

Motivational Effects of Need to Belong on Intergroup Memory in Minimal Groups

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Research Question

- How do social motivations, specifically the need to belong, affect memory bias for group members?

Introduction

• Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982) posits that people categorize themselves and others in terms of group affiliations and favor their ingroup.

• People can be categorized into multiple, cross-cutting, and overlapping social categories. For example, a Black male Ohio State student is a simultaneous member of his racial, gender, and university group. Making overlapping social identities salient can reduce the amount of ingroup bias by decreasing intergroup differentiation (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007).



Is Barack Obama seen as Black, male, or an American?

• People assigned to mixed-race groups categorize ingroup members according to their group membership (rather than race) and show greater memory and greater ratings toward ingroup members (Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2009).

• In other words, a salient social identity – however minimal – can override the effects of race on perception and evaluation.

• This effect is proposed to be motivational. People are driven to maintain a positive social identity by making comparisons and judgments that favor their ingroup (Tajfel, 1982). Changing a person's motivation and affiliation goals should change their intergroup biases.

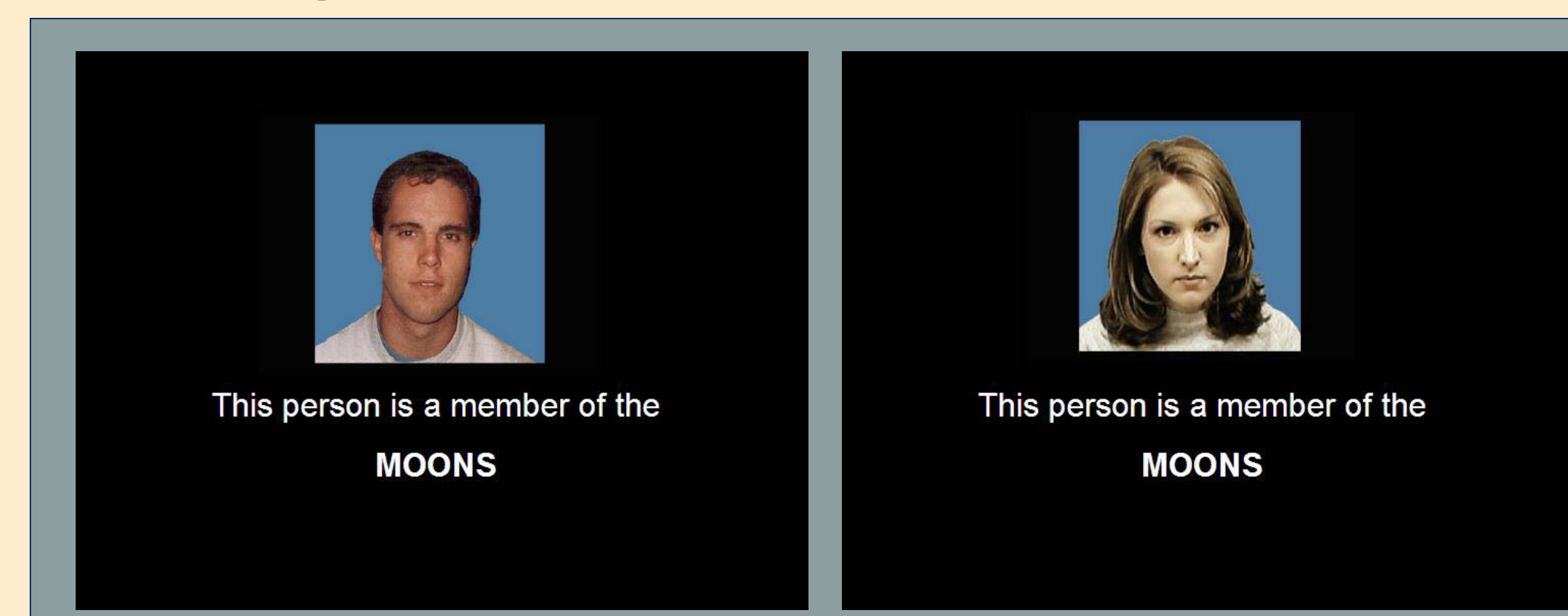
• The need to belong is an important social motivation (Maslow, 1943). Satiation or deprivation can lead to differential group affiliation goals.

Hypotheses

- People who are ostracised and made high in need to belong before being assigned to mixed-gender minimal group should show greater ingroup bias, in the form of greater memory for ingroup faces, compared to people in an inclusion condition.
- This effect should appear regardless of the gender of ingroup members.
- This effect should not be due to a change in emotional state.

Methods

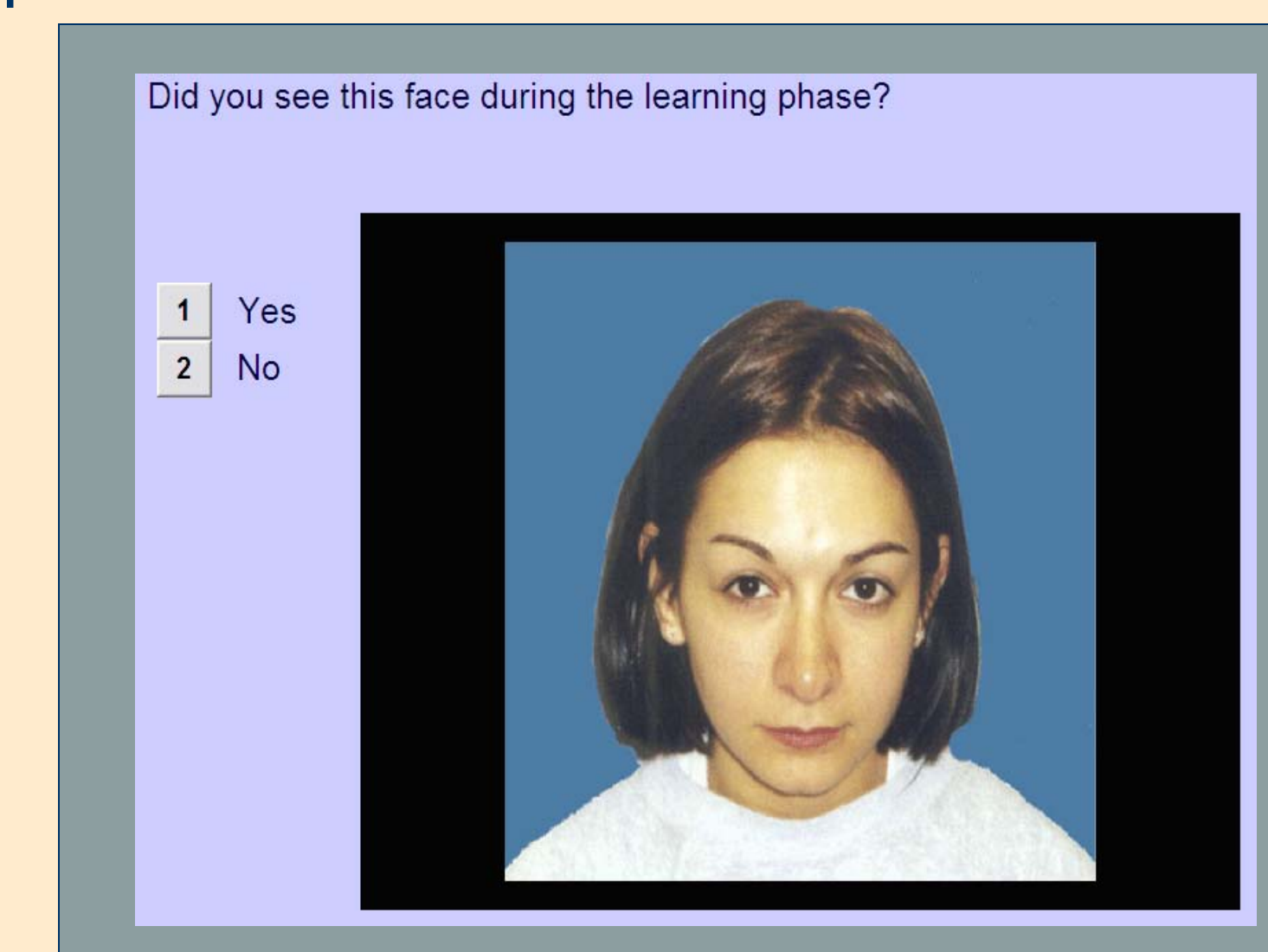
- Participants: 140 white undergraduates (69 males)
- Design: 2 (gender: male, female) x 2 (group: ingroup, outgroup) x 3 (ostracism: included, excluded, control) mixed design
- **Part A (Independent Variable = ostracism)**
- Randomly assigned to one of three conditions (Cohen, Aronson, & Steele, 2000).
 - **Included:** Wrote about a time they felt especially included in an important social group.
 - **Excluded:** Wrote about a time they felt excluded from an important social group.
 - **Control:** Wrote about what they ate on the previous day.
- We hypothesized that participants in the **included** condition would become low in the need to belong and participants in the **excluded** condition would become high in the need to belong
- **Part B (Independent Variables = group and gender)**
- Randomly assigned to one of two mixed-gender teams, Suns or Moons, or a control condition.
- Participants completed the following tasks in the following order:
 - **Learning Task:** Shown faces + team label for 4s.



Learning Task

Methods (continued)

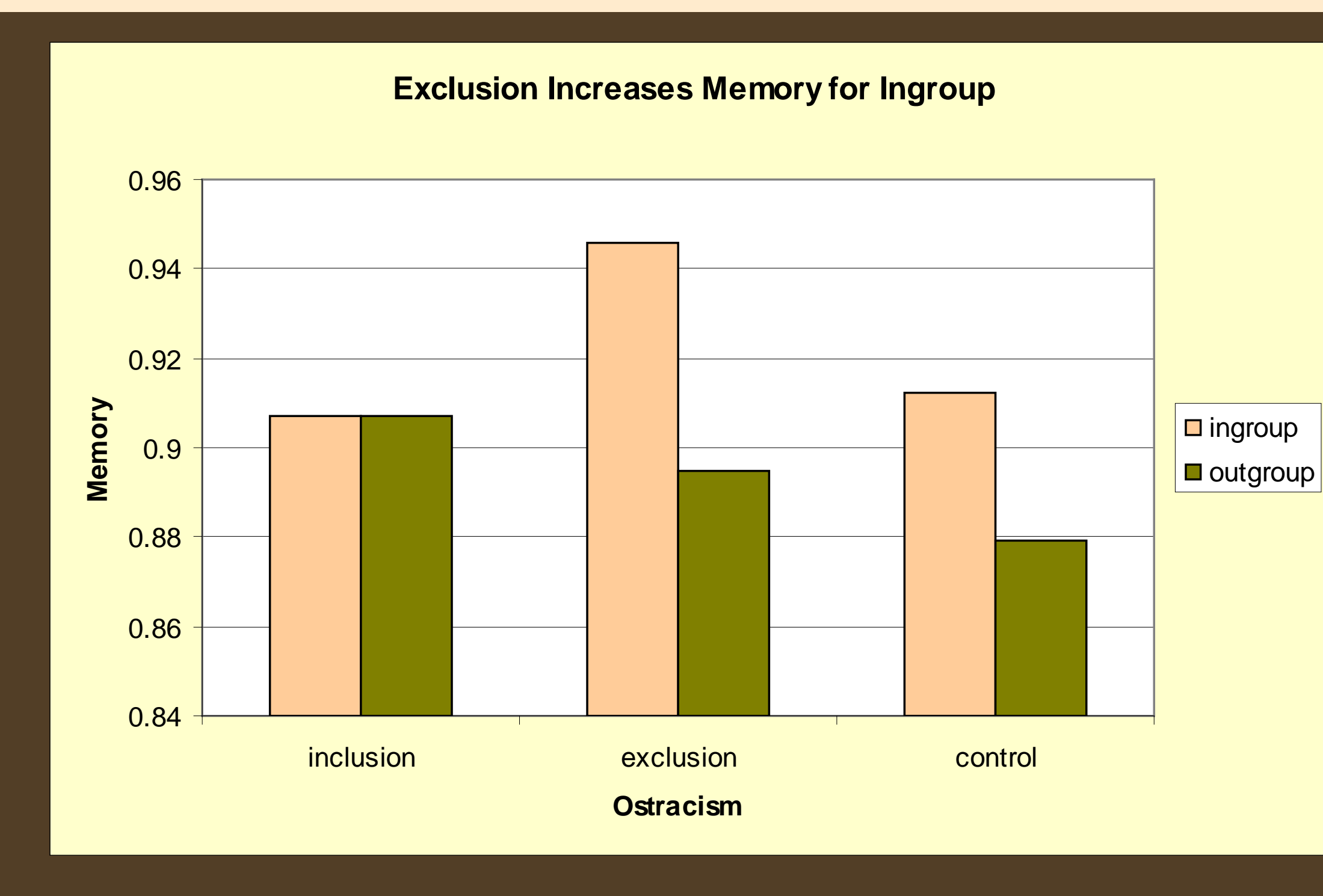
- **PANAS-X:** Measure of current emotional state to test whether ostracism and/or subsequent assignment caused changes in positive or negative emotions.
- **Memory Task:** Indicated if had seen face during Learning Task. Responses indicate how much participants attended to each face.



Memory Task

Results

- In the memory task, there was a marginal group x ostracism interaction, $F(2,274)=2.56, p=.085$.
- Compared to participants who wrote about a time they felt especially included and the control condition, participants who wrote about a time they felt **excluded** showed greater memory for ingroup members.



- This effect was not moderated by gender, $F(2,548)=1.04, p=.36$.
- Ostracism did not affect negative affect, $F(2,138)=.30, p=.74$.
- Assignment to a group did not affect negative affect, $F(1,138)=.06, p=.81$.

Conclusion

- As predicted, people who wrote about a time they were excluded and presumably had a heightened need to belong had greater memory for their ingroup, regardless of gender.
- This finding adds the missing link of motivation to previous research that has shown that assignment to a minimal mixed-race group leads to preference for ingroup members, regardless of race.
- Ostracism caused participants to become high in need to belong and altered their affiliation goals.
 - They were so desperate to reaffirm their social identity, that they showed greater bias when given the chance to join a group, even a minimal one.
- This finding adds to Crisp & Hewstone's model of multiple social categorization, by showing that social motivation can alter the way people are perceived.
 - The lack of significant changes in emotion, suggest that ostracism is different from core affect.
- This research is important to understanding prejudice and discrimination that can occur in intergroup interactions by explaining how social motivations can change the way a multiply-categorizable person is perceived.

Acknowledgements

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References

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