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When are intergroup attitudes judged as free speech and when as prejudice? A social identity analysis of attitudes towards immigrants

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Although anti-immigrant attitudes continue to be expressed around the world, identifying these attitudes as prejudice, truth or free speech remains contested. This contestation occurs, in part, because of the absence of consensually agreed-upon understandings of what prejudice is. In this context, the current study sought to answer the question, "what do people understand to be prejudice?" Participants read an intergroup attitude expressed by a member of their own group (an "in-group" member) or another group (an "out-group" member). This was followed by an interpretation of the attitude as either "prejudiced" or "free speech." This interpretation was also made by in-group or an out-group member. Subsequent prejudice judgements were influenced only by the group membership of the person expressing the initial attitude: the in-group member's attitude was judged to be less prejudiced than the identical attitude expressed by an out-group member. Participants' judgements of free speech, however, were more complex: in-group attitudes were seen more as free speech than out-group attitudes, except when an in-group member interpreted those attitudes as prejudice. These data are consistent with the Social Identity Approach to intergroup relations, and have implications for the processes by which intergroup attitudes become legitimised as free speech instead of prejudice.

Keywords: Prejudice; Immigrants; Social identity approach; In-group favouritism; Social influence.

Anti-immigrant attitudes continue to be expressed in one form or another around the world (e.g. Czaika & Di Lillo, 2018; Gravelle, 2019; Kaya & Karakoç, 2012; Ramsay & Pang, 2017; Stockemer et al., 2020; Willis-Esqueda et al., 2017). Instead of sympathising with the plight that immigrants often face, those expressing such negative attitudes often draw upon justifications underpinned by separate, collectively held beliefs and values, effectively establishing their attitudes as having a basis in rationality and truth (e.g. Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Van Dijk, 1992). In this manner, even attitudes inconsistent with anti-prejudice norms can be perceived as *not* prejudiced when claimants call upon these other collectively held beliefs (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Pereira et al., 2010). For example, expressions of anti-immigrant attitudes often evade accusations of prejudice when couched within the value of free-speech (e.g. Van Dijk, 1992; White II & Crandall, 2017). Thus, while some perceive as prejudice attitudes negatively characterising groups such as immigrants (e.g. Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018; Van Dijk, 1997), others perceive the attitudes simply as manifestations of people's rights to express what they believe to be true (e.g. Roussos & Dovidio, 2018).

The very fact that some people may fail to perceive anti-immigrant attitudes as prejudice, while others

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will not, highlights the lack of consensual agreement over what, exactly, prejudice is, at least within a particular context, time and place (for analyses, see Crandall & Warner, 2005; Dixon et al., 2012; Platow et al., 2019). This lack of consensus encompasses both formal academic and lay uses of the concept (e.g. Condor et al., 2006; Dyer, 1945; Figgou & Condor, 2006; Sommers & Norton, 2006). As noted by Platow et al., the lack of consensus not only limits formal analyses (e.g. different authors study different things), but it limits prejudice-reduction efforts as the targets of these efforts are likely to see their own attitudes as accurate, unprejudiced and, hence, not in need of altering (O'Brien et al., 2010).

In the current paper, we measure participants' judgements of a specific attitude expressed about immigrants along dimensions of prejudice, truth and free speech. In doing so, we draw upon formal theory outlined within the *Social Identity Approach* (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987) to identify and examine group-based processes that might lead people to provide variable judgements of prejudice about an identical intergroup attitude. We begin by introducing the Social Identity Approach, briefly outlining its analysis of in-group favouritism and social influence. We then derive a series of hypotheses that we examine in an experimental context. The question we seek to answer is not "why are people prejudiced?" but "what do people understand to be prejudice?"

The social identity approach

The Social Identity Approach comprises both social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and self-categorisation theory (Turner et al., 1987). These theories were originally developed to understand the psychology of group processes and in-group favouritism (e.g. Turner & Giles, 1981). In the more than 30 years since they were written, the theories have garnered a considerable amount of empirical support, and have been applied inter alia to the analysis of stereotyping (Oakes et al., 1994), social influence (Turner, 1991), organisational behaviour (Haslam, 2004), leadership (Haslam et al., 2020), collective action (Reicher & Stott, 2011), health and well-being (Haslam et al., 2018) and education (Mavor et al., 2017).

At its core, the social identity approach employs social-psychological concepts to understand group-based processes. It begins by recognising that people not only have identities as unique individuals (their personal identities), but as group members as well (their social identities) (see e.g. Platow et al., 2020; Platow & Grace, 2020). It is people's social identities—their psychological representation of themselves *with* others rather than separate from others—that have been linked to a range of social behaviours, such as the expression of in-group favouritism (e.g. Platow et al., 1997), helping (Cunningham & Platow, 2007), trust (Platow et al., 2012) and social influence (Oldmeadow et al., 2003).

In terms of in-group favouritism, a large body of work demonstrates that people often evaluate other members of their own group (their "in-group") more favourably than members of another group (an "out-group"; e.g. Doise et al., 1972; Kinket & Verkuyten, 1999). This has been observed within both enduring group memberships (e.g. Hunter et al., 1996) and laboratory-created ones (e.g. Platow et al., 1990). The social identity approach hypothesises that such in-group favouritism emerges, in part, from people's motivation to view their groups in a relatively favourable light (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), a motivation that extends to perceiving individual in-group members in a relatively favourable light (e.g. Marques et al., 1988; Rullo et al., 2015). The social identity analysis thus predicts the expression of in-group favouritism even in the absence of other known contributors (e.g. competitive intergroup relations, Platow & Hunter, 2001; social norms, Jetten et al., 1996). Of course, such in-group favouritism is akin to direct expressions of prejudice, as "we" are seen more favourably than "them" (Gleibs et al., 2010).

The Social Identity Approach also understands the process of social influence to be enabled by people's social identities (Turner, 1991). Supporting the social identity analysis of social influence is, again, a large body of work demonstrating that shared group membership between the source of communication and the recipient is a powerful basis of persuasion and influence (Platow, 2007; Platow et al., 2015). For example, people are more persuaded by the views of fellow in-group members than out-group members in evaluative judgements (Platow et al., 2000), attitudes (e.g. McGarty et al., 1994), behaviours (e.g. Cruwys et al., 2012) and, critically, judgements of reality itself (i.e. what is true and not true; e.g. Abrams et al., 1990). This in-group social influence was demonstrated quite conclusively by Cohen (2003) in the context of politically-based communications in the United States. In one study, for example, self-identified liberals were more persuaded by communications from Democrats than Republicans, and vice versa for self-identified conservatives. This effect was not qualified by the communication's content.

Considering the nature of prejudice: "old-fashioned" and "modern" prejudice

We currently propose that the processes of in-group favouritism and in-group social influence may each contribute to variable judgements of intergroup attitudes as prejudice or not prejudice. Again, as noted above, there is no clear consensus about what prejudice is (e.g. Platow et al., 2019), being variously defined by different

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authors (e.g. compare definitions by Allport, 1954; Baron et al., 2008; Kassin et al., 2014; Smith & Mackie, 1995; Sutton & Douglas, 2013). In many analyses, for example, prejudiced attitudes *must* be negative. And yet, in Allport's classic analysis, and others more recently (e.g. Smith & Mackie), prejudiced attitudes can also be positive. Indeed, psychologists have identified a variety of attitudinal expressions that they have labelled as prejudice, but do not have the blatantly negative content that, in other accounts, had been associated with prejudice.

These alternative expressions of prejudice are identified as "modern racism" (e.g. McConahay, 1986), "symbolic racism" (Sears & Henry, 2003), "subtle prejudice" (Pettigrew, 2006) and (in a more specific case) "benevolent sexism" (Connor et al., 2017). Each of these attitudinal expressions, in one form or another, couches potentially negative attitudes in the context of more socially accepted, collectively-held beliefs (e.g. "There have been enough programs designed to create jobs for immigrants," "Immigrants are getting too demanding in the push for equal rights," Akrami et al., 2000, p. 532). This enables people to express—*without fear of being labelled as prejudiced*—attitudes that may have negative implications for the target group even if the attitudes are not negative themselves. This is in direct contrast to more "old-fashioned" ("classical", "blatant" or "hostile") forms of prejudice (e.g. "Immigrant camps should be placed far out in the countryside," "Immigrants are generally not very intelligent," Akrami et al., 2000, p. 532). Critically, the prejudiced nature of these modern forms of prejudice has, itself, been debated (Jussim et al., 2016), clearly suggesting variability even within the formal social-psychological literature about whether these attitudes are prejudice or not.

The current research and judgements of prejudice

We have drawn from this broader literature on modern forms of prejudice to develop an intergroup claim (described below) to be judged by experimental participants along dimensions of prejudice, truth and free speech. Our goal was to present a statement about which we expected measurable variability in participants' judgements. The paradigm we employed entailed an in-group or an out-group member expressing a particular intergroup attitude that was subsequently interpreted by yet another in-group member or out-group member as being either "prejudice" or "free speech." This design allowed us to make a series of predictions derived from the Social Identity Approach. First, based upon in-group favouritism processes, we expected that an initial intergroup attitude expressed by an in-group member would be judged as less prejudiced (i.e. judged less negatively), more truthful, and more as free speech than the same claim made by an out-group member (i.e. a main effect; H1). Note that previous research by Lee et al. (2019) has shown a strong negative relationship between judgements of prejudice and judgements of truth.

Second, based upon in-group social influence processes, we expected that interpretations made by out-group members about an initial intergroup attitude would have little to no effect on participants' judgements of that attitudes (i.e. an out-group member would not exert social influence); in contrast, an initial intergroup attitude would be judged more as prejudice and less as true if an in-group member interpreted it as prejudice, but as more free speech if an in-group member interpreted it as free speech (i.e. a two-way interaction; H2). Finally, these two processes can combine (to produce a full three-way interaction), such that: (a) support for H1 would emerge when there is an out-group interpreter (i.e. again, who exerts no social influence), but (b) the effects of an in-group interpretation would moderate judgements of an initial intergroup attitude expressed by in-group and out-group members—an in-group interpretation of an attitude as free speech would allow the initial judgemental difference based on in-group favouritism to be maintained, but an in-group interpretation of the attitude as prejudice would reduce (or fully remove) the impact of in-group favouritism.

METHODS

Participants and design

Participants were recruited in June and July 2017 via the Amazon Mechanical Turk (remunerated at US$0.75) through an advertisement requesting help for a study about the "Social and political views held by Democrats and Republicans."[1] These two political parties provided the operationalization of group-membership; as they are American political parties, participation was limited to people who resided in the United States. Participants were not included in our final sample if they: (a) requested their data be excluded from analyses upon debriefing (an ethical requirement, $n = 2$), (b) failed to meet criteria assessing response consistency for their own group membership (i.e. giving different responses to the same question about their group membership at the start and end of the study; $n = 5$), (c) failed to respond correctly to at least three of five items from the Conscientious Responder

[1] The current research is not an assessment of specific political party views. Instead, we sought an evaluation of social-psychological principles. As such, we did *not* analyse the data as a function of political party; rather we collapsed across political party to assess the impact of communications from in-group and out-group members.

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Scale (Marjanovic et al., 2014; $n = 7$) and (d) completed the study in either fewer than 4 min or more than 45 min ($n = 10$).[2]

In the final sample ($N = 347$), self-identified males comprised 51.30%, with self-identified females comprising the remainder. Participants were aged 18 years or older, with a mean age of 38 years ($SD = 12.02$). Self-identified Democrats comprised 68.30% of the sample, with self-identified Republicans comprising the remainder. Ten participants (2.88%) indicated that they were immigrants, while four (1.15%) declined to indicate if they were; critically, separate analyses without these 14 participants yielded no change in the pattern of significant and non-significant effects and, as a result, all were retained in the analyses below. An open-ended ethnicity question indicated that the vast majority of the sample (80.12%) self-described using terms such as "white," "Caucasian" and "European." In terms of education level, 0.58% indicated that they had no formal education, 1.73% had completed primary school, 22.19% had partially or fully completed secondary school, 14.41% had completed a tertiary diploma or certificate, 47.55% had completed a bachelor's degree and 13.54% had completed a post-graduate degree.[3] Each participant was randomly assigned to one condition of a 2 (group membership of person expressing initial attitude: in-group/out-group) × 2 (group membership of interpreter of initial attitude: in-group/out-group) × 2 (interpretation of the attitude: prejudice/free speech) between participants factorial design.

Materials and procedure

Participants first read a statement of informed consent and, if they agreed to continue, were presented with a reCAPTCHA prompt to limit non-human responding. Participants were then asked if they identified as either Democrat, Republican or neither; only participants who identified with one of the two parties completed the remainder of the study. To make salient their political party, participants were asked to respond to a series of questions about their identification (e.g. "I am very interested in what others think about Republicans [Democrat]") as well as an open-ended question allowing participants to write "more about what being a Republican [Democrat] means to you." These items were presented only to enhance the salience of the identity and were not included in the analyses below.[4]

Participants were then asked to view a fictitious web page formatted in a manner similar to Facebook. They were informed that the page was created during the 2016 US presidential campaign for one or the other of the two political parties (depending on experimental condition). It was on this page that we presented a supposed post of an attitude about immigrants to the United States, followed by an associated comment thread. Each participant was shown the attitude:

> "America is a land built on the values of freedom, opportunity and tolerance. We welcome anyone who shares the same values. Our welcome also extends to immigrants from cultures that have different values to us – but only if they work hard and follow our values after they arrive."

In line with the concepts of modern/symbolic/subtle prejudice, this attitude was effectively exclusionary, framing inclusion only within other collectively-held values (i.e. "follow our values"; see also Durrheim, 2012). Depending on the experimental condition, the post was described as being written by either the "Democrats Associates" or "Republicans Associates" (both fictitious and created for this study). Immediately below the post was a response made by a supposed commenter identified as being associated with either "Democratic Friends" or "Republican Friends" (again, fictitious organisations). The response said, "I know this is your view, and what you have written is an example of PREJUDICE!" (emphasis in original); in the free speech condition, "prejudice" was replaced with "FREE SPEECH."

On the subsequent screen, the following four manipulation-check questions were presented (each prefaced with, "From memory … "): (a) "What was the political party of the person who made the Facebook post?" ("Republican," "Democrat," "Was not specified"), (b) "Which of the below options best describes what was written by the person who made the post on the Facebook page?" ("We welcome immigrants," "We do not welcome immigrants," "We welcome immigrants - only if they work hard and follow our values," "We do not welcome Immigrants - even if they work hard and follow our values"), (c) "What was the political party of the person who replied to the post?" ("Republican," "Democrat," "Was not specified"), and (d) "What did the comment made in reply to the post on the Facebook page say?" ("The post is a prime example of FREE SPEECH!", "The post is prime example of PREJUDICE!"). Participants who made at least one error on these questions were

[2] These time-based criteria were determined a priori. We assumed that completion of the study outside the parameters set represented a lack of engagement with the study. On average, participants completed the study in approximately 12 min.

[3] We did not analyse our data as a function of education level because: (a) we had no theoretical reason to do so, and (b) our three-way experimental design meant that we would not have sufficient statistical power to make meaningful inferences.

[4] Separate exploratory analyses indicated that responses to these items did not enter into any significant main or interaction effects on our primary dependent variables.

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TABLE 1
Means, standard errors, *F*-statistics, *p*-values and effect sizes for the significant main effects for the group membership of the initial claimant on each dependent variable

	Mean rating (SE)				
	In-group claimant	*Out-group claimant*	*F(1,339)*	*p*	$\eta^2_{partial}$
Perceived prejudice	3.74* (.12)	4.10 (.11)	5.87	.02	.02
Perceived truth	4.23* (.12)	3.90 (.11)	4.82	.03	.01
Perceived-free speech	6.12* (.09)	5.84* (.09)	4.79	.03	.01

Note: All responses were made on seven-point scales. *Mean is significantly different from the scale mid-point of 4, $p < .05$.

redirected back to the fictitious web page, and were given an unlimited number of attempts to respond correctly to each question before proceeding.

The following screen presented the primary dependent variables, in which participants provided their impressions of the original attitude along a series of attributes associated with prejudice, truth, and free speech. Eight words associated with the concept prejudice (prejudice, preconceived, discrimination, stereotyping, unjustified, biased, unfair, offensive), and 10 associated with truth (truth, factual, valid, correct, objective, justified, legitimate, logical, rational, reasonable) were presented (see Lee et al., 2019). Judgements of free speech were measured with the single item of "free speech." These items were randomly presented for each participant following the prompt, "would you say that the original post is … " Participants responded on seven-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). This was followed by screens presenting a series of demographic questions and a debriefing.

RESULTS

Means of the eight perceived prejudice items ($\alpha = .94$) and the 10 perceived truth items ($\alpha = .97$) were calculated for each participant. Separate $2 \times 2 \times 2$ between participants analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were calculated on each of these two new dependent variables, as well as the single item measuring perceptions of free speech. Consistent with H1, statistically significant main effects were observed for the group membership of the person expressing initial attitude on each dependent variable. As can be seen in Table 1, participants perceived the initial attitude as less prejudice, more truthful and more an instance of free speech when it was expressed by an in-group member than when it was expressed by an out-group member.

The only other statistically significant effect to emerge from these analyses was the full three-way interaction on participants' perceptions of free speech, $F(1,339) = 4.30$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .01$. To understand this interaction, separate two-way ANOVAs were conducted within each of the interpreter group membership conditions. When an out-group member was the interpreter, only the main effect of the group membership of the person expressing the initial attitude was significant, $F(1,181) = 4.32$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .02$. As with the overall main effect, participants judged an attitude expressed by an in-group member to represent free-speech ($M = 6.26$, $SE = .13$) to a greater extent than the exact same attitude expressed by an out-group member ($M = 5.89$, $SE = .12$). These judgements of free speech were *not* influenced by an out-group member's interpretation.

In contrast, however, when the interpreter was an in-group member, the simple two-way interaction between the interpretation and the group membership of the person expressing initial attitude was statistically significant, $F(1,158) = 5.08$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .03$. This interaction is displayed in Figure 1. Consistent with H3, when a potentially prejudiced attitude originated from a fellow in-group member and was confirmed as "free speech" by yet another in-group member, it was perceived more as free speech ($M = 6.14$, $SE = .20$) than when the potentially prejudiced attitude originated from an out-group member ($M = 5.52$, $SE = .18$), $F(1,77) = 5.48$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .07$. In contrast, the overall main effect for the group membership of the original claimant was no longer significant in the simple main effect when the attitude was interpreted by an in-group member as prejudice, $F(1,81) = .72$, $p = .40$ ($M_{\text{in-group claimant}} = 5.82$, SE = .19; $M_{\text{out-group claimant}} = 6.05$, $SE = .18$).

DISCUSSION

We began this paper by noting the continued expression of anti-immigrant attitudes around the world. Although a variety of factors undoubtedly contribute to their expression, we currently considered the possibility that, under certain circumstances, potentially negative intergroup attitudes may not be seen as being prejudice at all. Instead, these attitudes may well be seen more as truth and expressions of free speech than prejudice. Such variability in judgements is not unexpected, as previous authors have observed the clear lack of consensus among both researchers and lay people over what constitutes prejudice (Crandall & Warner, 2005; Dixon et al., 2012; Platow et al., 2019). With these observations as background, we introduced principles from the Social

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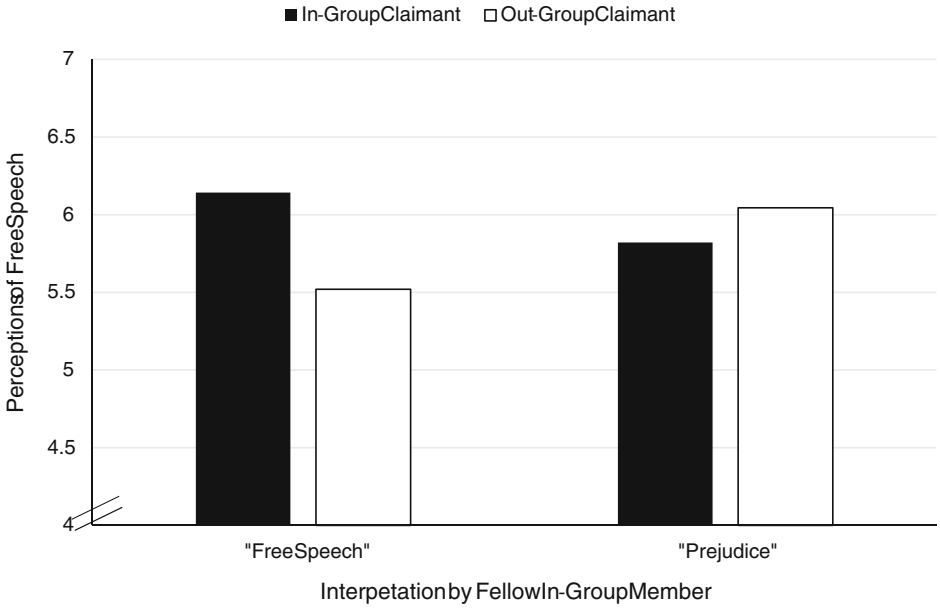

Figure 1. Statistically significant simple two-way interaction between group membership of the claimant and the nature of an in-group interpretation on judgements of free speech. Note the original scale is from 1 to 7.

Identity Approach as potential causal factors involved in variable judgements of an identical intergroup attitude as prejudice or not.

Our first hypothesis was confirmed. When an initial intergroup attitude was expressed by an in-group member, it was judged as less prejudiced, more truthful, and more free speech than if it was expressed by an out-group member. This is a potentially powerful finding. As our analysis suggests, a form of in-group favouritism determines what is and is not prejudice—an irony not lost on us, as a type of prejudice now seems to determine what is and is not prejudice. However, this is precisely at the core of our social identity analysis. In seeking to identify what people understand to be prejudice (our empirical question), we have been able to show that—at least under specific circumstances—it is not a matter of the attitude itself, but of the group membership of the person expressing that attitude. Intergroup attitudes gain and lose their subjective status as prejudice via the normative standards of one's in-group (Platow et al., 2019). In the current study, the attitude expressed about immigrants came to be perceived as less prejudiced when expressed by an in-group member than an out-group member.

The power of the group membership of the person expressing initial attitude was unexpectedly strong in this study. Subsequent interpretations of the initial attitude as prejudice or free speech had no substantive impact on participants' judgements of that initial attitude along the dimensions of prejudice and truth. As such, we failed to receive support for H2 along these two evaluative judgements. These other independent variables did, however, impact upon participants' judgements of the initial attitude as free speech (in support of H3). Again pointing to the power of in-favouritism processes, the overall main effect of the group membership of the person expressing initial attitude continued to hold when the interpreter was an out-group member. As anticipated, out-group interpretation simply had no effect on judgements of free speech. In-group interpretation, however, did have an effect, consistent with previous social identity analyses of social influence. An in-group member's initial attitude continued to be judged as free speech more than an out-group member's initial attitude when a fellow in-group member also confirmed the attitude as free speech. In contrast, the overall in-group favouritism effect finally disappeared when an in-group interpreter identified the initial attitude as prejudice. In-group interpreters thus also exerted social influence on participants' final judgements, although in a more limited manner.

This more limited impact of in-group over out-group social influence was unexpected. As we noted, there is considerable evidence demonstrating the strength of in-group social influence attempts, including influence defining reality itself (e.g. Abrams et al., 1990). Moreover, outside the laboratory, leaders and other social influence agents (e.g. social media bloggers) often serve as epistemic authorities (e.g. Kruglanski et al., 2005), facilitating both the legitimation and normalisation of some attitudes, as well as the delegitimation and identification of other attitudes as counter-normative (see Haslam et al., 2020). Although it is unclear precisely why H2 received limited support, one possibility reflects different ways that people come to understand what is and is not in-group normative, and how they subsequently respond. Researchers studying social norms differentiate descriptive from injunctive norms (Cialdini, 2006), with

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the former relating to what people *do* and the latter relating to what people *ought* to do. Recent reviews have suggested that (in other domains) descriptive norms often have a greater influence than injunctive norms (e.g. East et al., 2021; Manning, 2009). It is a manifestation of this pattern that we may have currently observed *if* our participants viewed the expression of the initial attitude as what people do (i.e. a descriptive norm), while the subsequent interpretation was viewed as what people ought to do (i.e. an injunctive norm). Unfortunately, we cannot examine this line of reasoning with our current data, but it does offer a path for future work to take.

Limitations

We realise, of course, that other limitations in our work need be noted. First, the initial intergroup attitude used as the stimulus in this study was very tempered and potentially ambiguous. This ambiguity was intentional in an attempt to allow variability in our dependent variables, a decision guided by the literature on modern/symbolic/subtle prejudice. As seen in Table 1, when the attitude was expressed by an out-group member, our current participants appeared more indifferent in their judgements of it as prejudice and truth. In contrast, when the attitude was expressed by an in-group member, participants were more confident that the claim *was* truth and not prejudice. Additional research, however, is warranted to examine a variety of intergroup attitudes that vary in the intensity of their positive and negative valence. This would provide researchers an opportunity to explore the scope of the current findings. We know from the current work that in-group favouritism can affect judgements of prejudice, but how powerful is such favouritism against other normative standards prohibiting the expression of explicitly negative intergroup attitudes? Moreover, the intergroup attitude that served as our stimulus was multi-componented. Future research may benefit from separating various claims.

A second caution pertains to the group memberships currently examined. We operationalised these group memberships on the basis of political parties, primarily as a means to examine social identity processes. But, of course, both the Democrats and Republicans in our study shared a common in-group based on nationality, and the target out-group (immigrants) was relevant to that shared national in-group. Unfortunately, our current design did not allow us to identify the relative contributions of each form of social identification. This is clearly another avenue for future work, as we know that crossed and inclusive categorizations can yield different results from simple categorizations (e.g. Crisp et al., 2001). This, of course, highlights a third caution and direction for future work: the nature of relations between the relevant groups. The Social Identity Approach informs us that intergroup relations characterised by status and power differences are likely to engender a specific set of beliefs about the legitimacy of intergroup attitudes that are quite different from relations characterised by equality (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Moreover, the invocation of real or imagined threat from an out-group will undoubtedly serve as a basis for rhetorical legitimization of negative intergroup claims more as truth than as prejudice (Branscombe et al., 1999).

CONCLUSION

Despite our cautions, the current research does provide valuable insight into the social and psychological processes by which intergroup attitudes come to be seen as more or less prejudiced. The most powerful finding of the current study is that an intergroup attitude expressed by one of "us" is seen as less prejudiced, more truthful, and more free speech than the same claim made by one of "them." This is consistent with the in-group favouritism processes associated with our social identity analysis. The current work can aid psychologists and social change agents who seek to reduce prejudice to move beyond (ironically) in-group favouring assertions that "we" know truth and "they" (those supposed prejudiced people) have made errors, are biased, and are in need of (our) education. Instead, psychologists can refocus their efforts to examine the social-psychological processes that legitimate and normalise intergroup attitudes as "truth" and "free speech," and not "prejudice." This is important because people who do not see their attitudes as prejudice—instead seeing them as truth and free speech—are likely not to respond positively to efforts to change their views. Instead, these targets of prejudice reduction programmes are likely to reply with a simple counter-retort that it is the psychologists and social-change agents who are prejudiced for unjustly asserting that others are prejudiced.

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

All procedures performed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Australian National University Human Research Ethics Committee (ANU HREC) and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Ethical permission to conduct this research was granted by the ANU HREC Protocol 2016/065. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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