 1 by Scottish Female Morag Campbell got a total of 32 points;

story 2 by English Female Liz Porter got a total of 23 points;

story 3 by Scottish Male Duncan Stewart got a total of 21 points;

story 4 by English Male Brian Alexander got a total of 24 points.

In group D (who also read the hand-written stories),

story 1 by English Female Caroline Reynolds got a total of 26 points;

story 2 by Scottish Female Ann MacLeod got a total of 29 points;

story 3 by English Male Charles Moore got a total of 26 points;

story 4 by Scottish Male James MacDonald got a total of 19 points.

Aggregate scores were then calculated for each of the two experimental conditions. That is scores from groups A and B - those hearing the stories from a tape - were summed; and scores from groups C and D - those reading the hand-written stories - were summed.

The two conditions of the experiment yielded quite different results. Under condition 1, in which subjects heard the stories from a tape recording, the aggregate scores for English voices totalled 127 points, while the Scottish voices totalled 73 points. The female voices totalled 103 points, the male voices 97. Story 1 readers totalled 48 points, story 2 readers totalled 49 points, story 3 readers totalled 57 points and story 4 readers totalled 46 points.

Under condition 2, in which subjects read the stories attributed to named authors, the aggregate scores for English names was 99 points, and for Scottish names 101 points. The female names totalled 110 points, the male names 90 points. Story 1 authors totalled 58 points, story 2 authors totalled 52 points, story 3 authors totalled 47 points and story 4 author totalled 43 points.

In summary, while the implied nationality of the author name given in condition 2 had no apparent impact, the nationality of the accent in condition 1 seemed to have a notable effect on the opinions of subjects. Both sex and story read had no discernible effect on opinion under either condition. It is

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perhaps unsurprising that the nationality implied by the given author names in condition 2 had little effect on subjects. These names were only stated once at the top of the first page of story text. No other reminder of nationality was given in the course of the subject's reading. Nationality was not pointed out to any subject as of any importance to the experiment. It is quite likely therefore that the nationality implied so briefly under this condition was simply not noticed by subjects, and could therefore not impact on their judgements.

Under condition 1 of the experiment, the issue of nationality was more obvious, the whole of each story being presented by Scottish/English accents. Even if the brief introduction to each story - e.g. 'This is Morag Campbell reading!' - was disregarded, an awareness of the reader's nationality could not be escaped under this condition.

Considering the data from groups A and B, who under condition 1 heard the stories told on tape, Page's L trend test (Miller 1984) was used to show whether the spread of scores was statistically significant. For each subject their ranking positions for the stories they heard were awarded points according to the system outlined above. This statistical test for trend produced the observed value of L (6.98) and, since this exceeds the critical value (6.6) for a 0.05 level of significance when $K=4$ and $N=20$, we can conclude that there is a significant trend across the groups of scores.

Having established the statistical significance of the results with the original design by this method, I decided to take advantage of the neutral results obtained in condition 2 to perform another test using the second condition as a control. This test was the chi-square test: see table 1.

Table 1

	Results of experiment		
	Condition 1 (subjects hear stories)	Condition 2 (subjects read stories)	Total
Total 'English' Score*	127	99	226
Total 'Scottish' Score*	73	101	174

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200

200

400

**Nationality distinguished by accent in Condition 1, and by author name in Condition 2*

The observed level of χ^2 at 3.85 is just above the critical level of 3.84 which it must be equal to or greater than to declare the proportions in the two groups to be significant at 0.05 with 1 degree of freedom.

The subjective interpretation referred to in the opening comments from writers such as Nairn - that the Scots hold a belief in their inferiority relative to their English neighbours - is therefore statistically supported by this evidence.

DISCUSSION

The irritations I originally felt when reading the work of those writers who asserted that the Scots believe their fellow Scottish citizens inferior to the English was my motivation to question such assumptions by designing an experimental investigation. To my surprise, the outcome of this investigation showed that the phenomenon of Scottish inferiorism can after all be empirically demonstrated and statistically supported. In conclusion, therefore, those writers who allege the existence of a Scottish inferiority complex are not refuted by this evidence. My original suspicion that Scottish inferiorism was a myth - since it was so often reported and discussed without any evidence being given for it - has now been challenged.

It must be remembered that the design of this research, by abstracting people's reactions from their social context, has some weaknesses as well as strengths. It could be argued that the experiment measured other aspects of the subjects' attitudes towards the accents they heard rather than their evaluation of the national identity associated with them. The methodology was selected, however, for its advantages of control of irrelevant variables and for its potential to allow social-psychological investigation of perhaps unconscious beliefs such as were suggested by the deep-seated inferiorism said to be characteristic of Scots. Another caution worth bearing in mind is that in the experimental condition in which Scottish identity was implied only by name, there was no significant difference between scores given to Scottish or English 'authors'. Only in the spoken version, where nationality was

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indicated by accent, did a significant difference of opinion appear. Perhaps this was, as I suspect, simply because, in the non-oral version, the nationality was not noticed by subjects, but on the other hand the comparatively low scores for Scottish voices may have been due, not to felt inferiorism, but to a distaste for Scottish accents. Whether this is the case and why the Scots may feel this way about their accents are certainly questions worth asking.

The power of this research method to reveal beliefs which were unconscious or which respondents were reluctant to make public was shown by the reactions I often got when debriefing the subjects after they had reported their ranked order on the storytellers/authors. I told them that what I was interested in was how they judged Scots storytellers/authors against their English counterparts. Very often having realised at this point that they had given a lower rank to Scots and that this was the issue, many subjects acted in a guilty manner and sometimes tried to retract their rankings, as if they had done something wrong. This may in itself be evidence of the public support/private betrayal or the forthright nationalism and deep-seated inferiorism of which the Scots are accused, but these are further myths certainly worth investigating.

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