

The more prototypical the better? The allure of being seen as one sees oneself

Group Processes & Intergroup Relations

2014, Vol. 17(2) 221–239

© The Author(s) 2013

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/1368430213510570

gpir.sagepub.com



Ángel Gómez,¹ Jolanda Jetten,² and
William B. Swann Jr.³

Abstract

Whereas past research has emphasized people's desire to be a prototypical group member within valued groups, this research explores people's competing desire to be seen as prototypical as they see themselves. Results of three studies show that evaluations that verified participants' self-perceived prototypicality were seen as especially credible and were accepted without evoking compensatory activity. We found evidence for compensatory activity whereby participants labeled as underprototypical were most likely to express similarity to other ingroup members and a desire to engage in behaviors designed to promote the ingroup. Those labeled as overprototypical were less likely to express similarity to other ingroup members and a desire to engage in progroup behaviors. A similar pattern was found on a behavioral measure whereby participants were asked to choose a majority or a minority pen. Contrary to the assumption that people are primarily motivated by a desire for self-enhancement, these findings emerged independent of perceived group desirability. These findings indicate the importance of the alignment between self-perceptions and ingroup perceptions when examining responses to intragroup position. Findings are discussed in relation to theoretical predictions derived from self-verification, self-categorization, and optimal distinctiveness theorizing.

Keywords

group loyalty, prototypicality, self-verification, social identity

Paper received 21 November 2012; revised version accepted 21 September 2013.

We all differ in the extent to which we match the defining features of a group and are thus prototypical for that group (Oakes, 1996; Rosch, 1978). For example, some of us may be perceived as especially typical of a given category, such as patriotic Americans or career women. Others might feel that they are much more marginal or peripheral members of these groups. To date, researchers have assumed that group members

¹Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, UNED, Spain

²University of Queensland, Australia

³University of Texas, at Austin, USA

Corresponding author:

Ángel Gómez, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, UNED, C/ Juan del Rosal 10, Madrid 28040, Spain.

Email: agomez@psi.uned.es

strive for greater prototypicality in valued groups (Levine & Moreland, 1994; Noel, Wann, & Branscombe, 1995). Being or becoming prototypical within a valued group is thought to be desired due to its presumed linkage to positive rewards such as power, respect, and status. It is therefore not surprising that marginal group members may express group loyalty and high motivation to work for the group in an attempt to speed up the acceptance process and to secure a more prototypical position in the group (Jetten, Branscombe, & Spears, 2002; Jetten, Branscombe, Spears, & McKimmie, 2003; Noel et al., 1995; Simon & Stürmer, 2003).

However, as powerful as the desire for prototypicality may be, we suggest that there may be limits to the extent to which people seek out prototypicality. Specifically, such strivings may be tempered by a countervailing motivation for being perceived to be only as prototypical of the group as someone perceives themselves to be. For instance, even though a woman might feel disappointed when other employees see her as less typical of the group than she sees herself, she may be just as upset if she hears that others in her company perceive her as more typical than she sees herself. In this paper, we attribute such reactions to an underlying preference for other group members to perceive us as typical of the group as we perceive ourselves to be. The desire for convergence between self-views and appraisals from others stems from an underlying preference for verification of self-related beliefs (Swann, 1983, 2011), including people's beliefs about how they fit into groups. As such, when we learn that others perceive us as more or less typical than we think we are, we feel threatened and, through our behavior and actions, try to realign self-views and appraisals from others. One way to rebalance these perceptions is through intragroup processes of either emphasizing or de-emphasizing our similarity to other ingroup members.

In addition, we argue that the desire for evaluations that confirm self-perceived prototypicality may be so strong that it will override the tendency for people to align themselves with valued groups or distance themselves from devalued groups. To

set the stage for our predictions, in what follows we shall introduce self-verification theory (Swann, 1983, 2011) and self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) and discuss how our predictions connect but also differ from optimal distinctiveness theorizing (Brewer, 1991).

Wanting to Be Seen as Prototypical as We See Ourselves

Self-verification theory (Swann, 1983, 2011) assumes that people form their self-views by observing how others treat them (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). Once formed, self-views serve the important pragmatic functions of enabling people to make predictions about their worlds and guide behavior, as well as the epistemic function of reinforcing their conviction that the world is knowable and coherent. Applying this formulation to the group level, the theory could be used to predict that people will prefer confirmation for their perceptions of their prototypicality in the group. Such confirmation will make people secure in the knowledge that other group members will correctly anticipate their behaviors and reinforce their assumption that the world is a coherent and manageable place. By the same token, people will eschew disconfirmation of their self-conceived prototypicality. Interestingly, self-verification strivings should apply whether the disconfirmation involves being perceived as more or less prototypical than people perceive themselves to be. The notion that people will eschew being evaluated as *more* prototypical than they perceive themselves to be, departs from the assumption that people have a need for positive self-esteem or self-enhancement (e.g., Jones, 1973; for a recent review of the verification vs. enhancement literature, see Kwang & Swann, 2010).

Although self-verification strivings have been extensively documented, the research literature has focused almost exclusively on people's efforts to confirm their *personal* self-views while the processes whereby people verify their *social* self-views

have been largely ignored (for two noteworthy exceptions, see Chen, Chen, & Shaw, 2004; Gómez, Seyle, Huici, & Swann, 2009). Of particular relevance here, researchers have never considered the possibility that self-verification strivings may be motivated by a preference for feedback that confirms people's perceptions of their own prototypicality vis-à-vis the group. Thus, for example, people should prefer feedback that verifies their perceptions of prototypicality over feedback indicating that they are either less prototypical than they believe themselves to be (underprototypical) or more prototypical than they perceive themselves to be (overprototypical). We tested these possibilities in the studies reported here. In particular, we asked if people do indeed embrace feedback that verifies their beliefs regarding their prototypicality, as predicted by self-verification theory, or whether they embrace feedback that maximizes their self-perceived prototypicality, as predicted by the assumption that people desire status enhancement and positive self-esteem.

The Advantages of Being Prototypical

From self-categorization theory, it is predicted that when social identity is salient, interactions between group members and self-perceptions are determined by the extent to which group members are perceived as prototypical for their group (Turner et al., 1987). It has been argued that, provided that the social group is valued and important to group members, a more prototypical position is perceived as more attractive than a more peripheral position. This is because a prototypical position is associated with having access to more resources and contributes more to group-derived self-esteem and status within the group. For example, it has been found that prototypical group members are more likely than peripheral members to be group leaders (Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984), and successful in eliciting attitude change in others (van Knippenberg & Wilke, 1992). They are also evaluated more positively (Hogg & Hardie, 1991), and they are more

responsible for defining group's norms (Turner et al., 1987). Given the attractiveness of a more central position within the group, research has focused on the strategic behavior that peripheral group members display to enhance their prototypicality. Only when responses were public and could be monitored by other group members did peripheral group members (compared to prototypical group members) amplify their derogation of outgroup members (Noel et al., 1995) and rule-breakers (Jetten, Hornsey, Spears, Haslam, & Cowell, 2010). It was also only under these conditions that peripheral group members took a tougher stance in negotiations on behalf of the group (van Kleef, Steinel, van Knippenberg, Hogg, & Svensson, 2007), and expressed greater willingness to work on behalf of the group (Jetten et al., 2003) compared to prototypical group members.

The research to date could easily lead to the conclusion that intragroup behavior is determined by group members seeking out greater prototypicality—this because prototypicality is associated with positive outcomes and therefore presents the clearest route to status enhancement within the group. However, such a conclusion would be premature and would not be consistent with the way prototypicality is defined in classical self-categorization theorizing (see Ellemers & Jetten, 2013, for a similar point). Indeed, Turner et al. (1987) defined prototypicality as the position within the group that is consensually perceived by all members as most *representative* of the group (and therefore essential in defining the group and understanding and affirming the group's identity), not as the *most desired* position within the group that all group members strive for. Whereas this distinction is only implicit in self-categorization theory, other theories such as self-verification theory speak more directly to the importance of validation versus self-enhancement.

The foregoing account suggests that both self-verification and self-categorization perspectives agree that discrepancies between self-perceptions about own standing in the group and other's understanding of own standing in the

group will arouse strivings for resolving such discrepancies. In the next section of the paper we contrast this prediction with those made by optimal distinctiveness theory.

Optimal Distinctiveness Versus Self-Verification Theories: Connections and Differences

Self-verification theory's prediction that people want others to evaluate them in ways that neither underestimates nor overestimates their self-perceived prototypicality may evoke feelings of déjà vu for those familiar with optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT; Brewer, 1991). However, there are important differences between the two approaches. The most fundamental difference is the nature of the drive that motivates individuals to react to the differences between their own self-perceptions and the appraisals of others. Self-verification theory assumes that people pursue *self-verification strivings* while ODT assumes that people strive to resolve *assimilation and differentiation needs*. As such, self-verification theory is unconcerned with the degree to which one is similar to, or different from, other group members; instead, the only consideration is the degree to which there is a match between one's self-views and the appraisals of others. A second difference relates to the way in which the two theories predict group members will resolve differences between self-perceptions and others' perceptions about own standing in the group. From self-verification theory we predict that people will prefer to resolve *all* discrepancies between self-perceptions and others' perceptions *within* the group. This is because whenever group members perceive a discrepancy in these perceptions, no matter whether the discrepancy refer to be too similar or too different from other ingroup members, they will solicit feedback from highly credible others such as other ingroup members.¹ In contrast, ODT is more specific on how these discrepancies should be resolved and assumes that people pursue their desire for belonging by seeking greater inclusion in the ingroup (i.e., an

intragroup process) but that people pursue their desire for distinctiveness at *the group level*—by distancing their group from other groups (i.e., an intergroup process).

These theoretical differences between self-verification theory and ODT have led to differences in the way key predictions have been tested empirically. Tests of self-verification theory have employed different manipulations and outcome measures than those that are typically employed in studies testing ODT predictions. For example, in self-verification studies, experimenters typically provide information regarding how others perceive the individual. In addition, outcome measures have focused on the individuals' perceptions and motivations, such as impressions of the credibility of the source of feedback (Swann, Griffin, Predmore, & Gaines, 1987) or the desire for self-verification (Gómez et al., 2009; Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989). In the present research we use outcome measures that are commonly used in research on self-verification but not ODT research. In particular, we will examine measures of feedback credibility perceptions and the desire for self-verification.

In contrast, tests of the ODT approach have investigated how people satisfy assimilation needs at the intragroup level, while they satisfy distinctiveness needs at the intergroup level. To arouse assimilation and differentiation needs, ODT researchers (Pickett, Bonner, & Coleman, 2002; Pickett & Brewer, 2001; Pickett, Silver, & Brewer, 2002) have typically presented bogus feedback about scores on a measure of self-views such as the Self-Attribute Questionnaire (SAQ; Pelham & Swann, 1989). To arouse the need for assimilation, participants learn that *their own scores* are in the periphery of the group distribution. To arouse the need for differentiation, participants learn that *their group's scores* are closely aligned with the scores of another group. Results generally support the prediction that arousing needs for assimilation leads to a preference for more inclusive social categories (Pickett, Silver, et al., 2002; Sorrentino, Seligman, & Battista, 2007), and a tendency to overestimate ingroup size whereas arousing differentiation needs leads to a preference for exclusive ingroups

and a tendency to underestimate ingroup size (Pickett, Silver, et al., 2002; see also Leonardelli, Pickett, & Brewer, 2010, for a review).

That said, we acknowledge that our hypothesis that expressions of group affiliation as well as difference from other group members might be an important mechanism to reaffirm self-perceived prototypicality, is also consistent with some aspects of ODT. First, like ODT, we assume that being perceived as under- or overprototypical produces a threat. The nature of the threat differs, however: for self-verification theory, it threatens the desire for self-confirmation. For ODT, such feedback threatens the desire for assimilation or differentiation. And second, in line with ODT, we assume that when group members receive feedback that they are perceived as less prototypical than they think they are, they will compensate for this threat by emphasizing their similarity to other ingroup members—an intragroup process.

Assessing Responses to Feedback Regarding One's Prototypicality

To determine whether people prefer evaluations that maximize versus verify their self-perceived prototypicality, we conducted three studies. In all studies, participants received feedback regarding their level of prototypicality. The feedback indicated that, relative to their self-perceptions, participants were perceived as being less prototypical than they saw themselves (underprototypical), equally prototypical (verifying), or more prototypical (overprototypical). In addition, to provide additional insight into the impact of the desirability of the group on the degree to which participants embraced the feedback, we manipulated the status of the group (Study 2) and the perceived value of the group (Study 3). We assessed the degree to which participants embraced the feedback using three classes of outcome measures. One outcome measure was participants' ratings of the credibility of the evaluators and the extent to which participants' desire for self-verification

was frustrated. A second class of outcome measures involved assessing the impact of feedback on compensatory activities such as emphasizing their similarity to versus uniqueness from other group members (e.g., ingroup similarity) or seeking greater alignment with the group (e.g., intentions to promote the ingroup). A third class of outcome measures involved overt behavior, specifically the extent to which participants chose a pen that placed them in the majority or minority of the group. To bolster generalizability of our findings, Studies 1 and 2 focused on Spanish nationals as the ingroup, and Study 3 focused on young people as the ingroup.

Of greatest interest here were people's reactions to feedback regarding their prototypicality. Previous evidence that people strive for prototypicality suggests a simple linear prediction, such that the more prototypical the feedback indicates one is, the more people will perceive the evaluators as credible, the more they will desire to be recognized as a member of the group, and the less they will compensate by emphasizing one's uniqueness from the group or seeking greater alignment with the group. Integrated self-categorization theory and self-verification theory reasoning leads to a curvilinear prediction, such that when people receive feedback that verifies rather than disconfirms their perceptions of their own prototypicality, they will impute more credibility to the evaluators and fail to engage in compensatory activity by altering their self-rated uniqueness from the group or degree of alignment with the group. In contrast, when people receive nonverifying feedback about their own prototypicality, indicating that they are *either* underprototypical or overprototypical, they will impute less credibility to the evaluators. Moreover, they will display compensatory activities that are designed to counter the nonverifying feedback. For example, just as they will work to decrease their apparent similarity to the group and increase their alignment with the group in the underprototypicality condition, they will compensate in the opposite direction in the overprototypicality condition. Finally, as in Studies 2 and 3, past research on prototypicality would predict that group desirability would be a

highly potent determinant of the tendency for participants to embrace feedback, but reasoning derived from self-categorization and self-verification theory would predict that the degree to which the feedback verified their self-views would be the most potent determinant of their reactions to it.

Study 1: Resistance to Being Seen as Over- or Underprototypical of Spaniards

High school students were introduced to a two-wave investigation. During the first wave, participants wrote a short paragraph describing themselves and completed a background questionnaire that assessed personal preferences and global personality attributes. During Wave 2, participants learned that their responses would be coded and distributed among other ingroup members from their school (“evaluators”) who were tasked with the job of comparing the participants’ self-descriptive paragraph with the responses to the questionnaire that the participant had completed during Wave 1. In reality, the evaluations had been prepared in advance.

Participants

Sixty-eight high school students in Madrid, Spain, voluntarily participated in the first wave. Nine participants were absent during the second wave 1 month later, leaving 59 (18 girls and 41 boys, mean age = 14.44, $SD = 0.65$) participants in the final sample. Preliminary analyses of the findings from this study and all subsequent studies revealed no main or interactive effects of gender.

Procedure

During the first wave participants were asked to indicate to what extent they considered themselves typical Spanish persons, what they had in common with Spanish people, and to what extent they considered themselves similar to other Spaniards.

Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with the following items (from 0% = *totally disagree*, to 100% = *totally agree*): “I am a typical Spanish person,” “I have a lot in common with other Spanish people,” and “I am similar to other Spanish people” ($\alpha = .71$). The mean self-perceived prototypicality was 58.47% ($SD = 9.45$), indicating that participants considered themselves as moderately prototypical. An ANOVA revealed no significant difference between participants in the different conditions in self-perceived typicality, $F(2, 58) = 1.20, p > .30$. In this investigation and all subsequent studies, none of our conclusions were altered when we entered self-perceived prototypicality and its correspondent interactions as predictors in the analyses.

One month later, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental conditions: *underprototypical*, *verification*, or *overprototypical*. Participants in the *underprototypicality condition* learned that, according to the evaluators, they were less prototypical than they thought they were, and their own typicality score did not match with how the evaluators rated them after reading the traits that they had listed to describe him/herself. Participants in the *verification condition* learned that, according to the evaluators, they had a good understanding of how prototypical they were for the group and their own prototypicality score matched with the score given by the evaluators. Participants in the *overprototypicality condition* learned that, according to the evaluators, they were more prototypical for the group than they themselves thought and their own prototypicality score did not match the score given by the evaluators.

To ensure that participants perceived the degree of prototypicality that the evaluators assigned to them, we included a manipulation check in which participants rated their agreement with a three-item scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*), to 5 (*totally agree*): “I think that the evaluators perceive me as more Spanish than I see myself,” “I think that the evaluators perceive me as a typical Spanish person,” and “I think that the evaluators perceive me as less Spanish than I see myself (reverse),” $\alpha = .74$. An ANOVA on these

Table 1. Study 1. Perceived credibility of the evaluators and ingroup similarity as a function of prototypicality manipulation.

Measures	Prototypicality manipulation					
	Underprototypicality		Verification		Overprototypicality	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Perceived credibility of the evaluators	3.14 ^b	0.92	3.93 ^a	0.62	3.06 ^b	0.90
Ingroup similarity	3.78 ^a	0.36	3.01 ^b	0.77	2.09 ^c	0.67

Note. Results with different superscripts within same rows differ significantly from each other ($p < .05$).

ratings was significant $F(2, 58) = 40.91, p < .001$, indicating that participants in the underprototypicality condition perceived that the evaluators considered them as less prototypical than participants in the verification condition $t(40) = -4.65, p < .001, M = 2.33, SD = 0.89$ versus $M = 3.36, SD = 0.49$, and participants in the overprototypicality condition $t(36) = -8.06, p < .001, M = 4.27, SD = 0.49$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition perceived that the evaluators considered them as more prototypical than participants in the verification condition, $t(36) = 2.65, p < .05$.

A second manipulation check assessed whether participants perceived that the information provided by the evaluators self-verified their own perceived degree of prototypicality with a two-item scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*), to 5 (*totally agree*): “I think that the evaluators perceive me as Spanish as I see myself” and “I think that the evaluators perceive me in the same way I see myself,” $r(58) = .67, p < .001$. The ANOVA was significant, $F(2, 58) = 23.06, p < .001$. Participants in the underprototypicality condition perceived less self-verification than participants in the verification condition, $t(40) = 5.75, p < .001, M = 2.36, SD = 0.88$ versus $M = 3.88, SD = 0.83$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition also perceived less self-verification than participants in the verification condition $t(36) = 5.99, p < .001, M = 2.23, SD = 0.85$. Importantly, no difference was found between participants in the under- and overprototypicality conditions, $p = .67$.

A third check examined whether the manipulation affected the perceived attractiveness of the ingroup. On a feeling thermometer (Esses,

Haddock, & Zanna, 1993), participants were asked to indicate to what extent they felt that the ingroup could be described as cold versus warm, negative versus positive, and unfavorable versus favorable (with scores ranging from 0 to 100; $\alpha = .74$). The group Spanish was rated as relatively positive and attractive ($M = 71.52, SD = 8.07$) and there were no differences between conditions, $F(2, 58) = 1.88, p = .16$.

After reading the feedback, participants completed the measures described next on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*), to 5 (*totally agree*).

Perceived credibility of the evaluators. Participants were asked the extent to which they considered the evaluators to be *intelligent, competent, credible, capable, and realistic* (adapted from Bosson & Swann, 1999; Gómez et al., 2009; $\alpha = .90$).

Ingroup similarity. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they felt similar to other Spanish people. Items were: “I have a lot in common with other Spanish people,” “I am similar to other Spanish people,” and “I am different from other Spanish people” (reverse-coded; $\alpha = .82$).

Results and Discussion

To determine whether the manipulation of the prototypicality feedback affected the perceived credibility of the evaluators and ingroup similarity, we conducted a pair of ANOVAs. Means and standard deviations for the outcome measures are displayed in Table 1.

Perceived credibility of the evaluators. The expected effect on the perceived credibility of the evaluators emerged, $F(2, 58) = 5.35, p < .01$. Participants in the underprototypicality condition and participants in the overprototypicality condition imputed less credibility to the evaluators than participants in the verification condition, $t(40) = -2.83, p < .01$, and, $t(36) = -3.09, p < .01$, respectively. No difference was found between participants in the under- and the overprototypicality conditions, $t(36) = 0.28, p = .78$.

Ingroup similarity. Analysis revealed a significant effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 58) = 34.92, p < .001$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition perceived themselves as less similar to other ingroup members than those in the verification condition $t(36) = -3.88, p < .001$. In addition, participants in the underprototypicality condition perceived themselves as more similar to the group than participants in the verification condition, $t(40) = 4.19, p < .001$.

In sum, in line with predictions, the results of Study 1 revealed that participants imputed more credibility to evaluators who verified their self-conceived prototypicality than to evaluators who provided self-discrepant feedback. This evidence supports our assumption that verification of prototypicality amplifies perceptions of the verifier as especially credible (Bosson & Swann, 1999; Gómez et al., 2009). Effects on similarity to the ingroup in the under- and in the overtypicality conditions are demonstrations of compensatory self-verification (e.g., Brooks, Swann, & Mehta, 2011; Swann & Hill, 1982)—aimed at restoring perceptions of prototypicality. Specifically, participants in the overprototypicality condition saw themselves as less similar to Spaniards (compared to the verification condition), presumably in an attempt to reaffirm their self-views and regain and validate group membership. In contrast, participants in the underprototypicality condition rated themselves as more similar to other Spaniards compared to the verification condition, and, in that way, strove for bringing other's perceptions in line with self-prototypicality perceptions. With this evidence in hand, we proceeded

to further test the generalizability of these strivings for verification of prototypicality.

Study 2: Does Group Status Override Strivings for Verification of Self-Conceived Prototypicality Among Spaniards?

Previous work has shown that people prefer belonging to desirable and high-status groups because membership in such groups confers members with a positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The question arises whether a preference for self-verification will emerge when opportunities for status enhancement are made explicit (i.e., membership in a high-status or valued group). We tested this possibility in Study 2. Whereas status enhancement reasoning would predict that the motive to seek affiliation with higher status groups would override the motivation to restore perceptions of prototypicality, our integration of self-verification and self-categorization theory reasoning leads to the expectation that restoring feelings of prototypicality would be a stronger determinant of responses than the opportunity to claim greater prototypicality within a high-status group. To test these competing formulations, we assessed the impact of status of the group on compensatory reactions to being tagged as under- or overprototypical of the ingroup.

In Study 2 we also added two novel measures. In addition to assessing the perceived credibility of the evaluators, we also assessed more directly the extent to which self-verification was frustrated by the evaluators' feedback. That is, we assessed whether under- and overprototypicality feedback increased desire for verification relative to verifying feedback. We also assessed compensatory responses to overly high or low perceived prototypicality by asking participants to report their intentions to promote the ingroup. We expected that promotion of the ingroup would be highest in the underprototypicality condition, moderate in the verification condition, and lowest in the overprototypicality condition.

Participants

Ninety-six high school students in Madrid, Spain, voluntarily participated in the first wave of the present study. One participant was absent during the second wave 1 month later, leaving 95 (32 girls and 64 boys, mean age = 14.85, $SD = 0.69$) participants in the final sample. As in Study 1, self-perceived prototypicality scores obtained in Wave 1 suggested that participants perceived themselves as moderately prototypical as Spanish, $M = 62.63\%$, $SD = 14.59$.

Procedure

The procedure was identical to Study 1 except for the addition of the group status manipulations and two new dependent measures. During Wave 2, participants were randomly assigned to the *underprototypical*, *verification*, or *overprototypical* condition, and to the *low-* or the *high-status* condition. Participants in the *low-status group condition* were provided with a newspaper article reporting the results of a large-scale survey examining how people from other countries in Europe perceive Spain. The results of the report highlighted Spain's sports defeats, political struggles, the economic downturn, and its cultural and educational stagnation over the last few years. In contrast, participants in the *high-status group condition* were provided with a newspaper article emphasizing Spain's sports victories, its politics and economic successes over the last years, and its cultural and educational progress.

Using the same two items as in Study 1, $r(94) = .63$, $p < .001$, we assessed the perceived prototypicality of the feedback assigned by the evaluators. A 3 x 2 ANOVA analysis yielded a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 94) = 90.43$, $p < .001$. Participants in the underprototypicality condition perceived that the evaluators considered them as less prototypical than participants in the verification condition, $t(65) = -7.71$, $p < .001$, $M = 1.87$, $SD = 0.69$ versus $M = 3.20$, $SD = .72$, and than participants in the overprototypicality condition, $t(59) = -13.80$, $p < .001$, $M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.63$. Participants in the

overprototypicality condition perceived that the evaluators considered them as more prototypical than participants in the verification condition, $t(60) = 5.86$, $p < .001$. No other main or interactive effects were significant, $F_s < 0.81$, $p_s > .49$.

We also checked the perceived verification of the evaluators' feedback with similar items as those used in Study 1 ($\alpha = .77$). The ANOVA showed a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 94) = 89.99$, $p < .001$. Participants in the underprototypicality condition perceived less self-verification than participants in the verification condition, $t(65) = 11.11$, $p < .001$, $M = 2.21$, $SD = 0.51$ versus $M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.69$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition also perceived less self-verification than participants in the verification condition $t(60) = 10.95$, $p < .001$, $M = 2.11$, $SD = 0.55$. No difference was found between participants in the under and overprototypicality conditions, $p = .44$. No other main or interactive effects were significant, $F_s < 1.45$, $p_s > .23$.

To ensure that participants perceived the manipulation of group status as intended, we included a manipulation check in which participants rated their agreement with four items ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*), to 5 (*totally agree*): "Spain's achievements are excellent as compared to other European countries," "Spanish sports teams are more successful than sports teams from other European countries," "Spain's economy is flourishing compared to other economies within Europe," and "The Spanish educational system is one of the best within Europe," $\alpha = .72$. A 3 x 2 ANOVA yielded a main effect of the group status manipulation, $F(2, 89) = 43.59$, $p < .001$. Participants in the high-status group condition perceived the group's success to be higher than participants in the low-status group condition, $M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.56$ versus 2.53 , $SD = 0.59$. No other main or interactive effects emerged, $F_s < 2.27$, $p_s > .11$.

After reading the feedback, participants completed the same outcome measures as used in Study 1: *Perceived credibility of the evaluators* and *ingroup similarity*. In addition, the questionnaire included two new dependent measures: *desire for*

Table 2. Study 2. Perceived credibility of the evaluators, desire for self-verification, ingroup similarity, and intention to promote the ingroup as a function of prototypicality manipulation.

Measures	Prototypicality manipulation					
	Underprototypicality		Verification		Overprototypicality	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Perceived credibility of the evaluators	3.03 ^b	0.74	3.81 ^a	0.60	2.87 ^b	1.05
Desire for self-verification	4.13 ^a	0.49	3.21 ^b	0.44	4.20 ^a	0.54
Ingroup similarity	3.63 ^a	0.63	3.09 ^b	0.57	2.11 ^c	0.85
Intention to promote the ingroup	4.04 ^c	0.86	3.61 ^b	0.73	3.06 ^a	0.44

Note. Results with different superscripts within same rows differ significantly from each other ($p < .05$).

self-verification and *intentions to promote the ingroup* (all alphas $> .77$).

Desire for self-verification was measured using three items adapted from Gómez et al. (2009): “I like others to see me as I see myself,” “I like others to treat me in a way that makes me feel understood,” and “I like others to make me feel that I can be myself.”

Intentions to promote the ingroup were measured using five items. Participants indicated the extent to which they were willing to: “explain Spanish customs and traditions to foreigners,” “talk about Spanish culture and Spanish traditions to immigrants,” “fight for the full recognition of features of the Spanish language in computer programs,” “promote the preservation of our artistic and cultural Spanish heritage,” and “participate as a volunteer for organizations that protect and promote Spanish culture.”

Results and Discussion

Data were analyzed using 3 x 2 ANOVAs. Means and standard deviations for all measures are displayed in Table 2.

Perceived credibility of the evaluators. The ANOVA yielded a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 95) = 12.54, p < .001$. Participants in the underprototypicality condition, and

participants in the overprototypicality condition imputed less credibility to the evaluators than participants in the verification condition, $t(65) = 4.54, p < .001$, and, $t(60) = 4.62, p < .001$, respectively. No difference was found between participants in the under- and the overprototypicality conditions, $t(59) = -0.68, p = .50$. No other effects emerged, $F_s < 1.46, p_s > .24$.

Desire for self-verification. The ANOVA on desire for self-verification yielded a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 95) = 41.26, p < .001$. Participants in the underprototypicality condition expressed a greater desire for self-verification than participants in the verification condition, $t(65) = 8.13, p < .001$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition also expressed a greater desire for self-verification than participants in the verification condition, $t(61) = 7.74, p < .001$. No differences were found between participants in the underprototypicality condition and participants in the overprototypicality condition, $t(60) = 0.58, p = .56$. No other effects emerged from the analyses, $F_s < 1.88, p_s > .15$.

Ingroup similarity. The ANOVA yielded a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 95) = 35.84, p < .001$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition perceived themselves as less similar to other ingroup members than

those in the verification condition $t(60) = 5.36, p < .001$. In addition, participants in the underprototypicality condition perceived themselves as more similar to the group than participants in the verification condition, $t(65) = 3.69, p < .001$. No other significant main or interactive effect emerged from the analyses, $F_s < .63, p_s > .43$.

Intentions to promote the ingroup. An ANOVA yielded a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 95) = 15.06, p < .001$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition were less willing to promote the ingroup than participants in the verification condition, $t(60) = -2.66, p < .01$. However, participants in the underprototypicality condition were more willing to promote the ingroup than participants in the verification condition $t(65) = 2.92, p < .01$. No other main or interactive effects emerged from the analyses, $F_s < 1.25, p_s > .29$.

In summary, the results of Study 2 replicate and extend findings from Study 1 in several ways. First, the present study consolidates findings showing that (a) participants imputed more credibility to evaluators who provided verifying feedback about their prototypicality than to evaluators who provided discrepant feedback; and (b) participants felt more similar to other ingroup members in the verification condition than participants in the overprototypicality condition, but they reported *less* felt similarity than participants in the underprototypicality condition.

Study 2 also showed that being seen as an under- or overprototypical member of a group triggered compensatory self-verification. Such compensatory activity manifested itself in a greater wish to promote the group if prototypicality was underestimated, as well as a reduced desire to promote the group if prototypicality was overestimated. Importantly too, effects on desire for verification or intention to promote the ingroup were not moderated by the perceived status of the ingroup. The latter finding suggests that the desire for verification of prototypicality was more powerful than the desire for greater prototypicality within a high-status group. That said, the third study offered additional tests of

the potential influence of status enhancement via claiming greater prototypicality in a desirable group in a closely related paradigm.

Study 3: Does the Value of the Ingroup Affect Strivings for Prototypicality Verification?

This study extended our exploration of the potential influence of status enhancement processes within our paradigm in two ways. First, we changed the group desirability manipulation; instead of focusing on group status as in Study 2, we focused on the perceived valence of the group. Arguably, whereas group status refers mainly to group performance and group standing, group valence (whether the group is liked or disliked) speaks more directly to the group's desirability. Second, critics might argue that strivings for verification of prototypicality might be restricted to the particular category we considered (i.e., Spaniards). We accordingly sought to replicate our findings with a well-defined and important category for our participants in the previous studies: "young people."

Third, we introduced a behavioral measure of compensatory reactions to our manipulations. Specifically, we included a behavioral measure that involved offering participants a choice of pens that would place them in either the minority or majority (Kim & Markus, 1999). We expected that, compared to participants in the verification condition, those in the underprototypicality condition would compensate by choosing the pen that would place them in the majority. In contrast, relative to those in the verification condition, we expected participants in the overprototypicality condition to display more compensatory behaviors by choosing the pen that would place them in the minority.

Participants

One hundred and twenty high school students in Madrid, Spain, voluntarily participated in the first wave of the present study. Two participants were

absent during the second wave 1 month later, leaving 118 (56 girls and 62 boys, mean age = 16.38, $SD = .56$) participants in the final sample. Self-perceived prototypicality scores obtained in Wave 1 suggested that participants perceived themselves as moderately prototypical of the group young people, $M = 58.53\%$, $SD = 9.09$.

Procedure

The procedure and design replicated that of the first two studies with one variation: participants learned that they were to describe themselves as young people instead of Spaniards. One month later, all participants were provided with individual-level feedback. Participants were told that all evaluators were ingroup members: other (young) students of their own high school that were trained to focus on general standards indicating what a typical young person is. Participants first received the prototypicality assessments according to the evaluators' feedback, and completed the verification of such feedback checks (alphas $> .85$). We submitted prototypicality of the evaluators' feedback to a 3×2 ANOVA. The ANOVA yielded a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 117) = 258.07$, $p < .001$. Participants in the underprototypicality condition felt that the evaluators considered them as less prototypical than participants in the verification condition, $t(76) = -12.49$, $p < .001$, $M = 1.97$, $SD = 0.41$ versus $M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.28$, and less prototypical than participants in the overprototypicality condition, $t(77) = -20.81$, $p < .001$, $M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.40$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition perceived that the evaluators considered them as more prototypical than participants in the verification condition, $t(77) = 11.62$, $p < .001$. No other effects were significant, $F_s < .72$, $p_s > .48$.

Analyses of the perceived verification of the feedback ratings revealed a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 117) = 130.33$, $p < .001$.

Participants in the underprototypicality condition perceived less self-verification than participants in the verification condition, $t(76) = 14.00$, p

$< .001$, $M = 2.01$, $SD = 0.60$ versus $M_s = 3.88$, $SD = 0.58$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition also perceived less self-verification than participants in the verification condition $t(77) = 13.83$, $p < .001$, $M = 2.10$, $SD = 0.57$. No difference was found between participants in the under- and overprototypicality conditions, $p = .51$. No other effects emerged, $F_s < 1.44$, $p_s > .23$.

After being assigned to one of the three experimental prototypicality conditions, participants were randomly assigned to the low- or the high-value group condition. Participants in the *low-value condition* learned that according to research conducted among a representative sample of adults, most adults consider young people to be unpolite, disrespectful, lazy, and unpractical. Participants in the *high-value condition* received the opposite information (i.e., young people are polite, respectful, hard-working, and practical).

To ensure that participants perceived the manipulation of group value as intended, we included a manipulation check in which participants rated their agreement on four items whereby responses ranged from 1 (*totally disagree*), to 5 (*totally agree*): "adults have a positive view of young people," "adults believe that young people have positive values," "in general, adults like young people," and "adults are accepting of young people's values and ways," alpha = .83. A 3×2 ANOVA yielded a main effect of the group value manipulation, $F(2, 117) = 391.18$, $p < .001$. Participants in the high-value condition reported that adults had a more positive image of the ingroup than participants in the low-value condition, $M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.46$ versus $M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.32$. No other effects emerged, $F_s < 1.07$, $p_s > .35$.

After reading the feedback, participants completed the same outcome measures as used in previous studies: *Perceived credibility of the evaluators*, *desire for self-verification*, *ingroup similarity*, and *intentions to promote the ingroup* (all alphas $> .71$). In addition, at the end of the study, participants were presented with the pen selection task.

Pen selection task. After Kim and Markus (1999), a research assistant (blind to conditions) presented the participant with five pens at the end of the

study and asked the participant to choose one as a reward for participation. The research assistant grabbed five pens from a large bag of pens with both yellow and green pens without looking at them (a pretest revealed that both colors were rated positively, $t(19) = 0.55, p = .59$, and equally desirable (chi-square = 0.20, $p = .65$). If the research assistant picked five pens of the same color, then he or she would replace one with a pen of the opposite color. All participants chose among five pens with one pen color in the majority (three or four pens) and one in the minority (one or two pens). After each participant chose a pen, the research assistant recorded the pen choice and ratio of pens.

Results and Discussion

Data were analyzed using a series of 3 x 2 ANOVAs; means and standard deviations for the outcome measures are displayed in Table 3.

Perceived credibility of the evaluators. The ANOVA yielded a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2,117) = 145.14, p < .001$. Participants in the underprototypicality condition, and participants in the overprototypicality condition imputed less credibility to the evaluators than participants in the verification condition, $t(76) = 15.46, p < .001$, and, $t(77) = 14.24, p < .001$, respectively. No difference was found between participants in the under- and the overprototypicality conditions, $t(77) = 0.48, p = .63$.

Desire for self-verification. The ANOVA on desire for self-verification yielded a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 117) = 61.54, p < .001$. Participants in the underprototypicality condition expressed a greater desire for self-verification than participants in the verification condition, $t(76) = 9.94, p < .001$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition also expressed a greater desire for self-verification than participants in the verification condition, $t(77) = 10.04, p < .001$. No differences were found between participants in the underprototypicality condition and participants in the overprototypicality

condition, $t(77) = 0.03, p = .98$. No other effects emerged from the analyses, $F_s < 0.45, p_s > .64$.

Intentions to promote the ingroup. The ANOVA yielded a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 117) = 127.68, p < .001$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition were less willing to promote the ingroup than participants in the verification condition, $t(77) = -13.02, p < .001$. However, participants in the underprototypicality condition were more willing to promote the ingroup than participants in the verification condition $t(67) = 4.26, p < .001$. No other effect emerged from the analyses, $F_s < 0.73, p_s > .39$.

Ingroup similarity. The ANOVA yielded a main effect of the prototypicality manipulation, $F(2, 117) = 181.18, p < .001$. Participants in the overprototypicality condition perceived themselves as less similar to other ingroup members than those in the verification condition, $t(77) = 9.13, p < .001$. In addition, those in the underprototypicality condition perceived themselves as more similar to the group than participants in the verification condition, $t(76) = 9.05, p < .001$. No other main or interactive effect emerged from the analyses, $F_s < 0.58, p_s > .55$.

Pen selection task. A 3 (prototypicality: underprototypicality vs. verification vs. overprototypicality) x 2 (value of the ingroup: low vs. high) x 2 (ratio: 1:4 or 2:3) x 2 (choice: majority or minority) log-linear test revealed a significant Prototypicality x Pen Choice interaction, $\chi^2(6, N = 118) = 32.00, p < .001$ (see Figure 1). Participants in the underprototypicality condition were more likely to choose a majority pen (84.6%) than a minority pen (15.4%), $\chi^2(1, N = 39) = 18.69, p < .001$. However, participants in the overprototypicality condition were more likely to choose a minority pen (77.5%) than a majority pen (22.5%), $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = 12.10, p < .001$. No differences in choice were found for participants in the verification condition, $p = .87$. There were no other effects, $p_s > .34$.

In summary, the results of Study 3 replicate and extend findings from our previous studies.

Table 3. Study 3. Perceived credibility of the evaluators, desire for self-verification, in group similarity, and intention to promote the in group as a function of prototypicality manipulation.

Measures	Prototypicality manipulation					
	Underprototypicality		Verification		Overprototypicality	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Perceived credibility of the evaluators	2.73 ^b	0.24	3.58 ^a	0.25	2.75 ^b	0.26
Desire for self-verification	4.43 ^a	0.39	3.62 ^b	0.33	4.42 ^a	0.38
Ingroup similarity	3.91 ^a	0.63	3.02 ^b	0.50	2.08 ^a	0.40
Intention to promote the ingroup	3.82 ^c	0.48	3.42 ^b	0.33	2.49 ^a	0.30

Note. Results with different superscripts within same rows differ significantly from each other ($p < .05$).

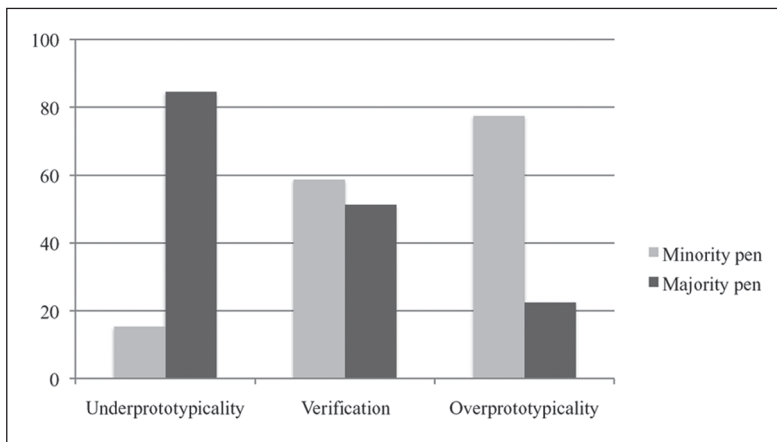


Figure 1. Study 3. Percentage of participants who choose the minority or majority pen as a function of prototypicality manipulation.

Participants imputed less credibility to evaluators who provided discrepant feedback about their prototypicality and reported an increasing desire for self-verification than when exposed to evaluators who provided verifying feedback. In addition, in the overprototypicality condition participants expressed feeling less similar to other ingroup members and they were less likely to want to promote the ingroup than participants in the verification condition. Participants in the underprototypicality condition perceived more

similarity with other ingroup members and they reported a reduced desire to promote the ingroup than participants in the verification condition. Furthermore, our findings demonstrated that the perceived value of the ingroup does not moderate the effect of the prototypicality manipulation on any of these effects confirming the strength of prototypicality verification strivings over self-enhancement processes.

Most interestingly, our behavioral measure of compensatory self-verification processes

buttressed the conclusions emerging from our self-report measures. Specifically, data from the pen selection task confirmed our expectations in that relative to participants in the verification condition, those in the underprototypicality condition displayed compensatory behaviors by choosing the majority pen, while participants in the overprototypicality condition displayed compensatory behaviors by choosing the minority pen. Importantly these effects were not moderated by the perceived value of the ingroup.

General Discussion

Previous work on group prototypicality has focused mostly on the sacrifices group members are willing to make to secure a more prototypical position in a valued group (e.g., Jetten, Branscombe, et al., 2002, 2003; Noel et al., 1995). Indeed, the attainment of greater prototypicality is assumed to be the ultimate goal for those who have not yet obtained a prototypical position in the group. However, we suggest that there are limits to prototypicality strivings within valued groups. In three studies, we show that the attainment of prototypicality might be too high a price to pay if it threatens one's self-conceived prototypicality. In all three studies, we found that when the group bestowed more prototypicality on the member than that member attributed to himself, the more the member engaged in compensatory prototypicality verification. Specifically, members evaluated as overprototypical compensated for low prototypicality by subsequently expressing less similarity to other ingroup members (Studies 1 to 3), less desire to promote the ingroup (Studies 2 and 3), by using more personal-identity-related words in a writing task (Study 3), and by choosing a more distinct pen (Study 3) than those for whom self and group prototypicality perceptions were aligned (i.e., verification condition).

Further, the fact that manipulations varying the desirability of the group (i.e., group status in Study 2 and group value in Study 3) did not qualify our participants' desire for verification of their self-conceived prototypicality lends further

support for our hypothesis that self-verification strivings would override self-enhancement motivations (e.g., Kwang & Swann, 2010). This suggests that the motivation to restore perceptions of prototypicality was a more important determinant of responses than satisfying a desire for self-enhancement strivings through maximizing perceptions of prototypicality in a high-status or valued group.

The importance of verification in prototypicality perceptions was also evident in the condition in which self- and group-prototypicality perceptions were aligned. When others' perceptions of prototypicality confirmed self-perceptions, evaluators were seen as most credible and evoked least desire for compensatory self-verification compared to conditions in which prototypicality was frustrated. What is more, responses by those who experienced high prototypicality verification were immune to manipulated variations in the desirability of the group. We found that neither the perceived credibility of evaluators nor the desire for self-verifying information was affected by group status manipulations (Study 2) or a group value manipulation (Study 3).

Another conclusion to be drawn from the findings is that, when self-other perceptions of prototypicality were misaligned, responses depended on the way prototypicality was frustrated. Similar patterns of results as those observed in previous work were obtained for those who were told that the group felt that they were less typical than they themselves thought they were (Jetten, Branscombe et al., 2003; Noel et al., 1995; van Kleef et al., 2007). Being denied typicality by other group members enhanced willingness to promote the group and enhanced perceived similarity to other group members (compared to the verified and overprototypicality conditions). Previous research has emphasized the strategic nature of responses by underprototypical group members: those who are denied prototypicality show group loyalty in the hope that this will help them attain greater prototypicality in the future (Jetten et al., 2003; Noel et al., 1995). Our findings are compatible with these accounts, but also point to another process that

might be at play. The enhanced need for verification among those who were underprototypical (compared to the verification condition) also suggests that behavior might not just be strategically motivated. Such behavior might also reflect attempts to restore prototypicality verification so that self and group prototypicality perceptions become again aligned. It is this latter process that is most consistent with the way prototypicality was conceptualized in classic self-categorization theory reasoning (see Oakes, 1987). In this classic view, prototypicality is not of value in and of itself. Prototypicality is only valuable to individuals when it encompasses the shared understandings between the self and others about group life, thereby helping individuals to navigate their way in valued groups.

Our findings not only shed light on a conceptual confusion that has surrounded self-categorization theorizing, they also extend self-verification theory. Most research in this tradition has focused on verification of the content of people's personal identities (e.g., "intelligent," "sociable"). Recently, some authors have extended early work on social self-views (e.g., Chen et al., 2004) and on ingroup identities (Gómez et al., 2009). The research we report here further extends this new line of work on the verification of social self-views by demonstrating that people are motivated to verify the *relationship* between people's personal qualities and the qualities of other group members. Interestingly, each of the different outcome measures we have chosen pertains to different aspects of this relationship between self and the group. For example, while some outcomes refer specifically to people's preferences regarding the self (e.g., the desire for self-verification in Studies 2–3), others refer to the preferences regarding the connection of the individual to the group (e.g., perceived similarity to the ingroup in Studies 1–3, desire to be distinctive in Study 3), and still others refer to preferences regarding the group itself (e.g., intentions to promote the group in Studies 2 and 3). Collectively, our investigations not only demonstrate that self-verification processes channel people's reactions to information about their prototypicality, they also expand the number of predictors and outcome

measures in the self-verification researcher's toolbox.

Implications

Our evidence that people are motivated to verify rather than enhance their self-perceived prototypicality may require a rethinking of some of the underlying assumptions that have informed work on group prototypicality (see also Ellemers & Jetten, 2013). By merging reasoning derived from self-verification and self-categorization theories, we developed the hypothesis that group members' responses would be largely determined by the extent to which their self-prototypicality perceptions were shared and confirmed—rather than enhanced—by other group members.

This evidence of the importance of confirming as compared to enhancing the self-views of group members extends and enriches previous treatments of prototypicality by self-categorization theorists (Jetten et al., 2003; van Kleef et al., 2007) by highlighting the importance of the degree to which the self-perceptions of group members and the perceptions of other group members are aligned (see Ellemers & Jetten, 2013, for a similar point). Similarly, recent leadership research shows that, regardless of the assigned prototypicality of the leader, leaders can only be influential when the perceptions of followers and leaders are aligned (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011). Still other work has also shown that people feel threatened when others perceive them in ways that are not consistent with their contextually defined self-definition (i.e., categorization threat; Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten, & Smith, 2010).

While previous research has demonstrated that individuals may use strategies that *simultaneously* satisfy the need for inclusion *within* the group and serve the need for differentiation through distinctions between the ingroup and outgroups (Brewer, 1991; Pickett, Bonner, et al., 2002; Pickett & Brewer, 2001; Pickett, Silver, et al., 2002), our results show that individuals may balance *simultaneously* their need to feel included as well as their need to feel distinct *within* the group (Hornsey &

Jetten, 2004). The different alternatives that each theory proposes for resolving the discrepancy between self-conceived and group-conceived prototypicality makes these two approaches complementary rather than competitive. Perhaps the most important implication that our findings offer to ODT reasoning is that differentiation does not necessarily need to be resolved at the intergroup level by searching for ingroup–outgroup distinctions (see also Hornsey & Jetten, 2004). Self-verification strivings may help to resolve differentiation needs within the group.

It has been argued that because those who are highly prototypical of the group are so similar to what the group stands for, they necessarily compromise individual distinctiveness for similarity to other members (Hogg, 2001). This reasoning clashes with evidence that leaders (who are highly prototypical group members) stand out from the group and that their uniqueness from the group allows for, or actually promotes, social change (Haslam et al., 2011). Our findings help reconcile these seemingly discrepant themes. By recognizing that people's conceptions of their own prototypicality are actively regulated through a process of identity negotiation (Swann, 1987; Swann, Johnson, & Bosson, 2009), we can step away from the notion that individuals are consigned to reconcile their needs for prototypicality, distinctiveness, and similarity within their own minds. Indeed, the crucial processes may involve less *intrapsychic* juggling of needs for prototypicality and distinctiveness than *interpersonal* and *intragroup* activities designed to ensure that the members of the group recognize and confirm each other's individual needs.

Final Thoughts

Three studies show that there are limits to the extent to which group members strive for prototypicality in the group. Even if membership in the group is desirable and attractive, when others perceive us as more or less typical than we think we are, we feel threatened and try to restore fit by realigning self and group perceptions. Rather ironically then, it was those group members who

feared that they were more prototypical of the group than they believed themselves to be who sought distinctiveness. Although such individuals surely understood that prototypicality was a good thing, they also recognized that it was possible to have too much of a good thing.

Funding

This research was supported by a Discovery Grant from the Australian Research Council (DP1094034) and by a Research Fund Grants (PSI2012-30921) from the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

Note

1. The notion that a desire to regulate uniqueness can motivate de-emphasizing group affiliation has also recently been considered by group researchers working in a social identity tradition (see Ellemers & Jetten, 2013; Hornsey & Jetten, 2004; Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002; Postmes & Jetten, 2006) and by researchers investigating the effects of majority influence (Imhoff & Erb, 2009).

References

- Barreto, M., Ellemers, N., Scholten, W., & Smith, H. (2010). To be or not to be: The impact of implicit versus explicit inappropriate social categorizations on the self. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 49*, 43–67. doi:10.1348/014466608X400830
- Bosson, J., & Swann, W. B., Jr. (1999). Self-liking, self-competence, and the quest for self-verification. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25*, 1230–1241. doi:10.1177/0146167299258005
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 17*, 475–482. doi:10.1177/0146167291175001
- Brooks, M. L., Swann, W. B., Jr., & Mehta, P. H. (2011). Reasserting the self: Blocking self-verifying behavior triggers compensatory self-verification. *Self & Identity, 10*, 77–84. doi:10.1177/0146167211424580
- Chen, S., Chen, K., & Shaw, L. (2004). Self-verification motives at the collective level of self-definition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 86*, 77–94. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.86.1.77
- Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human nature and the social order*. New York, NY: Scribner's.

- Ellemers, N., & Jetten, J. (2013). The many ways to be marginal in a group. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 17*, 3–21. doi:10.1177/1088868312453086
- Esses, V. M., Haddock, G., & Zanna, M. P. (1993). Values, stereotypes, and emotions as determinants of intergroup attitudes. In D. M. Mackie & D. L. Hamilton (Eds.), *Affect, cognition, and stereotyping: Intergroup processes in group perception* (pp. 137–166). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Gómez, A., Seyle, C., Huici, C., & Swann, W. B., Jr. (2009). Can self-verification strivings fully transcend the self–other barrier? Seeking verification of ingroup identities. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 97*, 1021–1044. doi:10.1037/a0016358
- Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., & Platow, M. J. (2011). *The new psychology of leadership: Identity, influence and power*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Hogg, M. A. (2001). A social identity theory of leadership. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 5*, 184–200. doi:10.1207/S15327957PSPR0503_1
- Hogg, M. A., & Hardie, E. A. (1991). Social attraction, personal attraction, and self-categorization: A field study. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 17*, 175–180. doi:10.1207/S15327957PSPR0503_1
- Hornsey, M. J., & Jetten, J. (2004). The individual within the group: Balancing the need to belong with the need to be different. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 8*, 248–264. doi:10.1207/s15327957pspr0803_2
- Imhoff, R., & Erb, H. P. (2009). What motivates non-conformity? Uniqueness seeking blocks majority influence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*, 309–320. doi:10.1177/0146167208328166
- Jetten, J., Branscombe, N. R., & Spears, R. (2002). On being peripheral: Effects of identity insecurity on personal and collective self-esteem. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 32*, 105–123. doi:10.1002/ejsp.1877
- Jetten, J., Branscombe, N. R., Spears, R., & McKimie, B. M. (2003). Predicting the paths of peripherals: The interaction of identification and future possibilities. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*, 130–140. doi:10.1177/1368430207081537
- Jetten, J., Hornsey, M. J., Spears, R., Haslam, S. A., & Cowell, E. (2010). Rule transgressions in groups: The conditional nature of newcomers' willingness to confront deviance. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 40*, 338–348. doi:10.1002/ejsp.627
- Jetten, J., Postmes, T., & McAuliffe, B. J. (2002). "We're all individuals": Group norms of individualism and collectivism, levels of identification, and identity threat. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 32*, 189–207. doi:10.1002/ejsp.65
- Jones, S. C. (1973). Self- and interpersonal evaluations: Esteem theories versus consistency theories. *Psychological Bulletin, 79*, 185–199. doi:10.1177/1088868310365876
- Kim, H., & Markus, H. R. (1999). Deviance or uniqueness, harmony or conformity? A cultural analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*, 785–800. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.77.4.785
- Kwang, T., & Swann, W. B., Jr. (2010). Do people embrace praise even when they feel unworthy? A review of critical tests of self-enhancement versus self-verification. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 14*, 263–280. doi:10.1177/1088868310365876
- Leonardelli, G. L., Pickett, C. L., & Brewer, M. B. (2010). Optimal distinctiveness theory: A framework for social identity, social cognition, and intergroup relations. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 43, pp. 66–115). San Diego, CA: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Levine, J. M., & Moreland, R. L. (1994). Group socialization: Theory and research. *European Review of Social Psychology, 5*, 305–336. doi:10.1080/14792779543000093
- Lord, R. G., Foti, R. J., & De Vader, C. L. (1984). A test of leadership categorization theory: Internal structure, information processing, and leadership perceptions. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 34*, 343–378. doi:10.1177/1046496491223005
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self and society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Noel, J. G., Wann, D. L., & Branscombe, N. R. (1995). Peripheral ingroup membership status and public negativity toward outgroups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68*, 127–137. doi:10.1177/1368430210375702
- Oakes, P. J. (1987). The salience of social categories. In J. C. Turner, M. A. Hogg, P. J. Oakes, S. D. Reicher & M. Wetherell (Eds.), *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory* (pp. 117–141). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Oakes, P. J. (1996). The categorization process: Cognition and the group in the social psychology of stereotyping. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Social groups and identity: Developing the legacy of Henri Tajfel* (pp. 95–119). Oxford, UK: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Pelham, B. W., & Swann, W. B., Jr. (1989). From self-conceptions to self-worth: The sources and structure of self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*, 672–680. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.57.4.672

- Pickett, C. L., Bonner, B. L., & Coleman, J. M. (2002). Motivated self-stereotyping: Heightened assimilation and differentiation needs result in increased levels of positive and negative self-stereotyping. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*, 543–562. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.82.4.543
- Pickett, C. L., & Brewer, M. B. (2001). Assimilation and differentiation needs as motivational determinants of perceived in-group and out-group homogeneity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 37*, 341–348. doi:10.1006/jesp.2000.1469
- Pickett, C. L., Silver, M. D., & Brewer, M. B. (2002). The impact of assimilation and differentiation needs on perceived group importance and judgments of in-group size. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 4*, 546–558. doi:10.1177/0146167202287011
- Postmes, T., & Jetten, J. (Eds.). (2006). *Individuality and the group: Advances in social identity*. London, UK: Sage.
- Rosch, E. (1978). Principles of categorization. In E. Rosch & B. B. Lloyd (Eds.), *Cognition and categorization* (pp. 27–48). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Simon, B., & Stürmer, S. (2003). Respect for group members: Intragroup determinants of collective identification and group-serving behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*, 183–193. doi:10.1177/0146167202239043
- Sorrentino, R. M., Seligman, C., & Battista, M. E. (2007). Optimal distinctiveness, values, and uncertainty orientation: Individual differences on perceptions of self and group identity. *Self and Identity, 6*, 322–339. doi:10.1080/15298860601008937
- Swann, W. B., Jr. (1983). Self-verification: Bringing social reality into harmony with the self. In J. Suls & A. G. Greenwald (Eds.), *Social psychological perspectives on the self* (Vol. 2, pp. 33–66). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Swann, W. B., Jr. (1987). Identity negotiation: Where two roads meet. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53*, 1038–1051. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.53.6.1038
- Swann, W. B., Jr. (2011). Self-verification theory. In P. van Lang, A. Kruglanski & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (pp. 23–42). London, UK: Sage.
- Swann, W. B., Jr., Griffin, J. J., Predmore, S., & Gaines, B. (1987). The cognitive-affective crossfire: When self-consistency confronts self-enhancement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*, 881–889. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.52.5.881
- Swann, W. B., Jr., & Hill, C. A. (1982). When our identities are mistaken: Reaffirming self-conceptions through social interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66*, 59–66. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.43.1.59
- Swann, W. B., Jr., Johnson, R. E., & Bosson, J. (2009). Identity negotiation in the workplace. In B. Staw & A. Brief (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 29, pp. 81–109). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Elsevier.
- Swann, W. B., Jr., Pelham, B. W., & Krull, D. S. (1989). Agreeable fancy or disagreeable truth? How people reconcile their self-enhancement and self-verification needs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*, 782–791. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.57.5.782
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–48). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Van Kleef, G. A., Steinel, W., van Knippenberg, D., Hogg, M.A., & Svensson, A. (2007). Group member prototypicality and intergroup negotiation: How one's standing in the group affects negotiation behaviour. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 44*, 362–369. doi:10.1348/014466605X89353
- Van Knippenberg, D., & Wilke, H. (1992). Prototypicality of arguments and conformity to ingroup norms. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 22*, 141–155. doi:10.1002/ejsp.2420220204