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Facing Exclusion: How Peripheral Consumers Seek Connections by Helping Others

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Facing Exclusion:
How Peripheral Consumers Seek Connections by Helping Others

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Management

by

Xuan Xie

Dissertation Committee:
Associate Professor Loraine Lau-Gesk, Chair
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Professor Michael A. Hogg

2024

DEDICATION

To those who have doubted me,
Thank you for challenging me to prove myself and strive for greatness.
Your questions have driven my determination and resilience.

To those who have believed in me,
Thank you for providing the support and motivation needed to see this journey through.
Your faith in me has been a source of strength and inspiration.

To my star,
Thank you for embracing me for my true self and loving me for who I am.
Your love and understanding have been a constant source of comfort and confidence.
I am forever grateful for your presence in my life.

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VITA

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FIELD OF STUDY

Social Exclusion, Inclusive Marketing, Consumer Psychology, Meaningfulness, Well-being

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Facing Exclusion:

How Peripheral Consumers Seek Connections by Helping Others

by

Xuan Xie

Doctor of Philosophy in Management

University of California, Irvine, 2024

Associate Professor Loraine Lau-Gesk, Chair

Consumers experience exclusion in everyday life, from not receiving the special presale invitation to realizing they do not align with a brand's quintessential consumer profile. Social exclusion has been magnified in the digital age given the prevalence of cyber-ostracism on social media platforms. While existing research focuses on the negative consequences of social exclusion, this dissertation examines factors that influence consumers acts of kindness upon experiencing social exclusion. Drawing on uncertainty-identity theory, I examine the moderating role of peripheral membership when feeling socially excluded. I propose that excluded peripheral consumers exhibit a heightened need to belong when feeling excluded and display a higher likelihood to help others. A series of lab and field experimental studies (N = 1971) empirically tested the hypotheses in different

contexts. A pattern emerged: peripheral consumers exhibited a higher willingness to help others when feeling excluded.

This dissertation integrates uncertainty-identity theory into the marketing literature and establishes the moderating role of peripheral membership in understanding consumer behavior. This dissertation fills a critical gap in the literature by looking into belongingness as the underlying mechanism of peripheral consumers' responses to social exclusion. This dissertation further contributes to the broader conversation around coping mechanisms in the face of social exclusion by understanding how kindness manifests in this context. This dissertation offers practical implications for marketers aiming to build strong connections and foster belongingness among peripheral and prototypical consumers of their brand.

INTRODUCTION

We observe and experience social exclusion in our daily lives. Research indicates that ostracism is a pervasive experience that can significantly impact our daily social interactions with others (Nezlek et al., 2012). It can occur in various settings, such as the workplace, intimate relationships, friendships, family dynamics, and encounters with new acquaintances. Feeling ignored at office parties can be dejecting. Being shushed by family members over holiday dinners can be discouraging. Receiving silent treatment from a loved one can be disheartening. Even when ostracism comes from distant acquaintances or strangers, it can be highly distressing and unpleasant (Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007). Recent surveys revealed that more than half of U.S. adults (58%) are feeling alone and being left out (Cigna, 2021), a seven percentage point increase compared to pre-pandemic number (Cigna, 2018). At least two in five respondents sometimes or always feel as though they lack companionship (43%), that their relationships are not meaningful (43%), that they are isolated from others (43%), and/or that they are no longer close to anyone (39%). Additionally, 27% of U. S. adults have never felt as though they are part of a group of friends and more than 25% felt that people have never understood them and that they do not have a lot in common with people around them (Elflein, 2019). Feeling left out is a natural response to social exclusion.

With 240 million social media users in the U.S.—which constitutes 72% of the population (Pew Research Center, 2021) - cyber ostracism is a prevalent issue that has worsened since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, social media users may experience being unfollowed or unfriended on social media platforms, facing silent treatment in group chats, or being excluded from online events. These situations can

impact users' well-being through subtle means such as receiving a low number of Facebook likes, minimal Twitter favorites and retweets, or YouTube dislike attacks. More overt forms of cyber ostracism include ghosting, where someone suddenly stops responding to messages, and cyberbullying, which involves targeted harassment and abuse online.

Consumers experience exclusion quite commonly in retail spaces and throughout their purchasing and consumption journey (e.g., Duclos et al., 2013; Mead et al., 2011; Su et al., 2017, 2019; Ward & Dahl, 2014). Socioeconomic barriers can prevent lower-income consumers from accessing high-end brands and feel inadequate when entering luxury brand stores. People who wear plus-size clothing may find limited options in stores (Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013). Consumers with disabilities may encounter challenges in navigating retail spaces due to poor accessibility features such as a lack of ramps, accessible fitting rooms, or clear signage. Algorithms on e-commerce platforms can also perpetuate exclusion by favoring certain demographics over others, affecting personalized ads and recommendations. Consumers who lack access to traditional banking or credit services may be unable to use certain online payment options or access specific financial services.

Exclusion in the market can also arise from discrimination based on race, gender, age, or other demographic factors (Arsel et al., 2022; Bone et al., 2014; Crockett & Grier, 2003, 2021; Kates, 2002, 2004). Consumers may be treated differently or unfairly by retailers and service providers, resulting in negative experiences that can damage their trust and loyalty. LGBTQ+ consumers may face exclusion when brands fail to represent their identities or experiences in marketing campaigns or product designs, or when companies support discriminatory policies (Montecchi et al., 2024). Consumers from racial

or ethnic minority groups may encounter discrimination through targeted pricing, limited product availability in their neighborhoods, or a lack of diversity in marketing and representation (e.g., Bennett et al., 2015; Crockett & Grier, 2003, 2021; Grier et al., 2019). Recent years, particularly amid the COVID-19 pandemic, have exacerbated exclusion for marginalized groups such as the LGBTQ+ community and racial minorities. Social movements like Black Lives Matter and Stop Asian Hate underscore the urgent need for inclusivity (Nardini et al., 2021), as hate crimes surge, pride celebrations are canceled, and Asian communities continue to face prolonged discrimination.

Exclusion, whether subtle or overt, triggers psychological discomfort, leads to a feeling of isolation, which is linked to increased risk for early mortality and other mental health problems (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015), threatens fundamental human needs, such as the needs for self-esteem, belonging, control, and meaningful existence (Williams, 2009), increases suicidal attempts, and impacts ones' overall well-being (Williams, 2007). The serious negative consequences of social exclusion have been observed at a personal level, such as loneliness and feeling of depression (Büttner et al., 2021), at group level, such as aggression toward other groups (Ren et al., 2018), and at societal levels, such as extremism and anti-social behavior (Williams, 2007). Exclusion experience in the market lead to consumers sacrificing their personal and financial well-being for the sake of social well-being (Mead et al., 2011), feeling disconnect from brands, products, and services (Su et al., 2017), or making riskier financial decisions (Duclos et al., 2013).

While the majority of existing research focuses on the negative consequences people face as they cope with feelings of exclusion (e.g., DeWall, Baumeister, & Vohs, 2008; DeWall & Richman, 2011; Twenge et al., 2001, 2007), this dissertation seeks to explore a different

perspective. It aims to investigate how consumers who experience exclusion engage in acts of kindness, particularly focusing on those who perceive themselves as being on the periphery. Peripheral members are those "at the fringe of their ingroup", who "feel less certain" about themselves and seek certainty to belong (Goldman & Hogg, 2016; Hohman et al., 2017). Relying on uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2012), this dissertation investigates how peripheral consumers help others as a means of restoring their own sense of belongingness when faced with exclusion. In particular, I address the following main research questions: What is the impact of exclusion on peripheral consumers? When feeling excluded, why do peripheral consumers help others?

By examining the behaviors of peripheral consumers as they navigate episodes of exclusion, this dissertation extends existing research in several meaningful ways. Firstly, it integrates uncertainty-identity theory into the marketing literature, providing a novel perspective on consumer identities and their relationships with others, groups, and brands. This approach establishes the moderating role of consumer sense of membership (peripheral vs. prototypical) in understanding consumer behavior. Secondly, it fills a critical gap in the literature by offering new insights into belongingness as the underlying mechanism of peripheral consumers' responses to social exclusion. Thirdly, the dissertation contributes to the broader conversation around coping mechanisms in the face of social exclusion by providing a deeper understanding of how kindness manifests in this context. By moving beyond the common focus on the adverse effects of ostracism, it offers a fresh perspective on the circumstances under which excluded peripheral consumers engage in acts of kindness to help others.

In the following chapters, I begin with a literature review on social exclusion, social influence, and several key foundational social psychology theories, including social comparison theory, self-categorization theory, and social identity theory. This review illuminates the gap uncertainty identity fills among existing theories and sets the stage for a deeper exploration of uncertainty-identity theory, which serves as the theoretical foundation of this dissertation. I then describe the theoretical development that leads to my hypotheses regarding the moderating role of consumer sense of membership (peripheral vs prototypical). Through a series of experiments (N = 1971) across a diverse set of population, I empirically validate the anticipated relationships. Finally, I discuss theoretical contributions and practical implications of my dissertation, address limitations, and present on-going fieldworks that address some of these limitations and propose avenues for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Exclusion

Social exclusion refers to "being kept apart from others". Social rejection refers to "an explicit declaration that an individual or group is not wanted" and ostracism refers to "ignoring and excluding individuals or groups by individuals or groups" (Williams, 2007). Scholars had attempted to unravel the semantic and meaningful differences between these terms, yet, there is no empirical evidence suggesting that the consequences observed vary depending on the term and definition used (Leary, 2001; Williams, 2007). Thus, these terms can be and are being used interchangeably in this research.

The effects of social exclusion have been investigated in various contexts and responses have been found to be mostly negative. Exclusion causes psychological discomfort and a sense of isolation, which is linked to an increased risk of early death and various mental health issues (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). It poses a threat to essential human needs such as self-esteem, belonging, control, and a sense of purpose (Kashdan et al., 2014; Warburton et al., 2006; Williams, 2009). Additionally, social exclusion leads to feelings of meaninglessness, lethargy, and lack of emotion (Twenge et al., 2003). When people imagine they will end up alone later in life or be rejected by others, it is associated with aggressive behavior (Buckley et al., 2004; Twenge et al., 2001). The severe adverse effects of social exclusion have been observed at a personal level, including loneliness and depression (Büttner et al., 2021), at a group level, including aggression towards other groups (Ren et al., 2018), and at societal levels, such as extremism and anti-social behavior (Williams, 2007).

Specifically, researchers found that ostracized participants who had no control showed more aggression towards others (Warburton et al., 2006). In their study, participants were either excluded or included in a spontaneous game of toss. They were then subjected to a series of aversive noise blasts where they either had control over the onsets[1] or lacked control. Aggression was measured by the amount of hot sauce participants assigned to a stranger, knowing the stranger disliked spicy foods and would be required to consume the entire sample. Researchers found that ostracized participants who had no control allocated over four times as much hot sauce as any other group. However, ostracized participants who regained control did not exhibit higher levels of aggression

[1] Onsets refers to the starting points or moments when the aversive noise blasts begin.

compared to the included groups. This suggests that the level of control can significantly impact aggressive responses to ostracism. The study's findings support the idea that aggressive responses depend on how much control needs are threatened, aligning with The Temporal Need Threat Model of Ostracism (Williams, 2009).

The Temporal Need Threat Model of Ostracism (Williams, 2009) outlines three distinct stages of reactions to ostracism: reflexive, reflective, and resignation. In the reflexive stage, which occurs as soon as ostracism is perceived, people experience an immediate threat to their needs for belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence (Baumeister et al., 2007; DeWall & Richman, 2011; Gerber & Wheeler, 2009; Ren et al., 2018). This reaction is intense and universal across different ostracism scenarios (Rudert & Greifeneder, 2016). As they go through this stage, strong feelings of pain (Eisenberger et al., 2003), anger, sadness, and other negative feelings (Blackhart et al., 2009; Williams & Zadro, 2005) have been documented in the literature.

The reflective stage takes place in the moments following the initial reflexive reaction and marks the onset of recovery from the negative impact of ostracism (Williams, 2009). This is where people actively engage in appraisal and coping and participate in need fortification where three distinct patterns of behavioral outcomes have been observed (Ren et al., 2018). In responding to social exclusion, most research has shown that people might behave more aggressively (e.g., Twenge et al., 2001, 2007). However, newer research has also demonstrated instances where people seek solitude as their response to social exclusion (Riva et al., 2017). Recovery during this stage is influenced by the availability of coping strategies (Riva & Eck, 2016) and cognitive mechanisms that help people process the experience (Williams, 2009). Moreover, individual differences such as self-construal

and personality can moderate the reflective response (Ren et al., 2013; Riva & Eck, 2016; Williams, 2009).

If ostracism persists for an extended period, one may enter the resignation stage, which is characterized by feelings of depression, helplessness, and alienation (Riva et al., 2017; Williams, 2009). Previous studies have linked prolonged ostracism to depressive symptoms (Büttner et al., 2021; Riva et al., 2017; Rudert & Greifeneder, 2016). In a study with 426 participants, researchers found that exclusion led to lower reflexive need satisfaction for all participants, while depressive symptoms were linked to reduced reflexive and reflective need satisfaction and slower recovery (Büttner et al., 2021). The findings suggest that depressive symptoms are associated with lower need satisfaction, regardless of social inclusion or exclusion, emphasizing the importance of addressing chronic need threat in clinical practice. Consistent with the core concepts of the resignation stage, Rudert and Greifeneder extend the model by showing that these reactions depend on how the exclusion is interpreted in relation to prevailing norms (Rudert & Greifeneder, 2016). Four studies demonstrated that the one's endorsement of the norm influences their subjective interpretation of the situation. That is, if exclusion aligns with these norms, the negative impact is mitigated.

Consumer researchers have explored the impact of social exclusion as it manifests in consumer contexts. For example, research across four experiments tested whether social exclusion influences consumers to spend and consume strategically to foster affiliation (Mead et al., 2011). Compared to controls, excluded participants were more likely to purchase products symbolizing group membership (rather than practical or self-gift items), align their spending choices with an interaction partner's preferences, invest in an

unappealing food item favored by a peer, and express willingness to try an illegal drug if it improved their chances of establishing social connections. These findings indicate that socially excluded consumers may prioritize social well-being over personal and financial well-being.

Additionally, consumer researchers have explored how social exclusion influences financial decision-making (Duclos et al., 2013). Through four laboratory experiments and a field survey, the research reveals that feeling isolated or ostracized leads consumers to seek riskier, potentially more profitable financial opportunities. This inclination towards risk-taking isn't due to negative emotions or low self-esteem; instead, interpersonal rejection intensifies financial risk-taking by increasing the perceived utility of money (as a substitute for popularity) to achieve life's rewards. Consequently, the pursuit of wealth often involves taking a riskier yet potentially more rewarding path.

In retail context, research indicates that social rejection increase consumers' desire to affiliate with the brand (Ward & Dahl, 2014). Four studies explore how brand rejection influences consumers' perceptions and willingness to pay. Results indicated that consumers exhibit more positive attitudes and higher willingness to pay when the rejection comes from an aspirational brand rather than a non-aspirational one. Additionally, this reaction is stronger when the consumer associates the brand with their ideal self-concept and when the consumer is unable to self-affirm before experiencing rejection. Consumers are also more receptive when the salesperson delivering the threat reflects the brand, and when the rejection threat occurred recently.

Rather than using the brand as a means to connect with others, researchers have also found that socially excluded consumers are more inclined to form a relationship with a

brand when the brand displays human-like traits (R. P. Chen et al., 2017). In three studies, the researchers found that socially excluded consumers showed a stronger preference for anthropomorphized brands compared to non-excluded consumers. Additionally, socially excluded consumers' preferences for types of relationships with anthropomorphized brands vary depending on their perception of the exclusion. Specifically, those who blame themselves for being excluded prefer anthropomorphized partner brands, while those who attribute the exclusion to others prefer anthropomorphized fling brands. Results suggest that this effect was mediated by the consumers' desire for social affiliation and moderated by the opportunity for connection with other people.

Consumer researchers have also investigated how social exclusion affects consumers' tendency to switch brands and products (Su et al., 2017). Across five studies, it was found that socially excluded consumers—whether chronically or temporarily—showed more switching behavior compared to those who do not feel excluded. This effect is linked to a decreased sense of control after social exclusion but is not present when the current option provides a sense of social belongingness, such as when it is socially accepted or represents social connection.

Beyond consumer preference for brands and products, social exclusion can also influence consumers' preferences for visual density (Su et al., 2019). Through seven experimental studies, the findings show that socially excluded consumers respond more favorably to products with dense visual patterns compared to their non-excluded peers. This response is attributed to social exclusion inducing a sense of psychological emptiness, which dense patterns help mitigate by providing a feeling of being "filled." The effect

diminishes when consumers physically fill something or envision a "temporal density" scenario, such as imagining a busy schedule with many tasks in a short time.

Social Influence

The way we see the world is affected by the context we are in. Social situations powerfully influence us in what we think, what we do, and define who we are (Ross & Nisbett, 1991). Ross and Nisbett (1991) highlight the significant role of external situations in shaping our behavior, thoughts, and identity. The authors begin by discussing the fundamental attribution error, a cognitive bias that leads people to overemphasize personal characteristics as explanations for behavior while underestimating the role of situational influences. This bias can result in misunderstandings of others' actions and can hinder our ability to accurately assess how the environment shapes behavior. Ross and Nisbett also explore conformity and obedience, illustrating how we often adjust our behavior to align with the expectations and norms of a group. The famous experiments by Soloman Asch (Asch, 1951) and Stanley Milgram (Milgram, 1963) provide evidence for this tendency, demonstrating that people may go against their own beliefs or ethical standards under the pressure of group influence or authoritative commands.

Ross and Nisbett (1991) further examine the concept of social comparison, which describes how people assess their own abilities and opinions by comparing themselves to others. This process can significantly shape our self-concept and influence our attitudes and actions based on our comparisons with peers. In addition, Ross and Nisbett discuss the importance of situational framing, which refers to how the interpretation of a situation can guide our responses. The framing effect highlights how the same event can elicit different

reactions depending on how it is perceived, emphasizing the subjective nature of human experience. These social influences shape our attitudes and beliefs, ultimately affecting how we respond and behave in various scenarios.

Kelman (Kelman, 1958) outlines three processes through which attitude change occurs under social influence: compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance is the most superficial process, in which people conform to a group's expectations to receive rewards or avoid punishment. Although they may outwardly align with the group's beliefs, their internal convictions may not change. Compliance is often short-lived and contingent on the presence of external incentives or pressures. In contrast, identification and internalization involve deeper forms of attitude change. Identification occurs when we adopt behaviors or beliefs because they identify with a person or group, often due to admiration or a desire to be part of a certain social circle. This process leads to a stronger sense of belongingness but may still be somewhat flexible if our connection to the group changes. Internalization, on the other hand, is the most enduring process. It happens when someone accept a group's beliefs or behaviors as consistent with their own values and principles. This change is long-lasting and stable, as their attitudes become fully aligned with the group's perspectives.

In the context of consumer marketing, several foundational theories have significantly advanced our understanding of how consumers navigate social environments and form their identities. This dissertation draws on uncertainty identity theory, highlighting the importance of examining the literature on related theories that deepen our understanding of the role of social influence on consumer behavior. Social comparison theory, self-categorization theory, and social identity theory offer key insights into how

consumers are influenced by social comparisons, group affiliations, and the desire for belonging, all of which shape consumer decisions and brand perceptions.

Social Comparison Theory

Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) posits that human have an intrinsic need to evaluate their abilities and opinions against those of others. This evaluation occurs particularly in situations where objective standards are lacking, prompting people to seek out other people as a frame of reference. This comparison process can significantly influence self-concept, self-esteem, and overall well-being. The theory emphasizes the significance of social context in shaping our self-concept and behaviors.

The theory distinguishes between upward comparison and downward comparison. Upward comparison occurs when people compare themselves to those they perceive as better off or superior in a particular domain. This type of comparison can be motivating and inspire self-improvement, but it may also lead to feelings of inadequacy and diminished self-esteem when the perceived gap between the self and the comparison target became too wide. On the other hand, downward comparison involves evaluating oneself against those considered worse off or inferior in a specific area. This form of comparison can provide a boost to self-esteem and reinforce a sense of confidence in one's own abilities or opinions. However, it may also lead to complacency or a lack of motivation for further self-improvement when a person relies too heavily on comparing themselves to others who are perceived as less capable or successful.

While Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) is more concerned with how people evaluate themselves relative to others, Self-Categorization Theory (Turner et al.,

1987) focuses on how people classify themselves and others into social groups and how that impacts their identity and behavior.

Self-Categorization Theory

Self-Categorization Theory (Turner et al., 1987) emphasizes the role of categorization in shaping a person's sense of self and the social influence processes experienced. By categorizing themselves into specific social groups, people form a social identity that influences their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors.

The theory places comparison of intergroup and intragroup dynamics at the center of social influence. Intragroup comparison refers to evaluating oneself relative to other members of the same group, leading to the adoption of shared norms, values, and behaviors that define the group. This process fosters social cohesion and a sense of belongingness. Intergroup comparison, on the other hand, involves evaluating one's group in relation to other groups. This can result in the amplification of group differences and can lead to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination.

As people self-categorize, they undergo a process of social identification, where they align themselves with a particular group (the in-group) and differentiate themselves from others (the out-group) (Abrams & Hogg, 2010; Gaffney & Hogg, 2017; Tajfel et al., 1971; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This process can significantly impact their identity and behavior. For instance, they may adopt the attitudes, beliefs, and norms of their in-group (Abrams et al., 1990), while distancing themselves from the out-group. These group-based identities influence not only how people see themselves but also how they navigate various social

situations and interact with others. Social identification thus plays a central role in shaping a person's experiences and relationships within different social contexts.

Self-Categorization Theory forms the basis for understanding how people classify themselves into distinct social groups, influencing their perceptions and behaviors based on group identification. Social Identity Theory expands on Self-Categorization Theory by emphasizing the psychological processes that arise from group identification, such as in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination. This theory explores how people derive part of their identity and self-esteem from their membership in social groups and emphasizes the impact of social group membership on a person's self-concept and explores how these group affiliations shape perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides crucial understanding of the psychological processes behind group behavior and intergroup relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). SIT posits that people categorize themselves and others into groups based on shared attributes, such as race, gender, or interests. This categorization provides a framework for understanding social environments and guides perceptions and behaviors. Once someone categorize themselves into groups, they develop a sense of belongingness and identity with those groups. This social identification influences their self-concept, self-esteem, and perceptions of in-group and out-group members.

In addition, SIT posits that people engage in intergroup comparisons to evaluate their group relative to others. This comparison can lead to positive or negative perceptions

of other groups and shape how people view themselves and their group. This process of identifying and comparing groups generates uncertainty (Gaffney & Hogg, 2017), which can lead to negative outcomes such as fanaticism, xenophobia, and collective violence (van den Bos, 2001; van den Bos & Lind, 2002). Further, acute and chronic uncertainty can result in extreme negative outcomes, including dehumanization (Levine & Hogg, 2010).

SIT discusses how in-group members are more similar than outgroup members. As people identify with their in-group, they tend to favor their group and its members over others. This bias can lead to discrimination against out-groups, contributing to intergroup conflict. Social identities and social groups inform group norms that help shape what to think, what to do, and how to behave as members often make decisions based on their group's values and norms. It also distinguishes the ingroup from the relevant outgroups on what not to think, do, and behave including political beliefs (Cohen, 2003).

To summarize, the key premises of the Social Identity Theory point out that social categorization has significant effects on social psychological outcomes, people tend to identify with groups that they view positively, and members of a group try to differentiate themselves from the other groups (Billig, 2017). As a metatheory (Abrams & Hogg, 2004), Social Identity Theory (SIT) has been extended and applied across a wide range of disciplines to explore the ways in which group membership shapes self-perception and human behavior. The theory serves as a versatile framework for examining how group membership shapes individual and collective behavior across various contexts.

Social identity theory has been expanded to investigate topics such as intergroup relations (Huddy, 2004; C. M. Jackson et al., 2019; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), prejudice and discrimination (Krumm & Corning, 2008). Researchers have delved into how people

identify with certain groups, the mechanisms driving in-group favoritism (Aksoy & Palma, 2019; De Cremer, 2001), and the cognitive processes behind stereotyping and discrimination (Costarelli & CallÀ, 2007; J. W. Jackson & Rose, 2013). Within organizational studies, social identity theory has been employed to explore workplace dynamics, including team cohesion, leadership, and employee motivation (Hogg et al., 2012; Joshi, 2006). The theory sheds light on how employees' group identities affect their sense of belongingness, job satisfaction, and productivity (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2002; Findler L et al., 2007; Wookje Sung et al., 2017).

In political science, social identity theory has been utilized heavily to examine political behavior and political group identification (Greene, 2004; Mankoff, 2021; Miocevic & Kursan Milakovic, 2023; Monroe et al., 2000; Reynolds, 2018). The theory sheds light on how people's political identities are influenced by their affiliations with various social groups, shaping their political preferences and actions (Steffens et al., 2018). Political scientists explore how group identities contribute to political polarization and the formation of political alliances, offering a nuanced perspective on contemporary political landscapes (Lane et al., 2023; Marchal, 2022; Rudolph & Hetherington, 2021). Understanding these dynamics can aid in the development of strategies to mitigate polarization and encourage constructive political discourse.

Social identity has been studies in marketing and consumer behavior extensively. Within the realm of consumer behavior, social identification and judgments have been explored extensively in all different consumer domains, consistently suggesting it as a powerful factor to influence consumer attitudes, beliefs, and actions (e.g., Berger & Rand, 2008; Chan et al., 2012; Forehand et al., 2002; Kettle & Häubl, 2011; Mercurio & Forehand,

2011; Reed, 2002, 2004; Reed II et al., 2012; Reed II & Forehand, 2016; Ward & Broniarczyk, 2011; White et al., 2012; White & Argo, 2009). More specifically, social identity can influence consumers' subsequent attitude formation and changes when it is salient, self-important, or object-relevant (Reed, 2004) though different social identities are activated at different levels.

Uncertainty Identity Theory

Originating from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), which posits that people categorize themselves and others into social groups, fostering in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination, Uncertainty Identity Theory (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2012) was developed to understand the motivational aspect of social identity theory. Initially referred to as uncertainty reduction (Hogg, 2000), Uncertainty Identity Theory (UIT) posits that human seek to reduce feelings of uncertainty as a core human motive. UIT explains how group identification reduces uncertainty by invoking social cognitive processes and social interactions associated with social identity (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2012).

Uncertainty-identity theory suggests that human have a fundamental drive to diminish uncertainties, particularly those related to themselves and their closely associated perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2012; Wagoner & Hogg, 2017). This is achieved through group identification, which provides a sense of belongingness and a clearer understanding of one's roles within a community. The theory suggests that when people are uncertain about their values, beliefs, or societal role, they tend to identify with in-groups for a sense of certainty and security.

Group identification is a powerful and effective process for overcoming self-uncertainty. People ascribe the prototypical characteristics of their group to themselves and others, which helps establish a clear sense of identity and purpose. A group can encompass a team, an organization, a religion, an ethnicity, or a nation (Levine & Hogg, 2010). To alleviate self-uncertainty, research shows that people often identify with groups that have structured and cohesive norms (e.g., Hogg et al., 2017; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001). For example, enthusiastic fans of the outdoor apparel brand Patagonia form a cohesive community centered around environmental sustainability and outdoor activities. By aligning themselves with like-minded peers, people reduce uncertainties about their preferences and lifestyle choices. This association not only provides a sense of social belonging but also guides decisions regarding sustainable practices and outdoor events.

Similar dynamics can be observed in other lifestyle brand communities, such as the Apple community, where group identification shapes preferences and behaviors. Group identification prescribes subsequent behavior and provides guidance for interactions with others (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2012; Wagoner & Hogg, 2017). For example, members of the Apple community often identify strongly with the brand. This influences their choice of Apple products and guides behaviors such as participating in forums, attending Apple events, and following Apple's recommended usage patterns. Group identification within a lifestyle brand community can impact product purchases, usage habits, and social interactions, creating a sense of belongingness and alignment with the community's norms.

Furthermore, researchers conducted an experiment where they primed participants with either high or low levels of uncertainty and then presented them with information about their political groups (Hogg et al., 2007). Participants' identification with their

political party increased under high uncertainty when they perceived their party's entitativity (cohesion) to be higher, while there was no effect under low uncertainty. This concept of insular groups with clearly defined prototypes and strict enforcement of behaviors and attitudes offering a foundation for uncertainty reduction extends to identifying with religious groups (Hogg, Adelman, et al., 2010; Hogg et al., 2011) and extremist groups (Doosje et al., 2016; Hogg, 2014; Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Kruglanski et al., 2006). Extremist groups are typically highly entitative, providing strict norms and sanctions that guide members' behaviors and attitudes (Doosje et al., 2016; Kruglanski et al., 2006; Moghaddam, 2005; Victoroff, 2005). Additionally, research indicates that someone who generally align with moderate groups may express a willingness to associate with extreme groups during times of self-uncertainty (Hogg, Meehan, et al., 2010).

Researchers have primarily tested uncertainty-identity theory in contexts where people have only one potential group to identify with under uncertainty and demonstrated how people respond to self-uncertainty based on their social identity prominence (Grant & Hogg, 2012). However, most people identify with a variety of groups, and their range of social identities constitutes their overall sense of self and social identity (Grant & Hogg, 2012; Leonardelli et al., 2010; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). For some people, multiple identities significantly overlap, while others maintain discrete and compartmentalized identities (Brewer, 1991).

Social identity complexity is a concept that examines the multiple social identities a person may possess, particularly when they belong to various social groups (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). This theory suggests that people can have overlapping, intersecting, and sometimes conflicting social identities, such as race, gender, nationality, occupation, or

religion. When people perceive their social identities as complex and interrelated, they tend to be more tolerant of diversity, adaptable, and open-minded in their interactions with others. High social identity complexity is linked to greater cognitive flexibility, enabling people to navigate social environments with varying groups and perspectives. It also fosters an inclusive worldview, as those with complex identities understand the importance of accommodating different social groups within themselves. In contrast, low social identity complexity can lead to rigid views and less acceptance of differences, potentially contributing to ingroup bias and exclusion. Further research in this area could provide insights into how people navigate overlapping or compartmentalized identities under varying levels of uncertainty and how they perceive themselves and their place within broader social contexts.

Applications of Uncertainty Identity Theory

Uncertainty-identity theory has been extended and applied in other disciplines, offering valuable insights into how uncertainty in identity influences human behavior in contexts such as group dynamics (Grant & Hogg, 2012; Hohman et al., 2017; Wagoner et al., 2018), radicalism and extremism (Hogg, Meehan, et al., 2010), political polarization (Barberá et al., 2015; Gaffney et al., 2014), morality (Hohman & Hogg, 2011, 2015), and health-related areas (Hogg et al., 2011; Syfers et al., 2024).

Group Dynamics

Uncertainty Identity Theory has been used extensively to study group dynamics (Grant & Hogg, 2012; Hohman et al., 2017; Wagoner et al., 2018). Grant and Hogg (2012)

explores the relationship between group identification and self-uncertainty through the lens of uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2007) and social identity complexity (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Two experiments were conducted to test whether individuals identify more strongly with their group when they experience self-uncertainty and perceive their group's identity as prominent relative to their other identities. Experiment 1 (N = 90) primed participants with either overlapping or distinct group attributes before self-uncertainty was primed. Experiment 2 (N = 87) primed participants with few or multiple other identities before self-uncertainty was induced. Results confirmed that group identification was highest when uncertainty was high and when group identity was distinct, or participants had few other identities (Grant & Hogg, 2012).

Hohman et al. (2017) explored the relationship between peripheral membership and group identification through the lens of uncertainty-identity theory. The research suggests that self-uncertainty, which arises from not feeling prototypical, drives a desire to increase ingroup behaviors. The study's three experiments support this theory, demonstrating that feeling peripheral raises self-uncertainty (Experiment 1), leads to increased group identification for those experiencing self-uncertainty (Experiment 2), and results in ingroup bias for the same group (Experiment 3). The findings conclude that being peripheral in a group heightens self-uncertainty. Peripheral members seek to minimize self-uncertainty and strengthen their group identification (Hohman et al., 2017).

Wagoner et al. (2018) hypothesized that social identity-uncertainty, rather than politico-economic uncertainty, is a key motivator for subgroup autonomy. The study assessed Sardinian participants' (N = 174) subgroup (Sardinian) and superordinate group (Italian) identity-centrality, identity-uncertainty, and politico-economic uncertainty to

predict support for subgroup autonomy and superordinate group fragmentation. Results showed that social identity-uncertainty, rather than politico-economic uncertainty, increased support for subgroup autonomy, particularly among those strongly identified with the subgroup. They found that weaker superordinate identity-centrality predicted superordinate group fragmentation, suggesting that subgroups pursue autonomy to reduce identity-uncertainty (Wagoner et al., 2018).

Extremism

This theory has also been used to link between uncertainty and social extremism and to understand radical groups (Hogg, Meehan, et al., 2010). Based on uncertainty-identity theory, researchers hypothesized that when individuals feel their self-relevant values and practices are threatened, self-uncertainty enhances identification with radical groups while either having no impact on or diminishing identification with moderate groups. Since the hypothesis was tested on Australian students, who typically prefer to identify with moderate groups, it was expected that this preference would diminish under uncertainty. A lab experiment with 82 participants confirmed this prediction. In this study, self-uncertainty and group radicalism were manipulated. Results suggest that the preference for identifying with a moderate group over a radical one vanished under uncertainty as self-uncertainty bolstered identification with the radical group. This effect was reflected in participants' intentions to engage in specific group behaviors, with identification mediating behavioral intentions. The research includes a discussion of the, as well as suggestions for future research directions.

Political Polarization

In addition, this theory has been extended to understand political polarization, such as Tea Party's influence on American political prototypes (Gaffney et al., 2014). The Tea Party entered U.S. politics in a time of economic uncertainty, positioning itself far to the right of the conservative movement. Its highly conservative position has allowed it to provide a clear self-definition that contrasts with more moderate and liberal political views. In this study, researchers manipulated the comparative context in which participants received an extreme pro-normative message from a Tea Party group. Results indicate that conservatives primed with self-uncertainty, supported the extreme position, indicating more conservative views for both themselves and similar others when primed with an intergroup versus an intragroup context.

In analyzing nearly 150 million tweets on 12 political and non-political issues, researchers assessed whether online communication serves as an "echo chamber" due to selective exposure and ideological segregation or as a "national conversation" as they determine the patterns of online engagement (Barberá et al., 2015). Findings indicated that political discussions (e.g., the 2012 presidential election, the 2013 government shutdown) predominantly took place among users with similar ideologies. In contrast, other events (e.g., the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, the 2014 Super Bowl) showed more varied interactions. Conversations around the 2012 Newtown shootings initially began as a national conversation before becoming more polarized over time. The study also found that, in both political and non-political topics, liberals were more likely than conservatives to share information across ideological boundaries, a pattern that aligns with psychological

theories regarding ideological differences in epistemic, existential, and relational motivations.

Morality

Beyond political polarization, UIT has also been utilized to understand morality (Hohman & Hogg, 2011, 2015). Hohman and Hogg (2011) examines the relationship between uncertainty about the afterlife and group identification and the impact of mortality salience on national identification. Experiment 1 (n = 187) manipulated mortality salience and measured uncertainty about the afterlife. Results showed that mortality salience heightened national identification only for those uncertain about the afterlife. Experiment 2 (n = 177) manipulated both mortality salience and belief in the afterlife, with participants primed to believe there was an afterlife, there was no afterlife, or that the existence of an afterlife was uncertain. Consistent with Experiment 1, mortality salience increased identification only for participants who were existentially uncertain. These findings highlight the importance of uncertainty in responses to mortality salience and support uncertainty-identity theory's perspective on the impact of self-uncertainty on ideological beliefs and group behaviors (Hohman & Hogg, 2011).

Subsequently, Hohman and Hogg (2015) further explores how self-uncertainty, self-esteem, and mortality salience influence group identification and ingroup defense. In Experiment 1 (N = 140), they examined whether self-uncertainty mediates the combined effect of self-esteem and mortality salience on group identification. Findings revealed that mortality salience increased self-uncertainty and identification only under neutral self-esteem, and self-uncertainty mediated the joint effect of mortality salience and self-esteem

on ingroup identification. In Experiment 2 (N = 294), they investigated whether elevated self-uncertainty influenced the interactive effect of self-esteem and mortality salience on group identification and ingroup defense. Again, the results from both experiments emphasize the significant role self-uncertainty plays in responses to mortality salience.

Health

Researchers have used uncertainty-identity theory to offer an alternative perspective to understand adolescents' substance abuse and sexual promiscuity during their period of identity transition in adolescent years (Hogg et al., 2011). During this time, adolescents face considerable uncertainty about their identity and appropriate behavior, often relying on their peers to shape their sense of self. They may engage in risky health behaviors as a way to establish a distinct identity within peer groups, which provides a sense of self-validation and social status. This paper evaluates empirical support for this theory and proposes potential protective factors that may help shield adolescents from aligning with unhealthy groups driven by uncertainty-motivated identification (Hogg et al., 2011).

Relying on uncertainty-identity theory, researchers have also explored the complex relationship between conservatism and adherence to COVID-19 policies and recommendations aimed at controlling the pandemic in the United States (Syfers et al., 2024). Study 1 revealed that conservative Americans who felt uncertain about themselves and the future experienced higher levels of both symbolic threat (e.g., the pandemic seen as a threat to American democracy) and realistic threat (e.g., the pandemic threatening physical health) compared to those who were more certain. Study 2 found that threat

perception partially mediated the link between this form of uncertainty and engagement in risky social behaviors (behaviors that increase the risk of virus transmission) among Americans across the political spectrum. These findings show that self-uncertainty is associated with increased COVID-19 threat perception, particularly for conservatives. Moreover, threat perception and risky behaviors aligned with existing liberal and conservative norms in the context of self-uncertainty (Syfers et al., 2024).

THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

Sense of Membership

As people identify themselves with groups, they start to learn about group norms and to guide their behavior. Prototypical characteristics are then attributed to those members (Hogg, 2012). However, there are many characteristics of a group that do not necessarily apply to all of its members. Among the members of a group, some exemplify prototypical characteristics (i.e., prototypical or core members), while others play marginal or peripheral roles (i.e., peripheral or marginal members) (Ellemers & Jetten, 2013). Peripheral members are those "at the fringe of their ingroup", who "feel less certain" about themselves and seek certainty to belong (Goldman & Hogg, 2016; Hohman et al., 2017). Peripheral members, who may feel marginalized, can experience increased self-uncertainty and seek stronger group bonds. In contrast, prototypical members feel secure in their place within the group and are experiencing low self-uncertainty.

Through the lenses of uncertainty-identity theory, Hohman et al. (2017) investigated the difference between peripheral members and prototypical members on group identification. While much past research on feeling peripheral examines how this

experience disrupts individuals' sense of belongingness and increases ingroup bias, this research investigates why feeling different from the ingroup heightens belonging needs. Building on uncertainty-identity theory, the study suggests that self-uncertainty arises from not feeling prototypical and motivates a drive to increase ingroup behaviors. Three experiments support these claims and found that feeling peripheral raises self-uncertainty (Experiment 1), leads to increased group identification, but only for those experiencing self-uncertainty (Experiment 2), and results in ingroup bias, but again, only for those who are self-uncertain (Experiment 3). They concluded that feeling peripheral in a group increases self-uncertainty, which in turn increases the desire to feel self-certain and manifests in strengthened group identification (Hohman et al., 2017).

Specifically, the first experiment tested and validated the hypothesis that feeling peripheral in a group increases self-uncertainty by exploring the relationship between group membership and self-uncertainty by randomly assigning participants to either prototypical or peripheral roles within an important group (Hohman et al., 2017, p. 126 - p. 128). This research represents the first examination of how being near-peripheral (i.e., being positioned close to an outgroup) affects self-uncertainty in comparison to far-peripheral placement (i.e., away from the outgroup). Being in a near-peripheral placement may lead to heightened concerns about one's standing within the group while being in a far-peripheral placement may not elicit the same levels of uncertainty.

The second experiment relied on a 2 (peripheral vs. prototypical) × 2 (high self-uncertainty vs. low self-uncertainty) factorial design to examine whether feeling peripheral within a significant social group would cause individuals to strengthen their group identification more when they experienced high self-uncertainty as opposed to low self-

uncertainty (Hohman et al., 2017, p. 128 - p. 129). By decreasing self-uncertainty (i.e., high self-certainty), the influence of feeling peripheral on group identification was lessened. When participants were made to feel low self-uncertainty, their peripheral status did not lead to stronger identification with the group. This finding supports the notion that self-uncertainty underpins the link between feeling peripheral and group-related behaviors.

The third experiment relied on a 2 (peripheral vs. prototypical) × 2 (high self-uncertainty vs. low self-uncertainty) factorial design and showed that group members who felt peripheral displayed more ingroup bias when experiencing high self-uncertainty compared to low self-uncertainty (Hohman et al., 2017, p. 129 - p. 130). Reducing uncertainty decreased the inclination to exhibit ingroup bias. Moreover, identification played a mediating role in the extent to which individuals expressed ingroup bias after feeling peripheral. These findings replicate the results of Experiment 2 on a larger scale and reveal that self-uncertain peripheral members not only strengthen their identification with the group but also engage in more ingroup bias, likely as a strategy to alleviate the self-uncertainty caused by their peripheral membership.

Though Hohman et al. (2017) mainly focuses on peripheral members of a group, findings revealed that prototypical members acted differently as they experience low self-uncertainty. Presumably they already feel secure about their place and membership within their group. Indeed, peripheral members will actively strengthen their group identities to reduce their self-uncertainty and strive to be recognized as prototypical members of their in-group (Goldman & Hogg, 2016). The nuance of motivation between prototypical and peripheral members lies in the degree of self-uncertainty experienced (Gaffney et al., 2014; Hogg, 2012, 2014). For instance, consider the prototypical consumer of the luxury brand

Chanel. This consumer closely aligns with the brand's core identity, embodying the characteristics and values associated with Chanel. Their high level of alignment may result in a lower degree of self-uncertainty, as their identification with the brand reinforces a clear sense of personal identity and belonging, thus may not feel the same strong motivation to enhance group bonds for self-validation. On the other hand, think about a peripheral consumer who occasionally purchases items from the same luxury brand but does not deeply engage with its values or lifestyle. This consumer, feeling more peripheral to the brand's identity, may experience higher self-uncertainty. In response, they might be more motivated to strengthen their connection to the brand, seeking stronger group bonds by actively participating in brand-related events or communities.

In sum, based on the literature, peripheral consumers who feel excluded may exhibit a higher propensity to help others compared to those in a neutral condition. This inclination can be explained by their increased self-uncertainty and desire to strengthen their connection to the group. Peripheral consumers, feeling marginalized, may seek opportunities to affirm their group membership and enhance their social standing by engaging in helping behaviors. This strategy aligns with findings from prior work and suggest that peripheral members may actively work to fortify their group identity and reduce self-uncertainty by fostering stronger group bonds (Ellemers & Jetten, 2013; Goldman & Hogg, 2016).

In contrast, prototypical consumers may not show a significant difference in their willingness to help others when faced with exclusion versus neutral conditions. Prototypical members already possess a strong sense of belongingness and security within their group, which may shield them from the impact of exclusion on their desire to help.

Given their established position and lower self-uncertainty, these consumers might not feel compelled to engage in helping behaviors as a response to exclusion. This perspective is consistent with prior work and noted that prototypical members often feel secure in their group identity and may not be driven by the same motivations as peripheral members (Goldman & Hogg, 2016; Hogg, 2012).

H₁: *For peripheral consumers, feeling excluded (vs. control) will lead to higher willingness to help others. For prototypical consumers, feeling of exclusion will have no such effects.*

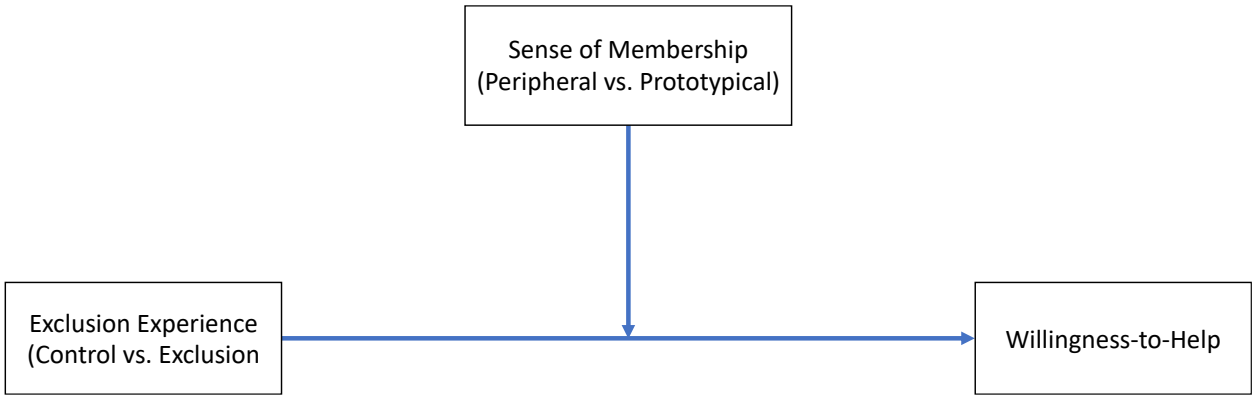

Figure 1 – Conceptual Model: Hypothesis 1

Belongingness

At the heart of uncertainty-identity theory lies the motivational drive of people to identify themselves with groups or communities, whether social or brand-based, to mitigate uncertainty about who they are and to connect with something larger than themselves. This aligns with longstanding research on the human desire for belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Z. Chen, 2017; Gardner et al., 2005; Leary et al., 2013; X. Li & Zhang, 2014; Loveland et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2012).

In the marketplace, products and brands offer consumers a means to express their desired identities and signal group affiliation (Belk, 1988; Berger & Heath, 2007, 2008; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Richins, 1994). Consumers make certain purchases not only for what they do but also what they symbolize (Levy, 1959). Research has shown how consumers signal their group identities to learn about people who share the same or different tastes (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Consumers use others' brand choice to infer about them regarding their tastes and identities and to determine if they belong to the same group (Belk et al., 1982). It is commonly observed that consumers signal their belonging to certain groups through the people they associate with, the clothes they wear, the products they purchase, the food they consume, the experiences they engage in, and the actions they take (Belk, 1988; Belk et al., 1982; Berger & Heath, 2007, 2008; Chan et al., 2012; Gardner et al., 2005; Hogg, 2015; Lambert et al., 2013). For instance, consumers may choose to drive specific types of vehicles, attend particular events, or use certain language and symbols to align themselves with their desired social groups.

When consumers face exclusion, whether in retail settings or other aspects of their lives, they often exhibit behaviors aimed at restoring a sense of control and belonging. Branding research shown that consumers respond to being socially excluded by strengthening their social bonds. For instance, researchers found that consumers showed a higher willingness to pay for an aspirational brand when they experienced rejection, as it reflected their ideal self-concept (Ward & Dahl, 2014). Additionally, researchers have linked social exclusion to consumers' brand-switching behavior. Lack of control can prompt consumers to seek belonging through new brand associations (Su et al., 2017).

As consumers establish their group memberships with similar others, they gain a higher level of "inferred commonality" (Naylor et al., 2012) with their in-group members. This commonality helps to build closer bonds among group members, which in turn leads to tighter connections with the associated brand. As consumers feel more aligned with their in-group and the brand, they develop a greater preference for the brand and a stronger loyalty. Social identity theory posits that people demonstrate greater preference for in-group members compared to out-group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and award more points to in-group members even when groups were formed based on arbitrary criteria such as coin-flipping (Billig & Tajfel, 1973) or categorization of "over estimators" and "under estimators" (Tajfel et al., 1971). This preference reinforces their positive perception of their chosen brand and affirms their sense of belongingness.

Members from the same group are often motivated to think that "their good is the better one" (Hornsey, 2008). This inclination stems from a desire to maintain a positive self-image, a central assumption of social identity theory (Brown, 2000). By perceiving their chosen brand as superior, consumers bolster their sense of self-worth and identity. This bias toward their in-group and preferred brand serves as a means of affirming their personal values and reinforcing their association with the group. Such perceptions can lead to stronger brand loyalty and in-group cohesion, as members validate their choices and find comfort in their alignment with the group's preferences. Ultimately, this dynamic helps sustain a collective sense of identity and belonging, which further motivates consumers to defend and promote their group's interests and the associated brand's values.

In contrast, consumers from an out-group share a weaker bond with the same brand due to perceived dissimilarities and lack of common characteristics. This often results in

consumers refraining from making similar purchases to those of out-group members (Berger & Heath, 2008) or even abandoning their tastes to distinguish themselves from outsiders who adopt the same tastes. These behaviors demonstrate how consumers use brand choices to express their identity and maintain a distinction from out-group affiliations. Associating with members of an out-group does not foster a sense of belongingness and can instead increase feelings of alienation and disconnection from one's in-group.

Research indicates people strengthen their belongingness (Gardner et al., 2005; Twenge, Zhang, et al., 2007) in response to social exclusion. When peripheral consumers face exclusion, they may seek to strengthen their in-group connections to reaffirm their sense of belongingness and self-identity. By reinforcing their bonds with the group and the associated brand, peripheral consumers can alleviate their feelings of exclusion and self-uncertainty, guiding them toward a greater need to belong. This desire for belongingness can manifest in a range of behaviors, from increased brand loyalty to more active participation in group activities and interactions. Therefore, I predict that as consumers seek to establish or reinforce their group identities in response to exclusion, they may demonstrate a greater need to belong, particularly if they perceive themselves as peripheral within a group.

H_2: *The need to belong will mediate the effect of exclusion on peripheral consumers' willingness to help. Excluded peripheral (vs. prototypical) consumers will show greater willingness to help others as their need to belong increases.*

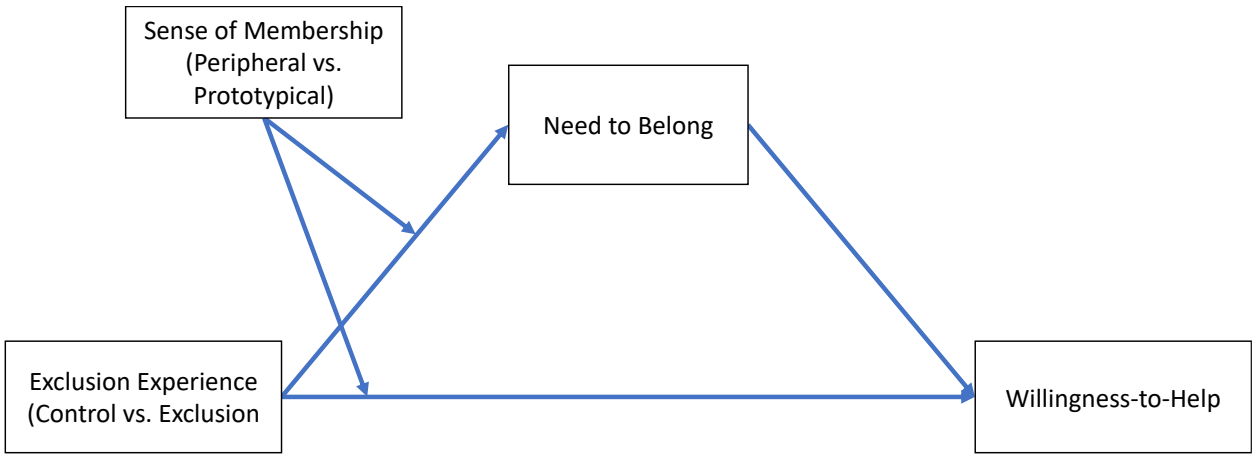

Figure 2 – Conceptual Model: Hypothesis 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Overview of Studies

In a series of experimental studies (N = 1971), I explore the impact of social, racial and brand exclusion on consumers' willingness to help and investigate the moderating role of consumer sense of membership in shaping their willingness to help following an exclusion episode. Study 1 is set using social context and participants recalled their daily interactions. Study 2 replicates Study 1 and uses branding context where participants recalled incidents involving a marketing campaign or a brand experience of their choice. Study 3 and Study 4 have participants from racial minorities and racial majorities and were directed to specifically recall daily interactions related to their racial identities. Study 5a and 5b are set using branding context again where participants were asked to read and respond to branding messages.

Study #	Context	Experimental Design (between-subjects)	Sample Size
1	Social Exclusion	3 (Exclusion: control vs. ignored vs. rejected) x 2 (SoM: peripheral vs. prototypical)	331
2	Brand Exclusion	3 (Exclusion: control vs. inclusion vs. exclusion) x 2 (SoM: peripheral vs. prototypical)	448
3	Racial Exclusion	2 (Racial Experience: inclusion vs. exclusion) x 2 (Measured SoM: Asians vs. Caucasians)	414
4	Need to Belong	2 (Exclusion: control vs. rejection) x 2 (Measured SoM: Asians vs. Caucasians)	204
5a	Inclusive Brand Messaging	2 (Brand Messaging: inclusion vs. exclusion) x 2 (SoM: peripheral vs. prototypical)	282
5b	Helping and Supporting A Brand	2 (Brand Messaging: inclusion vs. exclusion) x 2 (SoM: peripheral vs. prototypical)	292

Table 1 – Overview of Studies

Study 1 – Social Exclusion

Design and Procedure

To test our theorizing, three hundred and thirty-one participants (M_{age} = 45.62; 57.1% women, .6% prefer not to say) from Mechanical Turk were recruited to participate in a research study in exchange for a small payment. Participants were randomly assigned to a 3 (Exclusion: control vs. ignored vs. rejected) × 2 (Sense of Membership: peripheral vs. prototypical) between-subjects design.

Following prior work (Molden et al., 2009), participants in the control condition recalled and wrote about a recent grocery shopping experience. They read: "Recall and write about a time in which you had driven or walked to the grocery store". Participants in the ignored (vs. rejected) condition recalled and wrote about a recent incident when they felt being ignored (vs. rejected). Participants in the being ignored condition read: "Recall and write about a time in which you felt intensely ignored in some way . . . it must be a time that you were clearly ignored, but no one actually said that they did not want or like you".

Participants in the being rejected condition read: "Recall and write about a time in which you felt intensely rejected in some way . . . it must be a time that you were clearly rejected, where you were told you were not accepted because you were not wanted or liked". To encourage honest and complete responses, all participants read: "Please take a moment to recall and write about that incident for 5 minutes. The survey is anonymous, and no one will be able to link your answers back to you. Please do not include your name or other information that could be used to identify you in the survey responses. Your responses are greatly appreciated and will benefit us tremendously for our research. Please complete this task fully and honestly".

Next, following Hohman et al. (Hohman et al., 2017)'s procedure, participants were directed to answer 13 true/false questions (Forer, 1949) for computing their personality profiles. Participants were randomly assigned to either having an artistic or a scientific personality type and were asked to read a short description of their personality assessment. This cover story is used to manipulate prototypicality. Participants were then told about the cultural differences on this personality test and reviewed an image comparing their score either closer to American average (prototypical condition) or French average (peripheral condition). The dependent variable was a 6-item willingness-to-help scale used in published works (DeWall, Baumeister, Gailliot, et al., 2008; see Appendix A). Demographics questions were asked at the end of the survey and participants were debriefed and told about the purpose of the research study before exiting the survey.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Check – Feeling Ignored. Participants rated on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 with 1 being not at all and 7 being very much how implicitly ignored they felt at the time of the incident. A 3 (Exclusion: control vs. ignored vs. rejected) × 2 (Sense of Membership: peripheral vs. prototypical) ANOVA revealed a significant main effect on social exclusion manipulation ($F(2, 324) = 142.47$, $p < .001$). That is, participants in the ignored condition have higher rating of feeling ignored ($M = 6.00$) compared to those in the rejected condition ($M = 4.94$, $p < .001$) or in the control condition ($M = 2.44$, $p < .001$). No significant differences on feeling ignored were observed in sense of membership or the two-way interaction.

Manipulation Check – Feeling Rejected. Participants rated on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 with 1 being not at all and 7 being very much how explicitly rejected they felt at the time of the incident. A 3 (Exclusion: control vs. ignored vs. rejected) × 2 (Sense of Membership: peripheral vs. prototypical) ANOVA revealed a significant main effect on social exclusion manipulation ($F(2, 324) = 159.60$, $p < .001$). That is, participants in the rejected condition have higher rating of feeling rejected ($M = 6.13$) compared to those in the ignored condition ($M = 5.45$, $p = .01$) or in the control condition ($M = 2.37$, $p < .001$). No significant differences on feeling rejected were observed in sense of membership, suggesting that a mere sense of peripheral or prototypical membership does not create a feeling of rejection. The two-way interaction were marginally significant ($F(2, 324) = 2.427$, $p = .09$).

Willingness-to-Help. An ANOVA with exclusion experience and sense of membership as independent variables and willingness-to-help as dependent variable ($\alpha = .80$) was conducted. Results revealed the expected significant 2-way interaction ($F(2, 325) = 4.546$, $p = .011$). Specifically, for peripheral members, feeling rejected lead to a higher willingness-

to-help (M = 7.25) than feeling ignored (M = 6.35, p = .016) or neutral in the control condition (M = 6.37, p = .019). For prototypical members, there were no statistically different differences observed when feeling rejected, ignored, or neutral. This is likely because rejection dealt more with relational needs while being ignored dealt more with efficacy needs (J. Lee & Shrum, 2012). To fulfill threated relational needs, members are likely to help others to build a connection.

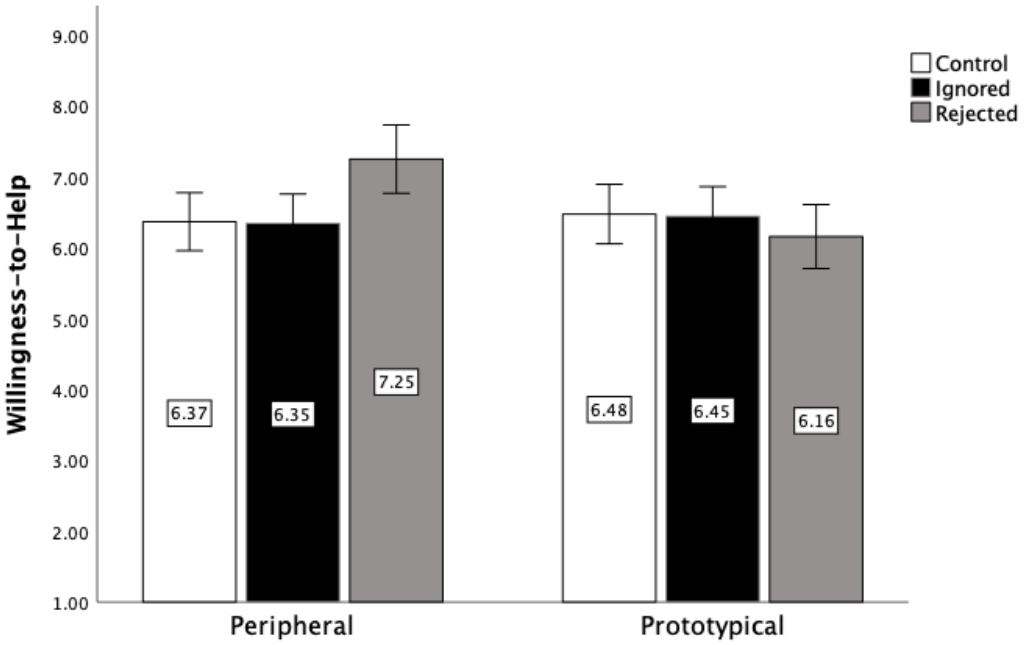

Figure 3 – Study 1 Results

Study 2 – Brand Exclusion

Design and Procedure

For Study 2, four hundred and forty-eight participants (M_{age} = 41.89; 60.7% women, 2.2% non-binary, .4% prefer not to say) from Cloud Research were recruited to participate

in a research study in exchange for a small payment. Participants were randomly assigned to a 3 (Exclusion: control vs. inclusion vs. exclusion) × 2 (Sense of Membership: peripheral vs. prototypical) between-subjects design.

Following a similar procedure (Molden et al., 2009), participants in the control condition read: "Share a recent interaction with a brand that left a neutral impression on you". Participants in the inclusion condition read: "Share a recent interaction with a brand that made you feel included and valued". Participants in the exclusion condition read: "Share a recent interaction with a brand that made you feel excluded or marginalized". All participants were asked to "describe the interaction, the brand involved, and your overall thoughts and feelings about the interaction. Reflect on how this interaction may have impacted your perception of the brand and your engagement with their products or services". They were also encouraged to complete and provide a full response to the written task and read "Please take a moment to recall and write about that interaction as detailed as possible for 5 minutes. The survey is anonymous, and no one will be able to link your answers back to you. Please complete this task fully and honestly". The same procedure as in Study 1 was followed. Participants answered demographics questions and read a debrief about the study before exiting the survey.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Check – Feeling Excluded. Participants rated on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 with 1 being not at all and 7 being very much how excluded they felt at the time of the incident. A 3 (Brand Exclusion: control vs. inclusion vs. exclusion) × 2 (Sense of Membership: peripheral vs. prototypical) ANOVA revealed a significant main effect on

brand exclusion manipulation (F (2, 442) = 126.03, p < .001). That is, participants in the exclusion condition reported significantly higher rating of feeling excluded (M = 5.28) compared to those in the inclusion condition (M = 2.23, p < .001) or in the control condition (M = 3.18, p < .001). No significant differences on feeling excluded were observed in sense of membership (F (1, 442) = .02, p = .88), suggesting that a mere sense of membership does not create a feeling of exclusion. The two-way interaction was also statistically insignificant (F (2, 442) = 1.84, p = .16).

Manipulation Check – Feeling Included. As a robustness check, participants also rated on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 with 1 being not at all and 7 being very much how included they felt at the time of the incident. A 3 (Brand Exclusion: control vs. inclusion vs. exclusion) × 2 (Sense of Membership: peripheral vs. prototypical) ANOVA revealed a significant main effect on brand exclusion manipulation (F (2, 442) = 121.40, p < .001). That is, participants in the inclusion condition reported significantly higher rating of feeling included (M = 5.82) compared to those in the exclusion condition (M = 2.91, p < .001) or in the control condition (M = 4.44, p < .001). No significant differences on feeling included were observed in sense of membership (F (1, 442) = .30, p = .58), suggesting that a mere sense of membership does not create a feeling of inclusion. The two-way interaction was also statistically insignificant (F (2, 442) = .08, p = .92).

Willingness-to-Help. Results revealed that the 2-way interaction (F (2, 442) = .53, p = .59) was not statistically significant. No significant main effects on brand exclusion or sense of membership were detected either. This might be due to the willingness-to-help measures, which relate to helping other who are not connected to the brand. This suggests that brand exclusion may not influence how consumers interact with others.

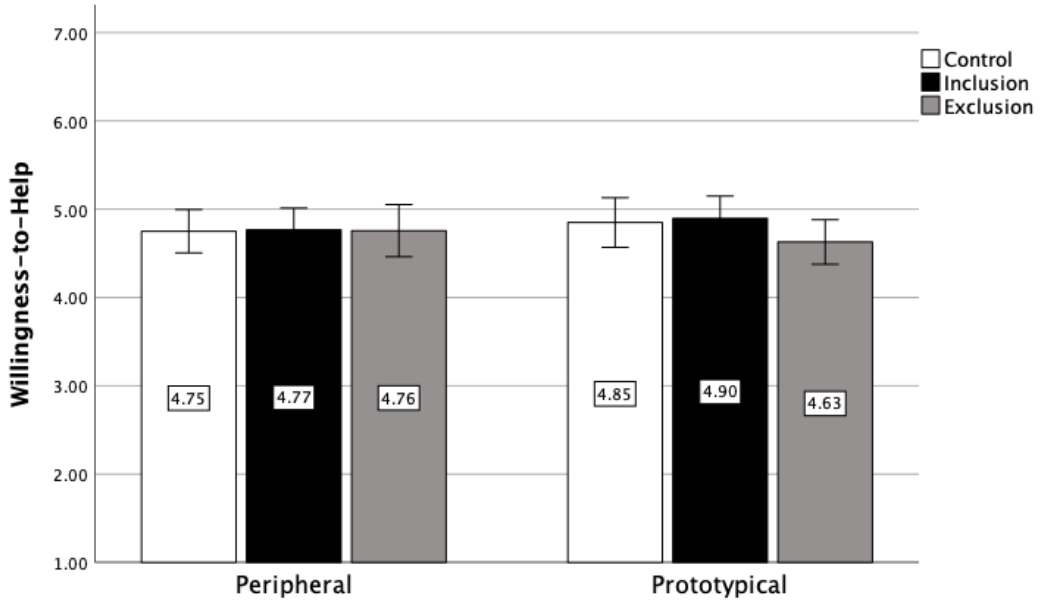

Figure 4 – Study 2 Results

Study 3 – Racial Exclusion

To broaden our understanding into societal impact, it is important to acknowledge and investigate racial dynamics of social exclusion, examining the responses of people from different racial backgrounds, including African Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans, and Asian Americans. These three ethnic groups are the largest bicultural communities in the United States, collectively wielding a substantial purchasing power of $4.1 trillion (Nielsen, 2015). Recognizing the imperative to adapt to the evolving consumer landscape, marketers and scholars alike have actively engaged with this need (e.g., Cross & Gilly, 2014; Peñaloza & Gilly, 1999). Past research has suggested that bicultural consumers prefer messages that appeal to their duality (Lau-Gesk, 2003), consider contradictory perspectives (Aytug et al., 2018), and display a greater cognitive flexibility (Rodas et al.,

2021). Previous research has also revealed that bicultural consumers, who possess an understanding and appreciation of more than one culture, seamlessly shift between multiple identities when responding to cultural cues (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Cheng et al., 2006). This understanding provides valuable insights for marketers aiming to tailor their efforts to these diverse consumer segments. Yet research remains mostly silent on how they respond to social exclusion and how it manifests in consumer behavior in the market.

Throughout the history of the United States, Asians have confronted pervasive and enduring discrimination, contributing to their prolonged experience of social exclusion. The inception of discriminatory practices is evident in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (*Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)*, n.d.), marking the first instance of a nation being banned from immigration. Subsequent historical events, such as the notorious internment of Japanese Americans during 1942 (*Japanese-American Incarceration During World War II*, n.d.), further underscore the challenges faced by the Asian community in the United States. Fast-forwarding almost 80 years, the persistence of discrimination against Asians is evident in ongoing attacks. Shockingly, even in the current era, Asians continue to be targets of prejudice and violence. The Stop Asian American Pacific Islander Hate organization reported a disturbing surge in incidents during the global pandemic, documenting nearly 3,800 cases from March 2020 to February 2021 (Jeung et al., 2021; Lantz & Wenger, 2022). These incidents span a spectrum of hostility, ranging from verbal harassment and deliberate avoidance (shunning) of Asian Americans to instances of physical assault on public streets and parks. Additionally, civil rights violations, including workplace discrimination and being barred from transportation, further emphasize the

distressing nature of these occurrences. These alarming events emphasize the urgent need to address systemic discrimination against the Asian community. Yet, the literature has been relatively silent on comprehending racial discrimination and its impact among Asian Americans (e.g., Bennett et al., 2015). This prompts the question and inspiration to examine the responses of people from different racial backgrounds and broaden our understanding into societal impact.

To understand the impact of exclusion beyond social and brand experience, this study investigates the theorizing by recruiting participants from different racial backgrounds and to understand racial experience. To do so, this study employs specific racial or ethnic categories as a unique way to understand consumer profile in order to offer a nuanced representation of societal dynamics: Caucasians as prototypical and Asians as peripheral members of the United States. This categorization is grounded in existing literature that has utilized similar classifications. Previous research has delved into the understanding of what it means to be an American and has shown that Caucasian/White Americans exhibit a stronger association with being "American" compared to Asian Americans (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Q. Li & Brewer, 2004). This forms the basis for recognizing Caucasian/White Americans as prototypical members. In contrast, Asians have consistently been labeled as the "model minority" (R. G. Lee, 2010; Shankar, 2008, 2012; Thompson & Kiang, 2010; Wu, 2015) and the "perpetual foreigner" (S. J. Lee et al., 2009), providing a foundation for recognizing Asian Americans as peripheral members. This categorization is corroborated with U. S. current population demographics. Statistically, Whites comprise 75.5% of the U.S. population while Asians make up only 6.3% (*U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts*, 2022).

Design and Procedure

Study 3 employed a 2 (Measured Sense of Membership: peripheral/Asian vs. prototypical/Caucasian) x 2 (Racial Experience: inclusion vs. exclusion) between-subjects design. The recruitment target was 220 participants per racial group. A total of 414 participants (M_{age} = 38.99; 54.3% women, .7% non-binary) were recruited online from the CloudResearch platform, after excluding those who did not qualify or were miscategorized in terms of their racial group. While my initial intention was to compare Asians and Caucasians as two levels of a factor, the data collection process necessitated treating these two populations separately and conducting analyses independently[2]. Primarily, the use of the Cloud Research Platform led to the recruitment of Asian and Caucasian participants through two distinct study links. This approach was implemented to ensure a balanced number of participants, especially considering the platform's higher concentration of Caucasian participants. Given this population distribution, the Caucasian subset was successfully collected within a single day, whereas the Asian population was gathered over the course of several months. This disparity further justifies the decision to treat these as two separate studies, designated as Study 3a and Study 3b. Study 3a comprises 201 Asian participants (M_{age} = 33.98; 54.7% women, 1.0% non-binary). Study 3b comprises 213 Caucasian participants (M_{age} = 43.73; 54.0% women, .5% non-binary).

Upon consenting to participate in our study, participants were randomly assigned to one of the two racial experience conditions. In both conditions, participants were asked to

[2] Per dissertation committee's suggestion, analysis for merged datasets were ran as well and presented first followed by results from separate analyses.

recall and write about a past experience for 3 minutes. In the inclusion racial experience condition, participants read: "Recall and write about a time in which you felt included in some way because of the racial or ethnic group you belong to… it must be a time that you were clearly accepted, where you were told you were accepted because you were wanted or liked". In the exclusion racial experience condition, participants read: "Recall and write about a time in which you felt excluded in some way because of the racial or ethnic group you belong to… it must be a time that you were clearly rejected, where you were told you were not accepted because you were not wanted or liked". After the writing task, all participants were asked to indicate their willingness and motivations to help others as well as the scale questions. The same demographic questions (e.g., age, gender identification, race, household income, education, language) were asked before study debrief.

Results and Discussion

Study 3 – All Participants

Manipulation Check. A 2 (Racial Experience: Inclusion vs. Exclusion) x 2 (SoM: Asian vs. Caucasian) ANOVA on "feeling excluded" revealed that participants in the exclusion racial experience condition felt more excluded (M = 5.59) than did those in the inclusion racial experience condition (M = 2.22, F (1, 410) = 470.50, p < .001). Two-way interaction and main effect of sense of membership were not significant.

Willingness to Help. A 2 (Racial Experience: Inclusion vs. Exclusion) x 2 (SoM: Asian vs. Caucasian) ANOVA with willingness to help as the dependent variable (α = .78) revealed a nonsignificant two-way interaction (F (1, 410) = 2.35, p = .13). The main effect on sense of

membership is significant (F (1, 410) = 8.98, p = .003) while the main effect on racial experience is nonsignificant (F (1, 410) = 2.36, p = .13).

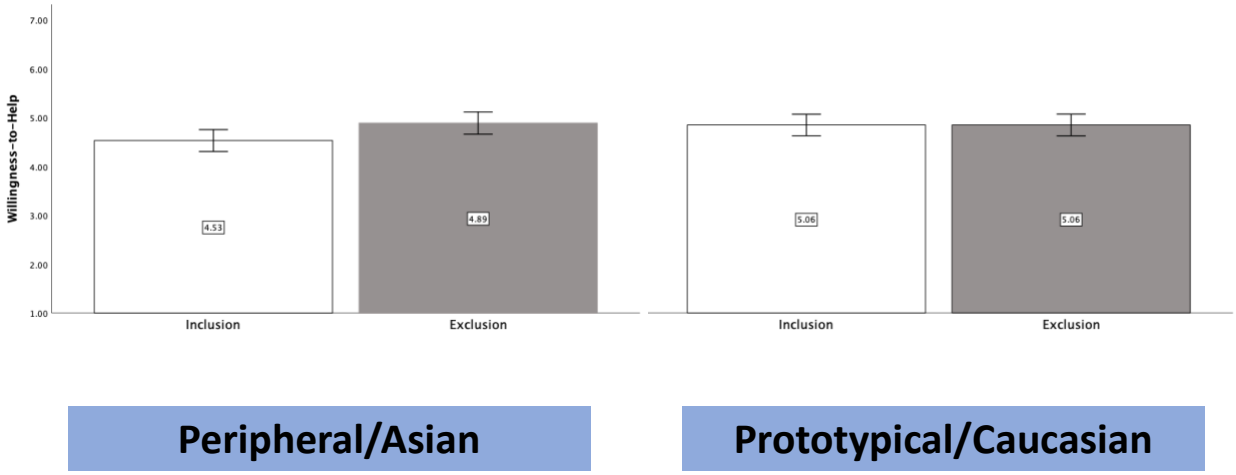

Figure 5 - Study 3 Results

Study 3a - Peripheral (i.e., Asian) Participants

Manipulation Check. A one factor 2 levels (Racial Experience: inclusion vs. exclusion) ANOVA on "feeling included" revealed that participants in the inclusion racial experience condition felt more socially included (M = 5.48) than did those in the exclusion racial experience condition (M = 2.34, F (1, 199) = 180.26, p < .001). Similarly, a parallel analysis on "feeling excluded" revealed that participants in the exclusion racial experience condition felt more socially excluded (M = 5.70) than did those in the inclusion racial experience condition (M = 2.26, F (1, 199) = 246.62, p < .001).

Willingness to Help. An ANOVA, with racial experience as the predictor variable and willingness to help as the dependent variable, revealed a significant interaction (F (1, 199) = 4.88, p = .028). Specifically, peripheral members (i.e., Asian participants in this study) exhibited a greater willingness to help when experiencing racial exclusion (M = 4.89)

compared to when experiencing racial inclusion (M = 4.53). This finding suggests that, for peripheral members, the experience of racial exclusion may elicit a heightened motivation to help others as a coping strategy or a means to establish connections with others in response to exclusionary experiences.

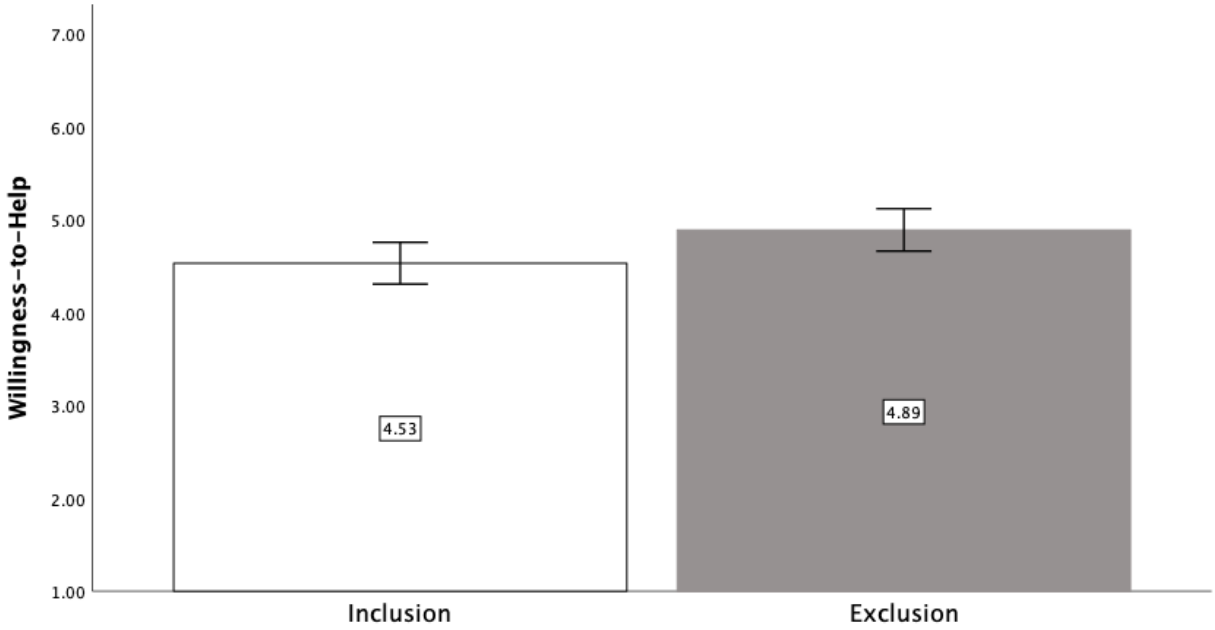

Figure 6 - Study 3a Peripheral (i.e., Asian) Participants Results

Study 3b - Prototypical (i.e., Caucasian) Participants

Manipulation Check. A one factor 2 levels (Racial Experience: inclusion vs. exclusion) ANOVA on "feeling included" revealed that participants in the inclusion racial experience condition felt more socially included (M = 5.63) than did those in the exclusion racial experience condition (M = 2.83, F (1, 211) = 132.28, p < .001). Similarly, a parallel analysis on "feeling excluded" revealed that participants in the exclusion racial experience condition

felt more socially excluded (M = 5.49) than did those in the inclusion racial experience condition (M = 2.19, F (1, 211) = 225.10, p < .001).

Willingness to Help. An ANOVA, with racial experience as the predictor variable and willingness to help as the dependent variable, indicated a non-significant interaction (F (1, 211) = .000, p = .997), as anticipated. That is, prototypical members (i.e., Caucasian participants in this study) displayed no difference in their willingness to help, irrespective of experiencing racial exclusion or inclusion. This finding implies that, within the context of this study, prototypical members (i.e., Caucasian participants) appeared to maintain a stable willingness to help, unaffected by experiences of racial exclusion or inclusion. It is likely that racial inclusion or exclusion does not impact prototypical members' proclivity for helping others.

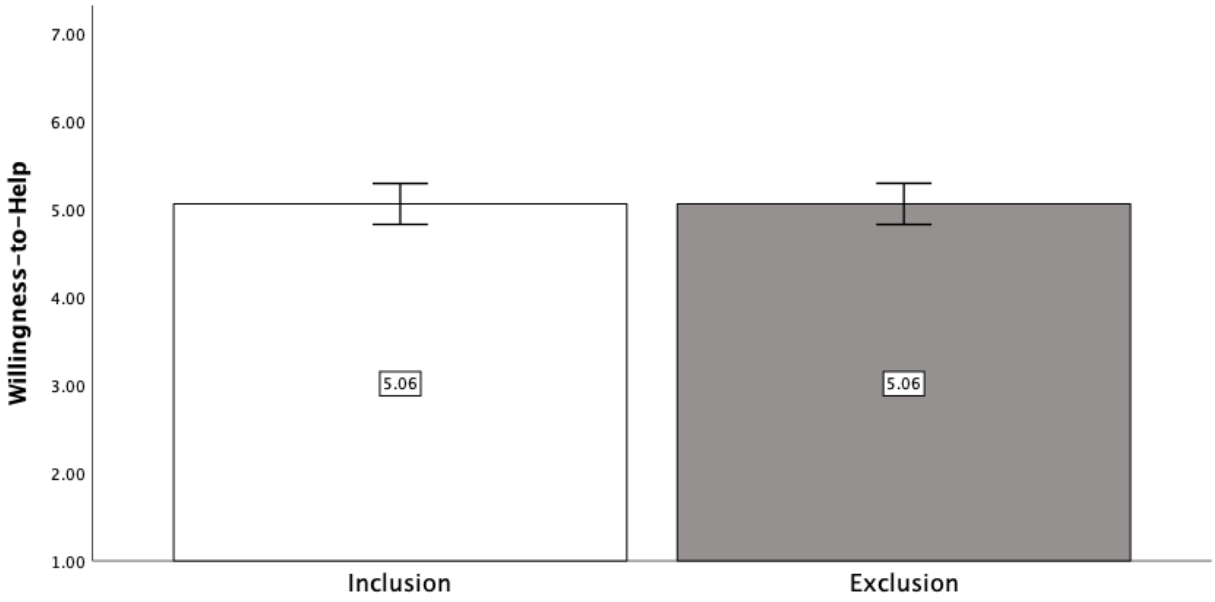

Figure 7 - Study 3b Prototypical (i.e., Caucasian) Participants Results

Overall, Study 3 delves into the repercussions of racial exclusion on people with diverse racial backgrounds, with a particular emphasis on the experiences of those categorized as peripheral (Asian) and prototypical (Caucasian). A post hoc analysis on perceptions of American Identity among Asians and Caucasians was conducted[3]. These categories aim to reflect the demographic composition of the US society, providing a contextualized understanding of how people within these racial or ethnic groups navigate in a societal context. By utilizing these specific categories, we seek to capture the diverse experiences that may exist within the given society in an experimental setting. However, it is important to note that results need to be interpreted with caution and sensitivity as using such categorizations can perpetuate stereotypes. The findings illuminate variations in the willingness to help others among people from different racial backgrounds when subjected to racial exclusion. Findings revealed that peripheral members (i.e., Asians) who wrote about their past exclusive (vs. inclusive) experience exhibited an increased willingness to help others. In contrast, prototypical members (i.e., Caucasians) did not show any difference in helping behavior when writing about a past exclusive or inclusive experience. These counter-intuitive findings led to the exploration of the motivation underlying peripheral members' willingness to help.

Study 4 – Need for Belong

This study seeks to understand the higher willingness to help others as observed for excluded peripheral members. Similar to Study 3, Study 4 enlists both Asian and Caucasian participants, and successfully completes data collection in a comparable timeframe,

[3] Results for post hoc analysis available at: https://shorturl.at/NFqgP.

enabling simultaneous analysis and direct comparison. In Study 3, data had to be segregated as the White population was collected within one day, while the Asian population was gathered over several months. This time, data from both populations were collected and concluded concurrently, facilitating the examination as originally intended.

Design and Procedure

Study 4 utilizes a 2 (Measured Sense of Membership: peripheral/Asian vs. prototypical/Caucasian) x 2 (Exclusion: control vs. rejection) between-subjects design. A total of 204 participants (M_{age} = 37.63; 37.3% women, .5% non-binary, 2% prefer not to say) were recruited online through the CloudResearch platform to take part in a consumer experience study in exchange for a small payment. Similar to Study 3, Study 4 asks all participants to recall and write about a past experience.

Upon consenting to participate in our study, participants within each racial identity were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions (control vs. rejection). Similarly to previous manipulations, participants in the rejection condition read: "Recall and write about a time in which you felt intensely rejected in some way . . . it must be a time that you were clearly rejected, where you were told you were not accepted because you were not wanted or liked". Participants in the control condition read: "Recall and write about a recent grocery shopping experience where you had some interactions with another person" (Molden et al., 2009). All participants then read "Please take a moment to recall and write about that incident for at least 5 minutes. We would really appreciate you spending the time to write as much as possible. The submit button to advance to the next page will be visible after 5 minutes. Your honest and detailed responses are greatly

appreciated and will benefit us tremendously for our research. The survey is anonymous, and no one will be able to link your answers back to you. Please do not include your name or other information that could be used to identify you in the survey responses". After completing the writing task, all participants were asked to provide their belonging needs using a 10-items need to belong scale (Leary et al., 2013; $\alpha = .78$; see Appendix B) as well as Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; see Appendix C) adapted around ethnicity and race. Finally, demographic questions (e.g., age, gender identification, race, household income, education, language) were presented followed by the study debrief.

Results and Discussion

Willingness-to-Help without covariate. An ANOVA with sense of membership (peripheral vs. prototypical) and exclusion (control vs. exclusion) as predictor variables, willingness to help as dependent variable revealed a nonsignificant two-way interaction ($F(1, 200) = .38$, $p = .54$). Both main effects on exclusion ($F(1, 200) = 1.35$, $p = .25$) or sense of membership ($F(1, 200) = .59$, $p = .45$) were non-significant.

Willingness-to-Help with covariate. An ANOVA with sense of membership (peripheral vs. prototypical) and exclusion (control vs. exclusion) as predictor variables, willingness to help as dependent variable ($\alpha = .87$), and Collective Self-Esteem Scale as covariates, revealed a marginally significant two-way interaction ($F(1, 199) = 3.62$, $p = .059$). Specifically in rejection condition, there is a significant difference among peripheral and prototypical members on their willingness to help ($M_{Asian} = 6.52$ vs. $M_{Caucasian} = 7.20$, $p = .007$) oppose to what we predicted. A significant main effect of sense of membership on willingness-to-help is detected ($F(1, 199) = 4.44$, $p = .04$). Caucasians

exhibited a greater willingness to help others (M = 7.09) than Asians (M = 6.73). A possible explanation is that, due to the recruitment strategy, participants were asked about their racial identity upfront as a screening question. Being asked about their racial identity before taking the survey could have primed them to focus on their own racial identities and stereotypes (Higgins & Eitam, 2014). As recently activated memory constructs can significantly influence various judgment tasks (Higgins et al., 1977), Caucasians are more likely to help others while Asians consider themselves the "perpetual foreigner" and are less likely to help others (S. J. Lee et al., 2009; Q. Li & Brewer, 2004). Additionally, the inclusion of Collective Self-Esteem Scale as covariates in the analysis was deemed necessary, as it demonstrated significant impacts on participants' willingness to help others ($F(1, 199) = 121.68$, $p < .001$).

Need to Belong. An ANOVA with measured sense of membership (Asians vs. Caucasians) and exclusion (control vs. rejection) on need for belonging ($\alpha = .78$) revealed a marginally significant interaction ($F(1, 200) = 3.29$, $p = .071$) as expected. In line with the proposed theorizing, when experiencing social rejection, peripheral members displayed a significantly higher need to belong (M = 3.77) compared to prototypical members (M = 3.43, p = .006). This implies that social rejection had a more pronounced impact on the need to belong for peripheral members. As expected, in the control condition, where participants recalled and wrote about a mundane daily task, there were no significant differences between peripheral and prototypical members ($M_{peripheral} = 3.75$ vs. $M_{prototypical} = 3.72$, p = .75). This suggests that in a neutral context, the need to belong did not differ significantly among Asians and Caucasians.

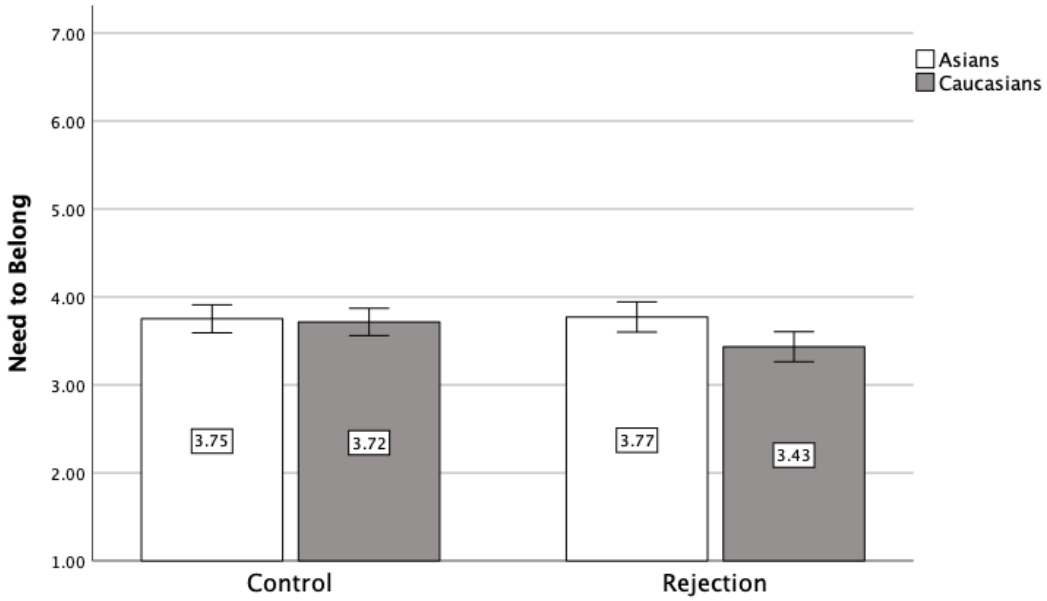

Figure 8 – Study 4 Results

In support of H_2, Study 4 results indicate that excluded peripheral members report a greater need to belong compared to prototypical members. Conversely, in a neutral social context, no statistically significant differences in need to belong were observed among peripheral and prototypical members. This higher need to belong for peripheral members following a social rejection may be attributed to their heightened sensitivity. People with a peripheral racial identity, such as those of Asian descent in this study, might be more attuned to social cues and context, leading to a more sensitive response to instances of exclusion. Experiencing social rejection could trigger a stronger desire for social connection in peripheral members due to their heightened sensitivity to social cues. Consequently, the need to belong can become a crucial motive for them to help others as a mean to establish social connection and seek belongingness.

Mediation Analysis. Given that sense of membership[4] only significantly differs in the rejection condition, but not in the control condition, two separate mediation analyses were conducted, one within each experimental condition. For each experimental condition, I conducted a simple mediation analysis using Model 4 in Hayes' PROCESS macro (A. F. Hayes, 2018). In the rejection condition, results indicated that need to belong mediates the effect of sense of membership on willingness-to-help. In another words, the test of the indirect effect of sense of membership on willingness-to-help through need to belong supported mediation (effect = -.4315, 95% CI -.8531, -.0954). However, as expected, need to belong does not mediate the effect of sense of membership on willingness-to-help in the control condition. In another words, the test of the indirect effect of sense of membership on willingness-to-help through need to belong did not supported mediation (effect = -.0548, 95% CI -.3801, .2652).

Study 5a – Brand Messaging

On the opposite side of the spectrum from exclusion is inclusion, where brands actively embrace diversity and cultivate a sense of belongingness. Although the previous studies centered on the impact of exclusion, the next sets of studies examine the impact of inclusion. Shifting gears to understand inclusion in branding can offer fresh insights into the benefits of promoting diversity and belonging. In the branding landscape, inclusion in branding, characterized by efforts to embrace diversity and appeal to a broad audience has emerged as a powerful tool (Arsel et al., 2022; Bennett et al., 2013; Grier, 2020). Take, for

[4] Peripheral members (i.e., Asians) was coded as 0 and prototypical members (i.e., Caucasians) was coded as 1.

instance, Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign (Esterl, 2014), which not only personalized products but also celebrated diversity by featuring a wide array of names on their packaging. Such initiatives resonate with consumers, fostering a sense of inclusivity and belonging that transcends the product itself.

Nike's "Equality" campaign (A. Costa, 2021) is another striking example of this approach. By promoting a message of inclusivity and equal opportunity through powerful advertisements featuring athletes from diverse backgrounds, Nike transcended the boundaries of sport to create a narrative that resonated with a broad audience. The campaign not only showcased the brand's commitment to diversity but also positioned it as a champion for social justice, aligning with the values of consumers seeking more than just athletic wear. In the beauty industry, Fenty Beauty by Rihanna revolutionized the market with its extensive range of foundation shades, explicitly designed to cater to a diverse spectrum of skin tones. Beyond meeting a long-overlooked need in the cosmetics industry, Fenty Beauty became a symbol of inclusivity, garnering widespread acclaim for celebrating the beauty of consumers regardless of their ethnic background (Labouvier, 2017; Nast, 2020).

The success of inclusive marketing campaigns such as Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign, Nike's "Equality" campaign, and Fenty Beauty's extensive range of foundation shades suggest that inclusive messaging can have broad appeal across diverse audiences. These campaigns celebrate diversity and foster a sense of belongingness. Given that prototypical members typically feel more connected and aligned with mainstream cultural norms, their exposure to inclusive messaging may resonate with their values and beliefs, particularly those related to social justice and equality. Brands like Nike and Fenty Beauty,

which position themselves as champions of diversity and inclusion, demonstrate how prototypical members may be drawn to brands that reflect their values.

Given that prototypical members are typically more connected and aligned with mainstream cultural norms, they are likely to respond positively to inclusive messaging and branding initiatives that reflect their values, such as social justice and equality. This alignment between brand messaging and the values of prototypical members can strengthen brand loyalty and engagement, as these consumers may view inclusive campaigns as a sign of a brand's progressiveness and commitment to social responsibility. Therefore, I predict that prototypical consumers will display a higher willingness to help for inclusive brand messaging, as it resonates with their identity, values, and sense of belongingness. Brands that position themselves as champions of diversity and inclusion not only appeal to a broad audience but also align with the values and beliefs of prototypical members, potentially leading to increased support and engagement. These factors offer a compelling explanation for your prediction that prototypical consumers will favor inclusive brand messaging over exclusive messaging.

Peripheral consumers, who may experience higher levels of self-uncertainty within groups, might respond differently to inclusive brand messaging compared to prototypical consumers. Given their weaker sense of belongingness and potentially less alignment with mainstream cultural norms, peripheral consumers may be less motivated by brand messaging that emphasizes diversity and inclusion. While inclusive messaging may resonate with their values in some cases, peripheral consumers may also approach such campaigns with a level of skepticism, particularly if they perceive the brand's efforts as inauthentic or merely performative. Additionally, their more marginalized position may

lead them to seek niche brands or communities that offer a clearer sense of identity and cater to their specific preferences and values. Therefore, I am not making an explicit hypothesis for peripheral consumers. My general prediction is that peripheral consumers may display a more mixed response to inclusive brand messaging, with some feeling positively about the inclusivity but others being indifferent or cautious about aligning with broader inclusive initiatives. Peripheral consumers might instead prefer messaging that offers clear, consistent identity and aligns with their unique preferences, leading them to seek out more niche or specialized brands that cater to their specific tastes and needs.

H3: *For prototypical consumers, inclusive (vs. exclusive) brand messaging will lead to a higher willingness to help, mediated by perceived fit[5]. For peripheral consumers, brand messaging will have no such effects.*

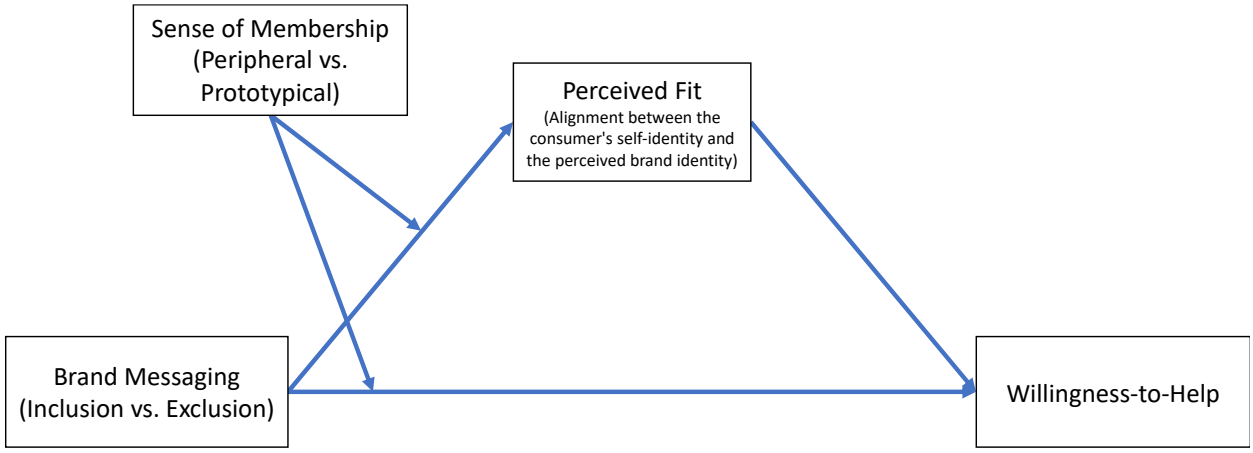

Figure 9 – Conceptual Model: Hypothesis 3

[5] Perceived fit refers to the alignment between the consumer's self-identity and the perceived brand identity.

This next is structured to provide empirical support demonstrating that when exposed to brand messaging that creates a sense of inclusion, prototypical consumers will respond more positively, providing initial empirical support for H_3.

Design and Procedure

Two hundred eighty-two participants (M_{age} = 45.12; 51.4% women, 1.8% non-binary, .4% prefer not to say) were recruited online from the CloudResearch platform for a study on consumer experience, in exchange for a small payment. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions in a 2 (Brand Messaging: inclusion vs. exclusion) x 2 (Consumer Sense of Membership: peripheral vs. prototypical) between-subjects design.

Upon consenting to participate in our study, participants were informed that they would be engaging in a market research study conducted by a brand named InnovateX. The cover story about the brand InnovateX is as follows: "Our team of academics is partnering with a leading brand for this research, using the fictional brand name InnovateX. This fictional brand name was created exclusively for academic research purposes, ensuring that your responses remain unbiased and focused solely on your perceptions, allowing for more candid and genuine insights." To start the study, participants were initially asked to complete a consumer profile assessment. They all read the following message: "This tool is crafted to gain insights into your preferences, values, and lifestyle choices. Our aim is to explore diverse consumer profiles within our brand community, enabling us to better align with your needs and desires. By gaining a deeper understanding of your preferences and lifestyle, we hope to tailor our offerings to meet the varied demands of our valued

consumers." Subsequently, they responded to questions regarding their attitudes toward various items, including environmentally friendly brands and products, as well as their lifestyle and travel preferences. These questions served the purpose of aligning with our cover story and randomly assign them a peripheral or prototypical consumer sense of membership. This approach enhances the credibility of their subsequently assigned consumer profile.

For participants assigned as peripheral consumers of the brand, they read: "Based on your responses, it indicates that you align more with the profile of a peripheral consumer for our brand—someone who resonates with some, but not all, ethos we embody. Your choices may be influenced by a mix of considerations, including environmental sustainability, eco-friendly choices, aesthetics, and functionality. As a consumer, your preferences contribute to the diversity of our consumer base, reflecting the versatility of our brand appeal." For participants assigned as prototypical consumers of the brand, they read: "Based on your responses, it indicates that you align more with the profile of a prototypical consumer for our brand—someone who resonates with the core ethos we embody. Your consistent commitment to environmental sustainability, eco-friendly choices, and a balance of style and functionality mirrors the ideals that define our brand. As a consumer, you not only value the products individually but also embrace the holistic vision we offer."

Following that, participants read about the mission statement of InnovateX. They were randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions and read a brand mission statement (inclusion vs. exclusion). In the inclusion condition, participants read: "At InnovateX, our inclusive mission is to empower individuals from all walks of life with

innovative and sustainable products that enhance their daily experiences. We strive to create a community where everyone feels a sense of belongingness and can enjoy the benefits of cutting-edge solutions designed to make a positive impact on their lives." In the exclusion condition, participants read: "Committed to excellence, InnovateX's exclusive mission is to redefine standards and exceed expectations. We cater to those who seek premium, sophisticated, and uniquely designed products. Our exclusive line represents the pinnacle of innovation and quality, tailored for individuals with discerning tastes and a passion for distinctive experiences." After reviewing InnovateX's mission statement, participants were presented with information about two products - a water bottle and a travel backpack, both from InnovateX. They were then asked to provide ratings for these products, followed by sharing their overall attitudes and perceptions of the brand.

Then, all participants were asked to indicate how likely they would engage in different scenarios on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 with 1 being extremely unlikely and 7 being extremely likely. Six different scenarios were asked to create a willingness to help index. Those scenarios include giving money to a homeless person, donating money to fund for children with terminal illnesses, offering a ride to an unknown person whose car had broken down, giving directions to a lost stranger, allowing someone to use your cell phone, and giving food to a homeless person (DeWall, Baumeister, Gailliot, et al., 2008). Next, participants were then asked to provide ratings on 7 items indicating their autonomous motivations (i.e., because it is an important choice I really want to make, because I personally believe it is the best thing for me to do, because I have carefully thought about it and believe it is very important for many aspects of my life, because it is consistent with my life goals) and controlled motivations (i.e., because I feel pressure from others to help,

because others would be upset with me if I did not, because I want others to approve of me) for engaging in those scenarios above (Pavey et al., 2012; see Appendix E). These ratings served as the main dependent variable. This was followed by self-construal scale (Singelis, 1994; see Appendix F)[6], identity threats questionnaire (Slepian & Jacoby-Senghor, 2021; see Appendix G), and demographic questions (e.g., age, gender identification, race, household income, education, language). The decision to incorporate self-construal into the study aligns with previous research emphasizing its importance in understanding social behaviors, particularly in the context of social exclusion (White et al., 2012; White & Argo, 2009). Participants were debriefed before exiting the study.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Check – Feeling Exclusive. A 2 (Brand Messaging: inclusion vs. exclusion) x 2 (Consumer Sense of Membership: peripheral vs. prototypical) ANOVA revealed that participants exposed to exclusive brand messaging felt more exclusive (M = 5.04) compared to those in the inclusive brand messaging condition (M = 3.99, F (1, 278) = 40.321, p < .001). No significant differences were observed in consumer sense of membership (p = .11) or the two-way interaction (p = .98).

Willingness to Help. An ANOVA including consumer sense of membership (peripheral vs. prototypical) and brand messaging (inclusion vs. exclusion) as predictor variables, willingness to help as dependent variable, and interdependent and independent self-construal as covariates, revealed a two-way interaction (F (1, 276) = 8.81, p = .003). In

[6] Self-construal refers to how individuals perceive themselves in relation to others, independently or interdependently (Singelis, 1994).

line with the proposed theorizing, prototypical consumers exhibited a significantly greater willingness to help when they were exposed to inclusive messaging (M = 5.18) compared to exclusive messaging (M = 4.59, p = .001). While peripheral consumers exhibited a greater willingness to help when they were exposed to exclusive messaging (M = 4.93) compared to inclusive messaging (M = 4.76), the observed differences were not statistically significant (p = .35). Additionally, the inclusion of both interdependent and independent self-construal as covariates in the analysis was deemed necessary, as they both demonstrated significant impacts on participants' willingness to help others (F (1, 276) = 52.14, p < .001 and F (1, 276) = 22.06, p < .001, respectively).

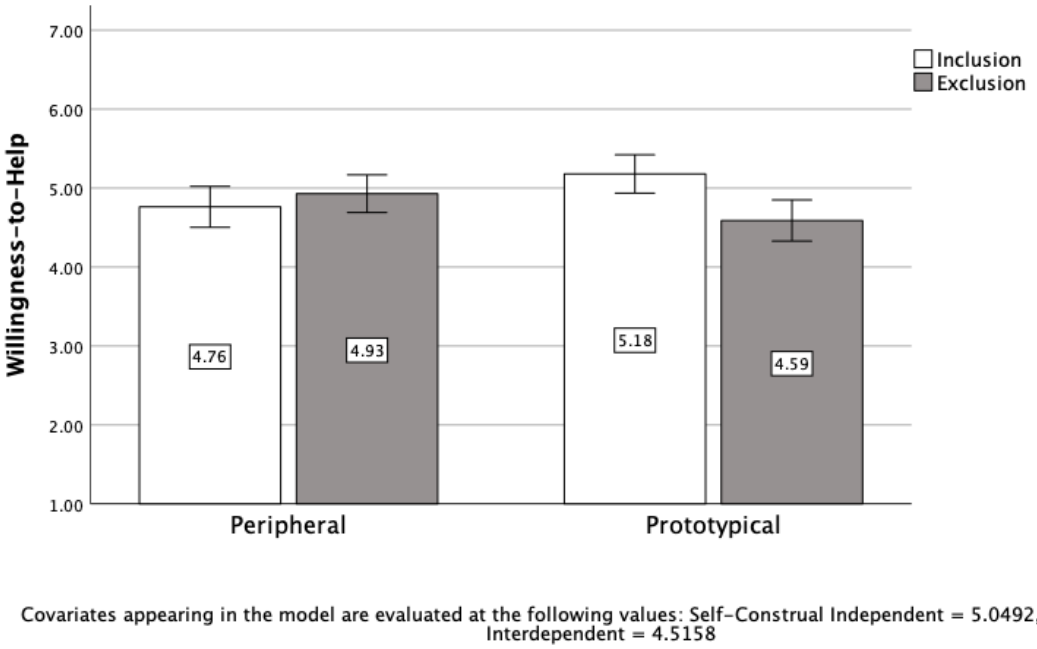

Figure 10 – Study 5a Results

Ancillary Measure - Brand Inclusivity. A 2 (Brand Messaging: inclusion vs. exclusion) x 2 (Consumer Sense of Membership: peripheral vs. prototypical) ANOVA on "brand

inclusivity" revealed that participants exposed to inclusive brand messaging rated brand as more inclusive (M = 5.44) compared to those in the exclusive brand messaging condition (M = 4.56, F (1, 278) = 44.26, p < .001). No significant differences were observed in consumer sense of membership (p = .26) or the two-way interaction (p = .54). Brand inclusivity was assessed using a Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree to 7 - strongly agree) on the following statements: the brand's advertising and marketing reflect a diverse range of people and backgrounds; the brand actively promotes diversity and inclusion in its workforce; the brand supports and collaborates with diverse communities and causes; the brand creates products or services that cater to a wide range of needs and preferences; the brand's customer base is inclusive and welcoming of different backgrounds (a = .93).

Ancillary Measure - Brand Exclusivity. Similarly, a parallel analysis on "brand exclusivity" revealed that participants exposed to exclusive brand messaging perceived the brand as more exclusive (M = 4.61) compared to those in the inclusive brand messaging condition (M = 3.91, F (1, 278) = 23.34, p < .001). No significant differences were found in consumer sense of membership (p = .18) or the two-way interaction (p = .37). Brand exclusivity was assessed using a Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree to 7 - strongly agree) on the following statements: the brand makes me feel like part of an exclusive club; the brand's limited-edition releases or products make me feel special; the brand's pricing suggests exclusivity and luxury; the brand offers exclusive benefits or rewards to loyal customers; the brand's events or experiences are exclusive and invite-only (a = .88).

While this study provides valuable insights into how peripheral and prototypical consumers respond to brand messaging that is either inclusive or exclusive, it is important to recognize that willingness to help others may not directly translate into consumers'

support for a brand. To address this gap, I conducted the next study to measure consumers' willingness to help and support a brand.

Study 5b – Helping and Supporting a Brand

This study aims to provide a more comprehensive view of how different types of consumers engage with brands, offering a clearer picture of the impact of inclusive messaging on consumer-brand relationships. To do so, I added measures to explicitly evaluate consumers' intentions and actions related to helping and supporting brands. This extension can strengthen the practical implications of this dissertation work to illuminate how consumers' willingness to help may manifest in tangible support for brands. This dissertation hopes to contribute to the development of actionable strategies for marketers aiming to cultivate stronger connections and support from their consumer base as they amp up their inclusive marketing efforts.

Design and Procedure

Two hundred ninety-two participants (Mage = 44.40; 60.6% women, .7% non-binary, 1.7% prefer not to say) were recruited online from the CloudResearch platform for a study on consumer experience in exchange for a small payment. The same experimental design was employed. Same as in Study 5a, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions in a 2 (Brand Messaging: inclusion vs. exclusion) x 2 (Consumer Sense of Membership: peripheral vs. prototypical) between-subjects design. Participants from the previous study were excluded from participating in this study to prevent them from guessing the real purpose of the study and potentially skewing the data.

The procedure for this study mirrors the previous one but with measures assessing how likely consumers would help and support a brand. All participants were asked to indicate how likely they would engage in different scenarios on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 with 1 being extremely unlikely and 7 being extremely likely. A total of sixteen different scenarios were asked to create four sub-scales of willingness to help and support a brand (see Appendix D).

Results and Discussion

Events and Participation. The following scenarios were incorporated into this sub-scale: attend events such as product launches and workshops; volunteer at local community events organized by InnovateX; participate in crowdsourced campaigns to provide input or ideas on new products, services, or charitable endeavors; participate and encourage others to join in online/offline challenges initiated by InnovateX ($\alpha = .93$). An ANOVA with brand messaging (inclusion vs. exclusion) and consumer sense of membership (peripheral vs. prototypical) on events and participation indicated a nonsignificant two-way interaction (F (1, 286) = .51, p = .48). No significant main effect on either brand messaging (F (1, 286) = .02, p = .90) or consumer sense of membership (F (1, 286) = 1.87, p = .17) were detected.

Communication and Information Sharing. The following scenarios were incorporated into this sub-scale: opt to receive newsletters, updates, or other communications to stay informed about their products, initiatives, and events; follow their social media platforms to stay informed and engaged; create and share content (e.g., photos, reviews, testimonials) related to your experiences; attend and actively engage in webinars or virtual events

hosted by InnovateX (α = .90). An ANOVA with brand messaging (inclusion vs. exclusion) and consumer sense of membership (peripheral vs. prototypical) on communication and information sharing revealed a nonsignificant two-way interaction (F (1, 286) = .05, p = .82). However, results indicated a significant main effect of consumer sense of membership (F (1, 286) = 5.50, p = .02). That is, prototypical consumers reported a greater willingness to engage in communication and information sharing with the brand (M = 4.04) compared to peripheral consumers (M = 3.59). The inclusion of both interdependent and independent self-construal as covariates in the analysis was deemed necessary, as they demonstrated significant impacts on consumers' willingness to engage in communication and information sharing with the brand (F (1, 286) = 41.87, p < .001 and F (1, 286) = 9.38, p = .002, respectively).

Social Responsibility and Charitable Efforts. The following scenarios were incorporated into this sub-scale: purchasing special editions for charitable causes; round up your purchases to donate to a non-profit organization InnovateX collaborates with; advocate for the brand's values and social responsibility initiatives in conversations with peers or on social media; share your own initiatives to promote sustainability, inspired by InnovateX's environmental initiatives (α = .89). An ANOVA with brand messaging (inclusion vs. exclusion) and consumer sense of membership (peripheral vs. prototypical) on social responsibility and charitable efforts revealed a nonsignificant two-way interaction (F (1, 286) = .01, p = .93). However, results indicated a significant main effect of consumer sense of membership (F (1, 286) = 4.92, p = .03). That is, prototypical consumers reported a greater willingness to engage in social responsibility and charitable efforts made by the brand (M = 4.37) compared to peripheral consumers (M = 3.98). The inclusion of

both interdependent and independent self-construal as covariates in the analysis was deemed necessary, as they demonstrated significant impacts on consumers' willingness to engage in social responsibility and charitable efforts made by the brand (F (1, 286) = 49.12, p < .001 and F (1, 286) = 12.72, p < .001, respectively).

Feedback and Engagement. The following scenarios were incorporated into this sub-scale: share constructive feedback about their products or services; participate in surveys or research studies to gather consumer opinions and preferences; provide testimonials for their products or services; give them another chance in case there is a mishap in the first try (α = .87). An ANOVA with brand messaging (inclusion vs. exclusion) and consumer sense of membership (peripheral vs. prototypical) on feedback and engagement revealed a marginally significant interaction (F (1, 286) = 3.01, p = .08). Specifically, prototypical consumers exhibited a greater willingness to support brands in response to inclusive brand messaging (M = 5.54), compared to exclusive brand messaging (M = 5.07, F (1, 286) = 5.17, p = .02). Results also indicated a marginally significant main effect of consumer sense of membership (F (1, 286) = 3.10, p = .08). Overall, prototypical consumers reported a greater willingness to provide feedback and give brand a second chance (M = 5.30) compared to peripheral consumers (M = 5.05). The inclusion of both interdependent and independent self-construal as covariates in the analysis was deemed necessary, as they demonstrated significant impacts on consumers' willingness to provide feedback and give brand a second chance (F (1, 286) = 32.79, p < .01 and F (1, 286) = 23.95, p < .01, respectively).

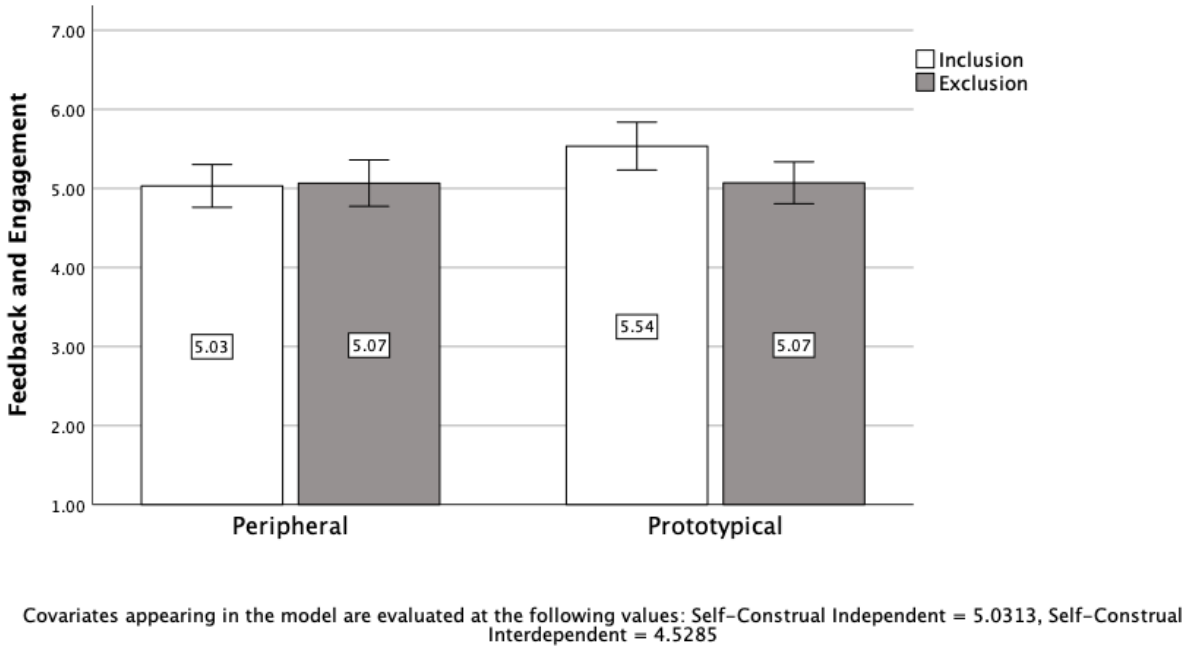

Figure 11 – Study 5b Results

Results from these two studies showed that peripheral consumers might not always display a higher likelihood of wanting to help others. While this goes against the main predictions of this dissertation, this does not come as a total surprise. Prior research has found that group members may also consider non-central and marginal position a desirable state to be in and not wanting to become a central member of a group (Ellemers & Jetten, 2013). Think of a global coffeehouse chain known for its community-oriented spaces and commitment to fair trade. The brand undergoes changes in its marketing narrative and introduces products that appear disconnected from its original values, leading to consumer uncertainty. Some consumers might intentionally shift to a more peripheral role, selectively engaging in discussions related to specific offerings or local initiatives while distancing themselves from the broader brand narrative that causes

uncertainty. This deliberate move to a peripheral position may be viewed as desirable for those seeking a balance between group affiliation and the flexibility to navigate uncertainties about the group's identity.

It is also possible that people may also lower their identification with a group if they have high social identity uncertainty or group identity uncertainty (i.e., feel highly uncertain about what it means to be a member of this group). Researchers have found that members can experience subgroup autonomy when they feel uncertain about their superordinate group (Jung et al., 2019; Wagoner et al., 2018; Wagoner & Hogg, 2016). Consider a popular athleisure brand recognized for its commitment to sustainability and promoting an active lifestyle. The brand alters its messaging and production practices, causing some consumers to question its genuine commitment to sustainability. Consumers uncertain about the brand's overall identity may seek subgroup autonomy by aligning with niche communities within the brand, such as those dedicated to ethical and sustainable fashion or specific fitness activities. By doing so, the consumer seeks a clearer and more defined identity within that subgroup.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Conclusion

Through a series of experimental studies, this dissertation examines peripheral consumers' willingness to help others as they encounter and respond to episodes of exclusion. It contributes to theoretical understanding by incorporating uncertainty-identity theory in consumer and marketing literature, introduces the moderating role of consumers' peripheral sense of membership, and the mediating role of a heightened need to belong in

driving peripheral consumers' willingness to help others and engage in prosocial behavior. This dissertation presented six experimental studies (N = 1,971) and shed light on how experiences of social, racial, or brand exclusion affect consumers' willingness to help others. This dissertation demonstrated that consumers' sense of membership moderates their willingness to help others after an episode of exclusion. The findings revealed that when peripheral consumers face exclusion, their need to belong heightens. To cope with the negative consequences of exclusion, peripheral consumers seek opportunities to reconnect with others. Consequently, their willingness to help others increases as a result of feeling excluded.

In Study 1, results revealed that peripheral members exhibited a greater willingness-to-help when feeling rejected compared to being ignored or neutral. This suggests that rejection threatens people's relational needs, prompting them to help others to establish connections. Conversely, Study 2 did not find any statistically significant interactions between brand exclusion and willingness-to-help. This lack of significance could be due to the measures of helping others not directly connected to the brand, indicating that brand exclusion may not significantly influence consumer interactions with others. In Study 3, the examination of racial exclusion and inclusion in relation to different racial groups revealed contrasting outcomes. Peripheral members (i.e., Asian participants) showed increased willingness-to-help when experiencing racial exclusion compared to inclusion. This response may be a coping strategy or a way to establish connections. In contrast, prototypical members (i.e., Caucasian participants) maintained consistent willingness-to-help levels regardless of racial exclusion or inclusion experiences. Study 4 found that peripheral members exhibited a significantly higher need to belong when facing

social rejection compared to prototypical members. This heightened need to belong may drive peripheral members to help others as a coping strategy. Mediation analysis supported the role of need to belong as a mediator between sense of membership and willingness-to-help in the rejection condition. Study 5a, set in a branding context, found that prototypical consumers were more willing to help others when exposed to inclusive messaging, while peripheral consumers showed a non-significant trend in the opposite direction. Additionally, interdependent and independent self-construals significantly impacted participants' willingness to help. In Study 5b, prototypical consumers displayed a greater willingness to provide feedback to the brand, engage in communication and information sharing, as well as social responsibility and charitable efforts with the brand. This trend was less pronounced in peripheral consumers.

The findings from these studies emphasize the complex interplay between social, racial, and brand exclusion and consumers willingness to help others. Peripheral consumers may experience heightened willingness to help as coping mechanisms to satisfy their need to belong following an exclusion episode. In contrast, prototypical consumers appear more influenced by inclusive brand messaging in terms of their willingness to help and engage with the brand. The dissertation contributes to a deeper understanding of how social and brand exclusions impact consumers' willingness to help and provides insight into the motivation underlying peripheral and prototypical consumers' responses. These findings have implications for developing inclusive strategies in marketing and community-building efforts to foster engagement across diverse consumer groups.

Theoretical Contributions

By examining the behaviors of peripheral consumers as they navigate episodes of exclusion, this dissertation makes several theoretical contributions. These include the integration of uncertainty-identity theory and the establishment of belonging as the underlying mechanism for peripheral consumers' willingness to help others and engage in prosocial behavior. This dissertation also differentiates identity uncertainty from situational uncertainty and emphasizes the importance of the intersectionality of multiple consumer identities.

First, this dissertation integrates uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2012) into the marketing literature, providing a novel perspective on consumer identities and their relationships with others, groups, and brands. By relying on uncertainty-identity theory, this dissertation establishes the moderating role of consumer sense of membership (peripheral vs. prototypical) in shaping responses to exclusion. Specifically, it provides empirical evidence on how consumers of different racial backgrounds (e.g., Asians, Caucasians) perceive themselves as peripheral or prototypical members of U.S. society.

Second, this dissertation advances the field by providing new insights into belongingness as the underlying mechanism of peripheral consumers' responses to social exclusion. While belongingness has been extensively studied in the marketing literature for its crucial role in shaping consumer behavior (Z. Chen, 2017; X. Li & Zhang, 2014; Loveland et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2012), this dissertation distinguishes how peripheral and prototypical consumers might experience different levels of need to belong. The variation in their need to belong, tied to identity uncertainty, accounts for subsequent helping behavior when faced with exclusion. In investigating other potential mediators suggested

in the literature (Blackhart et al., 2009; Riva et al., 2017; Williams, 2007), this dissertation considered factors such as self-esteem and identity threats and empirically ruled them out. Through a series of experiments, these alternative explanations were tested and found to be less significant than the impact of belongingness, affirming its mediating role in explaining how peripheral consumers cope with feeling excluded and help others as a way to reconnect and achieve a sense of belongingness.

Third, this dissertation contributes to the broader discussion around coping mechanisms in the face of social exclusion by providing a nuanced view of how and why kindness can emerge in this context. Although social exclusion is never beneficial (Baumeister et al., 2005, 2007; Twenge, Ciarocco, et al., 2007; Twenge et al., 2001, 2003), it is an inevitable and common experience for many consumers (R. P. Chen et al., 2017; Duclos et al., 2013; J. Lee & Shrum, 2012; Lu & Sinha, 2017; Mead et al., 2011; Ward & Dahl, 2014). This research reveals how its impact can be lessened by fostering a sense of inclusion. By welcoming consumers and addressing their need to belong, marketers can promote helping behavior and enhance overall consumer experiences. While this dissertation only focused on willingness to help others as the main dependent variable, it provides insights into the broader scope of consumer prosocial behavior, which involves helping or benefitting specific individuals or society at large (Benabou & Tirole, 2006; Small & Cryder, 2016; White et al., 2019). Activities such as donating blood, participating in clothing drives, and volunteering at homeless shelters can be further explored, as the mechanisms for different types of prosocial activities may vary among consumers and could offer different benefits for consumers as they cope with feeling excluded (Cavanaugh et al., 2015; Givi & Galak, 2020; Jami et al., 2021; White et al., 2019).

Furthermore, while prior consumer and marketing literature on uncertainty mainly focused on situational uncertainty consumers experience as they navigate their decision-making processes (Castaño et al., 2008; Hassan et al., 2013; Lambrecht et al., 2007; Shulman et al., 2015), uncertainty-identity theory hones in on uncertainty in identity as a key factor in influencing consumer responses and decision-making. Moreover, exploring different social identities and consumer profiles, including racial dynamics, college contexts, and the strength of American identity, highlights the concept of intersectionality within social exclusion and the complexity of social identities (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Intersectionality is an important factor to consider (Gopaldas, 2013), as various aspects of identity can intersect and influence one another in shaping unique experiences of exclusion. This research acknowledges the richness and diversity of consumer experiences and emphasizes the importance of understanding how these multiple facets of identity intersect and impact consumer behavior.

Practical Implications

This dissertation emphasizes the importance of supporting peripheral consumers and examines their responses to feelings of exclusion. By focusing on exclusion, it helps guide brand messaging strategies and inclusive marketing practices and presents a call to action for public policymakers to implement supportive measures. By fostering inclusive marketing approaches and influencing policy changes, this research aims to create a more equitable marketplace and strengthen brand-consumer relationships (Bennett et al., 2013).

This research offers valuable insights for brands aiming to support a diverse range of consumers, including fashionistas who do not conform to the slim body model (Gurrieri

& Cherrier, 2013; Harju & Huovinen, 2015; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013), consumers with disabilities (Bhogal-Nair et al., 2024; M. Li et al., 2023; Mogaji et al., 2023), LGBTQIA+ individuals (Hildebrand et al., 2013; Kates, 2002, 2004; Montecchi et al., 2024; Oakenfull, 2013), and those involved in social movements such as Anti-Asian Hate and Black Lives Matter (Nardini et al., 2021). By acknowledging the different needs for belongingness and understanding the distinction between peripheral and prototypical consumers, marketers can create campaigns that are more inclusive of various body types, abilities, and identities.

For instance, brands can cater to fashionistas outside the slim body model by offering inclusive sizing options and showcasing a broader range of body types in marketing campaigns (Almond, 2013; D'Alessandro & Chitty, 2011; Harju & Huovinen, 2015; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013). This approach fosters body positivity and extends the appeal of fashion brands to a wider audience. Additionally, incorporating models of diverse sizes and shapes on runways and in advertisements helps all consumers feel represented and included. Brands can further support consumers with disabilities by developing adaptive clothing lines and integrating assistive technologies into products (Bhogal-Nair et al., 2024; M. Li et al., 2023; Mogaji et al., 2023). Such efforts ensure that these consumers feel seen, valued, and part of the brand's consumer base.

To support social movements like Anti-Asian Hate and Black Lives Matter, brands can use research insights to address the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups. Thoughtful and sincere messaging, such as celebrating cultural heritage or supporting community initiatives, can contribute to positive social change and enhance brand reputation. Brands might also support these movements through partnerships with relevant organizations or donating a portion of their profits to social causes (Nardini et al.,

2021). For the LGBTQIA+ community, crafting inclusive campaigns that honor diverse identities fosters a sense of belongingness and trust, building long-lasting relationships with these consumers. For example, using LGBTQIA+ imagery and language in advertising, as well as collaborating with LGBTQIA+ influencers, can demonstrate a brand's commitment to inclusivity (Hildebrand et al., 2013; Kates, 2002, 2004; Montecchi et al., 2024; Oakenfull, 2013).

Inclusive marketing and branding involves crafting campaigns and initiatives that allow marginalized or underrepresented groups to engage with and connect to brands (Licsandru & Cui, 2018; McMellon, 2005; Shalvi, 2022; Xavier, 2020). It is becoming essential for brands to integrate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) messaging in their marketing strategies to maintain authenticity and relevance (Arsel et al., 2022). However, inclusive branding is not one-size-fits-all. Marketers must tailor strategies to the needs of prototypical and peripheral consumers. As demonstrated in Study 5a and 5b, peripheral and prototypical consumers respond differently to inclusive brand messaging. While prototypical consumers may embrace inclusive branding efforts, peripheral consumers might require distinct approaches to feel included. By balancing marketing investments between the two groups, marketers can create campaigns that resonate with different segments and cultivate broader brand loyalty (Braxton & Lau-Gesk, 2020; Parris & Guzmán, 2022).

Additionally, this dissertation provides insights to guide the development of public policies to regulate marketing practices that could perpetuate exclusion or discrimination. For instance, policies can require brands to include diverse representations in their advertisements and to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or perpetuating bias. Policies could

also mandate the disclosure of inclusive practices and diversity commitments (Dadzie et al., 2013), ensuring brands are held accountable for their marketing approaches. For example, policymakers can advocate for the introduction of an inclusivity index for consumer brands, providing a standardized measure of a brand's commitment to fair and equitable treatment of all consumer groups. This index can serve as a transparent tool for consumers to make informed decisions, allowing them to identify and support brands that prioritize inclusivity and social responsibility. By setting clear standards for equitable representation and messaging, public policy can serve as an additional and lawful layer to protect consumers from unfair treatment and foster a more inclusive marketplace (Dadzie et al., 2013; Motley & Perry, 2013; Saatcioglu & Ozanne, 2013).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While these findings contribute valuable insights, it's essential to acknowledge the limitations of the current research. Although a series of experimental studies were collected to rigorously investigate the social exclusion phenomenon, most of them were conducted in a controlled setting through online experiments. To address this limitation, I have made an initial attempt to conduct field work in-person and have collected results from undergraduate students in a classroom setting.

Latinx Thriving Initiative Video Study

Undergraduate students in an in-person marketing class participated in the study as part of a class activity for an initial fieldwork attempt. Only data from participants who provided written consent are included in the analysis below. Seventy-five college

undergraduate students (M_{age} = 21.12; 61.3% women, 2.7% non-binary, 1.3% prefer not to say) participated and consented to having their data analyzed for research purposes in exchange for a small payment. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions (Recipient: featured in the video vs. not featured in the video) in a simple one factor 2 levels between-subjects design.

Upon consenting to participate in our study, all participants were asked to watch a marketing video produced by the Office of Inclusive Excellence at the University of California, Irvine, which covered the Latinx Thriving Initiative. This video[7] is publicly available on the university's website and UC Irvine's official YouTube channel. The video was played during class time on the classroom screen, and everyone in the classroom watched it together. After viewing the video, all students received an anonymous survey link to complete on their own laptops. Participants were first asked to rate their attitudes (good, positive, favorable, likable) toward the video, the Latinx Thriving Initiative, the university, and provide details about their current and future campus involvement. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions before responding to questions about their willingness to help others.

In the featured-recipient condition, participants were asked to imagine that the person receiving their help was Hispanic, aligning with the casts featured in the video promoting the university's Latinx Thriving Initiative. In the not-featured-recipient condition, participants were asked to imagine that the person receiving their help was non-Hispanic. All participants then provided their ratings on the main dependent variable of interest, willingness to help others, followed by questions about their motivations, identity

[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1I8d1QkYZ8

threats (Slepian & Jacoby-Senghor, 2021), and scale questions (e.g., self-construal scale by Singelis, 1994; self-uncertainty scale by Hohman et al., 2017; see Appendix H). The study concluded with classic demographic questions (e.g., age, gender identification, race, household income, education, language).

Willingness to Help. An ANOVA with help recipient as independent variable, willingness to help as dependent variable revealed a marginally significant main effect on the recipient of their help (F (1, 73) = 3.06, p = .09). Overall, participants reported a greater willingness to help those that are featured in the video (M = 4.75) compared to those who were not featured in the video (M = 4.34).

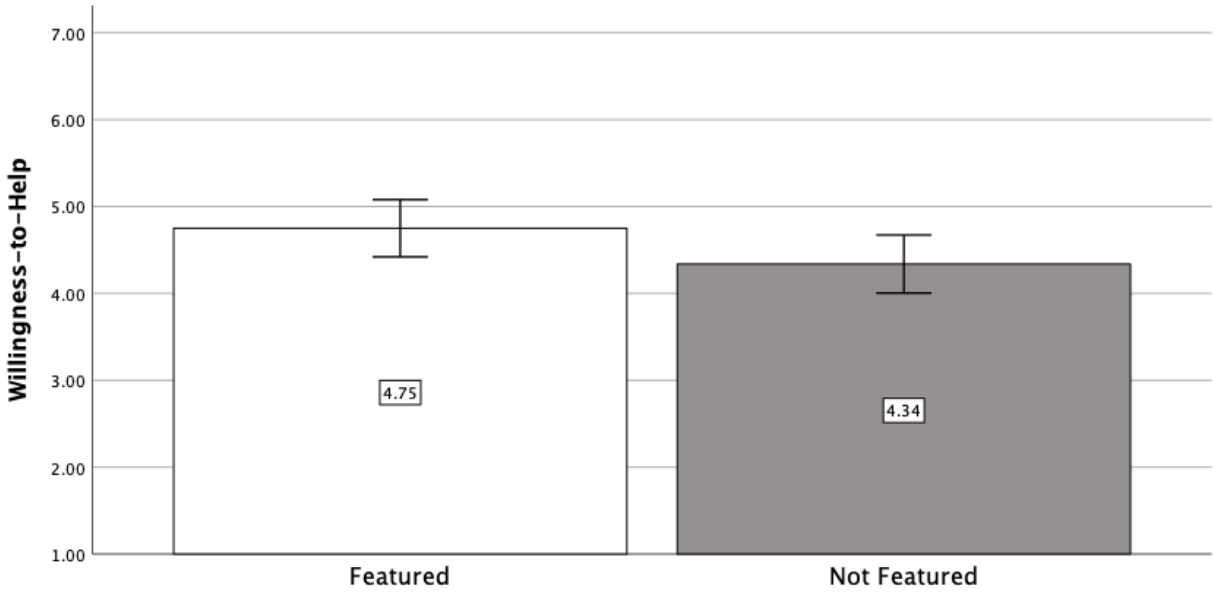

Figure 12 – Latinx Thriving Initiative Video Study Results

The marginally significant main effect underscores the broader implications of visual representation in advertising and its role in influencing consumers' willingness to

help. These findings indicate that simply exposing viewers to inclusivity initiatives can positively impact their altruistic tendencies. This empirical evidence highlights the importance of featuring diverse casts in marketing promotions. The increased willingness to help others featured in the video was observed across various demographic groups. Marketers can benefit from practicing inclusion in their marketing efforts, which can help create an inclusive and socially responsible brand image that consumers are increasingly seeking (J. L. Hayes et al., 2022; J. L. Hayes & Duff, 2022). Future research could employ field experiments to investigate social exclusion in real consumer settings beyond college population.

Social Media Web Scraping Dataset

Social media has transformed the ways consumers interact with their friends and brands making it a significant channel for building relationships and maintaining engagement (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2022; Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Lane et al., 2023; Nambisan & Baron, 2007; Naylor et al., 2012; Zollo et al., 2020). However, it also provides an infrastructure that can exacerbate social exclusion. Future research could investigate emerging forms of social exclusion such as ghosting (Freedman et al., 2024) and cancel culture (C. Costa & Azevedo, 2024), particularly in the digital realm, including cyberbullying (Ryoo & Kim, 2024), especially among the youth (He et al., 2024; Vezne et al., 2023) and college students (Gupta et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024), algorithmic discrimination (Lambrecht & Tucker, 2019; Rathee et al., 2023; Seele et al., 2021), and online shaming (Lamberton et al., 2024; Pundak et al., 2021).

Beyond traditional lab, online, and field experimental work, social media offers an important avenue for investigating consumer responses to branding efforts and engagements with brands (Hollebeek et al., 2014, 2022; Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). By analyzing social media content such as Facebook posts, Twitter tweets, and Yelp reviews, researchers can gain nuanced insights into actual consumer behavior. Such analyses can reveal how peripheral consumers navigate their online experiences and interactions with brands, offering a more comprehensive understanding of their attitudes, preferences, and decision-making processes. Additionally, social media data scraping enables a deeper examination of consumer engagement with brand messaging, allowing researchers to track trends, identify patterns, and even detect shifts in consumer sentiment over time. By leveraging these digital footprints, future research can provide valuable data-driven recommendations for optimizing branding strategies and enhancing consumer relationships.

For example, I am currently working on analyzing a social media web scraping dataset that contains over 1,300 Instagram posts from a brand, including post content and user comments. The scraped dataset includes post elements such as images, captions, and hashtags. Additionally, user-specific details like the number of followers, commenter engagement metrics (e.g., number of posts), and comment content—including replies, responses, and social interactions such as likes—are all available. By using the number of followers a commenter has as a proxy for their sense of membership, I aim to analyze the sentiment of comments in response to brand social media posts with varying inclusivity language.

Other Basis of Exclusion

While not a focus of the current dissertation, it is important to consider how African Americans and Hispanics may respond differently to feeling excluded. These groups are important cultural minorities that have faced unique challenges historically and continue to do so today. African Americans have experienced systemic and longstanding discrimination in the United States, including the legacy of slavery and a century of institutionalized racism. This history has left a lasting impact on the African American community and contemporary challenges persist. Issues such as unequal access to education and economic opportunities, housing discrimination, racial profiling, and market discrimination continue to present obstacles for African Americans. Marketing scholars have explored the impact of advertising (Elias et al., 2011; Grier et al., 2019, 2024; Hoplamazian & Appiah, 2013; Thomas et al., 2023) and its effects on African American consumers (e.g., Crockett & Grier, 2003; Grier et al., 2024).

Similarly, Hispanic and Latino Americans have faced a long history of discrimination and prejudice in the United States, from restrictive immigration policies to racial profiling and stereotyping. Studies have highlighted challenges such as workplace discrimination, including barriers to employment opportunities, promotions, and fair treatment. Hispanics also experience racial profiling and bias from law enforcement. Educational disparities, limited healthcare access, and housing challenges are other areas where Hispanics encounter systemic barriers. Despite legal progress and societal advancements, these issues persist, necessitating continued research and advocacy for awareness and change. Some scholars have studied racial discrimination's impact on Hispanic Americans (e.g., Bennett et al., 2015; Rodas et al., 2021).

In addition to exploring racial and ethnic exclusion, future research should investigate other bases for exclusion, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, age-based discrimination, and other dimensions of diversity. Expanding research in these areas can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships between consumer identity and the diverse social groups people belong to. This broader perspective can contribute to theoretical insights into consumer behavior and the development of more inclusive and nuanced marketing strategies.

Exclusion erects barriers that divide and isolate while inclusion create bridges that unite and connect. We can break down barriers and foster a world where everyone feels valued and supported. Let us commit ourselves to creating a future of inclusivity, where every single one of us has a place to belong and thrive.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Willingness-To-Help

DeWall, C. N., Baumeister, R. F., Gailliot, M. T., & Maner, J. K. (2008). Depletion Makes the Heart Grow Less Helpful: Helping as a Function of Self-Regulatory Energy and Genetic Relatedness. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 34(12), 1653–1662. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208323981

Please indicate your likelihood of engaging and participating in the following scenarios.

1. Giving money to a homeless person.
2. Donating money to a fund for children with terminal illnesses.
3. Offering a ride to an unknown person whose car had broken down.
4. Giving directions to a lost stranger.
5. Allowing someone to use one's cell phone.
6. Giving food to a homeless person.

Appendix B: Need to Belong Scale

Leary, M. R., Kelly, K. M., Cottrell, C. A., & Schreindorfer, L. S. (2013). Construct validity of the need to belong scale: Mapping the nomological network. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *95*(6), 610–624. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2013.819511

Respondents indicate the degree to which each statement is true or characteristic of them on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 2 = slightly, 3 = moderately, 4 = very, 5 = extremely).

1. If other people don't seem to accept me, I don't let it bother me. (r)
2. I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me.
3. I seldom worry about whether other people care about me. (r)
4. I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need.
5. I want other people to accept me.
6. I do not like being alone.
7. Being apart from my friends for long periods of time does not bother me. (r)
8. I have a strong need to belong.
9. It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people's plans.
10. My feelings are easily hurt when I feel that others do not accept me.

Appendix C: Collective Self-Esteem Scale

Luhtanen, R., & Crocker, J. (1992). A collective self-esteem scale: Self-evaluation of one's social identity. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 18(3), 302–318. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167292183006

We are all members of different social groups or social categories. We would like you to consider your race and ethnicity in responding to the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these statements. We are interested in your honest reactions and opinions. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

Respondents indicate the degree to which they agree/disagree on the following statements on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

1. I am a worthy member of my race/ethnic group.
2. I often regret that I belong to my racial/ethnic group.
3. Overall, my racial/ethnic group is considered good by others.
4. Overall, my race/ethnicity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.
5. I feel I don't have much to offer to my racial/ethnic group.
6. In general, I'm glad to be a member of my racial/ethnic group.
7. Most people consider my racial/ethnic group, on the average, to be more ineffective than other groups.
8. The racial/ethnic group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am.
9. I am a cooperative participant in the activities of my racial/ethnic group.
10. Overall, I often feel that my racial/ethnic group is not worthwhile.
11. In general, others respect my race/ethnicity.
12. My race/ethnicity is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am.
13. I often feel I'm a useless member of my racial/ethnic group.
14. I feel good about the race/ethnicity I belong to.
15. In general, others think that my racial/ethnic group is unworthy.
16. In general, belonging to my race/ethnicity is an important part of my self-image.

Appendix D: Willingness to Help and Support a Brand

Please indicate your likelihood of engaging and participating in the following scenarios.

Feedback and Engagement

1. Share constructive feedback about their products or services.
2. Participate in surveys or research studies to gather consumer opinions and preferences.
3. Give them another chance in case there is a mishap in the first try.
4. Provide testimonials for their products or services.

Events and Participation

1. Attend events such as product launches and workshops.
2. Volunteer at local community events organized by Innovate X.
3. Participate in crowdsourced campaigns to provide input or ideas on new products, services, or charitable endeavors.
4. Participate and encourage others to join in online/offline challenges initiated by Innovate X.

Communication and Information Sharing

1. Opt to receive newsletters, updates, or other communications to stay informed about their products, initiatives, and events.
2. Follow their social media platforms to stay informed and engaged.
3. Create and share content (e.g., photos, reviews, testimonials) related to your experiences.
4. Attend and actively engage in webinars or virtual events hosted by Innovate X.

Social Responsibility and Charitable Efforts

1. Purchasing special editions for charitable causes.
2. Round up your purchases to donate to a non-profit organization Innovate X collaborates with.
3. Advocate for the brand's values and social responsibility initiatives in conversations with peers or on social media.
4. Share your own initiatives to promote sustainability, inspired by Innovate X's environmental initiatives.

Appendix E: Motivation Measures

Pavey, Louisa, Greitemeyer, Tobias, & Sparks, Paul. (2012). "I help because I want to, not because you tell me to": Empathy increases autonomously motivated helping. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, Vol 38(5), 681-689. doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0146167211435940

People have different reasons for why they might help others in difficult situations. We would like you to rate the extent to which each of the following reasons is true for you on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all true; 7 = very true).

The reason I would help the person in the situation described is . . .

Autonomous motivation

1. . . . because it is an important choice I really want to make.
2. . . . because I personally believe it is the best thing for me to do.
3. . . . because I have carefully thought about it and believe it is very important for many aspects of my life.
4. . . . because it is consistent with my life goals.

Controlled motivation

5. . . . because I feel pressure from others to help.
6. . . . because others would be upset with me if I did not.
7. . . . because I want others to approve of me.

Appendix F: Self-Construal Scale

Singelis, T. M. (1994). The measurement of independent and interdependent self-construals. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 20(5), 580–591.

This is a questionnaire that measures a variety of feelings and behaviors in various situations. Rate the degree to which you agree/disagree on the following statements on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

1. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.
2. I can talk openly with a person who I meet for the first time, even when this person is much older than I am.
3. Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.
4. I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.
5. I do my own thing, regardless of what others think.
6. I respect people who are modest about themselves.
7. I feel it is important for me to act as an independent person.
8. I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.
9. I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.
10. Having a lively imagination is important to me.
11. I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans.
12. I feel my fate is intertwined with the fate of those around me.
13. I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met.
14. I feel good when I cooperate with others.
15. I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.
16. If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.
17. I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.
18. Speaking up during a class (or a meeting) is not a problem for me.
19. I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor (or my boss).
20. I act the same way no matter who I am with.
21. My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.
22. I value being in good health above everything.
23. I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I am not happy with the group.
24. I try to do what is best for me, regardless of how that might affect others.
25. Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.
26. It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.
27. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.
28. It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.
29. I act the same way at home that I do at school (or work).
30. I usually go along with what others want to do, even when I would rather do something different.

Appendix G: Identity Threats Questionnaire

Slepian, M. L., & Jacoby-Senghor, D. S. (2021). Identity Threats in Everyday Life: Distinguishing Belonging From Inclusion. Social Psychological and Personality Science, 12(3), 392–406. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550619895008

In the past week, to what extent you've experienced the following?
1 = none at all; 2 = a little; 3 = a moderate amount; 4 = a lot; 5 = a great deal

Lack of Belonging

1. I felt like I didn't belong.
2. I felt like I didn't fit in.
3. I felt like I really "stuck out".

Inauthenticity

4. I felt like I could NOT be the "real me".
5. I felt like I was NOT being authentic.
6. I felt like I was NOT able to be completely myself.

Exclusion

7. Others did things to reject me.
8. Others did things to ignore me.
9. Others did things to exclude me.

Negative Affect: Anger

10. I felt angry.
11. I felt frustrated.

Negative Affect: Sadness

12. I felt sad.
13. I felt hurt.

Appendix H: Self-Uncertainty Scale

Hohman, Zachary & Gaffney, Amber & Hogg, Michael. (2017). Who am I if I am not like my group? Self-uncertainty and feeling peripheral in a group. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. 10.1016/j.jesp.2017.05.002.

Please read the following statements and indicate whether you strongly agree or strongly disagree. (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)

1. My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another.
2. On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion.
3. I wonder about what kind of person I really am.
4. I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be.
5. When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like.
6. I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality. (r)
7. I think I know other people better than I know myself.
8. My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently.
9. If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another.
10. Even if I wanted to, I don't think I would tell someone what I'm really like.
11. In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am. (r)
12. It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want.

Appendix I: Manipulation Check Questions

Exclusion Experience (Molden et al., 2009)
Recall the first task where you were asked to write about an experience. Rate on a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 being not at all and 7 being very much so:

1. How implicitly ignored did you feel at the time of the incident?
2. How explicitly rejected did you feel at the time of the incident?

Variations:

1. How excluded did you feel at the time of the incident?
2. How included did you feel at the time of the incident?

American Identity (Hohman et al., 2017)

1. How much would you stand up for America?
2. How much you identified with being American?
3. How much of a feeling of belonging you had as an American?
4. How important to your sense of self being American was?
5. How much you liked Americans as a whole?
6. How similar you felt to Americans?
7. How well you felt you fit as an American?

American Identity Measure (Schwartz et al., 2012)

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about the United States, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly Americans.
3. I have a clear sense of the United States and what being American means for me.
4. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by being American.
5. I am happy that I am an American.
6. I have a strong sense of belonging to the United States
7. I understand pretty well what being American means to me.
8. In order to learn more about being American, I have often talked to other
9. people about the United States.
10. I have a lot of pride in the United States.
11. I participate in cultural practices of the United States, such as special food, music, or customs.
12. I feel a strong attachment towards the United States.
13. I feel good about being American.