

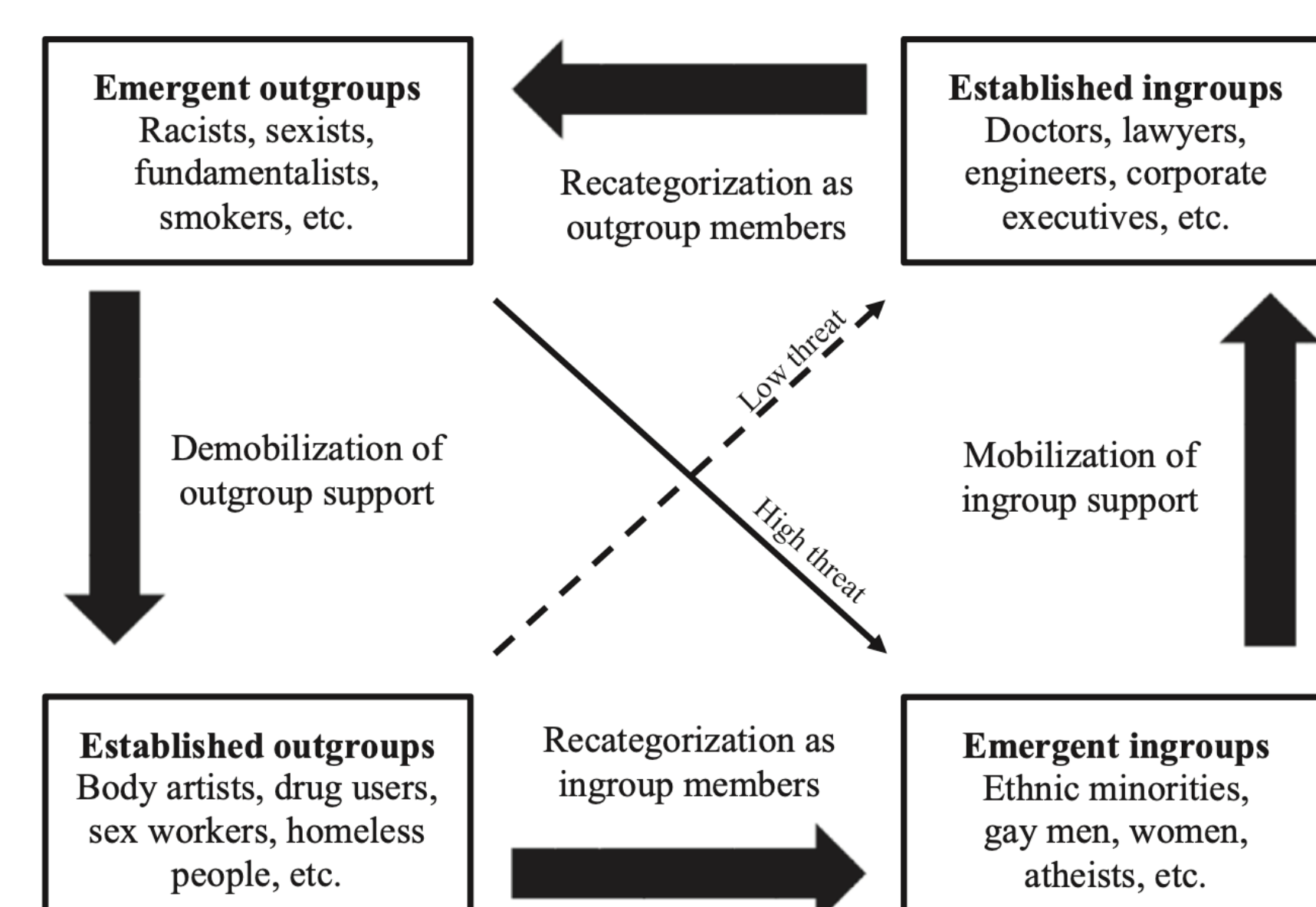
Emergent Ingroup Members in the U.S. Mainstream: A Descriptive Analysis of 245 Social Groups

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Introduction

Researchers have increasingly become interested in the emergence of novel social identities and their potential for inspiring social change (e.g., Ntontis et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2019). The Emergent Ingroup Model (EIM; Ferguson et al., 2019) provides a social identity perspective on the formation and maintenance of stability and change in society. It places recategorization (novel social categories) and remobilization (novel intergroup behavior) at the heart of social change efforts—with emergent ingroup members working together toward a better future, in the face of emergent outgroup resistance.



Our present research addresses three questions. First, how well do perceptions of stability and change in society’s emotions toward social groups fit with EIM predictions? Second, do these perceptions differ based temporal focus—on how society *has changed* from the past (Ferguson et al., 2019), or on how society *will change* in the future (Wright et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2013)? Third, do they also depend on the perceived time scale?

Accordingly, in three studies, we tested whether 245 social groups were seen as emergent or established ingroups, as well as emergent or established outgroups, in American society. Across studies, we predicted that emergent ingroups would include prejudice targets studied in social psychology (based on ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc.), as well as eco-friendly groups studied in environmental psychology (animal rights activists, environmentalists, vegans, etc.). We also predicted that emergent outgroups

would include their opponents within society (homophobic people, racists, climate change skeptics, etc.)

Method

Seven hundred and seventy-six undergraduate students participated in one-of-three online studies in exchange for course credit. Sixty-three participants took either an insufficient (under 10 minutes) or excessive (over 100 minutes) amount of time to complete the study and were thus omitted from the analyses. The final sample consisted of 713 participants (ages 18 to 54, 63% women, 82% European American).

Participants read that the study focused on their perceptions of how Americans’ feelings toward 245 social groups have changed over the past 50 (Study 1, $n = 225$) or 100 years (Study 2, $n = 326$), or might change over the next 50 years (Study 3, $n = 162$). They next completed a digital card sorting task, which required placing social groups into one-of-five boxes: 1) always negative feelings (established outgroup), 2) more negative feelings (emergent outgroup), 3) more positive feelings (emergent ingroup), 4) always positive feelings (established ingroup), or 5) not sure. Participants then completed a variety of demographic and study process measures. They finally read a debriefing and logged out.

Results

As predicted, perceptions of stability and change in emotions toward social groups fit reasonably well with EIM predictions. Emergent ingroups generally included prejudice targets and eco-friendly groups. Emergent outgroups generally included their opponents in society. See the table for the top 15 sorting frequencies and ranks per group category across studies.

To test whether there were differences across studies, we conducted one-way ANOVAs on the sorting measure. This measure was coded from 0 (always negative) to 4 (always positive). For the overall ANOVAs, we set a conservative p-value of $< .001$. For thirty groups (12%), the ANOVAs

reached significance. Most of these groups were emergent ingroups or established outgroups. The simple effects generally showed that participants in the next 50 years study rated societal emotions as more positively toward these groups than those in the past 50 and 100 years studies.

Social Group Category	Past 50 Years		Past 100 Years		Next 50 Years	
	Freq.	Rank	Freq.	Rank	Freq.	Rank
Established Ingroup						
Firefighters	143	1	189	1	89	1
Doctors	130	2	169	6	70	18
Veteranarians	128	3	182	2	76	9
Attractive people	115	4	169	7	81	3
Soup kitchen volunteers	115	5	168	8	81	4
Mothers	113	6	160	14	66	23
Astronauts	112	7	180	3	77	6
Dog owners	110	8	173	4	88	2
Chefs	106	9	163	12	69	19
Girl scouts	105	10	168	9	78	5
Dentists	104	11	162	13	71	17
Married people	102	12	168	10	72	15
Veterans	100	13	120	32	68	21
Blood donors	99	14	152	15	76	10
Librarians	99	15	173	5	72	14
Emergent Ingroup						
Business women	185	1	262	1	118	4
Women who are scientists	176	2	260	2	122	1
Supporters of same sex marriage	172	3	254	3	110	11
Interracial couples	171	4	253	4	109	13
Men who stay home to raise kids	169	5	237	11	122	2
Male nurses	167	6	252	5	107	14
Black professionals	165	7	252	6	121	3
Single parents	159	8	225	16	111	10
Gay men	157	9	239	9	111	9
Medical marijuana users	156	11	250	7	115	5
Gay people who raise children	156	10	230	13	110	12
Lesbians	155	12	245	8	105	19
Bisexual people	149	13	238	10	113	7
Supporters of legalizing marijuana	148	15	237	12	115	6
Adopted children	148	14	229	14	103	21
Emergent Outgroup						
Police officers	151	1	205	4	71	12
Cigarette smokers	143	2	221	1	81	6
Homophobic people	133	3	210	3	83	3
Anti-vaxxers	132	4	199	5	83	4
Social media addicts	130	5	196	6	74	10
Politicians	125	6	196	7	83	5
Distracted drivers	123	7	151	21	67	17
Selfie addicts	121	8	140	27	67	19
Supporters of gun rights	118	9	166	11	57	32
Racists	115	10	163	14	95	1
American Muslims	113	11	151	22	17	137
Rich people	112	12	159	18	78	8
Climate change skeptics	111	13	160	16	64	22
Rednecks	109	14	140	28	48	46
Shut shamers	108	15	164	13	69	15
Established Outgroup						
Murderers	182	1	271	1	109	1
Shoplifters	167	2	249	2	96	4
People who abuse children	165	3	214	7	90	11
Identity thieves	163	4	226	3	95	6
People who abuse elderly adults	160	5	214	8	91	10
Siblings who have consensual sex	160	6	222	5	96	5
Heroin addicts	156	7	206	9	93	9
Human traffickers	154	8	219	6	95	7
Husbands who hire prostitutes	152	9	223	4	93	8
Cult members	140	10	192	15	90	12
Drug dealers	135	11	206	10	81	15
Terrorists	133	12	194	14	101	2
Juvenile delinquents	132	13	181	17	75	20
People who cheat on their partners	129	14	204	11	84	14
Drunk drivers	126	15	201	12	100	3

Discussion

These studies provide initial support for the EIM. Emergent ingroups generally include prejudice targets, as well as eco-friendly groups. Across studies, these patterns typically hold regardless of the temporal focus (past versus future) or the time scale (50 versus 100 years). These results are limited by a buggy sorting task, and do not account for group perceptions of social change. Future research should consider these issues.

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