Being similar versus being equal: Intergroup similarity moderates the influence of ingroup norms on discrimination and prejudice

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Abstract

In 2 studies, we examined the influence of in-group norms of anti- and pro-discrimination on prejudice and discrimination as a function of intergroup similarity (Studies 1 and 2) and in-group identification (Study 2). Intergroup similarity decreased prejudice and discrimination when in-group norm prescribed discrimination, whereas it increased prejudice and discrimination when in-group norm proscribed discrimination (Study 1). This pattern was most apparent in highly identified in-group members (Study 2). The paradoxical effect of the anti-discrimination norm in the high similarity condition (i.e., an increase in discrimination) is interpreted as a response to the threat this situation introduces to in-group distinctiveness.

Keywords: Social influence, anti-discrimination norm, pro-discrimination norm, prejudice, distinctiveness threat, group identification

Introduction

Social norms and conformity have been assumed to determine prejudice and discrimination since the early investigations in social psychology (Pettigrew, 1958; Sherif & Sherif, 1953), and have recently benefited from a renewed interest (e.g., Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002; Falomir, Muñoz-Rojas, Invernizzi, & Mugny, 2004; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996; Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller, & Lalonde, 2007; Monteith, Deneen, & Tooman, 1996; Stangor, Sechrist & Jost, 2001). However, little effort has been devoted to examine potential moderators of the normative influence process. Understanding how several factors affect social influence is important to determine the boundary conditions under which norms are likely to influence prejudiced attitudes and behaviors. The present research examined whether the perception of intergroup similarity, to the extent that it may cause a threat to in-group distinctiveness, is likely to moderate the influence of in-group norms on prejudice and discrimination.

Group conformity and threat on prejudice and discrimination

Several factors can moderate conformity to the in-group norm, such as its contextual salience (see Cialdini & Trost, 1998), perception of discrepancies (i.e., whether the prescribed behavior is or is not in conflict with personal, cultural, and socio-contextual factors, Falomir et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2007), the willingness to attenuate individual-norm discrepancies (Muñoz-Rojas, Falomir, Invernizzi, & Leuenberger, 2000; Sanchez-Mazas, Mugny, & Jovanovic, 1996), the individual's motive for a positive self-image (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Prislin & Wood, 2005), or in-group identification (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1999; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997b). The nature of the intergroup relations will also lead participants to endorse either the pro-discrimination or the anti-discrimination behavior emitted by the group (Falomir et al., 2004;

see also Jetten et al., 1996; Louis et al., 2007; Sherif & Sherif, 1953) or by its leaders (Platow, Hoar, Reid, Harley, & Morrison, 1997).

In the same vein, factors affecting one's interests or identity, such as realistic or symbolic threat, may not only determine prejudice and discrimination directly (e.g., Stephan & Stephan, 2000) but also moderate conformity to an in-group norm. Indeed, Falomir and colleagues (2004) found that nationals's perception that foreigners threatened their economic resources (i.e., employment) induced changes in their individual level of discrimination but also moderated the influence of contextually salient norms. Specifically, the anti-discrimination in-group norm reduced participants' in-group bias only when the perceived threat was low. When threatened by the out-group, participants were motivated to cope with the threat by maintaining discrimination against this out-group. Of interest for the purpose of the present research, participants tended to raise their level of in-group bias in the high threat and anti-discrimination norm condition, presumably to compensate for the equal treatment prescribed by the norm (Falomir et al., 2004, Study 2).

The present research attempted to go a step further and extend these considerations to a different form of threat: the distinctiveness threat associated with an excessive intergroup similarity.

Intergroup similarity

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) proposes that people derive their individual self-concepts and self-esteem from their group memberships and that they struggle to achieve positive comparisons between their in-group and relevant out-groups. This theory points out a motivational process underlying intergroup discrimination: in-group members seek to differentiate their own group from relevant out-groups in order to preserve a distinct sense of self

and to protect their group's integrity. It follows that the more the out-group is perceived to be similar to the in-group, the more positive distinctiveness needs to be restored, and the more in-group members discriminate against this out-group (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Accordingly, similarity may induce an identity threat, an increased comparability between groups (Caddick, 1982), and an obliteration of intergroup boundaries (Sanchez-Mazas, Roux, & Mugny, 1994), and thus lead to dynamics of differentiation. There is now considerable evidence demonstrating the ability of intergroup similarity to induce a threat to distinctiveness, and the consequences in terms of differentiation and in-group bias (see Jetten & Spears, 2003, for a review).

Consistently, policies designed to improve interethnic relations that undermine intergroup differences—such as color-blindness or assimilation—have been shown to increase negative attitudes toward African Americans compared to other approaches that acknowledge intergroup differences (i.e., multiculturalism; Richeson & Nusbaum, 2004; Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). For instance, categorization at a superordinate level was shown to be better achieved, and to lead to more positive attitudes between similar subgroups, when both superordinate and subgroup identities were activated (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000b). When subgroup identities were not recognized, similarity led to higher in-group bias.

Despite the theoretical and empirical evidence supporting the idea that intergroup similarity may increase prejudice and discrimination, other approaches support the opposite idea—i.e., a negative relation between intergroup similarity and discrimination. For instance, Belief Congruence Theory (Rokeach, 1960) suggests that a dissimilarity in beliefs, attitudes or values increases negative attitudes toward other people and groups (see Struch & Schwartz, 1989), and that emphasizing similarities between groups is likely to decrease prejudice and

discrimination. The Categorical Differentiation Model (Doise, 1978; Doise, Deschamps & Meyer, 1978) suggests that differentiation at the cognitive, evaluative or behavioral level leads to differentiation along the other dimensions. Accordingly, the more two groups are perceived to be different, the more a differentiation at the evaluative (prejudice) and behavioral (discrimination) levels is expected. Finally, Self-Categorization Theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) also helps to understand how intergroup distinctiveness leads to prejudice and discrimination. Principles of meta-contrast ratio and comparative fit predict that intergroup differences increase the perceptual salience of groups, and that this heightened salience will lead to subsequent differentiation (Oakes, 1987).

Integrating these competing predictions regarding how similarity and differentiation can be related, Jetten and colleagues (2004; see also Jetten & Spears, 2003) proposed a curvilinear relationship between intergroup similarity and differentiation. On the one hand, differences between groups can lead to differentiation when groups are competing for valued resources (the instrumental function) or because of input distinctiveness (i.e., actual intergroup differences; see Jetten & Spears, 2003). On the other hand, intergroup similarities breed differentiation and refer to situations in which group identity is well defined, but threatened by comparison with a similar out-group. In addition, Jetten and colleagues (2004) examined the effects of various potential moderators of the relation between intergroup distinctiveness and in-group bias (i.e., relevance of dimension of comparison, relevance of out-group, nature of intergroup relation, and group identification).

In sum, low intergroup similarity may both increase prejudice and discrimination (i.e., through the categorization and differentiation principles) or reduce it (i.e., by the recognition of distinctive identities). Conversely, high intergroup similarity may both increase prejudice and

discrimination (i.e., because of a threat to distinctiveness) or decrease it (i.e., by providing individuals with a common in-group identity). Research is thus needed to understand which pattern of findings will result from perceived intergroup similarity in order to predict prejudice and discrimination.

Intergroup similarity and in-group norms

In the present research, we argue that other factors such as in-group norms may either augment or reduce the accessibility of intergroup similarities by inducing a holistic assessment of intergroup features (see Mussweiler, 2003, for a similar argument). In particular, we propose that the anti-discrimination (vs. pro-discrimination) norm orients the processing of intergroup similarity (vs. dissimilarity). When the in-group norm is anti-discrimination, people are led to focus on intergroup similarities. This results in an increased accessibility of features common to the in-group and the out-group, and leads to an increase in differentiation when the groups are similar. When the in-group norm is pro-discrimination, however, people may be led to focus on intergroup differences. This results in an increased accessibility of features that are different between the in-group and the out-group, and lead to an increase in differentiation when the groups are different due to a reflective distinctiveness process.

We consider that intergroup similarity may be particularly threatening when strengthened by in-group norms that prescribe an egalitarian and undifferentiated treatment between the in-group and the out-group (i.e., anti-discrimination norms). Since anti-discrimination norms emphasize the importance of equal treatment for everyone regardless of social category, intergroup similarity may increase the distinctiveness threat and discrimination specifically when the in-group norm prescribes anti-discrimination. Accordingly, anti-discriminatory in-group

norms may paradoxically increase prejudice and discrimination when intergroup similarity is high, but obtain more influence when intergroup similarity is low.

Intergroup similarity should work differently when the in-group norm is pro-discrimination. Since intergroup similarity is likely to justify an equal treatment between the in-group and the out-group, a pro-discrimination in-group norm may not be provided with a sufficient source of justification (Zelditch, 2001), and individuals are likely to distance themselves from the in-group norm. We also consider that intergroup similarity would not be threatening in these conditions given that the group norm ensures the necessary distinctiveness by a discriminatory intergroup treatment. As a consequence, we expect the pro-discrimination norm influence to be undermined as long as intergroup similarity increases. Conversely, since intergroup differentiation enhances intergroup discrimination motives, low intergroup similarity should strengthen the influence of pro-discrimination in-group norms.

To our knowledge, only one study examined the interaction between intergroup similarity and in-group norms. Jetten et al. (1996) illustrated the effect of similarity on positive differentiation. They provided participants with feedback concerning in-group and out-group norms regarding reward allocations (fairness vs. discrimination). Participants were assigned to four experimental conditions corresponding to the four possible combinations. Among these combinations, two were distinctive (the in-group norm was fairness while the out-group norm was discrimination, and vice versa) and two were similar (both group norms were either fairness or discrimination). Results showed that similarity of group norms led to more discrimination in natural groups (Study 2) but to less discrimination in minimal groups (Study 1). However, since norm induction was not independent from similarity induction, and results were inconsistent across the two studies, our understanding of these findings is not straightforward.

In sum, previous researches have focused on the effects either of in-group norms or of structural variables such as intergroup similarity. Yet, to our knowledge, no study examined the interactive effect of intergroup similarity and group norm, and further research is thus needed. The main goal of the present research was to test the hypothesis that intergroup similarity and in-group norms interact in order to predict prejudice and discrimination. Across two studies, participants were informed about the results of previous studies on the characteristics of in-group and out-group members showing that both groups shared the same four traits (intergroup similarity condition). In the low intergroup similarity condition, they received either no information (Study 1) or information showing that the group only shared two traits out of four (Study 2). They were then informed about the results of a survey carried out in a representative sample of the in-group's population showing either that the in-group discriminated and supported discrimination against the out-group (pro-discrimination norm condition) or not (anti-discrimination norm condition). The main dependent variables were prejudice and intergroup discrimination.

We expected a similarity by norm interaction on participants' prejudice and discrimination. Specifically, high intergroup similarity, as compared to low similarity, should decrease prejudice and discrimination when the in-group norm is pro-discrimination whereas it should increase prejudice and discrimination when the in-group norm is anti-discrimination.

Study 1

Method

Participants

Seventy-nine persons (39 males, mean age = 30.06 years, *SD* = 11.26) voluntarily participated in this study. They were recruited in the campus of the University of Geneva (31

were students). A female experimenter invited them to participate in a study concerning the image of different social groups leaving in Switzerland. Once participants volunteered to participate, the experimenter gave them a questionnaire containing the different measures. This questionnaire was presented as a study concerning the images of the Swiss and the ex-Yugoslavian nationals living in Switzerland.

Forty-six participants were Swiss nationals and the remaining 33 were dual nationals (Swiss and other). However, as nationality did not have any effect on subsequent measures, all participants were considered in the analysis.

Procedure

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire concerning the image of different populations living in Switzerland. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions. Each questionnaire contained an induction of intergroup similarity, a manipulation of in-group norm and measures of modern prejudice and resource allocations. Target populations were Swiss nationals and ex-Yugoslavian nationals. The first page of the questionnaire explicitly stated that the label "ex-Yugoslavian nationals" meant immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia.

Intergroup similarity. Participants in the high similarity condition were provided with information concerning the distribution of four traits – two positive and two negative – in the two target populations that stemmed from an alleged previous study.[1] Two of these traits were stereotypical of the Swiss (positive: methodical; negative: conservative) and the two others were stereotypical of the ex-Yugoslavians (positive: family oriented; negative: boorish). The four traits were presented as equally distributed within each population. Results of the alleged study were presented within tables representing the distribution of the four traits between these two

populations. Participants were informed that Swiss-stereotypic traits were highly present within both the Swiss sample (84.2% and 78.4% of Swiss people allegedly claimed to be methodical and conservative, respectively) and the ex-Yugoslavian sample (85.6% and 76.6%; respectively). Ex-Yougoslavian-stereotypic traits were barely presents within both the Swiss sample (16.1% and 13.1% of Swiss people allegedly claimed to be boorish and family-oriented, respectively) and the ex-Yugoslavian sample (10.4% and 16.3% respectively). In the control condition, no information concerning the distribution of traits was provided.

In-group norm. Participants were informed about the results of an alleged previous study – similar to the one they were participating in – carried out with a representative sample of Swiss citizens. These results were displayed in a graphical form, using percentages of responses (i.e., 'Yes', 'No', and 'I don't know') to four questions. The first two graphics dealt with the perceived legitimacy of social policies favoring the Swiss over the ex-Yugoslavians. The last two graphics allegedly concerned the actual behavior of this sample when they were asked to allocate resources to the two groups. In the anti-discrimination condition, participants were informed that the majority of Swiss nationals did not consider favoring Swiss people over the ex-Yugoslavians in terms of social welfare, nor in terms of housing or education benefits, to be legitimate (respectively, 82.25 and 79.21% responded 'No'). Also, they did not favor their in-group when asked to allocate these resources (respectively, 89.26, and 87.33% of the participants opted for an egalitarian distribution of resources). In the pro-discrimination condition, the higher percentages were associated with discriminatory responses (i.e., 82.25 and 79.21% of participants in the alleged study considered in-group favoritism on social resources to be legitimate, and 89.26 and 87.33% of these participants allegedly opted for a distribution of resources favoring the in-group).

Modern prejudice. At this moment, the Modern Prejudice Scale was introduced. This scale was adapted from Akrami, Ekehammar, and Araya (2000) to correspond to the Swiss context. This scale consisted of 9 items assessing modern prejudice toward ex-Yugoslavians (for instance, "Racist groups are no longer a threat for the ex-Yugoslavians", "The ex-Yugoslavians are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights", "A multicultural Switzerland would be good"). All items were rated on a 7-point scale (from 1= “Not at all” to 7= “Absolutely”). A factorial analysis revealed that 7 items loaded on one factor, whereas the 2 remaining items loaded on a second factor. Only the 7 items loading on the first factor were used to compute a modern prejudice score (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .85$). A higher score reflects a higher degree of modern prejudice.

In-group favoritism. Participants were asked to imagine that they had to decide an increase in funds for four social benefits (i.e., ‘social security benefits’, ‘minimum salary’, ‘education grants’, and ‘accommodation allowance’). For each social benefit, participants had to distribute a maximum of 100 points to the in-group (Swiss nationals) and another maximum of 100 points to the out-group (the Yugoslavians). Scores for the four benefits were averaged separately for the in-group ($M = 65.08$, $SD = 23.80$; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .94$) and the out-group ($M = 44.40$, $SD = 26.40$; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$), $F(1, 75) = 32.146$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .30$. The difference between the point allocations for the in-group and the out-group was computed in order to obtain an in-group favoritism index ($M = 21.48$, $SD = 32.73$).

Manipulation checks. Participants were finally presented with manipulation checking questions. They were asked if allegedly polled Swiss people allocated more social resources to their in-group compared to the out-group (‘Yes’, ‘No’), and if these people thought it was

legitimate to favor Swiss nationals over the Yugoslavians in the allocation of social resources ('Yes', 'No').

As a manipulation check for intergroup similarity, participants were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale (1="Absolutely different" to 7="Absolutely similar") the extent to which they personally perceived the Swiss group and the ex-Yugoslavian group to be similar (i.e., "In your opinion, the Swiss and the ex-Yugoslavians are :"). Finally, they were asked to indicate their nationality and native country. At the conclusion of the study, participants were thanked and thoroughly debriefed.

Results

Manipulation checks

Perception of in-group norm. Participants' responses to manipulation checks were regressed on intergroup similarity, in-group norm and similarity by norm interaction, using a binary logistic regression analysis. Analysis showed that the manipulation of the in-group norm was efficient. On the first item (i.e., "Swiss people allocated more social resources to Swiss nationals"), a greater amount of participants in the pro-discrimination condition (Yes = 88.9%) perceived that a majority of Swiss people favored their in-group relative to the anti-discrimination condition (Yes = 17.6%), Wald $\chi^2 = 30.165$, $p < .001$. On the second item (i.e., "Swiss people consider it legitimate to favor Swiss nationals over ex-Yugoslavians in the allocation of social resources"), a greater amount of participants in the pro-discrimination condition (Yes = 81.1%) perceived that a majority of Swiss people favored their in-group relative to the anti-discrimination condition (Yes = 18.9%), Wald $\chi^2 = 30.201$, $p < .001$.

Perceived similarity. Scores on the measure of perceived similarity were regressed on our model. Analysis yielded a significant effect of similarity induction, $F(1, 73) = 17.59$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .19$. Participants in the high similarity condition perceived both groups to be more similar ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.24$) than participants in the low similarity condition ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.48$). Neither the in-group norm nor the intergroup similarity by in-group norm interaction effects reached conventional threshold of significance ($Fs < 1$).

Dependent variables

Modern prejudice. A 2 (Intergroup similarity: Similarity vs. Control) X 2 (In-group norm: Anti-discrimination vs. Pro-discrimination) ANOVA was performed on the measure of modern prejudice. Means and standard deviations are displayed in Table 1. The analysis showed a significant intergroup similarity by in-group norm interaction effect, $F(1, 75) = 11.407$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2_p = .13$. Similarity significantly decreased prejudice in the pro-discriminatory condition, $F(1, 75) = 4.831$, $p = .031$, $\eta^2_p = .06$, whereas it increased it in the anti-discrimination condition, $F(1, 75) = 6.927$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2_p = .085$.

In-group favoritism. The in-group favoritism index was analyzed using the same ANOVA. The analysis also revealed a significant similarity by in-group norm interaction[2], $F(1, 75) = 6.738$, $p = .011$, $\eta^2_p = .082$. Similarity marginally increased in-group favoritism in the anti-discrimination norm condition, $F(1, 75) = 3.098$, $p = .083$, $\eta^2_p = .04$, whereas it decreased in-group favoritism in the pro-discrimination condition, $F(1, 75) = 3.802$, $p = .055$, $\eta^2_p = .06$.

Discussion

This first study examined whether the interaction between in-group norm and intergroup similarity would influence the perception of a threat to distinctiveness and thus affect prejudice

and discrimination. In accordance with our predictions, in-group norm moderated the effect of intergroup similarity on both attitudinal (i.e., modern prejudice), and behavioral measures of differentiation (i.e., in-group favoritism). In particular, when similarity was low, differentiation decreased when the in-group norm was anti-discrimination, and increased when the in-group norm was pro-discrimination. Conversely, when similarity was high, participants diverged from the in-group norm: both prejudice and in-group favoritism increased when the in-group norm was anti-discrimination and decreased when the in-group norm was pro-discrimination.

Despite the fact that this study supports our hypothesis, alternative hypotheses can account for the observed results. Indeed, the present study does not allow to determine whether the paradoxical effect of the anti-discrimination norm is explained by the participants' willingness to differentiate from their in-group or by an increased motivation to defend their in-group against a threatening out-group, as we argue. For instance, it could be argued that, in the anti-discrimination norm condition, similarity increases the likelihood that both groups are seen as one larger in-group which in turn could increase discrimination because of an excessively large group size that threatens one's individual distinctiveness need (see Pickett & Leonardelli, 2006). Consequently, one will decrease identification at a group level in favor of identification at a more exclusive, individual, level. However, we rather expected participants to increase differentiation in order to restore distinctiveness at a group level (see Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). One way to disentangle these explanations is to take into account the dimension of in-group identification. Accordingly, we performed a second study in order to provide additional evidence and to extend previous results regarding the effect of in-group identification.

Study 2

This study introduced three changes as compared to Study 1. First, Study 2 was carried out in France, whereas Study 1 was carried out in Switzerland. Second, we modified the manipulation of intergroup similarity. In particular, participants were provided with information concerning a high intergroup similarity vs. a low intergroup similarity (instead of a control without similarity information). Moreover, in Study 2, intergroup similarity was manipulated with traits that were not *a priori* stereotypical of the target groups. Compared to Study 1, similarity induction is thus less likely to induce suspicion amongst the participants. Third, we introduced a measure of in-group identification.

In-group identification, or commitment—defined here as the strength of one's ties with one's social identity (Ellemers et al., 2002)—have been shown to be related to in-group identity content (i.e., in-group stereotype and norms, Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002; Jetten et al., 1997b), reaction to in-group threat (see Branscombe et al., 1999), and intergroup differentiation (Doosje et al., 1999). On the one hand, in-group identification has been shown to moderate the relationship between intergroup similarity and differentiation (Jetten et al., 2004). When similarity is high, low identifiers will perceive both groups at the superordinate level and will not express prejudice and discrimination, whereas high identifiers will perceive a threat to their in-group identity and thus increase intergroup differentiation. On the other hand, identification has also been shown to increase conformity to in-group norms. For instance, Jetten, Spears and Manstead (1997b), studying norms that proscribe or prescribe discrimination, showed that high identifiers conform more to their group norms than low identifiers, especially when this norm prescribes differentiation.

As identification is related to conformity, perceived similarity and intergroup differentiation, we expected high identifiers to be more sensitive to the threat to distinctiveness induced by similarity in the anti-discrimination condition. Furthermore, we expected identification to be related to conformity when similarity is not threatening, leading high identifiers to display more in-group favoritism and prejudice in the pro-discrimination norm condition compared to the anti-discrimination condition. As a consequence we expected identification to moderate the in-group norm by intergroup similarity interaction observed in Study 1. More specifically, the in-group norm by similarity interaction observed in Study 1 should be stronger for individuals with higher levels of identification compared to those with lower levels of identification.

Method

Participants

One hundred ten students at the University of Chambéry (France) participated in this study (32 men, 76 women and 2 unspecified participants, mean age = 20.96 years, *SD* = 2.16). Participants, all students, were individually recruited on the University campus as they walked between classes. All of them were French native speakers with French nationality. A male experimenter invited them to participate in a study concerning the image of different social groups leaving in France. People who accepted to participate received a questionnaire containing the different measures and inductions. The questionnaire was presented as a "study concerning the images of the French and the North-African immigrants living in France. It was specified that the term "North-African immigrants" referred to people from Algeria, Tunisia, or Morocco who live in France without having the French nationality.

Procedure

The procedure was comparable to the one used in Study 1. However, we added a measure of in-group identification and we slightly modified the intergroup similarity manipulation. Each questionnaire contained, in the following order, a measure of identification, an induction of intergroup similarity, and a manipulation of in-group norm. It also contained a measure of in-group bias and a measure of modern prejudice. Target populations were French nationals and North African immigrants (hereafter labeled as North Africans).

In-group identification. In-group identification was assessed with a 5-item scale (see Doosje, Spears, & Ellemers, 2002). Participants were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale (1="Not at all" to 7="Absolutely") the extent to which they agreed with 5 different propositions ("At this moment, I identify with my group, the French", "At this moment, I see myself as belonging to the French", "At this moment, I am happy to belong to my group, the French", "At this moment, I feel committed to the French", and "At this moment, I feel solidarity with my group, the French"). An in-group identification score was computed (M = 4.16, SD = 1.59, Cronbach's α = .92).

Intergroup similarity. Induction of similarity was slightly different from the one used in the previous study. In all conditions, participants were provided with information concerning the distribution of four different traits (sociable, organized, cooperative, and autonomous). All of the traits had a positive valence. In the high similarity condition, participants were provided with information that represented all the traits as equally distributed in the two samples. Moreover, in this second study, an experimental condition replaced the control condition. In this condition, hereafter labeled the low similarity condition, both groups were presented as being similar on two traits and different on the two other traits[3]. Furthermore, traits were counterbalanced so that

differences between the two experimental conditions would not be attributable to the description of the two groups.

In-group norm. Besides the different target groups, the manipulation of the in-group norm was identical to the one performed in Study 1.

Modern Prejudice Scale. The Modern Prejudice Scale was then administered. This measure was identical to the one used in Study 1, adapted to the French context. Once again, we computed a score of modern prejudice (M = 3.18, SD = .83; Cronbach's α =.80).

In-group favoritism. This measure was identical to the one used in Study 1, apart that participants allocated resources to French and to North Africans. Participants were then asked to imagine that they had to decide an increase in funds for four social benefits (i.e., 'social security benefits', 'minimum salary', 'education grants', and 'accommodation allowance'). For each of these social benefits, they had to allocate a maximum of 100 points to the in-group (the French) and a maximum of 100 points to the out-group (the North Africans). Scores of the four benefits for the in-group (M = 46.85, SD = 23.36; Cronbach's α = .98) and for the out-group (M = 42.94, SD = 20.86; Cronbach's α = .97) were averaged. The difference between in-group and out-group point allocations was performed in order to obtain an in-group favoritism index (M = 4.15, SD = 11.20).

Manipulation checks. Participants were then asked to indicate to what extent they perceived their in-group norm to be pro- or anti-discriminatory. They were asked to indicate on two different 7-point scales if polled French people in the alleged study allocated more social resources to their in-group compared to the out-group (1="As much to French as North Africans" to 7="Much more to French than to North Africans"), and if these people considered it legitimate

to favor French natives over North African natives in the allocation of social resources (1="Not legitimate at all" to 7="Absolutely legitimate").

Participants were then asked to indicate on two 7-point scales (from 1="Absolutely different" to 7="Absolutely similar") the extent to which they perceived the 2 groups to be similar (i.e., "According to the study presented above, the French and the North-Africans are :", "In your personal opinion, the French and the North-Africans are :"). Finally, they were asked to indicate the nationality and native country of their parents and themselves. At the conclusion of the study, participants were thanked and thoroughly debriefed.

Results

Manipulation checks.

The scores obtained on each manipulation checking question were regressed on intergroup similarity induction (coded -.5 for the low similarity condition and +.5 for the high similarity condition), in-group norm induction (coded -.5 for the pro-discrimination norm condition and +.5 for the anti-discrimination norm condition), identification (centered), and all possible interactions between these 3 variables.

Perception of in-group norm. We used the mean of participants' scores on the 2 items as a measure of the perception of in-group norm, $r = .78$, $p < .001$. Analysis revealed a large main effect for in-group norm on this measure, $F\ (1, 102) = 133.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .57$. Participants in the anti-discrimination norm perceived the in-group norm to be less favorable to intergroup discrimination ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.27$) than participants in the pro-discrimination norm condition ($M = 5.92$, $SD = .88$). Furthermore, each score differed from the middle of the scale, $F(1, 102) = 20.67$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .17$, and, $F(1, 102) = 161.87$, $p < .001$ $\eta^2_p = .61$, respectively.

Perceived similarity. Analysis revealed that measures of perceived similarity were highly correlated, r (110) = .499, $p < .001$. Then, they were averaged and regressed on our model. Analysis yielded a significant effect of similarity induction, $F(1, 102) = 72.41$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .415$. Participants in the high similarity condition perceived both groups to be more similar ($M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.06$) than participants in the low similarity condition ($M = 3.86$, $SD = .81$). Furthermore, analysis revealed a marginally significant intergroup similarity by in-group norm interaction, $F(1, 102) = 3.39$, $p = .07$, $\eta^2_p = .03$, indicating that the main effect of similarity was even stronger in the pro-discrimination norm condition, $\eta^2_p = .23$, than in the anti-discrimination norm condition, $\eta^2_p = .11$. No other main or interaction effects reached conventional significance (Fs < 1).

Dependent variables

Our primary dependent variables were regressed on intergroup similarity induction, in-group norm induction, identification, and all possible interactions between these 3 variables.

Modern prejudice. The analysis yielded a significant main effect for in-group identification, $F(1, 102) = 9.91$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2_p = .09$. Identification was positively related to modern prejudice ($B = .159$). The expected three-way interaction was also significant, $F(1, 102) = 6.59$, $p = .012$, $\eta^2_p = .06$ (see Figure 1). For low conditional values of in-group identification (i.e., mean score of identification minus one standard deviation), the similarity by norm interaction did not reach statistical significance, $F(1, 102) = 1.42$, $p = .24$, $\eta^2_p = .01$.

For high conditional values of identification (i.e., mean score of identification plus one standard deviation), the similarity by norm interaction was significant, $F(1, 102) = 6.26$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2_p = .06$: similarity was negatively related to modern prejudice in the pro-discrimination condition, $B = -.72$, $F(1,102) = 5.83$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2_p = .05$, whereas it was positively but not

significantly related to modern prejudice in the anti-discrimination condition, B = .40, $F(1,102)$ = 1.44, p = .23, η^2_p = .01. Furthermore, in-group identification was positively related to modern prejudice only in the low similarity/pro-discrimination condition, B = .316, $F(1,102)$ = 5.81, p = .003, η^2_p = .08, and in the high similarity/anti-discrimination condition, B = .268, $F(1,102)$ = 4.81, p = .032, η^2_p = .04. The link between identification and prejudice did not reach statistical significance in the other 2 conditions (ps > .35).

In-group favoritism. Analysis revealed the presence of a significant overall in-group favoring bias (M = 2.21, SD = 4.74), $F(1, 102)$ =26.73, p <.001, η^2_p =.21. The results revealed a significant effect for in-group identification, $F(1, 102)$ = 4.10, p = .04, η^2_p =.04. The results also replicated the intergroup similarity by in-group norm interaction observed in Study 1, $F(1, 102)$ = 4.61, p = .03, η^2_p =.04. Finally, analysis revealed a significant three-way interaction effect, $F(1, 102)$ = 13.28, p < .001, η^2_p =.115 (see Figure 2). For low conditional values of in-group identification, the 2-way similarity by norm interaction did not reach statistical significance, $F(1, 102)$ = 1.27, p = .26, η^2_p =.012.

For high conditional values of identification, as for modern prejudice, the 2-way interaction was significant, $F(1, 102)$ = 16.97, p < .001, η^2_p =.143. This interaction reflected an effect of similarity in the pro-discrimination norm condition, B = -6.26, $F(1,102)$ = 14.32, p < .001, η^2_p = .12 . The more the two groups were similar, the less the participants discriminated against the out-group. This effect was reversed in the anti-discrimination norm: the more similarity, the more favoritism, B = 3.99, $F(1,102)$ = 4.61, p = .03, η^2_p = .04. In the pro-discrimination norm condition, in-group identification was positively related to discrimination when similarity was low, B = 1.76, $F(1,102)$ = 9.16, p = .003, η^2_p = .08, but not when similarity was high, B = -.67, $F(1,102)$ = 1.84, p = .18, η^2_p = .02. In the anti-discrimination norm condition,

however, in-group identification was positively related to discrimination when similarity was high, $B = 1.49$, $F(1,102) = 4.83$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2_p = .045$, but not when similarity was low, $B = -.25$, $F(1,102) = .243$, $p = .63$, $\eta^2_p = .002$.

Discussion

Overall, the present results replicated and extended the findings observed in Study 1. We expected and found the interaction between in-group norms and intergroup similarity observed in Study 1 to be moderated by identification. As expected, the norm by similarity interaction appeared to be stronger in higher levels of in-group identification, compared to lower levels of identification. Again, but mainly for high identification participants, the results showed a paradoxical effect of the anti-discrimination norm in the high similarity condition, i.e., an increase in prejudice and discrimination.

In other words, the present research showed that in-group identification predicted prejudice and discrimination but only in specific conditions. In the high similarity condition in-group identification was positively related to prejudice and discrimination when the norm was anti-discrimination, but not when the norm was pro-discrimination. This finding suggests that the motivation to restore one's group distinctiveness is a more likely explanation for the paradoxical effect of the anti-discrimination norm than a shift to a more individual level of identity. Furthermore, for high identifiers, their motivation to protect the in-group seemed to be stronger than their motivation to conform. As regards the pro-discrimination norm, both high and low identifiers behaved similarly when similarity was high. This result supports the hypothesis of a necessary legitimacy of the in-group norm to influence group members' behavior (Falomir et al., 2004). Indeed, the pro-discrimination norm may lack legitimacy in a context of high similarity, and therefore, leads to a decrease in discrimination and prejudice.

In the low similarity condition, however, in-group identification was positively related to prejudice and discrimination when the in-group norm was pro-discrimination, but not when this norm was anti-discrimination. This result replicates previous findings (see Jetten et al., 1997b), and two explanations can be proposed to account for it. On the one hand, an anti-discrimination norm may conflict with highly identified group members' motivation to favor their in-group. As a consequence, the two motives—to act in accordance with in-group norms and to display more in-group favoritism—may have cancelled each other out, leading to a lack of correlation between identification and prejudice or discrimination (see Jetten et al., 1997b). Low identifiers are merely less motivated to display in-group favoritism and follow the in-group norm. On the other hand, as anti-discrimination is a positively valued cultural principle, and as low identifiers may not be particularly motivated to display in-group favoritism, no difference in prejudice and discrimination may be expected as a function of identification (see Falomir et al., 2004, for a similar argument). Besides being more parsimonious, this latter explanation is consistent with previous research showing that low identifiers are likely to endorse the positive but not the negative aspects of their in-group identity (see Pickett, Bonner & Coleman, 2002), whereas high identifiers are likely to endorse both the positive and negative aspects (Pickett, et al., 2002; Spears, Doosje & Ellemers, 1997).

General Discussion

The present research examined the relationship between in-group norm and intergroup similarity on prejudice and discrimination. Across two studies, results consistently showed that intergroup similarity interacts with in-group norms. When intergroup similarity was low (i.e., in the control and low similarity conditions), in-group norms influenced participants' modern

prejudice and in-group favoritism: the pro-discrimination norm led to more prejudice and discrimination than the anti-discrimination norm. When intergroup similarity was high, however, in-group norms had the expected reversed effect: prejudice and discrimination were higher in the anti-discrimination norm condition than in the pro-discrimination norm condition. This paradoxical effect was consistent in both studies and across two different contexts (Switzerland and France) with different out-groups and different histories of immigration. Furthermore, Study 2 showed that this pattern of findings was strengthened as in-group identification increased. Overall, these results support previous research by showing that the influence of in-group norms is moderated by structural factors such as intergroup threat (see Falomir et al., 2004).

Concerning the low similarity condition, we found a conformity effect (Study 1), moderated by in-group identification (Study 2). These findings are consistent with previous research concerning both the effect of social influence on prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination (e.g., Crandall et al., 2002; Falomir et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2007; Monteith et al., 1996; Pettigrew, 1958; Sherif & Sherif, 1953), and the effect of group identification on conformity (Jetten et al., 2002; Jetten et al., 1997b). However, the present findings additionally showed that these conformity effects were grounded in contexts of intergroup distinctiveness. In particular, these studies showed a reversed effect for norms when intergroup similarity was high; a pro-discrimination norm led to a decrease in prejudice and in-group favoritism and an anti-discrimination norm led to an increase in discrimination against the out-group. This latter result is consistent with the literature on distinctiveness threat. When the in-group norm was anti-discrimination, we observed an increase in discrimination subsequent to a high intergroup similarity (Branscombe et al., 1999; Jetten & Spears, 2003; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997a, 2001). In order to cope with a threatening intergroup similarity, in-group members disregarded

their in-group norm and discriminated against the out-group. However, this counter-conformity effect may not be understood as a lack of in-group solidarity (see also Falomir et al., 2004; Falomir, Gabarrot, & Mugny, in press), but as a strengthened motivation to defend one's in-group identity. This proposal is supported by the positive relationship between in-group identification and differentiation when the in-group norm proscribed discrimination and intergroup similarity was high.

Second, the present findings suggest that intergroup similarity leads to an increase in discrimination specifically when the in-group norm proscribes discrimination. In other words, intergroup similarity leads to discrimination only when in-group members cannot establish in-group distinctiveness at another relevant level, such as the normative one. Indeed, when the in-group norm favors discrimination, intergroup similarity leads to a decrease in differentiation. Since the pro-discrimination norm reduced the threat to distinctiveness, and since group members did not perceive this norm as legitimate given the high intergroup similarity, no justification was provided to discriminate against the out-group. Furthermore, in-group members seem also to distance themselves from this discriminating group, as suggested by the absence of the relationship between in-group identification and differentiation in this condition.

Our studies showed that both similarities and dissimilarities are likely to induce negative intergroup attitudes depending on the salience of the in-group norm. Even if the predicted outcome is identical in the high similarity/anti-discrimination norm and the low similarity/pro-discrimination norm conditions, the underlying processes are assumed to be different. For instance, discrimination under these conditions may be related to different motives (Spears, Jetten, & Scheepers, 2002). Our findings suggest that discrimination in the case of high similarity is related to an identity function (i.e., a distinctiveness need), whereas discrimination

in the case of high dissimilarity is related to both the "reality principle"—based on perceived intergroup differences—and an instrumental function associated with group interests (see also Scheepers, Spears, Doosje & Manstead, 2002, 2006). Accordingly, further studies investigating whether these functions relate to specific in-group norms would be of value.

In the present studies, we did not examine the effects of high dissimilarity between the in-group and the out-group. However, extrapolating our reasoning, we can assume that excessively perceived dissimilarity is likely to induce an increase of discrimination by augmenting category salience (see Doise, 1978; Oakes, 1987) and by reducing the legitimacy of an anti-discrimination norm according to the Aristotelian principle stating that equals should be treated equally (and unequals treated unequally in proportion of their differences; see, for instance, Cullen, 1992; Wenzel, 2004). The latter possibility presupposes a curvilinear relationship between similarity and differentiation (Jetten & Spears, 2003), but only for the anti-discrimination norm. For the pro-discrimination norm when differences legitimate differentiation, prejudice and discrimination may increase linearly as a function of intergroup dissimilarity. Future research should examine the impact of excessive dissimilarity on normative influence.

Another important aspect that has been overlooked in the present research is the dimension of differentiation (i.e., the descriptive or the evaluative facet, see Jetten et al. 2004). For instance, prior research concerning colorblindness and multiculturalism showed that negating intergroup differences led to a more negative evaluation of the out-group relative to the in-group (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004), whereas recognition of differences led to an increase in category differentiation which occurred both for in-group favoring and out-group favoring attributes and was linked, in some cases, to a greater overall positivity toward the out-group and attention to individuating information (Wolsko et al., 2001). Furthermore, Jetten and colleagues

(2004) showed that the distinctiveness–differentiation relation differed for judgmental and behavioral measures. Thus, further research may strive to determine if the observed increase in in-group bias and prejudice observed in our studies is associated with an increase in category differentiation (i.e., a more stereotypical description of both groups) or to a more negative evaluation.

The fact that our studies dealt with natural groups represents an advantage in terms of external validity of the observed results, but may raise questions concerning the implications of group characteristics in these results. For instance, Jetten and colleagues (1996) found inconsistent results between studies involving either minimal or natural groups. Furthermore, in our studies, participants were members of an indigenous, high status group, and status had been shown to moderate the relationship between intergroup threat and negative out-group attitudes (see Riek, Mania & Gaertner, 2006).

As the four social resources used to assess in-group bias seem to relate to low status and disadvantaged people, one could argue that some in-group members might perceive negatively the allocation of such paternalistic resources to their in-group, or may support them as a subtle way to increase their power over the out-group (see, for instance, Nadler, 2002). However, if such rewards reflected a subtle power play reflecting a paternalistic helping, participants would have displayed out-group rather than in-group favoritism. The results showed that the average resource allocation is biased towards the in-group (rather than the out-group). Furthermore, a very few participants displayed out-group favoritism (only 3 people in Study 1 and 9 in Study 2). Finally, the results were replicated on a measure of modern prejudice.

Society is composed of social categories that are delimited by differences in culture and status. Parallel to the observed change in socio-cultural norms concerning intergroup relations,

there is a decrease in the perceived legitimacy of this status hierarchy, which may in fact be partly responsible for this change (Duckitt, 1992). As this legitimacy is fading, minority groups are more likely to challenge the existing *status quo* and claim their desire to be treated equally. This claim for a "*droit à l'indifférence*" (i.e., the right to be treated similarly to other groups, see Brubacker, 2001), as well as the "melting pot" metaphor prevailing in some Western societies (i.e., the cultural assimilation as an integration policy; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a, 2000b; Wolsko et al., 2000), emphasizes the similarities between individuals, and erases boundaries between groups. Thus, lay person theories, political policies, the cultural anti-discrimination norm, as well as social psychological theories of prejudice reduction (i.e., contact hypothesis theories, Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; or Belief Congruence Theory, Rokeach, 1960) suggest that prejudice can be decreased and intergroup relations improved when people are encouraged to focus on similarities, rather than differences, between groups. However, our findings highlight that undermining group identities, particularly in societies characterized by an anti-discrimination principle, may not be the best strategy to improve intergroup relations. Such a strategy arouses people's motivations for distinctiveness that may, in turn, weaken norms' efficiency and lead to an increase in prejudice. In sum, the present research suggests that strengthening similarity at one level (e.g., normative) has to be balanced by differentiation at another level (e.g., stereotype) in order to warrant individuals' motivation to maintain a positive and differentiated group identity.

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Footnotes

1. Three pilot studies—which are not presented here—were conducted with Swiss nationals to gather data concerning stereotypical attributes of the Swiss and ex-Yugoslavians and to assess each stereotypical attribute's valence and stereotypicality. In a fourth pilot study, we tested the manipulation of intergroup similarity. The independent variable was intergroup similarity (Similarity, Control, Distinctiveness) and the dependent variables were perceived similarity, perceived groups' valence, and perceived stereotypicality. Perceived intergroup similarity was greater in the similarity than in the control condition, $t(60) = 2.55$, $p = .013$, and in the distinctiveness condition, $t(60) = 2.699$, $p = .009$. The control and distinctiveness conditions did not differ from each other, $t(60) = .18$, $p = .86$. Overall the Swiss were perceived more positively than the ex-Yugoslavians, $F(1, 60) = 32.520$, $p < .001$. Analysis also revealed a significant main effect of similarity induction, $F(2, 60) = 5.581$, $p = .006$. In the similarity condition, both groups were perceived more positively than in the distinctiveness condition, $t(60) = 3.212$, $p = .002$. The similarity condition did not differ significantly from the control condition, $t(60) = .876$, $p = .40$. In general, the Swiss targets' descriptions were perceived to be more stereotypical characterizations of the Swiss population than the Yugoslavians' descriptions of the Yugoslav population, $F(1, 60) = 4.235$, $p = .042$. Neither the main effect of similarity, nor the similarity by target interaction reached statistical significance, $p = .19$, and $p = .36$, respectively. We decided to drop the distinctiveness condition in the subsequent studies.
2. Due to heteroskedasticity, *Levene's F* $(3, 75) = 8.258$, $p < .001$, we performed a power transformation (McClelland, 2000). This transformation was sufficient to correct for variance heterogeneity, *Levene's F*$(3, 75) = 2.581$, $p = .06$. In the results section, we report

F-values and *p*-values computed on the basis of the transformed variable. However, we report means and standard deviations in their untransformed versions.

3. Another pilot study, not detailed here, was conducted in the French context to assess the efficiency of the new induction of intergroup similarity. The independent variables were intergroup similarity and in-group norm, and the dependent variables were perceived similarity, perceived groups' valence, and perceived stereotypicality. Results showed a large effect for similarity induction on the perception of similarity, $F(1, 117) = 59.875$, $p < .001$. No significant effects were observed for the in-group norm, or the norm by similarity interaction. In addition, no effects were observed on perceived groups' valence or perceived stereotypicality, $ps > .20$.

Table 1

Study 1: Mean scores of in-group favoritism and modern prejudice as a function of in-group norm and intergroup similarity.

	Norm			
	Pro-discrimination		Anti-discrimination	
	Similarity		Similarity	
	Control	High	Control	High
Modern Prejudice				
M	4.07^{a}	3.16^{b}	3.17^{b}	4.07^{a}
SD	1.41	1.10	1.07	1.02
In-group favoritism				
M	30.65^{a*}	9.25^{b}	2.43^{c}	17.48^{b*}
SD	32.91	16.83	6.76	24.23

Means that do not share a subscript differ at $p < .05$
Ingroup favoritism means marked with an asterisk differ from 0 at $p < .05$.

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Study 2: Modern prejudice as a function of in-group norm, intergroup similarity, and in-group identification.

Figure 2. Study 2: In-group favoritism as a function of in-group norm, intergroup similarity, and in-group identification.

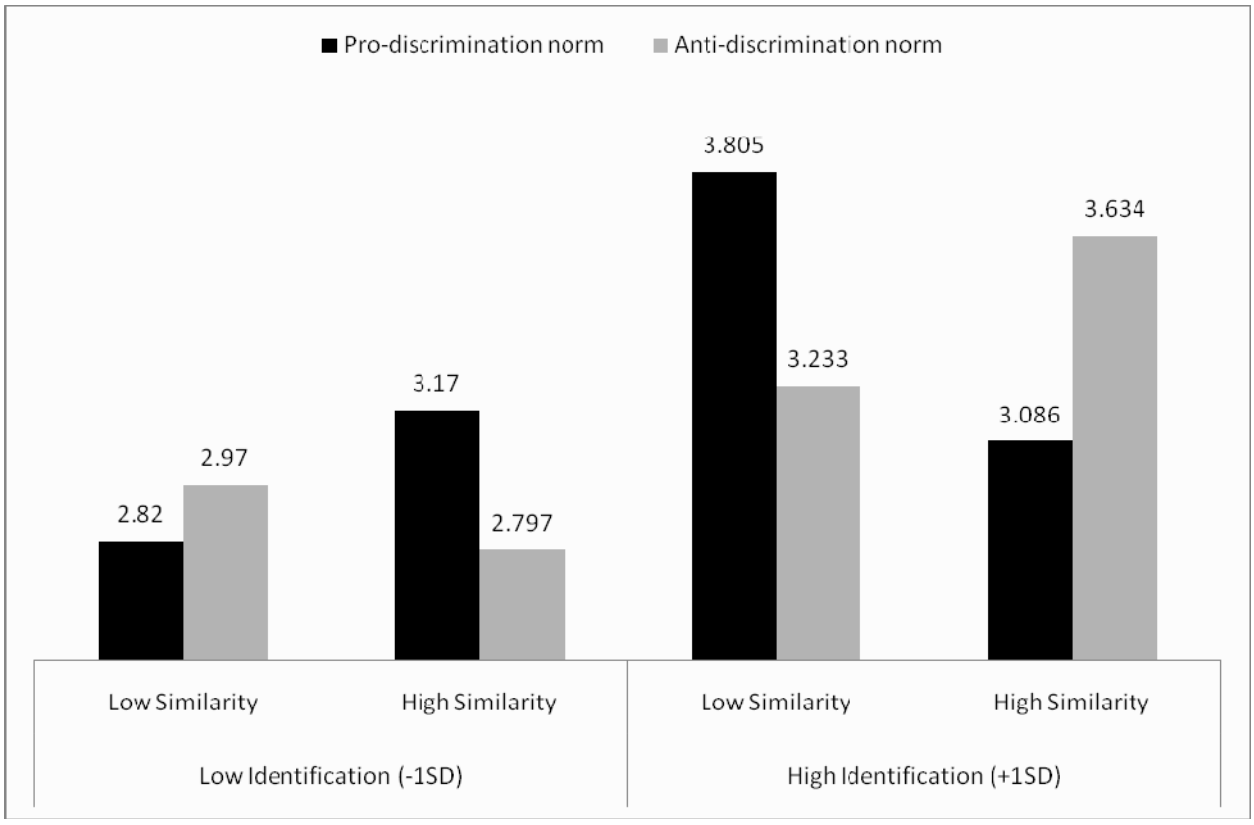

Figure 1. Study 2: Modern prejudice as a function of in-group norm, intergroup similarity, and in-group identification.

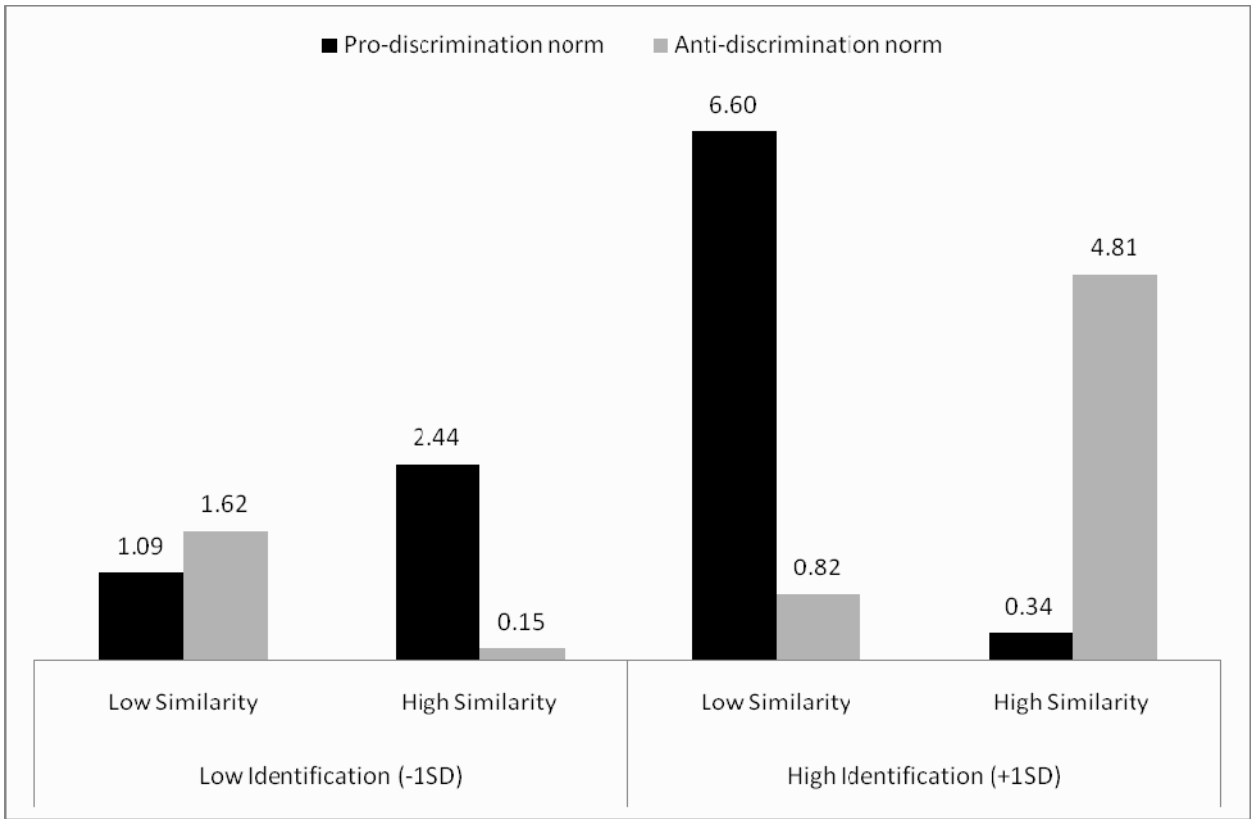

Figure 2. Study 2: In-group favoritism as a function of in-group norm, intergroup similarity, and in-group identification.