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Contexts and conditions of outgroup influence

The current study examined how the composition of intergroup contexts affects intergroup communication. We propose that when multiple outgroups exist, an extreme faction can make more moderate factions appear reasonable, creating pathways for influence. We also considered the role that an influence target's fit with their ingroup (self-prototypicality) plays in responses to outgroup influence attempts. Specifically, we propose, and the current study showed, that both the composition of intergroup context and one's relationship with their own group can create a pathway toward convergence of opinions and willingness to accept an outgroup's opinion position. Two experiments (American partisans, $N = 249$), suggest that self-prototypicality in one's political party positively predicts agreement with an opposing party's message when the message appears in the presence of a more extreme outgroup than the moderate outgroup alone. This study stresses the importance of considering intragroup and intergroup comparative processes for intergroup communication research.

Key words: influence, intergroup communication, self-categorization, social-categorization, self-prototypicality

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Contexts and Conditions of Minority Influence

In 2017, Emmanuel Macron defeated Marine La Pen in France's presidential election (66.06% vs. 33.94% of votes, respectively). In April of 2022, days before the French election, it appeared that the far-right candidate, Marine La Pen had gained traction and popularity in France, with some polls having her within percentage points of Macron. Although the final tally showed that 59% of French voters favored Macron to the 41% who favored Le Pen, she clearly gained in popularity (although Macron's loss of popularity is a valid point as well). There are several economic and social factors that contributed to the dwindling margins between a far right and once described "extremist" candidate and a moderate incumbent president. Beyond economic concerns and social unrest, Le Pen may have benefitted from a very specific part of the social context. Another extremist far right candidate entered the French presidential race: the television pundit Éric Zemmour. Roger Cohen of the New York Times described Zemmour: "And if you think Marine Le Pen is on the right of the political spectrum, well— ... Éric Zemmour was further right.... he (Zemmour) described unaccompanied migrant children as— quote "thieves" – "murders" – "rapists." Although Zemmour did not make the run-offs, he certainly impacted the election. Roger Cohen went on to describe Zemmour's role in the 2022 presidential election as one that ultimately helped Le Pen: "He made her seem more moderate, more reasonable, more electable by comparison" (Barbaro, 2022). The presence of someone that is even more extreme may make a candidate such as Le Pen appear more moderate – the comparison of the two makes the more moderate candidate appear closer to center than if the comparison did not exist. The current study draws from self-categorization theory (e.g., Turner et al., 1987) and work on minority influence (e.g., Papastamou et al., 2017) to examine how the context of intergroup relations is communicated and how this communication can drive groups closer together or further apart. We examined how the presence (or lack) of extremist outgroup factions can affect the perception of psychological distance between groups and ultimately the ability for influence to span intergroup divisions. We explored the complexities of intergroup communication outside of a binary ingroup versus outgroup context. Namely, we explored how intersecting outgroup identities can become a condition of intergroup communication and, under special circumstances, help to depolarize partisan attitudes.

Social Identities and Influence

Very little research in social psychology has demonstrated the ability of outgroups to promote intergroup attitude change (see Alvaro & Crano 1997, for an exception, see Pérez & Mugny, 1987). However, history provides real-world examples of minority outgroups creating meaningful and lasting social change in majority perspectives: Civil Rights movements, Workers Rights movements,

Suffragettes, and LGBTQ advocates have all advanced their positions and worked toward creating change in the form of integrated schools, women voting, more fair practices for workers, the legalization of same sex marriage in many countries, and so forth. These advancements should not be interpreted as final and permanent, but are notable because they have advanced both policy and dominant thinking and attitudes. Their success lies in reducing the psychological distance between the minority movement and the dominant majority. In each example, the dominant majority can and does produce heavy opposition, as change from the majority position in favor of the minority position reflects a threat to the majority groups' identities. That resistance is a core feature of both intergroup and intragroup relations. There is a predictable spectrum of who within a group will resist change and who might be open to it. Here, we argue that it is often a matter of the individual's relationship to their ingroup identity and position within their ingroup that promotes or hinders successful intergroup communication. This can be exacerbated or minimized by the context and complexity of the intergroup landscape. Some people, given their relationship to their ingroup, are more threatened by oppositional outgroups than others.

Group Positioning and Influence

We make the case that the landscape of the intergroup context and the precise comparisons made between outgroups are important for intergroup communication scholars to consider. However, just as the complicated nature of the intergroup context is important, the complicated nature of a target's attachment to and place within their ingroup is equally important. Targets who feel that they are on the fringes of their ingroup may, at times, desire to distance themselves from outgroups which appear close to their ingroup (their closeness to the outgroup threatens their status and position within the ingroup; see Hohman et al., 2017). As a result, they should seek to maximize the discrepancy between themselves and an outgroup attempting to enact change on their own group. Conditions that make an outgroup source appear psychologically closer to the ingroup may magnify this experience. For example, when a feature of the intergroup context, such as the presence of a moderate outgroup and a more extreme outgroup faction, makes the moderate outgroup appear closer to the peripheral member's ingroup, the person who feels peripheral and distant from their ingroup may seek more distance from the outgroup than those who feel comfortable in their ingroup position. However, prototypical group members (those who feel that they are representative of their ingroup and fit in well with their ingroup) should feel more comfortable in their position and be more open to perceiving the outgroup source as closer, and as a result, should be more likely than the peripheral members to be accepting of the outgroup position. Specifically, we posit that feeling prototypical of the ingroup can open space for convergence toward an outgroup opinion position. Rather than shutting down

and ignoring an outgroup position, someone who feels prototypical of their own group may have the confidence to consider an outgroup perspective. Drawing from some of the principles of communication accommodation theory (e.g., Giles, 2016; Giles et al., 1991; Palomares et al., 2016, Soliz et al., 2022; Soliz et al., 2009), we suggest that feeling prototypical of the ingroup can support a convergent form of communication in which people consider and even adopt an outgroup member's opinion. Alternatively, feeling peripheral of one's ingroup may create the need to establish an intergroup boundary and produce divergence from an outgroup perspective and potentially result in nonaccommodation (Gasiorek, 2016). Whereas there is no need for one who feels prototypical of their ingroup to perceive a competitive intergroup comparison, a threat to one's prototypicality should create the need to perceive a stark intergroup comparative context that allows the peripheral group member to distance themselves from the outgroup in hopes of edging close to their own ingroup prototype (i.e., produce nonaccommodation, Gasiorek, 2016).

People's important group memberships provide them with a sense of belonging and inclusion, esteem, and a significant amount of knowledge about their self-concepts (see Gaffney & Hogg, 2022). Ingroup members understand and define their groups in part by acknowledging what they have in common, but also cognitively exacerbating what makes their ingroup different from and better than relevant outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). As a result, it is exceedingly difficult for members of a group to successfully influence a competing outgroup toward acceptance of a counterattitudinal opinion (particularly with respect to attitudes that define group identities; Mackie et al., 1990). Put simply, it is difficult to convince a competing outgroup to change their mind and accept a counterattitudinal position.

People cognitively represent their social identities as prototypes (schemas that include group normative attitudes, behaviors, values, ingroup fashion, slang, and other shared attributes that define the ingroup, Turner et al., 1987). Importantly, the prototype contains contextual information that both defines what ingroup members have in common with one another and what separates them from relevant outgroups. As a result, group members vary in the extent to which they personally embody the ingroup prototype (e.g., Hogg, 2005). That is, some people are perceptually closer to their group's prototype and some people are further from their group's prototype (i.e., are more peripheral). This distance has meaningful implications for intergroup relations (e.g., Gaertner et al., 1993), the communication of intergroup messages, and potentially for an outgroup's ability to create change across group boundaries (i.e., outgroup influence).

When social identity becomes salient, the defining features of the self-concept are those included in the ingroup prototype. Thus, people view themselves and others through the lens of the prototype. This means that when membership in an important group is salient, the ingroup prototype and those members who most closely approximate the ingroup prototype (prototypical group members)

drive social influence (Hogg & Turner, 1987). Because people tend to view their ingroup prototype favorably, they view those people who are most prototypical favorably (see Hogg et al., 1993) and engage in more systematic processing of prototypical group members' persuasive messages (in comparison to peripheral group members' messages, van Knippenberg & Wilke, 1992). Whereas prototypical group members are uplifted to leadership positions, groups tend to derogate peripheral group members and those who deviate from group norms (see Hogg, 2005).

In general, strongly identified group members seek proximity to the ingroup prototype (Goldman & Hogg, 2016; Hogg & Gaffney, 2014). Indeed, when people feel peripheral in their group, they experience greater self-uncertainty than those who feel prototypical (Hohman, Gaffney, & Hogg, 2017). In addition, peripheral group members are more likely to derogate other peripheral group members (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001), engage in extreme intergroup behaviors, and support intergroup violence than are prototypical group members (Goldman & Hogg, 2016). Peripherals (as opposed to prototypicals) publicly express more negativity towards outgroups and support and advocate for the use of coercion tactics against them (Noel et al., 1995). Whereas prototypical group members express more bias toward outgroups when there is a threat to intergroup distinctiveness (i.e., when intergroup boundaries are blurry), peripheral group members express more intergroup bias in the absence of a distinctiveness threat (Jetten, et al., 2003). Combined, this research suggests that peripheral group members may feel particularly threatened from influence attempts from relevant outgroups. When an individual's prototypicality in an important group is threatened, any alignment with an outgroup should be avoided because it might push the individual further to the fringes of their own group. In contrast, prototypical group members who feel secure and included in their ingroup might not view influence attempts from an outgroup so negatively and might be more open to outgroup influence than peripheral group members, under certain instances. One potential caveat is that prototypical group members should oppose outgroup arguments when the boundaries between groups are blurry (Jetten et al., 2003) or when there is a challenge to the ingroup's standing (Abrams & Hogg, 2010).

Presumably, peripherals are more threatened by outgroup members blurring the distinctiveness of the intergroup boundary on which they find themselves. As a result, peripheral group members should be particularly motivated to create distance between the ingroup and the outgroup (Jetten et al., 2003). This seems most likely when it calls into question their own position within the group rather than actual distinctiveness threat (Hogg, 2005). This distance should create the perception of a large discrepancy between the ingroup position and the outgroup position and increase the likelihood that peripheral group members outwardly reject an outgroup's persuasion attempt. On the other hand, prototypical group members likely have less motivation to increase the distance between the ingroup and outgroup position because they are comfortably close to the ingroup

prototype. The caveat to this is when the outgroup bleeds into the ingroup (e.g., Jetten et al., 2003) rather than the outgroup threatening someone's position within the ingroup (see Hohman, Gaffney, & Hogg, 2017). Thus, our model predicts:

Peripheral group members (as opposed to prototypical group members) should perceive outgroups attempting to persuade them as more different from themselves and show more resistance to intergroup communications.

Ingroup positioning alone cannot account for resistance to outgroup communications. The nature of the social context - both intragroup and intergroup - is important for understanding the acceptance or rejection of intergroup communications. Current polarized norms establish adversarial communication between partisans. As a result, bridging the political gap is difficult, yet there might be room for convergence with a political rival's perspective to the extent that the ingroup context creates the perception that one's own position is not so far from an outgroup communicator's position.

Outgroup Influence

In general, given that people tend to trust members of their ingroup to a greater extent than members of an outgroup, ingroup members tend to be more persuasive than outgroup members and elicit more elaboration of their persuasive communications whereas a source's outgroup membership is often used as a heuristic to discount their persuasive communication (e.g., Mackie et al., 1990).

To highlight the importance of identity-based influence, Abrams et al. (1990) used a modified version of Sherif's autokinetic paradigm to demonstrate that informational influence increases to the extent that participants' shared group membership with the confederates is salient, and decreases when the saliency of the confederates' outgroup status increases. Moreover, using a modified Asch's line studies paradigm, they showed that public compliance to an ingroup position increases, but private agreement to an outgroup also increases, suggesting that normative influence effects are exacerbated when accounting for self- and social-categorizations. In sum, both normative and informational influence sources and their effects are heightened when the source is ingroup, but reduced when the source is outgroup.

Just as shared group membership creates a foundation for influence (i.e., referent informational influence, Hogg & Turner, 1987), the presence of an outgroup often amplifies an ingroup source's ability to exert influence (i.e., causing polarization from the outgroup message). American conservatives expressed significantly more conservative attitudes on policy advocated by an extreme ingroup conservative when the intergroup context with Democrats was salient than when the context was intragroup and the comparison was fellow moderate conservatives (Gaffney et al., 2014). Similarly, using a modified risky shift paradigm, Hogg et al. (1990) demonstrated convergence toward ingroup norms in the presence of outgroups, such that in the presence of a risky

outgroup, a cautious norm developed and people used it to polarize away from the outgroup. In addition, in the presence of a cautious outgroup, the discussion group converged around a risky norm. This shows that groups can strategically shift their prototype away from relevant outgroups to maintain the integrity of intergroup distinction.

Whereas a small ingroup faction that advocates a deviant or group counter-normative message might be dismissed when the relevant comparison is the moderate ingroup position (David & Turner, 1999), if an ingroup-deviant position is pronormative - they will deviate away from the normative ingroup position in a direction opposite from a relevant outgroup's position (e.g., Abrams et al., 2004). The minority position becomes attractive (David & Turner, 1999) as it successfully moves the ingroup away from the real enemy: the outgroup. Moreover, minority influence scholars (see Crano & Seyranian, 2009) provide evidence that whereas ingroup minorities (as opposed to the majority of an ingroup or a true outgroup) have the ability to change indirect or related attitudes in favor of their message (but typically not direct or focal attitudes), there is little evidence to suggest that small outgroup factions have the ability to exert change.

Outgroup vs. Ingroup Minority Influence

Whereas numeric, power, and status majorities can use their power to force agreement with their positions, minority groups and movements who seek to move the majority toward their positions do not possess this capability (see Moscovici, 1976). Successful minority influence often relies on a far more complex and less direct method. By their very nature, minority perspectives create an antagonistic relationship with majority viewpoints - they provide an alternative and viable way of thinking (Moscovici, 1980). Although minority messages have the ability to induce systematic processing of their messages, sometimes above and beyond majority messages (see Martin & Hewstone, 2008), this systematic thinking rarely induces direct change in favor of their message. Rather, when people think systematically about a minority message, they often change related or indirect attitudes on a latent level or after a delay (Crano & Chen, 1998). Moreover, outgroups in general, and outgroup minorities specifically (see Martin, 1998) rarely exert change. Outgroup messages are often dismissed immediately (see Crano & Seyranian, 2009).

Disagreement with a small faction of an outgroup rarely produces change on direct attitudes - there is little motivation to outwardly side with a group that stands contrary to the ingroup (Crano & Seyranian, 2009). One important exception is when individuals do not engage in social comparative processes with the outgroup because they do not experience a threat to their identity (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2009). Feeling prototypical of the ingroup should thus be a necessary condition for convergence with an outgroup's perspective because there would be the absence of an intragroup threat. In addition, we propose that

outgroup minorities can effectively decrease the perception of the discrepancy between their group's position and the target group's position by changing the perception of the intergroup context through a process of comparison and social categorization (see Turner, 1991).

Social Comparison Processes with Outgroups

Outgroups are not perceived equally. Thus, social influence does not exist in a vacuum. For example, the U.S. Civil Rights movement in the 1960s included multiple factions who worked toward equality for black Americans. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and several others used peaceful protest to achieve their goals and attract the attention of the dominant white majority. Other black empowerment movements also worked toward these goals. For example, Malcolm X advocated black nationalism and racial separatism to provide black Americans with dignity and humanity denied by U.S. systems such as law enforcement. He could not envision peacefully obtaining equality. Speaking about the perceived contrast between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, Peniel E. Joseph said: "(Malcolm X) injects a political radicalism on the national scene that absolutely makes Dr. King and his movement much more palatable to mainstream Americans" (Gross, 2020). Although these factions of the Civil Rights movement had more in common (including goals, support for social welfare programs, etc.) than their politicized differences (see Joseph, 2020), white Americans' perceptions of Malcolm X, black nationalism, and black power may have made King's integrationist branch of the movement appear more moderate and thus more palatable. We suggest that comparisons such as these between multiple minority outgroup factions can create a subjective sense of closeness to the moderate minority outgroup and thus create a context in which outgroup minority influence may advance. The juxtaposition of an extreme and a moderate outgroup may work to reduce negative stereotypes of the moderate group and help to create a perception that its position is appropriate in the normative context (see Giles & Ogay, 2007; Palomares et al. 2016; Soliz et al., 2022). That is, convergence with an outgroup is facilitated by the comparison among intersecting outgroups.

In the current study, we considered both the complicated nature of multiple groups in a social context as well as how changing perceptions of the closeness of an outgroup may threaten some members of a (majority) ingroup. For example, the presence of multiple factions advocating civil rights did not drive all white Americans to support the bus boycotts and demonstrations of the Civil Rights movement. For some, a mere suggestion that one branch of the movement was subjectively closer to their own position may have produced an intergroup distinctiveness threat - anything that made either movement appear closer to majority white Americans may have been construed as a threat. Our study considered these self and social categorization processes (e.g., Turner, 1991) both within and between groups. By examining the complicated nature of

social categorizations and intragroup positioning (prototypicality) as important conditions of minority influence, we posit that outgroups can strategically use other more extreme outgroups to increase their subjective closeness to influence targets, creating conditions for change. However, this should also depend on the influence target's position in their ingroup (i.e., self-prototypicality). Moreover, outgroup positioning and perceptions of an outgroup's position with respect to the ingroup are important for intergroup relations and change. We suggest that in loaded social influence contexts where social identity is salient, a key to successful outgroup influence is where the target is positioned within the ingroup. Some people might feel more confident expressing agreement with a source that effectively implies disagreement with the majority of their ingroup whereas others, given their own position in the ingroup, have neither the luxury nor the desire to support anything other than ingroup consensus.

The current study considered the conditions under which the perceived divides between groups shrink or expand with respect to social contexts made up of several group factions. As a result, our model predicted the following:

Participants will feel subjectively closer to a minority outgroup position if that position is presented alongside a more extreme position than if that position is presented alone. Specifically, the moderate outgroup position will appear less discrepant from the target's ingroup position in a context where the target can contrast the moderate outgroup with a more extreme outgroup. Moreover, this level of closeness will mediate direct support for the moderate outgroup's communication.

An important caveat to this prediction is that when an outgroup argues to change an important feature of the ingroup's identity, this may cause prototypicals to defend the ingroup and reject the outgroup message (see Abrams & Hogg, 2010).

Overview

We conducted two experiments to test the basic predictions of this model. Experiment 1 sought to address whether American Republicans would feel closer to a minority group of Democrats (a politically left outgroup) if they viewed the outgroup's message in comparison to a group of Socialists (a more extreme left outgroup) or if they only viewed the outgroup's message in comparison to their own group's position (Republicans). Experiment 2 examined ingroup prototypicality as a moderator of the aforementioned relationship and tested specifically whether an outgroup source is effective at inducing direct attitude change in these contexts. Experiment 2 used American Democrats as the target group and a minority Republican group (a politically right outgroup) and the Tea Party (a more extreme right outgroup) as source groups.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Design

We recruited 96 American Republicans from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to participate in this experiment (see Table 1 for detailed demographics). Study 1’s first goal was to determine if Republican participants would feel close to an outgroup source of moderate Democrats if the source’s persuasive communication appeared alongside a more extreme outgroup (i.e., Socialists) than if it appeared alone. We also wanted to account for intragroup positioning. Thus, we examined whether perceived self-prototypicality in the Republican party would moderate this relationship. Because we measured agreement with the source group’s message as a final dependent variable, we employed a moderated mediation design in which closeness to the outgroup source mediated the relationship between the outgroup comparison (moderate outgroup only or moderate and extreme outgroups together) and agreement with an outgroup message, and entered self-prototypicality as the moderator. To manipulate outgroup comparison, participants were randomly assigned to one of two outgroup contrast conditions: a moderate outgroup (moderate only) or the moderate outgroup presented alongside a more extreme outgroup (moderate and extreme).

Table 1. Study 1 Demographics

	Range	Mean (SD)
Age	19-74	36.90 (11.80)
	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Women	45	50
Men	44	49
Ethnicity		
Asian American	2	2
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	1
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	1
Black or African American	4	4
Hispanic or Latino	2	2
White	79	89
Education		
Junior High School	1	1
High School	19	21
Two Year College or Technical Program	26	29
College or Four-Year University	31	35
Post-college (e.g., graduate school)	12	13

Note. Values were generated from data after manipulation check screening (*N* = 90).

Pretest Measures

Self-Prototypicality. Participants first completed a four-item measure of Republican prototypicality adapted from van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg (2005). Items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*). An example item is “I am a good example of the Republican Party” ($\alpha = .94$).

Pretest Immigration Reform Attitude. Participants also completed a pretest measure regarding their attitudes toward immigration reform which comprised a four-item semantic differential scale ($\alpha = .99$). Each item appeared with a seven-point range between two bi-polar adjectives (e.g., good-bad). An example item is “How do you feel about immigration reform?” This scale was created by the authors for the purpose of the study.

Experimental Manipulation

To manipulate outgroup comparisons, participants then read a communication from a group of moderate Democrats (outgroup to the Republican participants) advocating liberal immigration reform. Next, participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions.

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Moderate-Only Condition. We provided participants with a graphical representation of where the outgroup source, Democrats, stood in relation to the mean of Republicans.

Moderate-Extreme Condition. We provided participants with a graphical representation of where the outgroup source, Democrats, stood in relation to the mean of Republicans and a more extreme outgroup, Socialists.

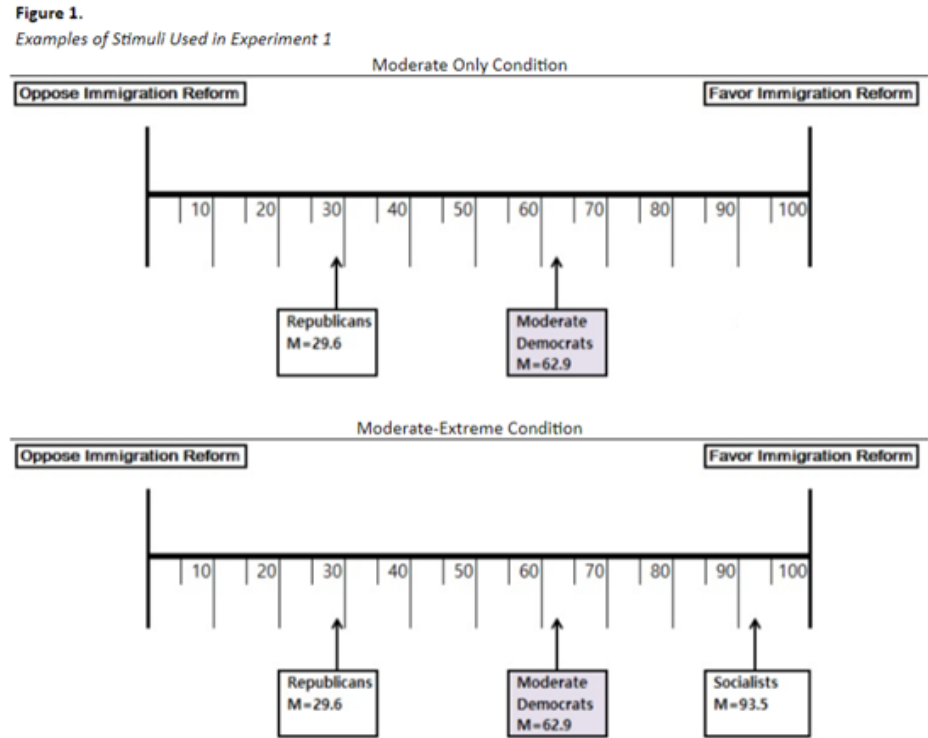
In all conditions, the participants were shown that the outgroup(s) held less favorable attitudes toward immigration reform than the ingroup - the source message remained constant (i.e., the mean of the outgroup's position remained consistent across conditions, see Figure 1 for an example of the stimuli used).

Dependent Variables/Mediators

Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS). To determine how close participants felt to the outgroup communication source, after the experimental manipulations, participants completed the Inclusion of Other in Self scale (IOS) adapted from Aron et al. (1992) and Tropp and Wright (2001). This is meant to show the distance the participants felt from the outgroup message source. 1 indicated no perceived overlap between self and the outgroup source, 7 indicated complete overlap between the Self and the outgroup source.

Posttest Immigration Reform Attitude. Agreement with the outgroup communication was measured on the same attitude object as was pretested

Figure 1. *Examples of Stimuli Used in Experiment 1*



(attitude toward immigration reform) and comprised a four-item semantic differential ($\alpha = .98$). Note that in all hypothesis tests and analyses, higher scores reflect greater support for the outgroup communication, or agreement with the message (i.e., immigration reform). Table 2 includes Cronbach’s α for each scale and a correlation matrix of the measures.

Data Screening

A single-item manipulation check was employed to ensure that participants accurately viewed the outgroup as holding less favorable attitudes toward immigration reform than the average Republican. Six participants failed this manipulation check, resulting in a sample size of 90 Republicans for the final analyses. A sensitivity analysis was conducted using the *pwr2ppl* package in R (Aberson, 2019; R Core Team, 2021). To our knowledge, there are no previous studies which have examined prototypicality and the IOS scale using the proposed design. Thus, we used a conservative approach, entering relationship size for all measured independent variables using small ($r = .20$), and moderate correlations

Table 2. *Study 1. Reliabilities, Means, SDs, and Intercorrelations.*

Variable	α	M	SD	2	3	4
1. Self-prototypicality	.91	4.87	1.20	0.14	0.01	0.1
2. Inclusion of other in the self	-	2.27	1.50		0.23*	0.49***
3. Pretest immigration attitude agreement	.96	4.48	1.77			0.64***
4. Posttest immigration attitude agreement	.98	3.82	2.03			

* $p = .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. *Parameters Used in Effect Sensitivity Power Analysis for Moderated Mediation in Study 1*

Parameter	r	r
Group source, Inclusion of other in the self	0	0
Group source, Prototypicality	0	0
Group source, Interaction term	0	0
Group Source, Posttest immigration reform attitude	0	0
Prototypicality, Inclusion of other in the self	20	30
Prototypicality, Interaction term	20	30
Prototypicality, Posttest immigration reform attitude	20	30
IOS, Interaction term	20	30
IOS, Posttest immigration reform attitude	20	30
Posttest immigration reform attitude, Interaction term	20	30
Sample estimates		
80% power	$N = 184$	$N = 75$

Note. Sensitivity calculated with 1,000 simulations. Pearson's r is reported.

($r = .30$), and increased sample size until adequate power was achieved (.80). As indicated by the estimates in Table 3, the sample for Study 1 was adequate to reach a power of 80% at moderate relationship estimates.

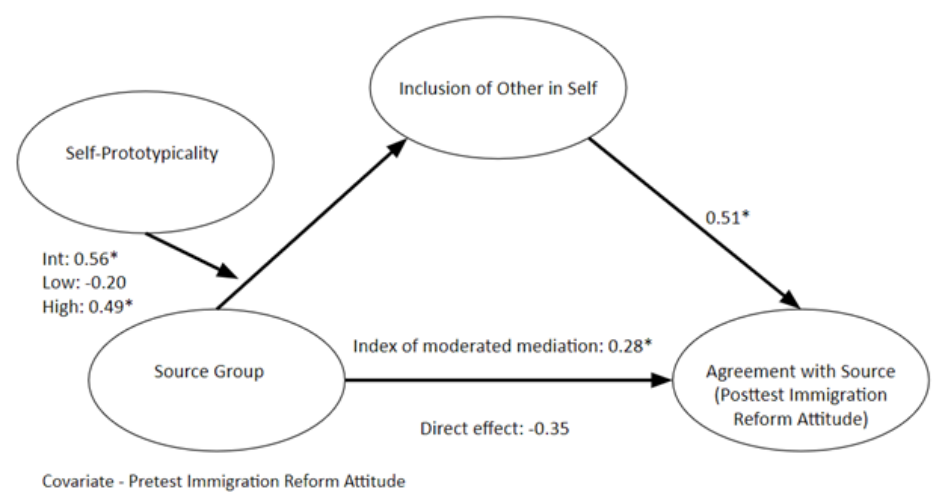
Results and Discussion

First, we examined if the intergroup context (a moderate outgroup source alone or a moderate outgroup source presented with a more extreme outgroup) affects people's perceptions of closeness to an outgroup source, and if this, in turn, predicts agreement with the outgroup source's message. We used the PROCESS Macro for R (Hayes, 2013, R Core Team, 2021), Model 7. The PROCESS macro uses the Johnson-Neyman approach to calculate the statistical significance of indirect effects. The source condition was dummy coded prior to the analysis and all predictor variables were centered. Pretest immigration reform attitudes were entered in the model as a covariate to examine attitude change as a function of the experimental manipulation and the predictor variable. The residualized change method has been demonstrated to be effective when the grouping variable is randomized. In this instance, the grouping variable, (source group) was randomly assigned. Therefore,

a residualized change method was an appropriate means for controlling pretest attitudes on immigration reform (Castro-Schilo & Grimm, 2018). Results revealed that the indirect effect was statistically significant when participants felt highly self-prototypical, but not when they were low in self-prototypicality. The source condition positively predicted IOS, which, in turn, positively predicted agreement with the immigration reform message (see Table 4 and Figure 2). As Republicans’ prototypicality increased, those exposed to an outgroup communication source from Democrats (outgroup), showed increased closeness to the source than when the source was presented alongside a more extreme outgroup. This relationship was not present when the moderate source appeared alone. Given the power sensitivity analysis conducted, we had a sufficiently large sample size in order to detect the moderate to large effect sizes observed.

Study 1 provided support for our predicted model and highlights the importance of considering a complicated intergroup context as well as people’s own perceived prototypicality in their ingroup for intergroup communication. We conducted Study 2 almost simultaneously to Study 1 as a replication in a different population: American Democrats. Moreover, we included a third condition to the source group manipulation: a source group that was positioned as extreme by comparison. The extreme source, although perhaps not by post-2020 standards, was a group of extreme Tea Partiers¹.

Figure 2. *The Indirect Effect of Source Group on Agreement with Source, Through Inclusion of Other in the Self Moderated by Self-Prototypicality. Controlling for Pretest Focal Attitudes*



¹ Study 1 and Study 2 data were collected in 2016.

Table 4. *Test of Conditional Indirect Effect of Source Group on Posttest Immigration Reform Attitude Agreement, Through Inclusion of Other in the Self and Moderated by Self-Prototypicality*

	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	95% CI
Outcome: Inclusion of other in the self			
Source group	0.29 (0.31)	0.91	−0.334, 0.907
Self-prototypicality	−0.70 (0.43)	−1.64	−1.557, 0.153
Prototypicality × Source group	0.56* (0.26)	2.16	0.045, 1.088
Pretest immigration reform attitude (control)	0.19* (0.08)	2.22	0.021, 0.370
Outcome: Post attitude agreement			
Source group	−0.35 (0.29)	−1.19	−0.971, 0.252
Inclusion of other in the self	0.51* (0.10)	5.16	0.302, 0.720
Pretest immigration reform attitude (control)	0.64* (0.10)	7.52	0.438, 0.810
	Indirect effect	SE	95% CI
Conditional indirect effects			
Low self-prototypicality	−0.20	0.21	−0.655, 0.164
High self-prototypicality	0.49*	0.30	0.0768, 1.845

Note. The pretest measure of immigration reform attitude was entered as a covariate to control for baseline support.

* $p < .05$

Study 2

Method

Participants and Design

We recruited 153 American Democrats from Mturk for this experiment (see Table 5 for details about the demographics). This study included one measured predictor variable and one manipulated independent variable. To manipulate the outgroup comparison, participants were randomly assigned to one of three outgroup contrast conditions. This showed an intergroup context in which the participants viewed their own group's position (Democrats) in comparison to a group of moderate Republicans (moderate only) a moderate group of Republicans in comparison to a more extreme outgroup (Tea Party; moderate and extreme), or in comparison to an extreme outgroup only (extreme only). The outgroup communication was held constant (see Figure 1), including the numbers associated with their opinions. How prototypical participants felt in the Democratic Party (self-prototypicality) comprised the measured predictor variable. We examined the extent to which participants included the outgroup source as a part of the self as a potential mediator. The dependent variable was the amount of agreement with the outgroup message arguing against federal cannabis legalization (a counterattitudinal issue for most Democrats).

Table 5. *Study 2 Demographics*

	Range	Mean (SD)
Age	19-65	35.84 (11.41)
	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Women	59	44
Men	75	56
Ethnicity		
Asian American	10	7
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	1
Black or African American	6	4
Hispanic or Latino	6	4
White	110	82
Education		
High School	35	26
Two Year College or Technical Program	29	21
College or Four-Year University	57	42
Post-college (e.g., graduate school)	13	9

Note. Values were generated from data after manipulation check screening ($N = 134$).

Procedures

Self-Prototypicality. Participants first completed a four-item measure of Republican Prototypicality adapted from van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg (2005). Items were answered on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*). An example item is “I am a good example of the Democratic Party” ($\alpha = .94$).

Pretest Cannabis Legalization Attitude. Participants next completed a pretest measure regarding their attitude toward federally legalizing cannabis using a four-item semantic differential scale ($\alpha = .99$). We chose this issue because an argument against it should be counterattitudinal for most Democrats.

Experimental Manipulations

Next, participants read a mock press release from a small moderate group of Republicans in which they argued against recreational cannabis legalization. Participants were then assigned to one of three experimental conditions. Participants viewed a graphical depiction of where the minority outgroup Republicans’ position stood in comparison to the ingroup Democrat mean (moderate only), in comparison to the ingroup and the Tea Party (moderate and extreme), or they only read that the communication came from the Tea Party and that it was positioned far to the right of the ingroup position (extreme only). Next, participants completed a battery of post-test items.

Dependent Variables/Mediators

Post-test Cannabis Legalization Attitude. The same semantic differential measuring the attitude toward federally legalizing cannabis appeared after the manipulations ($\alpha = .99$). Note that the pretest and posttest attitudes were reverse coded. Thus, higher scores reflect greater support of the outgroup communication. Table 6 includes the descriptive statistics for the measured and manipulated variables.

Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS). To determine how close participants felt to the outgroup communication source, after the experimental manipulations, participants completed the Inclusion of Other in Self scale (IOS) adapted from Aron et al. (1992) and Tropp and Wright (2001). This is meant to show the distance the participants felt from the outgroup message source. 1 indicated no perceived overlap between the Self and the outgroup source, 7 indicated complete overlap between self and the outgroup source.

Results and Discussion

Data Screening

A single-item manipulation check ensured that participants accurately viewed the outgroup as holding less favorable attitudes toward cannabis legalization than the average Democrat. Nineteen participants failed this manipulation check, resulting in a sample size of 134 Democrats in the final analysis. A sensitivity analysis for the moderated mediation conducted in Study 1 remained consistent, as the variables in Study 2 were the same. As indicated by the estimates in Table 3, the sample for Study 2 was adequate to reach a power of 0.90 at small relationship estimates. However, the original moderated mediation in Study 2 was followed by a moderated regression analysis. To be thorough, we ran a sensitivity analysis on the moderated regression design, again using the *pwr2ppl* package in R (Aberson, 2019; R Core Team, 2021). The sample for Study 2 was adequate to reach a power of 88% at a low estimate of effect for the interaction term (see Table 7).

Table 6. *Study 2. Reliabilities, Means, SDs, and Intercorrelations.*

Variable	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4
1. Self-prototypicality	.94	4.93	1.11	−0.11	−0.08	−0.07
2. Inclusion of other in the self	–	1.83	1.42		0.26***	0.31**
3. Pretest cannabis legalization attitude	0.99	2.08	1.67			0.96***
4. Posttest cannabis legalization attitude	0.99	2.21	1.77			

* $p = .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 7. *Parameters Used in Effect Sensitivity Power Analysis for Study 2*

$R^2 = 0.65$	$N = 134$
R^2 change	Power
0.05	0.88
0.07	0.97
0.10	0.99

Note. Sensitivity calculated with 1,000 simulations.

Primary Hypothesis Tests

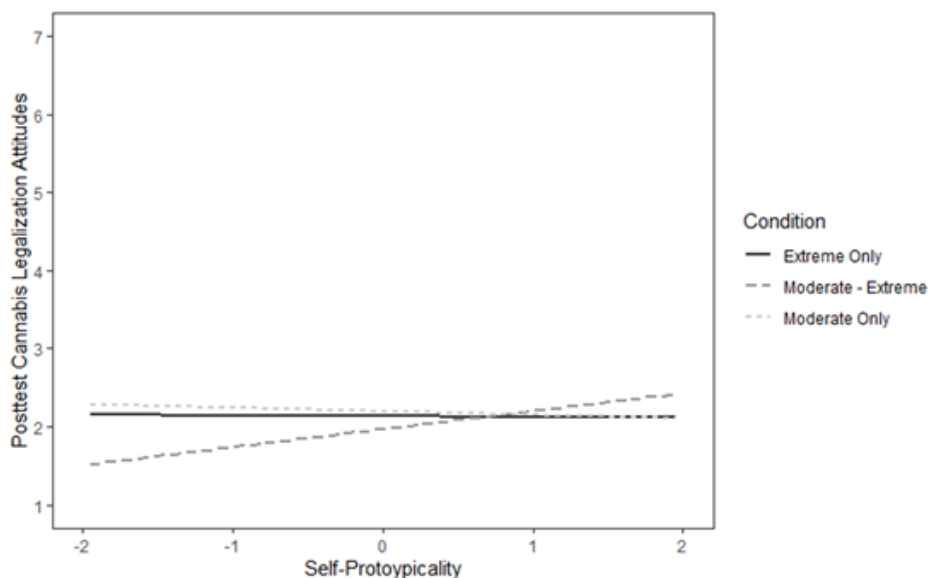
First, we sought to replicate the analysis from Study 1. The interaction of self-prototypicality and source group condition did not affect perceived closeness to the outgroup source ($p > .05$). Thus, we could not replicate the moderated mediation from Study 1. Specifically, the dummy coded source variable did not affect IOS. Thus, the mediation could not be replicated.

Next, we conducted a moderated regression analysis using *R* Project for Statistical Computing (R Core Team, 2021) to assess the relationship between self-prototypicality, source condition, and their interaction with agreement with the outgroup message arguing against federal cannabis legalization. Pretest attitudes were entered in the model as a covariate. Because self-prototypicality is a continuous variable, it was centered prior to the analysis. The reference group for the categorical moderator in the model (source group) was the extreme only condition. The model statistically significantly predicted agreement with the focal attitude, R^2 model = .92, $F(3, 127) = 247.4$, $p < .001$. Self-prototypicality and source condition were not independently related to focal attitude agreement. However, there was a statistically significant interaction² ($b^* = 0.07$, $p = .029$). Breaking down the interaction, only participants in the moderate and extreme condition experienced change from the outgroup communication ($b^* = 0.23$, $p = 0.011$). Specifically, participants in the moderate and extreme condition demonstrated increased agreement with the outgroup message as prototypicality increased (see Figure 3 and Table 8).

Although Study 2's results did not fully replicate Study 1, we did find general support for the hypothesis that exposure to a moderate outgroup counterattitudinal argument induces greater agreement with the argument if the moderate source is presented alongside a more extreme source than if the moderate source is presented alone. This is qualified by intragroup positioning, such that agreement

² We additionally conducted a hierarchical multiple regression using SPSS, in which prefocal attitudes were entered into the first model, the main effects were entered into the second model, and the dummy-coded interaction terms were entered into the final model. The R^2 change in the final model was .005, $p_{\text{Fchange}} = .038$. The statistically significant R^2 change was explained by the interaction of self-prototypicality and the moderate and extreme condition ($b^* = .12$, $p = .029$), whereas the interaction of self-prototypicality with the extreme only condition was not statistically significant ($b^* = .09$, $p = .697$).

Figure 3. *The Interaction Between Source Condition and Self-Prototypicality Predicting Posttest Cannabis Legalization Attitudes, Controlling for Pretest Cannabis Legalization Attitudes*



with an outgroup source increases as perceived self-prototypicality increases in the moderate and extreme condition. This finding lends support to the notion that ingroup prototypicality, under some instances, might open people up to listening to outgroup communications and even changing their attitude from the communication. Note that we added the extreme only condition, in which some participants were randomly assigned to view only the extreme message. This gives us additional confidence in our proposed model of outgroup influence and intergroup communication.

General Discussion

The study of minority and majority influence is theoretically grounded in the study of the relations between minority and majority groups and the meanings and associations each group has for the target of influence (Moscovici, 1976; Pérez & Mugny, 1996). The current study attempts to push forward this tradition. We attempted to contribute to intergroup communication research by considering principles established within minority influence research while considering how processes of self and social categorization can extend to include a comparative context among intersectional outgroups. The basic tenet of the model we proposed here highlights the importance of focusing on the norms established between groups and how these fluctuate when intergroup communication occurs outside

Table 8. *Posttest Cannabis Legalization Attitude Predicted by Self-Prototypicality and Moderated by Source Group*

	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>sr</i> ²
Moderate-Extreme	-0.04 (0.11)	-1.48	.14	.04
Moderate only	0.02 (0.11)	0.58	.56	.01
Self-prototypicality	-0.01 (0.06)	0.15	.88	< .01
Pretest cannabis legalization attitude (control)	0.96*** (0.03)	38.07	< .001***	.98
Moderate-extreme × Self-prototypicality	0.07* (0.11)	2.20	.03*	.05
Moderate only × Self-prototypicality	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.39	.69	.01
Slope of Self-prototypicality at levels of the moderator				
Moderator levels	<i>b</i> * (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	
Extreme only	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.15	.88	
Moderate only	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.68	.50	
Moderate extreme	0.23* (0.09)	2.58	.01*	

Note. The pretest measure of cannabis legalization attitudes were entered as a covariate to control for baseline support. Semi-partial correlations were included to indicate the unique contribution of each predictor. Categorical predictor was dummy-coded. Extreme-only condition serves as the reference group.

R^2 model = .92, $F(3, 127) = 247.4$, $p < .001$.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

of a binary ingroup versus single outgroup context (see Giles & Ogay, 2007; Soliz et al., 2022). The relationship that a person shares with their group and the importance they place on their group membership is important to this influence process and whether or not intergroup communications are effective. Although our work has yet to examine verbal communication convergence (which we expect would show more drastic results than our attitudinal dependent measures), we nonetheless demonstrated that convergence to an ingroup position can occur when (a) partisans feel secure in their ingroup identity and (b) the normative positioning of an outgroup communication is influenced by the presence of other outgroups. We demonstrated some of the complicated social and cognitive factors involved in intergroup relations and social influence. Moreover, our study experimentally demonstrated that minority outgroups can (sometimes) capitalize on social context and use the principles of social categorization to reduce the discrepancy between their own group and the group they attempt to change.

Overall, our findings suggest that sometimes the presence of a more extreme outgroup can be beneficial to moderates - that comparison may lend itself to making a moderate faction appear more reasonable than if the comparison does not exist. Moreover, our findings point to the importance of considering intragroup positioning - self-prototypicality - in the study of social influence and intergroup communication. An individual's relative comfort in their position in the ingroup and the knowledge that they are truly representative of the group may, under some circumstances, defuse the threat of persuasive communication from an outgroup (see Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2009).

Small sample sizes are a limiting factor of the current study. Although our sensitivity analyses provided us some confidence, future work should

focus on replicating these findings in larger and more diverse samples. We transparently laid out our sample sizes and their shortcomings by providing sensitivity analyses. Moreover, each study relied on a self-reported measure of felt prototypicality. Future research should fully explore these relationships by experimentally producing prototypicality threats. Moreover, to fully embed this work in communication theory, the nature of both outgroup stereotypes and norms surrounding the intergroup context should be explored. We suspect that the presence of an extreme outgroup changes the norms of the intergroup communication, but this needs to be fully researched in future work. Specifically, future studies will benefit from examining how partisans understand the normative differences between themselves, their ingroup, and both moderate and extreme outgroups.

Concluding Remarks

The current study examined the complicated nature of intergroup communication from a self-categorization perspective (Turner et al., 1987). Groups, and thus intergroup communication, do not exist in a vacuum with one tidy ingroup that is always compared to one tidy outgroup (although this may be the case in two-party political systems such as the American system, in which the distance between American Democrats and Republicans is increasing). Since we collected data in Study 1, the Tea Party, which laid the framework for some for the polarization of the American right (see Gaffney et al., 2014) is no longer a relevant extreme conservative faction. The two parties have polarized on a variety of other issues, including the interpretation of election results, what constitutes sedition, and gun control. Sometimes gun control is a salient feature on which two sides polarize, sometimes the state of women's rights and abortion is a salient feature. Studying the features that bind people to the ingroup position (such as self-prototypicality) and the interpretation of the intergroup context, including outgroup factions, can hopefully help to shed light on methods of depolarization. This is particularly poignant in a time when bipartisan legislation is desperately needed but nearly nonexistent in the United States and other politically polarized nations.

The point of the current study is not to imply that disempowered minority factions should not form important coalitions. Rather, we hope to point to instances under which the intergroup context can be used to de-escalate unproductive polarization. Of course, there are instances in which the world is in need of what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called creative extremists, and meaningful coalitions can help to instigate positive change.

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Conflict of Interest Disclosure

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Research Ethics Statement

The study received institutional ethical approval (Cal Poly Humboldt IRB: IRB 15-016; IRB 15-099).

Authorship Details

Amber Gaffney: research concept and design, collection and/or assembly of data, data analysis and interpretation, writing the article, critical revision of the article, final approval of the article.

Stephanie S. Souter: data analysis and interpretation, writing the article, critical revision of the article, final approval of the article.

Jiin Jung: research concept and design, collection and/or assembly of data, data analysis and interpretation.

William D. Crano: research concept and design.

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