

# Ingroup Favouring Evaluations in Response to Belonging Threats in Public and Private Contexts

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In the present investigation, we sought to examine the association between threats to belonging and intergroup discrimination in private and public contexts. To this end, participants (men) received either inclusion or ostracism feedback via a Cyberball game, and then were given the opportunity to differentially evaluate ingroup (i.e., men) and outgroup (i.e., women) members whilst believing these evaluations were to remain private or be shared publicly with other ingroup members. It was found that ostracised men whose evaluations were to be shared publicly and included men whose evaluations were to remain private evaluated the ingroup significantly more positively than the outgroup. Ostracised men whose evaluations were to be shared publicly and included men whose evaluations were to remain private evaluated the ingroup and the outgroup fairly. The ramifications of these findings are discussed.

**Keywords:** belonging; ostracism; inclusion; intergroup discrimination; ingroup favouritism; intergroup evaluations

## Introduction

On Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2019, at 1:40 in the afternoon, a lone gunman entered the Masjid Al Noor Mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand. He carried a semi-automatic weapon, and opened fire on the Muslims holding *Jumu'ah* (Friday Prayer) inside. By the time he was arrested, just 36 minutes after the attacks began, the gunman had killed 50 Muslims at two separate Mosques and injured at least 50 more. This makes the shooter, to date, the perpetrator of the deadliest mass killing in modern New Zealand history.

The aftermath of such an attack was devastating and widespread. What could have possibly motivated such hate? How could one man kill another so heartlessly, simply because of differing religious beliefs or skin colour? One important way to begin to understand such occurrences is through research carried out on group behaviour. Groups are regularly bound by common or shared beliefs like religion and political ideology. When members from one group encounter members of a group with differing beliefs and values, conflict is a likely outcome. A vast body of research investigating the hostility and violence observed between groups, posit such intergroup discrimination arises from the intergroup dynamics of, and between, the conflicting groups.

Social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) has guided much of the research on intergroup relations over the past 40 years, providing an account of how

individual psychology is influenced by group membership. The meta-theoretical basis of SIT lies in the distinction between personal identity and social identity. Personal identity is active and drives behaviour in interpersonal contexts. Social identity (the component of an individual's self-concept that is derived from their group memberships together with their associated emotional significance) drives behaviour in intergroup contexts (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see also Hewstone & Cairns, 2001).

A further assumption of SIT is that people are motivated to evaluate the self positively in the drive to attain positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; but see Turner, 1999). One way to accomplish this goal is by engaging in favourable intergroup comparisons (Turner et al., 1987). Successful intergroup comparisons are possible through ingroup bias (e.g., bias favouring the ingroup), outgroup derogation (e.g., discriminating against an outgroup), or a combination of both (e.g., intergroup discrimination). SIT, therefore, proposes that intergroup discrimination can be construed as a behavioural outcome of an individual's attempt to attain or maintain a positive social identity.

Whilst much research has sought to investigate links between social identity and intergroup discrimination, a vast amount of research attended to the latterly developed self-esteem hypothesis (SEH; Abrams & Hogg, 1988). Though SIT directly addresses the need for positive

social identity, much of the research investigating intergroup behaviour in the discipline of social psychology has since focused on the need for self-esteem, as posited by the SEH. The shift in focus to self-esteem stems from conceptualization problems with social identity and a study by Oakes and Turner (1980) that first stressed the role of self-esteem under the framework of SIT. The conceptual problem with social identity stems from its vague definition. Moscovici and Paicheler (1978, p. 256) point out that "identity is as indispensable as it is unclear". The lack of clarity of the concept of social identity has led to some contention and disagreement about the meaning and implications of social identity, none more prominent than the emergence of the concept of self-esteem (see Turner, 1999). Oakes and Turner's (1980) focus on self-esteem as a component of SIT, with their repeated reference to the need for self-esteem as a motivation, led to a plethora of further studies formulating, investigating, and refining self-esteem's role within intergroup discrimination.

To provide clarity regarding self-esteem within a SIT framework, Abrams and Hogg (1988) formulated the self-esteem hypothesis (SEH). The SEH contains two specific corollaries. The first is that acts or displays of intergroup discrimination will enhance social identity and thus self-esteem. The second, based on the assumption that people are motivated to achieve and

maintain a positive sense of self-esteem, is that low or threatened self-esteem will enhance intergroup discrimination.

Multiple studies have since explored one or the other of the corollaries of SEH. The findings outlined in subsequent reviews (e.g., Rubin & Hewstone, 1998) together with research emerging afterwards (e.g., Aberson, Healy & Romero, 2000; Fein & Spencer, 1997; Gramzow & Gaertner, 2005; Houston & Andreopoulou, 2003; Hunter et al., 2004; Long & Spears, 1997; Verkuyten & Hagoort, 2002) are largely inconsistent and contradictory. Though a few studies provide support for the SEH in its entirety (e.g., Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Fein & Spencer, 1997; Hunter et al., 2004, expt 2; Hunter et al., 2005), the bulk of the evidence reveals merely moderate support for the first corollary, and much less support for the second.

To overcome such inconsistencies, researchers have generally taken one of two routes. Some have attempted to overcome conceptual and methodological flaws of the SEH (see Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Hunter et al., 1996; Rubin & Hewstone, 1988; Turner, 1999; Hunter et al., 2004; Hunter et al., 2005; Long & Spears, 1998; Scheepers, Spears, Manstead & Doojse, 2009). Others suggest the motivational role of self-esteem has been over-stated with respect to intergroup discrimination and argue that other motives may provide greater (at the very least, additional) explanatory value (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Hogg & Abrams, 1993).

Research assessing the contribution of motives other than self-esteem to our understanding of intergroup discrimination have so far tended to emphasize uncertainty reduction (e.g., Grieve & Hogg, 1999), control (Hayhurst, Iverson, Ruffman, Stringer, & Hunter, 2014), fear of death (Solomon, Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 2001), group-based dominance (Duckitt, 2001), or distinctiveness and inclusion (Brewer, 1991). The importance of distinctiveness and inclusion is captured by the optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT; Brewer, 1991). ODT is, to date, the only view we are aware of that promotes a central role of belonging.

Given that belonging is generally considered fundamental to the human condition and a core motive in social psychology (e.g., Fiske, 2004; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Williams, 2009), this lack of focus on belonging as a motivational construct of intergroup

discrimination is somewhat unexpected. When fulfilled, a sense of belonging is associated with a range of psychological benefits, including lower rates of anxiety and depression, an enhanced sense of self-worth and self-confidence, and heightened feelings of self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence (amongst others; see Cruwys, Haslam, Dingle, Haslam, & Jetten, 2014; Fiske, 2004). Conversely, a dissatisfied sense of belonging is associated with a wealth of negative psychological, behavioural and physical outcomes (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Williams, 2009). Given the clear implications of a fulfilled or thwarted sense of belonging (see Baumeister & Leary 1995 for an in-depth discussion), the trifling number of studies investigating the relation between this and intergroup discrimination is especially surprising.

The studies that have examined the effect of threats to belonging (either via social exclusion or social ostracism), however, have found mixed results. Some studies have found rejection by an ingroup to increase aggression. For example, in one study, ostracised (compared to included) participants allocated more hot sauce to a stranger even though they knew that the stranger strongly disliked hot and spicy foods (Warburton, et al., 2006). Other research, however, has found that ostracism leads to pro-social behaviour such as increased conformity (Williams et al., 2000) and increased social mimicry (Lakin & Chartrand, 2005, 2008). In fact, ostracised participants have been shown to work harder on a group task even when their efforts would benefit the very group that ostracised them (Williams & Sommer, 1997).

These divergent results may be clarified by examining how rejected group members may strategically utilise intergroup discrimination to restore their position within the group. Indeed, some research suggests that the display of ingroup favouritism following some form of exclusion from the ingroup serves as a kind of identity management strategy, a way to enhance or restore inclusion within the ingroup (Noel et al., 1995). As such, perhaps ingroup favouritism will only increase following ostracism feedback if such behaviour could potentially restore ingroup inclusion. Biased behaviour may be utilised by ostracised group members to reinforce their commitment to, and shared values with, the ingroup.

Noel et al. (1995) examined strategic responding in peripheral group members by looking at differences in public versus private outgroup derogation. The findings showed peripheral group members derogated a relevant outgroup only when their opinions were to be made public to fellow ingroup members. Peripheral group members showed no such derogating behaviour when these opinions were to remain private. This suggests that rather than reflecting personal opinions and beliefs, publicly displayed intergroup bias may instead reflect the drive or desire to increase inclusionary status (or re-inclusion in the case of ostracism) with the ingroup (see also Branscombe et al., 1999). This is supported by the lack of bias shown by peripheral group members when their opinions were to remain private, as it would be of little benefit in terms of solidifying inclusion with the ingroup (Noel et al., 1995). Indeed, it seems that displays of intergroup discrimination may be utilised strategically by peripheral group members, in order to demonstrate they are worthy and good group members and solidify their acceptance or inclusion in the ingroup.

Similarly, other researchers have found that when peripheral group members anticipated future ostracism by the group, they showed less loyalty and identification with the group. When peripheral group members expected increased future acceptance, those who highly identified with the group demonstrated more loyalty (Jetten, Branscombe, Spears, & McKimmie, 2003). Therefore, current group behaviour depends on what group members expect might happen in the future. This again supports the idea of strategic responding by peripheral group members, in so far as they will show intergroup bias if they believe this may lead to greater ingroup inclusion in the future.

These studies look at the behaviour of peripheral group members. Noel et al. (1995) utilised a realistic group in terms of sorority pledges, whereas Jetten et al. (2003) manipulated peripheral status via bogus personality test feedback. Whilst peripheral group members have not received an explicit belonging threat per se, they are marginal group members and are motivated to enhance connectedness to the group, as ostracised members may be motivated to do. Therefore, we might expect a similar pattern of strategic responding in participants who have

received a threat to belonging via ostracism feedback: reporting bias decisions publicly in front of the other ingroup members may influence ostracised participants to show increased bias. This display of bias would theoretically function to demonstrate loyalty to the group and potentially increase the perceived likelihood of reconnecting with the group. In keeping with such theorising, ostracised participants have been shown to work harder on a group task even when their efforts would benefit the very group that ostracised them, perhaps to prove their loyalty and worth to the group (Williams & Sommer, 1997).

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the role of self-presentational concerns relating to displays of ingroup favouritism following belonging threat. To this end, participants received inclusion or ostracism feedback via a Cyberball game. Following the threat to belonging, participants evaluated ingroup and outgroup members whilst believing that these evaluations were to remain private or to be shared publicly with other members of the ingroup.

It was hypothesised that, due to self-presentational concerns and a wish to increase their belonging within the ingroup (Noel et al., 1995), participants who received ostracism feedback and believed that their intergroup evaluations would be shared publicly with members of the ingroup would display ingroup favouritism (i.e., evaluate the ingroup more positively than the outgroup). Displays of ingroup favouritism privately would be of little benefit in terms of solidifying inclusion (Noel et al., 1995), and so it was anticipated that ostracised participants who expected their intergroup evaluations to remain private, would not evaluate the ingroup and the outgroup differently. Participants who received inclusion feedback should have felt secure with their status within the ingroup and thus no self-presentation concerns were anticipated (Noel et al., 1995). Therefore, participants who received inclusion feedback were not expected to rate the ingroup and the outgroup differently whether they believed their evaluations would remain private or be shared publicly with the ingroup.

In other words, it was hypothesised that *only* participants who wished to increase their inclusionary status within the group (i.e., ostracised participants), *and* who believed there was a reasonable chance to

do so (i.e., such that any displays of ingroup favouritism were to be shared publicly with the ingroup), would evaluate the ingroup significantly higher than the outgroup.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were recruited through the website, <https://app.prolific.ac>, in return for a £3.50 payment. The only inclusion criteria were that participants identified as men. The final pool of participants included 207 men with an age range of 16 to 57 years ( $M = 26.70$ ,  $SD = 7.58$ ). In terms of participants' highest level of education, 2.4% of the participants had not completed high school, 40.8% had completed high school (or equivalent secondary education), 37.4% had completed an undergraduate degree (or other tertiary education), and 19.4% had completed some form of postgraduate degree. Fifty-one participants currently lived in the USA, 32 in Canada, 21 in Portugal, 16 in each of Mexico and the UK, 11 in Spain, 10 in Australia, eight in each of Chile and Poland, six in Greece, four in England, three in each of Germany and Hungary, two in each of the Czech Republic, Japan, and New Zealand, and one in each of Estonia, Finland, Israel, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and Wales. Five participants declined to state the country they currently lived in.

### Design

Our study utilised a mixed-model design. The target-group of evaluations (i.e., ingroup vs outgroup) was within groups. Belonging feedback (i.e., inclusion vs ostracism) and the nature of favouritism (i.e., public vs private) were between subjects. Allocation of participants to each condition was random. The number of participants allocated to each condition is presented in Table 1.

### Procedure

Following a procedure similar to Williams et al. (2000), participants were told they would be playing a Cyberball game with other members of the all-male group. It was made clear that performance in the game was not important, rather, the game was a chance to practice their visualisation skills. Participants were encouraged to visualise themselves, the environment, and other players. It was emphasised that the results of the game were of no importance, but it was paramount they participate in the game and focus on their visualisation skills. The

game was ostensibly played with other members of the men group, however in reality the participant was the only person playing the game. The other 'players' were avatars pre-programmed to either include or ostracise the participant. The participant's avatar was labelled *Man 2 (me)*, whilst the computer-controlled avatars were labelled *Man 1*, *Man 3*, and *Man 4*. See Figure 1 for a screenshot of the Cyberball game as seen from the participants point of view.

### Inclusion/ostracism

The computer-programmed players (or virtual confederates) were scripted to either include or ostracise the participant. Upon receiving a ball toss, the participant clicked on one of the three other players they wished to throw the ball to, and the computer animated the pass. The computer then dictated the throws of the digital avatars, depending on the condition the participant was assigned to. The game was scripted so that participants assigned to the inclusion condition received a fair share (approximately a quarter) of all ball tosses. Those in the ostracism condition received two throws at the beginning of the game to become familiar with gameplay and to supplement its realism. Ostracised participants were then denied the ball for the remainder of the game. All games consisted of 30 throws.

### Belonging

Following the Cyberball game, participants were presented with a scale of belonging devised by Sheldon and Bettencourt (2002). This scale (adapted slightly to become specific to the men group of interest in the current study) was comprised of three items; '*I feel that other men have included me*', '*I feel well integrated with other men*', and '*I feel a sense of belongingness with other men*' (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.95$ ). Participants' responses were scored using a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly agree, 7 – strongly disagree), and were specific to how participants felt 'right now'.

### Public/private bias task:

#### Evaluations

Following the belonging scale, all participants were given the opportunity to differentially evaluate ingroup (i.e., men) and outgroup members (i.e., women) using 20 pairs of 11-point trait rating scales. Participants assigned to the private condition were told that their evaluations of ingroup and outgroup members would remain private. Those assigned to the public condition were informed their evaluations would be made public and

were to be shared with other men during a group discussion, ostensibly occurring later in the experiment.

The 20 pairs of evaluative traits were taken from Platow, McClintock, and Liebrand (1990; *cooperative-competitive, helpful-unhelpful, selfish-unselfish, intelligent-unintelligent, strong-weak, warm-cold, flexible-rigid, manipulative-sincere, fair-unfair, honest-dishonest, friendly-unfriendly, trustworthy-untrustworthy, consistent-inconsistent*), and Oakes et al. (1994; *pushy-reticent,*

*humble-arrogant, confident-shy, aggressive-non-aggressive, ignorant-well informed, straight forward-hypocritical*). Counterbalancing was used to rule out ordering effects, and reverse scoring was employed where necessary such that higher scores indicated more positive ratings.

**Manipulation checks**

In the final step of the experiment, participants were presented with a series of manipulation checks and demographic questions. Participants were asked (a)

what they thought the study was about, (b) if they noticed anything odd or unusual about the study, (c) if they had taken part in similar studies before, (d) if they took the study seriously, and (e) if they normally consider themselves to be men. Information was also gathered on participants' age, highest level of education, and current country of residence. Finally, participants were fully debriefed, thanked for their time and interest in the study, and paid.

**Table 1.** Number of men per condition.

Belonging Feedback	Nature of Favouritism		Total
	Private	Public	
Inclusion	53	53	106
Ostracism	50	51	101
Total	103	104	207



**Figure 1.** Screenshot of Cyberball game as seen from the participant's point of view.

**RESULTS**

**Belonging**

In order to assess the effectiveness of the Cyberball paradigm to manipulate levels of belonging in participants, a 2 (feedback type: inclusion vs ostracism) x

2 (nature of favouritism: private vs public) between groups' analysis of variance (ANOVA) (analysis of variance) as a function of belonging was conducted. A main effect was found for feedback type,  $F(1, 203) = 154.18, p < .001, \eta^2 = .432$ . Participants who received ostracism

feedback had lower belonging scores than participants who received inclusion feedback ( $M = 7.95, SD = 4.83$  vs  $M = 15.36, SD = 3.71$ ). No other significant main or interaction effects were found.

**Table 2.** Evaluations of ingroup (i.e., men) and outgroup (i.e., women) members that were to remain private or be shared publicly for participants who received either inclusion or ostracism feedback.

Feedback Type	Nature of Favouritism	Intergroup Evaluations		N
		Ingroup	Outgroup	
Inclusion	Private	158.68 (22.09)**	147.87 (22.29)	53
	Public	153.70 (17.36)	147.94 (21.09)	53
Ostracism	Private	147.50 (21.29)	146.76 (21.97)	50
	Public	151.02 (20.25)**	132.43 (24.03)	51
Overall		152.82 (20.57)**	143.82 (23.14)	207

Note. Higher scores indicate more positive evaluations.

Note. \*\*  $p < .005$ , significantly higher evaluations of ingroup than outgroup.

### Ingroup favouritism

To assess the extent to which men who received either inclusion or ostracism feedback differentially evaluated members of the ingroup (i.e., men) and outgroup (i.e., women) either publicly or privately, a 2 (feedback type: inclusion vs ostracism) x 2 (nature of favouritism: private vs public) x 2 (target group: ingroup vs outgroup) mixed model ANOVA was conducted. The first two variables were between groups. The third variable was within groups. Cell means are presented in Table 2.

A significant main effect was found for target group,  $F(1, 203) = 18.27, p < .001, \eta^2 = .083$ . Overall, participants evaluated ingroup members (i.e., men) more positively than outgroup members (i.e., women;  $M = 152.82, SD = 20.57$  vs  $M = 143.82, SD = 23.14$ ). A significant main effect was also found for Cyberball feedback,  $F(1, 203) = 13.15, p < .001, \eta^2 = .061$ . Included participants gave evaluations that were overall more positive than evaluations given by ostracised participants ( $M = 152.05, SD = 17.13$  vs  $M = 144.43, SD = 12.83$ ).

A significant 3-way interaction effect was found between feedback type, nature of favouritism, and target group,  $F(1, 203) = 7.441, p = .007, \eta^2 = .035$ . Planned comparisons using repeated measures *t*-tests (and incorporating the Bonferroni-Holm correction) revealed that included participants whose evaluations remained private ( $M = 158.68, SD = 22.09$  vs  $M = 147.87, SD = 22.29$ ),  $t(52) = 3.49, p = .004$ , and ostracised participants whose evaluations were to be shared publicly ( $M = 151.02, SD = 20.25$  vs  $M = 132.43, SD = 24.03$ ),  $t(50) = 3.25, p = .006$ , evaluated the ingroup significantly more positively than the outgroup. No significant differences between evaluations for the ingroup versus the outgroup were found for included participants whose evaluations were to be shared publicly ( $M = 153.70, SD = 17.36$  vs  $M = 147.94, SD = 21.09$ ),  $t(52) = 1.72, p = .184$ , nor for ostracised participants whose evaluations were to remain private ( $M = 147.50, SD = 21.29$  vs  $M = 146.76, SD = 21.97$ ),  $t(49) = .175, p = .862$ . No other significant main or interaction effects were found.

### DISCUSSION

This study tested one hypothesis; that only participants who wish to increase their inclusionary status within the group (i.e., ostracised participants), and believe there is a reasonable chance to do so (i.e., any displays of ingroup favouritism will

be shared with the ingroup), will evaluate the ingroup significantly higher than the outgroup. This hypothesis was not supported. Men who received ostracism feedback and shared their intergroup evaluations publicly did evaluate the ingroup significantly more positively than the outgroup, as expected. Men who received inclusion feedback and shared their evaluations publicly, and men who received ostracism feedback and their evaluations remained private, did not significantly differentiate between the ingroup and the outgroup in their intergroup evaluations, also as expected. Somewhat unexpected, however, was the fact that men whose evaluations remained private and who received inclusion feedback did evaluate the ingroup more positively than the outgroup.

With respect to men who received ostracism feedback, the ostracised men in the private bias task condition did not discriminate, whilst the ostracised men in the public condition did. This supports theories of intergroup discrimination outlined by Leary (2005; Leary et al., 1995) and Noel et al. (1995). Leary and his colleagues argue that people who are motivated to increase their inclusionary status (e.g., people whose acceptance by the group has been threatened) will try to increase their value to the group (Leary, 2005; Leary et al., 1995). One way this might be achieved is through intergroup differentiation where the ingroup is favoured over the outgroup. Noel et al. (1995) suggests that showing intergroup bias publicly demonstrates that one is working in the best interests of the group. Conceivably, therefore, publicly displaying ingroup favouritism following ostracism feedback may function to demonstrate one's value to the ingroup and therefore increase their inclusionary status.

The current study reinforces this proposition. Indeed, following ostracism feedback from the ingroup, these men have a threatened sense of belonging. When their intergroup evaluations are to be shared publicly, they have an opportunity to show other ingroup members that they are worthy and deserve to be accepted into the group. They favour the ingroup as an attempt to demonstrate their commitment and loyalty to the ingroup, and therefore convince other group members to accept them. The public context of their evaluations offers hope for a chance of acceptance in the future (Jetten et al., 2003). When their evaluations are not to be shared publicly

and are to remain private, the ingroup remains unaware of any displays of favouritism. As such these responses have no chance of increasing their acceptance status within the group and thus we do not see the same levels of ingroup favouritism.

Men who receive inclusion feedback show a different pattern of results than men who received ostracism feedback. Privately, included men unexpectedly show significant levels of ingroup favouritism. It may be that the inclusion feedback fosters feelings of respect, reassurance, and satisfaction with respect to one's position in the group. Such feelings may have, in turn, resulted in group members acting in accordance with group norms (Smith & Tyler, 2007), being supportive of other in-group members (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001), and showing in-group favouritism (Leonardelli & Brewer, 2001; Spears, Ellemers, Doosje, & Branscombe, 2006).

This ingroup favouritism is not present, however, when included men were to share their evaluations publicly with other men. It may well be that in public settings these men fall back on a general social norm of fairness. This tendency to discriminate when evaluations were to remain private may have been restrained by a reluctance to behave in a way potentially construed as discriminatory (in this case, sexist). Whilst the social norm of fairness in a public context may be overridden by the need to belong in certain circumstances (as evidenced by significant levels of ingroup favouritism in public by ostracised males), included men have no motivation to act in any way incongruent with the fairness norm. These men have received inclusion feedback such that their position within the group is secure, and therefore they are not motivated to publicly display their loyalty to the ingroup through ingroup favouritism. Their belonging needs are fulfilled, and any public displays of bias offer no benefit.

Clearly the behavioural outcomes examined in this study (intergroup evaluations) are vastly different from those that occurred in Christchurch on March 15. It is key to note that the present study examines how men might publicly favour the ingroup following belonging threat, opposed to the public violence exhibited against an outgroup on March 15. Comparatively, favouring an ingroup via intergroup evaluations is fairly mild. Previous research has suggested that such intergroup evaluations may be unrelated

to more negative forms of discrimination (e.g., blasts of white noise, or the allocation of hot sauce; Struch & Schwartz, 1989). It has also been suggested that explanatory constructs (e.g., group identity, self-esteem) that are associated with milder forms of intergroup discrimination may be unrelated to more negative forms of discrimination (Amoit & Bourhis, 2005; Hodson, Dovidio, & Esses, 2003). As this is true for some constructs, it may

potentially be true for belonging also. Therefore, we must be extremely careful when drawing any conclusions that a threat to belonging may have been a contributing factor to what motivated the events of March 15.

Nevertheless, the present findings do contribute to a growing body of research suggesting that a threatened sense of belonging may indeed motivate displays of intergroup discrimination (or at least intergroup favouritism). By no means is this

the only possible motivation of such behaviour, nor that this was necessarily related to what motivated the events of March 15. But the present findings point to threatened belonging as a potential explanation of why intergroup discrimination might occur in some contexts. If we can begin to understand why something is happening, there is a possibility we can work together to prevent its reoccurrence in the future.

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