'Not one of us': Investigating the Predictors and Consequences of Denying Ingroup

Characteristics to Ambiguous Suspects in the Aftermath of Terrorist Acts

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Abstract

We investigated predictors of the ascription of ingroup membership to negative ambiguous targets immediately following terrorist acts. Two studies investigated target categorization following the Boston Marathon and UK Woolwich attacks: events involving negative targets whose status as racial (Tsarnaev brothers) or national (Woolwich attackers) ingroup members remained ambiguous. Within two days of the attacks, we presented White Americans and White Brits with the suspects' images. As predicted, those higher in social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism— concerned with enforcing status boundaries and adherence to ingroup norms, respectively— perceived suspects as *looking* less White and less British, thus denying them critical ingroup characteristics. Individuals feeling more fear (but not anger or sadness) following the attacks also distanced the suspects in this way. Highlighting its importance, perceiving suspects in more outgroup vs. ingroup terms increased support for treating them harshly, and for militaristic counter-terrorist policies prioritizing ingroup safety over outgroup harm.

Keywords: Group categorization; Social dominance orientation; Right-Wing Authoritarianism;

Punitiveness; Terrorism

On the 15th of April, 2013, two bombs exploded near the finish line of the Boston
Marathon, killing three people and injuring two hundred and eighty others in the first major
terrorist act on U.S. soil since the events of September 11th, 2001.

A massive investigation by law enforcement officials immediately took shape. Within
two days, meticulous analysis of surveillance footage led to the determination of two primary
suspects, captured in grainy photos wearing backpacks near the incident. Law enforcement
officials quickly released these photos to the public in order to aid the investigation. Speculation
immediately abounded as to their background as well as their potential motivations, fueled
further by the ambiguity of their skin color and the difficulty in determining whether the incident
was carried out by foreign or American actors. Shortly thereafter, the FBI released the names of
the suspects in the photographs. Unusually, although we now knew the individuals in the
photographs were named Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, and while we quickly learned more
about the details of their lives, many of the outstanding questions about the motivation behind
the attacks, and the ethnic and national status of the perpetrators, remained unanswered (Walsh,
2013).

A complex picture emerged: although their names clearly sounded foreign to most
Americans, we quickly learned that they had been living in the United States for many years,
with Dzhokhar Tsarnaev spending formative years attending high school in Cambridge,
Massachusetts. Moreover, in spite of the fact that they did not quite fit the physical profile and
background of the average White American, they had immigrated to the United States from the
North Caucasus in 2002, the very region that gave name to the term 'Caucasian'.

Shortly after the attack in Boston, another incident occurred in Woolwich, a working-class neighborhood in southeast London, United Kingdom. In this case, the suspects— Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale— were racially unambiguous. Nevertheless, in the immediate aftermath of their suspected lethal attack on a British soldier, their national status (as British citizens or as foreigners) remained unclear. Thus, although there were important differences in the nature, context, and target of the terrorist attacks, an important and unusual similarity between these two contexts was the fact that the status of the perpetrators as members of individuals' own group or members of an external group was ambiguous.

Our central interest in this work was in investigating the predictors of the ascription of ingroup membership to negatively-perceived ambiguous targets. We investigated ambiguous images of people suspected of having committed terrorist attacks, negatively-perceived targets of great salience and importance. There was no question that the perpetrators of the Marathon and Woolwich terrorist attacks were roundly judged to be abhorrent individuals committing terrible acts. Nevertheless, given their ethnic (Boston) and national (Woolwich) ambiguity, much debate concerned whether they could be legitimately thought of as maligned members of "us" or "them"— a question much less relevant when dealing targets whose group membership is well-established.

Indeed, the issue of ascribing group membership is one with important consequences (e.g., Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994), both for the individuals being characterized and for the groups involved. Research in intergroup relations has long shown that categorization into groups results in a preference for one's own group over the outgroup (Allport, 1954; Gramzow & Gaertner, 2005; Sherif, 1967). This bias manifests itself in terms of increased positive regard for the ingroup relative to the outgroup (Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1986),

increased empathy and prosocial behavior towards members of the ingroup (Hornstein, 1976; Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981), favoritism in the distribution of valued resources (Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989), construal of other ingroup members as closer to the self (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, Wetherell, 1987), and increased levels of trust and cooperation (Miller, Maner and Becker, 2010). In sum, group members' orientation towards other individuals is importantly influenced by whether these individuals are ingroup vs. outgroup members.

The determination of who belongs and who does not belong to the ingroup can also have implications for the group itself. Individuals belonging to the group should care about these implications, given that social groups are an important source of individual self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As such, they are motivated to hold their group in positive regard and are concerned with its level of overall functioning, as well as its status and standing in society. These concerns should influence the ascription of ingroup membership to others. Firstly, we would expect group members to be sensitive to how individuals who they admit to the ingroup influence its operation, attempting to ensure, for example, that those given ingroup status would conform to the norms and practices of the group, and thus support its smooth functioning and cohesiveness (Feldman, 1984). Secondly, we expect that group members will employ strategies to enhance and protect its image: one such strategy is to ascribe group membership to valued individuals and deny it to undesirable others (Castano, Yzerbyt, Bourguignon; Seron, 2002; Leyens & Yzerbyt, 1992). Examples of this include the conferral of honorary degrees to venerated individuals by universities, and companies dropping celebrity endorsees who engage in egregious, socially undesirable behavior from their 'corporate family'.

Consistent with the notion that group members are concerned with the consequences for their group of granting membership to others, Castano and colleagues (2002) argue that individuals take care when making ingroup categorizations. Such caution helps avoid the 'contamination' of the ingroup and any damage to its functioning or status that that might entail (see also Ho, Sidanius, Levin, & Banaji, 2011; Ho, Sidanius, Cuddy, & Banaji, 2013; Yzerbyt & Leyens, 1992).

In addition to issues relating to the functioning or status of one's group, another factor that can influence the likelihood of including ambiguous others in one's group is a sense of threat. Research by Miller, Maner, and Becker (2010) found that among white individuals with the tendency to view the world as a dangerous place (Altemeyer, 1981; Duckitt, 2001), priming a state of fear (a cue to threat) increased the characterization of racially ambiguous angry faces as black compared to white. According to these authors, mistakenly including an outgroup member in the ingroup would have tended to be a costly error, and as such, humans have evolved a tendency to be more conservative in ascribing ambiguous others with ingroup status when feeling threatened (see also Schaller et al., 2004). Other theoretical perspectives, which highlight the relationship between fear and avoidance tendencies (e.g., Huddy, Feldman, & Weber, 2007) would similarly expect fear to lead to the distancing of fear-provoking stimuli, consistent with the denial of ingroup membership to ambiguous terrorist targets.

In sum, individuals tend to value and derive esteem from the groups to which they belong, and exercise care and caution in determining those groups' boundaries, due to concerns with group functioning and status. Moreover, experiencing a sense of threat can make individuals more cautious in their ascription of group membership.

Individual differences in the conferral of ingroup membership

Although our reasoning suggests that all group members should show some concern with determining who does and who does not belong to their group, there is nevertheless theoretical reason to expect individual differences in how discriminating group members are in ascribing others with ingroup characteristics (see also Ho et al., 2013). One variable that could play a role is prejudice. Taylor and Moghaddam (1994) argued that prejudiced individuals should be more likely to consider the inclusion of an outgroup member in the ingroup as a source of contamination, and as such, should be particulary vigilant in excluding ambiguous targets whose ingroup membership cannot readily be confirmed. In support of this reasoning, research by Blascovich, Wyer, Swart, and Kibler (1997) showed that individuals who scored higher on the modern racism scale (McConahay, 1986) took longer to categorize racially ambiguous targets, suggesting their greater concern with the possibility of mistakenly including an outgroup member in the ingroup.

In the present work, we moved beyond the impact of prejudice per se, and considered the role of two individual difference variables— social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1981)— that have both been shown to relate to a wide variety of political and social attitudes and behaviors, including racism, sexism, support for war, support for the death penalty, and welfare opposition (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Altemeyer, 1981; Kteily, Ho, & Sidanius, 2012). Although these variables often predict prejudice towards similar groups in practice, they do so independently of one another, and for unique reasons (Duckitt, 2001). As such, looking at each of their relationships to the ascription of ingroup membership to ambiguous individuals should contribute to a more nuanced and complete understanding of the factors motivating decisions about group categorization.

Whereas being high in RWA reflects a concern with traditionalism, submission to established authorities, and aggression towards those who violate the social norms of the ingroup, individuals high in SDO favor the maintenance of anti-egalitarian and hierarchical relationships between social groups. As such, when it comes to the inclusion or exclusion of ambiguous targets from the ingroup, we need to consider the role of both ideological orientations, rather than either one alone. Individuals high in RWA should be especially sensitive to the inclusion of individuals in the ingroup who violate ingroup norms and contravene valued social conventions (Duckitt, 2001; Thomsen, Green & Sidanius, 2008). In addition, individuals high in SDO should be especially concerned with the possibility of including individuals of lower status into the ingroup, as doing so would blur the status boundaries that high SDO individuals are motivated to protect (Thomsen et al., 2008). Mirroring the reasons for caution in ascribing group membership described earlier, RWA should be primarily related to how inclusion judgments affect the group's functioning and cohesion; over and above RWA's effects, SDO should be related to judgments of group membership that influence group status.

In addition to assessing the influence of SDO and RWA on judgments relating to the ingroup membership of negative ambiguous suspects, we also assessed the role of emotional responses immediately following the terrorist attacks. Consistent with the association between a sense of threat and the exclusion of ambiguous targets from the ingroup outlined by the research of Miller et al. (2010), as well as research on the relationship between fear and avoidance (Huddy et al., 2007), we expected that individuals experienced more fear in response to terrorist attacks would also be less likely to perceive the suspects as belonging to the ingroup. To determine whether any relationship between fear and perceptions of ingroup status was specific to fear itself— as opposed to negative affect more generally— we also assessed anger and

sadness, negative emotions less closely associated with a sense of threat. Whereas some research would suggest that anger should relate to support for aggressive intergroup actions (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Skitka, 2004), there is less theoretical reason to expect it to uniquely predict individuals' desire to be more restrictive in their ascriptions of ingroup membership.

We tested these ideas in two studies that assessed the ascription of ingroup membership to negative ambiguous suspects in the immediate aftermath of terrorist attacks. By collecting data within days of the attacks, we were able to examine our hypotheses in the context of highly salient incidents that stirred a strong sense of threat and emotion. By assessing two different contexts, and two different bases of ingroup membership, we were also able to investigate the generalizability of our hypotheses. Thus, we examined the role of SDO, RWA, and emotional responses to the Boston Marathon attacks in influencing perceptions of the Whiteness of the racially ambiguous Tsarnaev brothers, as well as investigating perceptions of the Britishness of Michael Adebolajo, one of the suspected Woolwich attackers.

We hypothesized that participants' perceptions about the ingroup status of the Tsarnaev brothers and the Woolwich suspects— whose racial and national group memberships, respectively, remained ambiguous in the days following the attacks—would be influenced by both RWA and SDO. Because individuals high in RWA tend to reject any behavior that challenges established authorities and violates ingroup norms, we hypothesized that White Americans high on RWA would downplay the 'Whiteness' of the Tsarnaev brothers, and British individuals high on RWA would similarly downplay the 'Britishness' of the Woolwich suspects. Because individuals high in SDO seek to avoid blurring group status boundaries, we also expected that among White Americans and British participants, high SDO would be associated with psychological distancing from— and ingroup exclusion of— the Tsarnaev brothers and the

Woolwich suspects, respectively. Distancing them from the ingroup in this way allows individuals high in SDO to avoid having the status of their group 'contaminated' by an association with the extremely negative terrorist targets. This relationship might be particularly acute in the context of a terrorist attack, given that sense of threat to the social order such attacks can provoke. Consistent with this reasoning, Ho et al. (2013) found that, when threatened, White individuals high in SDO were more likely to engage in *hypodescent*, categorizing half-black, half-white biracials as black (i.e., outgroup members): a finding they interpreted as being due to high SDO individuals' desire to avoid blurring status boundaries.

Because RWA and SDO have been frequently observed to operate in parallel, we expected each construct to contribute uniquely to exclusionary perceptions targeted at the negative ambiguous targets among our participants.

Finally, because fear has been associated with restrictiveness in ascribing group membership, as well as avoidant intergroup responses (Huddy et al., 2007), we further hypothesized that fear (but not other negative emotions such as anger or sadness) would be negatively associated with perceiving negative ambiguous targets in ingroup terms.

Consequences of ingroup vs. outgroup membership

Our central theoretical interest in this work was determining the predictors of the ascription of ingroup membership. Nevertheless, we also expected that ingroup membership— once assigned or denied— would have important consequences. Thus, we expected the perception of the Tsarnaev brothers and the Woolwich attackers as ingroup vs. outgroup members to be far from inert. Previous work has shown that ingroup members receive certain benefits from their membership within the group: thus, individuals place greater trust in (Brewer, 2008), empathize more with (Piliavin et al., 1981; Forgiarini, Galluci, & Maravita, 2011), allocate more resources

to (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and behave more altruistically towards other members of their group (Stürmer, Snyder, Kropp & Siem, 2006) than to members of other groups. As such, being a member of an outgroup subjects one to the potential application of any of a number of processes—such as stereotyping, prejudice, and dehumanization— that can be used to justify aggressive attitudes and behavior, much more difficult to justify towards members of the ingroup (but see Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988). As such, we hypothesized that the perception of the Tsarnaev brothers and Woolwich attackers as outgroup (as opposed to ingroup) members would be associated with harsher judgments about the punishments they deserve.

Characterizing negative ambiguous targets as outgroup members might further contribute to the justification of aggressive policies towards outsiders more generally. Perceiving the ingroup to have been targeted from the outside may increase group members' support for policies and institutions designed to protect the ingroup, at the expense of outsiders, shifting group members' moral calculus to further prioritize ingroup over outgroup outcomes (Stürmer et al., 2006; see also Lickel et al., 2006). As such, we hypothesized that perceptions of the Tsarnaev brothers as less White and the Woolwich attackers as less British would relate to support for aggressive counter-terrorism measures: measures with the stated aim of protecting the ingroup, but that nevertheless had the potential for grave moral consequences and negative outcomes for those not belonging to the group (see also Asbrock & Fristche, 2013).[1]

Study 1

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[1] For example, in the process of weakening the Taliban's infrastructure, the American war in Afghanistan has resulted in the deaths of a great number of innocent civilians. Moreover, the American "war on terror" has involved the use of many tactics— such as 'enhanced interrogation techniques'— that have been criticized for being morally questionable (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

In a first study testing these hypotheses, we conducted a two-wave survey with White American participants in the direct aftermath of the Boston Marathon attacks. Two days following the attack, we assessed the relevant individual differences and emotional responses of interest. We then followed up with participants approximately ten days later. In this second wave, we measured participants' perceptions of the Whiteness of the Tsarnaev brothers. Importantly, our assessment of Whiteness perceptions was based on a purely perceptual measure, with participants rating how White the Tsarnaev brothers looked in the photos released by the FBI. At the second wave, we also assessed their support for punishment of the Tsarnaev brothers and for militaristic counter-terrorism policies.

Method

Participants. 585 participants completed wave 1 of the study. Of these participants, 359 (i.e., 61.4%) also completed wave 2. Of those, we selected all participants who indicated both that they were White (77.4%) and American citizens (98.3%) (N = 267; 46.8% male; M age = 33.80 years, SD = 11.44 years).

Data were collected using Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform, as part of a broader data collection effort on attitudes towards the Boston Marathon attacks. The first wave was administered at 5 P.M. on April 18, 2013. At this time, pictures of the suspects had just been released by law enforcement officials, but their names, identities, and backgrounds were still unknown (as remained the case until completion of wave 1 data collection). Data collection was completed within a few hours, ensuring that all participants had essentially the same amount of information about the events and the suspects. The second wave of the study was launched on April 26th, 2013, after the first suspect had been killed, and the second, arrested. Data collection for this wave was terminated on May 1, 2013, in order to give participants as much opportunity

as possible to complete the second wave while also ensuring that participants did not have

substantively different information about the events.[2]

Measures

Social dominance orientation (SDO) was measured using eight randomly selected,

counter-balanced, items from the sixteen-item SDO-6 scale (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Sample

items include, "It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others," and "No one

group should dominate in society" (reverse-coded; $\alpha = .89$).

Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) was assessed with twelve items taken from

Altemeyer's (1981) scale. Sample items include, "People should pay less attention to the Bible

and other old traditional forms of religious guidance and instead develop their own personal

standards of what is moral and immoral (reverse-coded)" and "Young people sometimes get

rebellious ideas, but as they grow up they ought to get over them and settle down" ($\alpha = .89$).

Emotional reactions to the bombings were measured in wave 1 using the following

question: "People may have different reactions to the Boston Marathon incident. Please rate the

extent to which you felt the following emotions in response to the incident and its aftermath."

Participants then indicated the extent to which they felt sad, angry, and fearful using a 7-point

Likert scale, where 1 indicated, "I did not feel this emotion at all" and 7 indicated, "I felt this

emotion very strongly".

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[2] We conducted attrition analyses to compare those White American participants who completed only wave 1 to those who completed both waves. The two sets of participants did not differ in gender, $F < 1$, or political conservatism, $F < 1$, although those completing both waves were marginally older, $F (1,432) = 3.39$, $p = .07$. With the exception of one variable (RWA), where we observed slightly lower levels among those completing both waves ($F (1, 432) = 5.57$, $p = .02$), we found no significant differences between the two sets of participants on any of the variables used that we measured in wave 1. Thus, those completing both waves did not differ markedly from those who completed only wave 1.

Whiteness perceptions. Perceptions of the Whiteness of the Tsarnaev brothers was measured at wave 2, and assessed using four items. Participants were shown the two sets of pictures of the Tsarnaev brothers released by law enforcement officials. For each set of pictures, participants read, "Above is a photograph released by the FBI on Thursday, April 18th of the lead suspects in the Boston Marathon bombing investigation. On the left is Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and on the right is Tamerlan Tsarnaev. How White do you think the suspects look? Use the slider to indicate where you think each of the suspects falls on a continuum from Non-White to White." For each of the brothers, participants indicated their Whiteness perceptions using a 100-point slider scale, where "0" indicated "Non-White" and 100 indicated "White." Thus, participants completed four slider scale items in total (once for each brother in each picture). We averaged these items to create our index of *Whiteness perceptions.*

Aggressive Responses to the Marathon Attacks

Harsh treatment. Like Whiteness perceptions, this construct was also assessed at wave 2. In particular, we assessed participants' responses to five items: "The perpetrator of the Boston Marathon attacks deserves to die as painful a death as possible", "The perpetrator of the Boston Marathon attacks is entitled to the best legal counsel available" (reverse-coded), "We shouldn't rush to judgment in bringing the perpetrator of the Boston Marathon attacks to justice" (reverse-coded), "It is OK for Tsarnaev not to have been read his Miranda rights before interrogation", and "It is appropriate to charge Tsarnaev with the use of a weapon of mass destruction". Participants indicated their responses to each item using a seven-point scale, where 1 indicated "Strongly disagree" and 7 indicated "Strongly agree" ($\alpha = .77$).

Militaristic counter-terrorism. This construct was measured at wave 2 by asking participants to rate their agreement with each of the following ten items: "To put an end to

terrorist acts, I think it is OK to use enhanced interrogation techniques", "To put an end to terrorist acts, I think it is OK to use torture", "To put an end to terrorist acts, I think it is OK to use waterboarding", "To put an end to terrorist acts, I think it is OK to target civilians and combatants alike in foreign terrorist strongholds", "To put an end to terrorist acts, I think it is OK to bomb an entire country if it is known to harbor anti-American terrorists", "We should increase diplomatic (as opposed to military) efforts in the Middle East" (reverse-scored), "I support continued military efforts abroad to root out potential terrorists", "We should spend more time on diplomatic efforts as opposed to engaging in military activity abroad" (reverse-scored), "We shouldn't be afraid to hunt down anyone who threatens our country anywhere", and "We should strike back with brutal force against anyone who seeks to intimidate us". Participants responded to each item using a 7-point Likert scale where 1 indicated "Strongly disagree" and 7 indicated "Strongly agree" ($\alpha = .92$).

Results & Discussion

Descriptive statistics. We report descriptive statistics and the intercorrelations between our variables in Table 1.

In terms of emotional reactions to the bombings, we observed that participants reported feeling sadness most strongly, followed by anger and fear. We were particularly interested in participants' perceptions of the Whiteness of the Tsarnaev brothers. Consistent with our notion that there was some ambiguity surrounding their racial group membership, the average Whiteness rating in our sample was only slightly above the midpoint, with a substantial degree of individual variability.

In this work, we were primarily interested in assessing the predictors of the ascription of ingroup characteristics. Specifically, we predicted that individuals higher in RWA, individuals

higher in SDO, and those who felt more fear (but not anger or sadness) in response to the

bombings would be less likely to ascribe ingroup characteristics to the racially-ambiguous

Tsarnaev brothers. As such, we included each of these variables as a predictor of our index of

Whiteness perceptions in a simultaneous regression. In sum, the set of predictors included in the

model explained a significant proportion of the variance in Whiteness perceptions of the

Tsarnaev brothers, F (5,260) = 14.42, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .22$. Most importantly, and as expected, we

found that each of RWA (β= -.183, $p = .005$), SDO ($\beta = -.26$, $p < .001$), and self-reported fear in

response to the marathon attacks ($\beta = -.26$, $p < .001$) was associated with participants reporting

that the Tsarnaev brothers looked less White in the photographs that we had asked them to rate.

As predicted, anger ($\beta = .12$, $p = .09$) and sadness ($\beta = -.06$, $p = .36$) were not significantly

associated with Whiteness perceptions.

A secondary question concerned how perceptions of the Whiteness of the Tsarnaev

brothers would influence the harshness of attitudes towards them, and might influence the

support for aggressive counter-terrorism policies that prioritized the safety of the ingroup at the

potential expense of outsiders. We were interested in whether Whiteness perceptions would

predict these outcomes uniquely over and above the other variables we were investigating. As

such, we first included each of RWA, SDO, and the various emotional responses in the first step

of a hierarchical regression, and then included Whiteness perceptions at the second step. As can

be seen in Table 2a, the variables at step 1 predicted a significant proportion of the variance in

harsh treatement of the Tsarnaev brothers, F (5, 259) = 39.21, $p < .001$, with RWA, SDO, and

fear emerging as significant predictors of greater harshness. Nevertheless, adding Whiteness

perceptions at the second step significantly increased the predicted proportion of variance in

harshness, $R^2_{change} = .02$, F (1, 258) = 7.24, $p = .008$. Similarly, adding Whiteness perceptions at

step 2 significantly increased the proportion of variance explained in support for militaristic

counter-terrorism measures, $R^2_{change} = .01$, $F(1, 259) = 5.17$, $p = .02$ (see Table 2b).[3]

In sum, then, we observed strong support for our hypotheses: SDO, RWA and fear each

had significant and unique effects on the ascription of ingroup characteristics (i.e., Whiteness) to

the Tsarnaev brothers—racially-ambiguous negative targets suspected of committing a reviled

act. Moreover, the extent to which White Americans perceived these targets to belong to their

racial ingroup was consequential. Indeed, it predicted aggressive responses to the marathon

attacks, both in terms of increased harshness of attitudes towards the brothers, and in terms of

support of militaristic counter-terrorism policies. Impressively, Whiteness perceptions predicted

these aggressive responses over and above variables— such as SDO and RWA— well-known to

be strong predictors of support for related outcome measures such as punitiveness (Gerber &

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[3] We further considered whether Whiteness perceptions partially mediated the effects from SDO, RWA, and fear to harsh treatment and militaristic counter-terrorism. Given that there are very well-established relationships between our independent variables and both punitiveness and militarism for reasons unrelated to the ascription of ingroup membership, we did not expect any mediation effect via Whiteness to be strong. Indeed, using bootstrapping (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), and controlling for the effects of all other independent variables, we found that Whiteness was a significant but weak mediator of the effects of SDO on harsh treatment (indirect effect = .05, 95% CI [.01, .10]) and militaristic counter-terrorism (indirect effect = .03, 95% CI [.003, .08]). Similarly, the mediation paths from RWA through Whiteness to harsh treatment (indirect effect= .035, 95% CI [.01, .08]) and militaristic counter-terrorism (indirect effect= .02, 95% CI [.003, .06]) were significant but weak. This was also the case for fear (harsh treatment: indirect effect = .03, 95% CI [.007, .06]; militaristic counter-terrorism: indirect effect = .02, 95% CI [.002, .05]). Given the weak strength of these mediational paths, we chose to report them here but not to give them undue prominence in the manuscript. In spite of the fact that Whiteness may have only accounted for a small part of the effects of SDO, RWA, and fear on aggressive responses to the Marathon attacks, it is nevertheless important that they each reliably predicted Whiteness perceptions. It is also worth noting that these perceptions, once formed, uniquely contributed to harsh punishment of the Tsarnaev bothers and militaristic counter-terrorism, even if their influence was small compared the Whitness-independent effects of the set of other variables.

Jackson, 2013; Kteily et al., 2012) and militarism (Cohrs, Moschner, Maes, & Kielmann, 2005; Kteily et al., 2012), as well as participants' emotional reactions to the attacks.

Study 2

Shortly after the Boston Marathon attacks, a suspected terrorist attack in Woolwich in the United Kingdom provided an excellent opportunity to investigate the generality of our theorizing. Indeed, rather than applying to racial group membership *per se*, our theorizing centers on the predictors of the ascription of ingroup membership to negative ambiguous targets more generally. In the Woolwich case, the suspects were racially unambiguous, but, in the immediate aftermath of their suspected attack, their status as British citizens or as foreign nationals remained unclear. As such, we were able to test some of our hypotheses again, assessing whether SDO and RWA predicted ascription of ingroup charactersitics — this time based on national identity — to suspected perpetrators of a terrorist attack. Further, we examined whether, as had been the case with Whiteness in study 1, perceiving negative ambiguous targets in less ingroup terms subsequently predicted more punitive attitudes towards them, and greater support for aggressive counter-terrorist policies.

Method

Participants. The Woolwich attack occurred on May 22, 2013, and data were collected from 179 participants between May 24, 2013 and May 27, 2013. For the present analyses, we used data only from White (80.1%) participants who also indicated that they were British citizens (92.6%) (N=115; 51.8% male; *M* age=42.02, *SD*=15.44).

Measures. Data used in the present analyses were taken from a survey packet administered as part of a broader data collection effort, and due to limitations on survey length,

included only a subset of the variables in study 1. As such, it did not include items assessing

participants' emotional responses to the attacks.

Social dominance orientation. SDO was measured using eight, counterbalanced items

randomly selected from the SDO-6 scale (Pratto et al., 1994). Participants responded to each

item statement using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "Strongly disagree" and 7

indicated "Strongly agree" (α=.76).

Right Wing Authoritarianism. Using the same 7-point scale, participants indicated their

agreement with four items taken from Altemeyer's (1981) RWA scale: "In these troubled times,

laws have to be enforced without mercy, especially when dealing with the agitators and

revolutionaries who are stirring things up," "Our customs and national heritage are the things

that have made us great, and certain people should be made to show greater respect for them," "It

may be considered old fashioned by some, but having a decent respectable appearance is still the

mark of a gentleman and, especially, a lady," and "Young people sometimes get rebellious ideas,

but as they grow up they ought to get over them and settle down." (α=.76)[4].

Perceptions of "Britishness". Similarly to Study 1, participants were presented a picture

released in the press of one of the suspected attackers, Michael Adebolajo. They were asked to

indicate how foreign the suspect looked using a slider bar anchored at 1 and 100, where 1

indicated "Not at all foreign" and 100 indicated "Very foreign". For the same picture, they were

also asked to indicate the extent to which the suspect seemed British, using a second 100-point

slider scale, where 1 indicated "Not British at all" and 100 indicated "Very British." The

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[4] Due to a clerical error, thirty participants received only half the RWA scale, from which their
composite scores were computed.

question assessing foreignness was reverse coded for the purposes of the present analyses. (α = .85).

Harsh treatment. We used four items to measure this construct in the UK: "The perpetrators of the Woolwich attacks deserve to die as painful a death as possible," "The perpetrators of the Woolwich attacks are entitled to the best legal counsel available (reverse-coded)," "We shouldn't rush to judgment in bringing the perpetrators of the Woolwich attacks to justice (reverse-coded)," and "We should try to understand the reasons for the Woolwich attack (reverse-coded)." Participants indicated their response using a seven-point scale where 1 indicated "Strongly disagree" and 7 indicated "Strongly agree." (α = .76).

Militaristic counter-terrorism. This construct was assessed with seven items: "To put an end to terrorist acts, I think it is OK to use enhanced interrogation techniques", "To put an end to terrorist acts, I think it is OK to use torture", "To put an end to terrorist acts, I think it is OK to use waterboarding", "To put an end to terrorist acts, I think it is OK to target civilians and combatants alike in foreign terrorist strongholds", "To put an end to terrorist acts I think it is OK to bomb an entire country if it is known to harbor anti-British terrorists", "The U.K. should continue to support US efforts to fight radical Islam", and "We should strike back with brutal force against anyone who seeks to intimidate us." Participants used a 7-point to indicate their responses where 1 indicated "Strongly disagree" and 7 indicated means "Strongly agree" (α = .89).

Results

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics for and intercorrelations between variables can be found in Table 3.

We were particularly interested in participants' perceptions of the "Britishness'" of the Woolwich attackers. The mean for our index of Britishness perceptions was moderately below the midpoint, suggesting that there was a slight overall tendency to view the attackers as foreign rather than British. Nevertheless, there was substantial variation around this mean, suggesting that, similar to the Boston Marathon case, there was indeed some degree of ambiguity regarding the attackers' group membership .

Our central theoretical interest was investigating the predictors of the ascription of ingroup membership. Specifically, we expected that individuals high on RWA would be less likely to perceive the nationally-ambiguous suspects in ingroup terms (i.e., as British). We expected SDO would operate in parallel, with individuals high in SDO also more likely to perceive the suspects in outgroup terms.

We included both these variables in a simultaneous regression predicting Britishness perceptions. Indeed, as expected, and replicating the pattern observed in the U.S., the overall model predicted a significant proportion of the variance in Britishness perceptions, $F (2, 112) = 8.20, p < .001, R^2 = .13$, with both RWA ($\beta = -.18, p = .047$) and SDO ($\beta = -.28, p = .003$) significantly and uniquely predicting participants' rating of the Woolwich suspects as less British.

We further expected that perceiving the suspected perpetrators in more outgroup terms would have important implications. Thus, we investigated whether, as had been the case with the Tsarnaev brothers, greater perceptions of the suspects as outsiders was associated with harsher attitudes towards them, and increased support for militaristic counter-terrorist policies. In order to do this, we added Britishness perceptions at the second step of a regression predicting each of these ultimate outcomes. As can be seen in Table 4a, the variables at step 1 predicted a

significant proportion of the variance in harshness towards the Woolwich suspects, F (2, 109) = 20.20, $p < .001$, with each of RWA ($B = .37$, $p < .001$) and SDO ($B = .30$, $p < .001$) contributing significantly. Nevertheless, adding Britishness perceptions at the second step significantly increased the proportion of variance predicted, $R^2_{change} = .03$, F (1, 108) = 4.15, $p = .04$.

This same pattern was observed for support for militaristic counter-terrorism (see Table 4b). The variables at the first step predicted a significant proportion of the variance, F (2, 110) = 32.10, $p < .001$, with each of RWA and SDO emerging as significant predictors. At the same time, adding Britishness perceptions at the second step significantly increased the proportion of variance explained, $R^2_{change} = .05$, F (1, 109) = 8.74, $p = .004$.[5]

In sum, we replicated the main findings of Study 1, in a novel context, and focusing on another relevant ingroup-outgroup distinction: membership in one's national group.

General Discussion

Deciding who to embrace and who to exclude as a member of one's own group can hold much consequence, both for the target being considered as well as for the group itself. Given the many benefits of ingroup membership (e.g., Piliavin et al., 1981), inclusion or exclusion from a group can have important ramifications for the target in question. Moreover, it also matters from the perspective of those making group membership determinations: because individuals derive self-esteem from their membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), they should be

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[5] As in Study 1 (see footnote 3), we also assessed the mediational pathway from SDO and RWA to harsh treatment and militaristic counter-terrorism through Britishness perceptions. Consistent with observations in the U.S., Britishness perceptions significantly but weakly mediated the effects of SDO on harsh treatment (indirect effect= .08, 95% CI [.003, .23]) and militaristic counter-terrorism (indirect effect = .10, 95% CI [.003, .23]). A similar pattern was also observed for RWA (harsh treatment: indirect effect = .06, 95% CI [.009, .15]), although the indirect pathway for militaristic counter-terrorism did not reach significance (indirect effect= .04, 95% CI [-.0002, .1422]).

cautious and sensitive to any implications for their group of including/excluding specific targets (Leyens & Yzerbyt, 1992).

Sometimes— as with especially irritating siblings or long-time colleagues—individuals seeking to psychologically distance someone are constrained in who they can plausibly claim to be outside their group. Nevertheless, when enough ambiguity exists, individuals have some latitude in whether they consider a target a fellow ingroup member, or an outsider.

In this work, we investigated predictors of the ascription of ingroup characteristics in the immediate aftermath of two incidents that presented interesting cases: in both the Boston Marathon and the U.K. Woolwich attacks, the suspects in question were highly negative targets whose group membership (racial and national, respectively) was ambiguous. As such, these cases provided rare and valuable opportunities to investigate theoretical processes of interest in the midst of highly salient events that elicited strong emotional reactions.

We expected that individual differences in relevant ideological orientations, as well as differences in the fear provoked by the incidents, would be related to the tendency to deny ambiguous negative targets ingroup characteristics. We centered our examination of ideological orientations on two individual difference variables, RWA and SDO, both highly associated with a host of important intergroup outcomes, albeit for different reasons (Duckitt, 2001). Across these two studies in two different contexts, we found support for the notion that SDO and RWA influence the manner in which group members perceive negative targets with ambiguous group membership. Moreover, when we investigated emotional responses to the Boston Marathon attacks, we found that individual differences in fear (but not anger or sadness) experienced also predicted individuals' ascription of ingroup characteristics to negative ambiguous targets.

Previous research had used the unitary modern racism scale to document an association between prejudice and associated contamination fears in excluding (racially) ambiguous others from the ingroup (Blascovich et al., 1997). By focusing on RWA and SDO, we were able to consider two alternative routes to the exclusion of negative ambiguous targets. Whereas social dominance orientation is associated with a concern for status boundary maintenance (Ho et al., 2013; Thomsen et al., 2008) and dislike of low status targets (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010), right-wing authoritarianism is associated with submission to authority, aggression toward norm-violators, and dislike of deviant targets (Altemeyer, 1981; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). As such, consistent with Ho et al. (2013), we reason that SDO drove down ascription of ingroup membership for the Tsarnaev brothers and the Woolwich attackers due to a concern with how their inclusion in the ingroup might adversely affect the group's status. On the other hand, we expect that RWA's effects were due to a rejection of their norm-violating behavior: including targets who so blatantly violate ingroup norms could affect members' sense of its cohesiveness and the coherency of its value structure. Future work should explicitly examine the mechanisms proposed here by testing for mediation of SDO's and RWA's effects on ascription of ingroup characteristics by participants' concern with the devaluing of their group's status and its cohesiveness, respectively.

Emotional responses to the attacks

In addition to the role of SDO and RWA, we also observed a role for fear in response to the attacks in predicting perceptions of group membership. In Study 1, we found that a sense of fear in the immediate aftermath of the Boston Marathon attacks led to a tendency to avoid ascribing Whiteness to the Tsarnaev brothers. This is broadly consistent with the finding that, when cues to threat (such as fear) are present, individuals tend to be conservative in making

decisions about who to classify in ingroup terms (Miller et al., 2010). It is also consistent with the more general observation that fear and anxiety tends to be associated with avoidant reactions (Huddy et al., 2007; LeDoux, 1996; Maner & Schmidt, 2006)— a desire for distancing that the denial of ingroup membership can help accomplish.

On the other hand, anger is traditionally associated with intergroup aggression rather than avoidance (e.g., Mackie et al., 2000; Skitka, 2004). As such, there was no theoretical reason to expect anger to relate to the distancing of the Tsarnaev brothers via the denial of ingroup characteristics. Similarly, there was no theoretical reason to expect sadness to predict Whiteness perceptions, and indeed, no such associations were observed. Our measurement of anger and sadness as well as fear increases our confidence that the relationship between fear and the denial of ingroup characteristics to ambiguous negative targets is specific to fear and not simply a product of negative affect more generally.

Interestingly, although fear is typically associated with avoidance and anger with aggression, both were nevertheless positively associated (in zero-order terms but not, with exception of fear predicting harshness, in our regressions) with harshness towards the Tsarnaev brothers and with support for militaristic counter-terrorism. Although this might at first seem surprising given their typically opposite associations with avoidance vs. confrontation, we concur with Giner-Sorolla (2013) that the *nature* of the action can importantly affect the emotion-action relationship. Thus, although both harshness and support for militaristic counter-terrorism are retaliatory and confrontational actions (likely explaining the positive correlation with anger), they also serve a defensive function, consistent with their positive correlation with fear (see Giner-Sorolla, 2013). That is, harsher treatment of the Tsarnaev brothers can serve as a deterrent against future terrorism, and the militaristic counter-terrorism policies participants were

asked about aim to reduce terrorist actions against the group, satisfying fearful individuals' need to counter the source of their fear.

The consequences of ingroup membership

We reasoned that whether or not individuals were ascribed ingroup characteristics would have important consequences. In fact, the ascription of ingroup characteristics—whether Whiteness in study 1 or Britishness in study 2— influenced subsequent political attitudes. Thus, to the extent that people perceived the attackers to be less White or less British, they were significantly harsher in treatment of these targets. Impressively, this effect was observed over and above the effects of two variables, RWA and SDO, which have well-established and strong relationships to punitiveness (Pratto et al., 1994; Kteily et al., 2012). Although consistent with research that suggests that individuals generally treat ingroup members with more empathy and understanding (Piliavin et al., 1981), this finding seemingly contrasts somewhat with research on the black sheep effect (Marques et al., 1988), which suggests that group members judge deviant ingroup members more extremely than comparable outgroup members. We suggest that this may highlight a unique quality of ambiguous targets. The black sheep effect is thought to occur because individuals attempt to mitigate damage to the ingroup image by punishing existing deviant group members harshly and thus distancing their behavior from that of the group more generally. However, when there is reasonable ambiguity about the membership of a negative target, the desire to psychologically distance the target from the group can instead be satisfied by denying them membership altogether, which may then be associated with greater harshness in judgments towards them. Future research should more systematically investigate this question.

Interestingly, the perception of the perpetrator of a terrorist act in more outgroup terms was also associated—again, over and above SDO and RWA—with support for aggressive

counter-terrorism policies in both studies. Although such policies may serve to protect the ingroup, they often do so at a cost to outsiders. The mechanism linking the denial of ingroup characteristics with aggressive counter-terrorism policies should be explored in future research. It is possible, for example, that perceiving a threatening perpetrator in outgroup terms shifts the moral calculus to further prioritize ingroup safety over outgroup wellbeing: that is, when an attack is construed as an outgroup member causing harm to the ingroup, individuals may come to care more about safeguarding their group and care *less* about implications to any outsiders.

Aside from its theoretical contributions, this research was also original in its methodology. We introduced a novel, simple, and powerful method of assessing perceptions of the 'ingroupishness' of ambiguous targets. We presented subjects with pictures of individuals suspected of perpetrating an instance of violence, and measured, in a gradient fashion, the willingness of participants to grant defining ingroup characteristics (either Whiteness or Britishness) to these targets. Despite the fact that they saw the exact same pictures, and were simply asked to rate how the targets looked in those pictures, there was nevertheless meaningful variability in the extent to which they rated the targets as differing in physical characteristics. Even more striking, this variability was significantly predicted by longstanding individual difference measures associated with prejudice, and to levels of fear, as well as subsequently predicting aggressive responses to the attacks. Previous research investigating the ascription of ingroup membership has tended to employ forced-choice tasks that might obscure more subtle differences in the willingness to perceive ambiguous targets in ingroup terms. For example, Castano and colleagues (2002) asked Northern Italian participants presented with pictures of ambiguous targets to indicate whether they thought the target was Northern or Southern Italian (a dichotomous outcome). Likewise, Miller et al. (2010), presented subjects with voice recordings,

and asked subjects whether they thought the speaker was Black or White. Rather than asking about group membership per se, our measures ask about visual perception of a defining characteristic of group membership. Thus, the findings obtained using our measure raise the intriguing possibility that individuals' ideological orientations and emotional responses can affect the very way in which individuals *see* negative ambiguous targets, one that would be consistent with research on motivated cognition and perception (e.g., Balcetis & Dunning, 2006; Kruglanski, 1996).

Notwithstanding the contributions of the current research, there were some shortcomings that should be noted, as well as other aspects not considered here that could be investigated in future research. Firstly, our conclusions with regard to emotion should be treated with more caution than our findings with regard to SDO and RWA, given that we only had data on participants' emotional reactions in study 1, whereas we replicated the effects of SDO and RWA in a second context.

Future work should also address aspects that we did not investigate in the present studies. For example, in addition to SDO, RWA, and fear, follow-up studies might investigate a variable absent from our present datasets: the degree of ingroup identification. Indeed, those higher on ingroup identification should be especially concerned with the implications for their group of associations with maligned targets (Castano et al., 2002), and should thus also be more likely to deny negative ambiguous targets ingroup characteristics. Our work would also benefit from the demonstration that the effect of SDO, RWA, and fear on ingroup exclusion holds over and above the effect of conventional measures of xenophobia.

Future work could also examine the extent to which these patterns are unique to ambiguous targets, as our theorizing would lead us to expect. Thus, when negative targets are

patently members of the ingroup (e.g., a longtime employee committing fraud), it should be more difficult to deny them ingroup membership than when ambiguity exists (e.g., an *intern* committing fraud while in one's department), even when their inclusion in the group has negative implications for its status and/or cohesiveness. For example, given his *un*ambiguous racial background, we would not expect SDO, RWA, or fear to lead to a reduced perception of the Whiteness of James Holmes, suspected of perpetrating a mass shooting that killed 12 people in a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado. Thus, although variables such as SDO and RWA may nevertheless influence support for Holmes' punitive punishment (Kteily et al., 2012; Pratto et al., 1994), we would not expect them to influence perceptions of the shooter's Whiteness. In such cases, distancing the target from the group at large may occur via other mechanisms (such as casting them as 'black sheep'/'bad apples', or downplaying their centrality to the group).

Relatedly, it would be important to establish the extent to which the effects of SDO and RWA are specific to individuals making judgments about ambiguous targets relevant to their group. Thus, as a general orientation towards hierarchy in society (e.g., Kteily et al., 2012; Sibley & Liu, 2010) that is not redundant with the desire for ingroup dominance (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006), it is plausible that even high SDO members of third-party groups unrelated to the target (e.g., high SDO Chinese individuals judging the Woolwich suspects) may perceive low-status ambiguous targets in such a way as to minimize their association with high-status groups. In this way, these high SDO individuals could prevent the general blurring of status-boundaries between groups in society. Although such a pattern would be consistent with research on SDO, we would nevertheless expect those high SDO individuals for whom the target is more *relevant* to apply their social dominance drives to group membership judgments more strongly. Thus, it should be especially when the status-blurring inclusion of a negative ambiguous target affects *my*

group that it most motivates me (see Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, for a discussion of how SDO tends

to be applied most strongly to the most contextually-relevant issues). Similarly, one might argue

that even though individuals outside the group higher in RWA might judge those who do not

submit to authority (such as the suspects in our studies) more negatively, RWA should be

especially active when it is *our group*'s rules that are contravened.

Finally, it would be interesting to examine predictors of positive ambiguous targets. Our

theorizing should inform predictions not only about the exclusion of negative targets, but also the

potential *inclusion* of positive ambiguous targets. Thus, individuals higher on SDO or RWA

should be *more* likely to ascribe ingroup characteristics to positive ambiguous targets who could

enhance the group's status or conform to its norms. This tendency to imbue positive ambiguous

targets with ingroup characteristics has been previously observed: one example was the way in

which many Arabs proclaimed Steve Jobs' Syrian heritage (Jobs' father was from Homs, Syria)

during the posthumous celebration of his life (Goodman, 2011).

Conclusion

We collected data in the aftermath of two different terrorist attacks to demonstrate that

individuals' ideological orientations and their emotional responses both seem to influence the

ways in which they ascribe ingroup characteristics to ambiguous suspected perpetrators of those

attacks. This characterization matters: seeing perpetrators of an attack in outgroup terms was

associated with endorsing harsher treatment of the attackers themselves, as well as greater

support for aggressive policies that prioritize ingroup over outgroup outcomes.

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