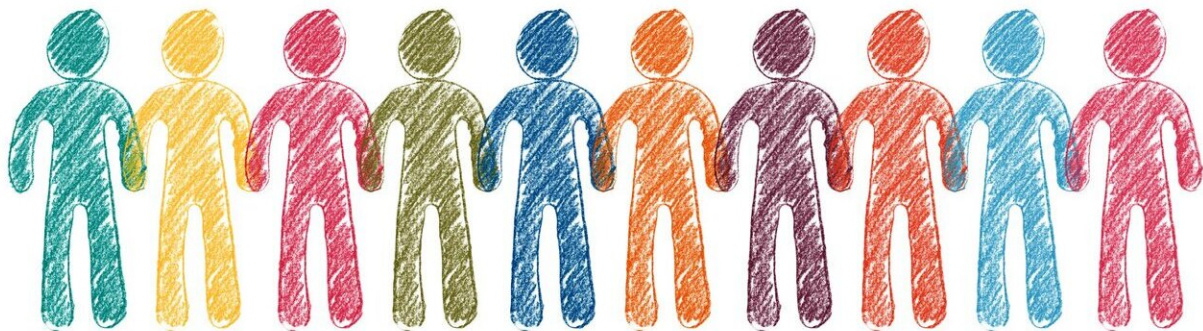


# Basque ethnic identity and collective empowerment are associated with wellbeing

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Social identity is a factor linked to wellbeing and community participation. Various studies have demonstrated the link existing between ethnic identity and empowerment and that the interaction between both of them leads to a rise in the indices of wellbeing and community participation. However, the nature of these relationships may

be determined by the fact that the individual perceives his or her own group as a minority one and/or one that is subject to discrimination. In fact, these relations emerge mostly in groups that find themselves in a minority situation and/or one of discrimination, but not in groups that are more hegemonic or in the majority.

To further this thesis, Jon Zabala, a member of the Culture, Cognition and Emotion consolidated research group at the UPV/EHU's Faculty of Psychology, conducted a transversal study "to explore the relationship that [social identification](#) (or [identity](#) fusion) and psychological collective empowerment have with personal wellbeing, social wellbeing and community participation of 748 Basque men and women."

As Zabala explained, "we saw that the individuals who feel closely identified or fused with Basques (or Basque speakers) and have a high degree of empowerment display high indices of personal and social wellbeing and [community participation](#); in fact, they display indices higher than those of people who are not fused and who have a low degree of empowerment." Yet the results of the research suggest that "social identification balances the negative aspects arising out of perceiving the group as a linguistic minority," asserted the author. In addition, "we found that with respect to the wellbeing of individuals who regard being euskaldun (Basque speaking) as being in a minority in their environment, such as in cities or locations where the Basque language is more precarious, it is more important to feel identified with Basques."

## **Collective psychological empowerment**

As the researcher pointed out, the advances achieved in cultural terms, and in particular in linguistic ones, are clearly consistent with the perception of the power of the Basque collective to change society and achieve its aims. However, "we still come across certain indicators of vulnerability, such as the precarious situation of the Basque language,

and certain specific indicators of linguistic discrimination in certain situations, which may be regarded as a threat to the survival of Basque and, therefore, to Basque identity," said Zabala.

According to the theory of [social identity](#), "when a collective is a minority one and perceives significant threats that may have to do with its identity, the identity is activated and may trigger empowerment processes," said the Faculty of Psychology researcher. "It may be that, despite the generally good socioeconomic position of this social group and the achievements reached in terms of the language, the awareness of being a linguistic minority, both in the world and within the population of the Basque country as a whole, contributes towards the fact that the degree of identification or identity fusion with Basque speakers and, especially, empowerment, act as particularly important factors for wellbeing."

The researchers perceived a strong link between collective empowerment and wellbeing. "We were surprised that a social factor like this should be so strongly associated with personal [wellbeing](#)," said Zabala. "Collective psychological [empowerment](#) was a highly significant factor and we need to further the research." The characteristics of the collective studied are not common in comparison with the studies carried out to date in this matter (the [ethnic identity](#) of African Americans has been studied above all). So the researchers assert that this work will be of use for other pieces of research that are conducted in this field worldwide.

**More information:** Jon Zabala et al, Basque Ethnic Identity and Collective Empowerment: Two Key Factors in Well-Being and Community Participation, *Frontiers in Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.606316](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.606316)

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