

The story of Jack Crabb in *Little Big Man* is that of a man brought up at various times as both an Indian and white, and hence is essentially a member of both groups at differing points in his life. As such, his ongoing participation in the conflict between the group sees him first claiming to “really be” a white when in danger from the whites, and later when supposedly being on the white side, pledging allegiance to the Indians.

Ellemers *et al*'s research suggests that where there is a threat to an individual's in-group, his likely response will depend upon the extent of his commitment to that group. If commitment is low then it is proposed that he will try to avoid the resulting negative identity and instead look to “flee” towards other groups. On the other hand, if commitment is high, then a process of group-affirmation should result, in which group homogeneity is emphasized and a high level of self-stereotyping occurs.

The threats involved in *Little Big Man* appear to fit into this category of group-oriented threat, since Jack experiences personal danger as a consequence of his alignment with one or the other group in the context of their inter-group violence. However, it seems to me that a more directly operative determinant of response than group-commitment is threat-intensity. Thus, the primary force acting on Jack's behavior when in danger was not his level of commitment to his present in-group, but the level of threat that the situation posed.

Having been born a white but subsequently spending years at a time as both a member of the Indian and white communities, it seems that Jack's level of commitment to each group was similarly high during the corresponding periods. Later it is evident that his enduring commitment lies with the Indians, but I think at earlier points it is a fair assessment that the degree of group isolation involved helped to ensure that his relative commitment was comparably high. However, in spite of this he readily switched allegiance to an out-group when faced with life-threatening situations, and I propose that had the threats been less extreme, this would not have been the case.

It appears then that a modification to Ellemers *et al*'s taxonomy that incorporates a threat-level aspect might be useful. This could involve crossing threat-type with both commitment *and* an added threat-level element. Possibly this factor would be less relevant in cells involving low commitment, as evidently even a low level of threat appears sufficient to cause the same response (“individual mobility” in cell 5) as a high threat. Of real concern is the effect that a threat-level continuum would have on types of threat in which there is high group-commitment, with my hypothesis predicting that resultant behaviors will vary. For instance, a relatively low-level threat should cause the taxonomy's cell 6 behavior of group-affirmation, whereas I propose that a higher level would cause the same kind of individual mobility currently seen as likely in cell 5.

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