Reactions to ingroup critics under threat: Social psychological factors that magnify versus mitigate negative reactions

Levi Adelman
University of Massachusetts - Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2

Part of the Social Psychology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/1073

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations and Theses at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.
Reactions to ingroup critics under threat: Social psychological factors that magnify versus mitigate negative reactions

A Dissertation Presented

By

LEVI Y. ADELMAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2017

Psychology
Reactions to ingroup critics under threat: Social psychological factors that magnify versus mitigate negative reactions

A Dissertation Presented

By

LEVI Y. ADELMAN

Approved as to style and content by:

Nilanjana Dasgupta, Chair

Bernhard Leidner, Member

Brian Lickel, Member

Gonen Dori-Hacohen, Member

Elizabeth Harvey, Member

Caren Rotello, Department Chair
Psychological and Brain Science
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Behind the great accomplishment of the individual are hidden the great accomplishments of the many. While this dissertation bears my name alone, I was propped up by the hands, hearts, and minds of so many that brought me to where I am today and that enabled me to study, conduct research, and ultimately earn my doctorate and write this dissertation. I want to thank my parents and family for standing by side through years of confusion, loss, and doubt that were my journey into academia. I owe innumerable thanks to Dr. Kumar Yogeeswaran, who believed in me, empowered me, and has been an excellent mentor, a phenomenal colleague, and a true friend whenever I needed one. I would like to thank Dr. Nilanjana Dasgupta who gave me all of the opportunities I could have hoped for as an undergraduate and then as a graduate student. Without her patience, guidance, and effort in finding the best way to direct and guide my education and growth I would not be who I am today or where I am today. Dr. Bernhard Leidner opened up new doors and paths for me, and has been extremely influential in my development. I would also like to thank Dr. Brian Lickel for always being present, engaged, and willing to offer guidance. Finally, I need to thank all of the people who made up the lab and department and were my wings with which to soar on the good days and my life vests on the bad days to always keep me afloat: Nate Carnes, Dan Chapman, Tara Dennehy, Greg Larsen, Tommy O’Brien, Daniel Rovenpor, Deborah Wu, and many more. You have all helped make this dissertation a reality and I am honored to present in on our behalf.
ABSTRACT

REACTIONS TO INGROUP CRITICS UNDER THREAT: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT MAGNIFY VERSUS MITIGATE NEGATIVE REACTIONS

SEPTEMBER 2017

LEVI Y. ADELMAN, B.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

M.S., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Ph.D. UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Nilanjana Dasgupta

Openness to criticism directed at one’s group can improve the quality of group decisions and alert groups to impending bad decisions. Past research has found that people respond more positively to criticism of their group when it comes from an ingroup versus outgroup member. Four experiments were conducted to examine whether people were less open to criticism of their group from fellow ingroup critics when they felt that their group’s wellbeing was threatened. The results suggest that this preference for criticism from ingroup members is significantly reduced or erased when criticism comes in a context of high threat, which decreases trust, willingness to share the criticism with others, the persuasiveness of ingroup (relative to outgroup) critics’ communication, while also increasing anger. The underlying psychological process behind these negative responses is attributional—greater suspicion of ingroup critics’ motives, which eliminates ingroup critics’ advantage relative to critics from the outside. In Experiment 4, affirming the importance of dissent and free speech as a fundamental value of the ingroup emerged as an effective remedy to increase openness to criticism despite high threat.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ iv

ABSTRACT............................................................................................................................ v

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. viii

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................ ix

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION ..............................................................................................................1

2. EXPERIMENT 1: TESTING WHETHER SITUATIONAL THREAT IMPEDES OPENNESS TO CRITICISM ............................................................................16

3. EXPERIMENT 2: REPLICATING AND EXTENDING EXPERIMENT 1 ..24

4. EXPERIMENT 3: TESTING THE PHENOMENON IN A NATIONAL SECURITY CONTEXT ........................................................................................................ 33

5. EXPERIMENT 4: TESTING A FREE SPEECH INTERVENTION ..............43

6. POST-HOC POWER ANALYSES .............................................................................54

7. MINI META-ANALYSIS .........................................................................................56

8. GENERAL DISCUSSION .........................................................................................58

TABLES .................................................................................................................................68

FIGURES ..............................................................................................................................77

APPENDICES

1. EXPERIMENT 1 MANIPULATIONS .............................................................................84

2. EXPERIMENT 1 DEPENDENT VARIABLES ................................................................88

3. EXPERIMENT 2 MANIPULATIONS .............................................................................89

4. EXPERIMENT 2 DEPENDENT VARIABLES, MEDIATORS, AND MANIPULATION CHECKS ........................................................................................................ 92
5. EXPERIMENT 3 MANIPULATIONS .................................................................94
6. EXPERIMENT 4 UNIQUE MANIPULATIONS ...........................................98
BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................................................................101
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Experiment 1 inferential and descriptive statistics</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Experiment 1 conditional process analyses</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Experiment 2 inferential and descriptive statistics</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Experiment 2 conditional process analyses</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Experiment 3 inferential and descriptive statistics</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Experiment 3 conditional process analyses</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Experiment 4 descriptive statistics</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Experiment 4 inferential statistics</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Experiment 4 conditional process analyses</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Experiment 1 interactions on the primary outcome variables</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Graph of the proposed moderated mediation</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Experiment 2 interactions on the primary outcome variables</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Experiment 3 interactions on the primary outcome variables</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Experiment 4 interactions on persuasion and attitudes</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Experiment 4 interactions on emotions and behavioral intentions</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Experiment 4 interactions on the critic’s motives</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A few years ago a well-known and highly regarded British Muslim journalist, Mehdi Hasan, published an article in *The New Statesman* criticizing Muslim communities for being too willing to believe conspiracy theories targeting their group (Hasan, 2014). Despite the high regard he commanded in the British Muslim community, his opinion prompted a sharp backlash from his fans and followers, many of whom called him a media shill, and accused him of taking “Zionist coin.”

The type of backlash that Mehdi Hasan’s article received was both surprising and unsurprising. On the one hand, consistent with social identity theory, people who strongly identify with their group are motivated to endorse positive attributions about their group and reject negative ones (Brown, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), making it unsurprising that Hasan’s fans would reject criticism directed at their group. On the other hand, decades of persuasion research shows that the status and credibility of communicators bolsters the persuasive power of their communication (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; see Pornpitakpan, 2004 for a review). This line of research would suggest that Hasan’s fans ought to have been open to his opinions and inclined to be persuaded given his credibility within their community. However, for some of them, this did not appear to be the case.

I argue that Hasan’s case is part of a larger phenomenon wherein dissent or criticism of one’s group from a fellow ingroup member may elicit two very different reactions. The social psychological conditions that push perceivers to be more open or more closed to critical opinions about their group are not well understood. Furthermore, past research has not yet determined the psychological processes driving such positive
and negative reactions to group criticism. The present research seeks to shed light on these important issues that are both theoretically and practically important.

Internal criticism or dissent within groups is vital for social groups’ success: they prevent group members from insulating themselves against alternative viewpoints that could prove to be vital to group decision-making (Postmes, Spears, and Cihangir, 2001), regardless of whether or not the alternative viewpoints contain truth or not (Mill, 1859/1972; Solomon, 2006). They can also prevent groupthink, the process by which members of a group overemphasize similar opinions in decision-making and shut down dissenters who favor alternative decisions, which has led to several disastrous decisions by groups in recent history, such as the Bay of Pigs invasion and strategic decisions related to the Vietnam War (Baron, 2005; Janis, 1982; see also Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Dissenting and critical opinions are known to improve decision-making by increasing creativity and innovation within groups (De Dreu and West, 2001) and generate more and better solutions to problems (Nemeth, Brown, and Rogers, 2001; see Jetten and Hornsey, 2014 for a review).

This is particularly important in large groups such as nation states, where critical dissent within groups is vital for democracy to flourish. Many political philosophers have identified criticism and dissent as being central to how democracy and public discussions develop and elaborate (e.g., Dewey, 1927; Habermas, 1991; 2006; Mouffe, 2000). Mouffe (2000) argues that liberal democracies contain an inherent tension between two competing values: the individual freedoms of liberalism and the democratic systems by which the majority governs over all. She proposes that a healthy relationship between these two values can be maintained through agonistic democracy, where people value and
welcome dissent and critical opinions as an essential part of the process of maintaining a healthy society. The conversations between often disagreeing and dissenting members of public are what grants power to the people of society to generate change as positive outcomes (Arendt, 2013; see also Schudson, 1997). Furthermore, collective action is predicated upon speech, which is derived from conversations between people and attempts to persuade one another (Arendt, 2013). However, these ongoing conversations and agonistic dialogues happen between members of different groups and members of the same larger groups that share both similarities and differences (Arendt, 2013) with the accompanying tensions between assimilation with others and differentiation from others (Brewer, 1991). These tensions run the risk of silencing the dissenting conversations that are so important to the success of social groups and societies. Noelle-Neumann and Petersen (2004) argue that people’s social inclinations and fear of isolation can lead to “spirals of silence” where people are too afraid of the consequences to share their political views (see also Noelle-Neumann, 1974). In addition, American society’s openness to criticism and dissenting opinions specifically is also threatened by an unwillingness to talk about politics openly (Eliasoph, 1998), a motivation to avoid the opinions of others (Frimer, Skitka, & Motyl, 2017), and even simply an unwillingness to disagree with others (Carbaugh, 1988; see also Pomerantz, 1984).

Therefore, given the social importance of being open to criticism and dissent, and the threats facing that openness, it is important to understand when and why people become less open to these essential elements of social and political conversation. It is

---

1 For the sake of brevity, I will be using the terms “America” and “American” to refer to the United States of America and citizens of the United States of America respectively. While I acknowledge that some people consider such references to be improper and imperialist, it is nonetheless in common usage both within the U.S. and in many regions of the world.
also important to understand how shared and distinct social identities impact people’s openness to critical messages.

In light of the importance of criticism to group functioning, this research seeks to investigate the phenomenon whereby people may become less open to accepting critical opinions. I synthesize persuasion theories and social identity theory, two literatures that typically function as separate knowledge domains, to address four research questions at its intersection. First, I investigate how systematic variations in social context influence perceivers’ reactions to critical communication—enhancing persuasion under some conditions but inhibiting persuasion under other conditions. Second, I examine how the identity of communicators impacts reactions to critical opinions. Third, I test an underlying process to explain why criticism is sometimes received well and other times not. Finally, I design and test an intervention to increase openness to group criticism.

**What promotes persuasion? Lessons from classic theories of persuasion**

There is a rich history of theoretical and empirical research on persuasion in social psychology from which emerged important factors that are known to influence persuasion—characteristics of the communicator, characteristics of the communication, and the audience (e.g. Elder, Sutton, and Douglas, 2005; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Pornpitakpan, 2004). I utilize the first two factors to derive hypotheses about when critical communications, presented in oral communication or written text, from ingroup members ought to elicit more or less persuasion.

**Communicator characteristics**

One of the primary factors or determinants of persuasion is the identity of the communicator. Among the many characteristics of communicators that influence
persuasion, one of the most consistent ones is credibility (see Pornpitakpan, 2004 for a review). Communicator credibility has been operationalized in many ways; most popular among them has been to manipulate the expertise of the communicator by varying how knowledgeable he or she is about the topic of the communication (Clark, Wegener, Habashi, & Evans, 2010; Horai, Naccari, & Fatoullah, 1974; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Johnson, Torcivia, & Poprick, 1968; Kelman & Hovland, 1953; Maddux & Rogers, 1980; Sutton, Elder, & Douglas, 2006). This literature shows, not surprisingly, that people are more persuaded by communication originating from a topical expert than from a non-expert. Expertise generally accounts for 9-16% of the variance in persuasion, amounting to a medium effect size (Wilson and Sherrell, 1993).

Importantly, expertise is also a matter of perception—the group membership of the communicator may affect perceived expertise. As a case in point, the gender of a communicator may affect perceived expertise. Female communicators who were objective experts in task groups working on a male-oriented task were subjectively perceived to have less expertise than equivalent male communicators (Thomas-Hunt & Phillips, 2004). Expert women also had less influence on fellow group members’ behavior than expert men, and groups with expert women underperformed relative to respective groups with expert men (Thomas-Hunt & Phillips, 2004).

Another study orthogonally varied the group membership of a critical communicator (ingroup vs. outgroup) and his or her expertise in the subject of communication (Hornsey & Imani, 2004). They found that ingroup critics were seen as having more expertise than outgroup critics simply as a function of their group
membership, and expert ingroup critics were judged as having more expertise than all other types of critics (non-expert ingroup critics, expert and non-expert outgroup critics; see also Sutton, Elder, & Douglas, 2006). Likewise, other studies have found that people are more influenced by ingroup than outgroup members (Abrams, Wetherell, Cochrane, Hogg, & Turner, 1990), and are more willing to learn from ingroup members, especially ones who have superior knowledge, as compared to outgroup members regardless of their knowledge (Kane, Argote, & Levine, 2005). Moreover, although people are more persuaded by strong rather than weak arguments from ingroup members, argument strength does not change the low persuasiveness of outgroup members (Mackie, Worth, & Asuncion, 1990). The benefits of ingroup membership also extends to dissenting numerical minorities, as research shows that ingroup numerical minorities can indirectly influence attitudes, as they are more positively evaluated and generate less counter-argument (Alvaro & Crano, 1997).

Together, these findings show that shared group membership is one of the signals that amplify the persuasiveness of a communication. These findings fit well with social identity theory, which proposes ingroup favoritism as a central tenet—that ingroup members are strongly favored over outgroup members (e.g. Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Brewer, 1999; Rubin & Hewstone, 1998). Ingroup favoritism is the likely reason why ingroup members are seen as persuasive experts more so than outgroup members even when they convey the same message.

The group membership of communicators also creates expectations about their intentions (Eagly, Wood, & Chaiken, 1978; Hornsey & Imani, 2004; Sutton, Elder, & Douglas, 2006; Vivian & Berkowitz, 1992). People infer biases in communicators’
message based on their group allegiance. One study showed that when a communicator was described as historically pro-environment and proposed a pro-environment message, that communicator was perceived as having a “knowledge bias” or not knowing the truth of the situation, which undermined his persuasiveness influence as compared to the same message attributed to a communicator who was historically pro-business (Eagly et al., 1978). Thus, this finding emphasizes the extent to which the recipients of a message take into account past actions and group loyalty of the communicator to derive that person’s intentions and biases when communicating. Most relevant to the current research, this finding suggests that people make inferences about communicators’ intentions based on their group membership.

**Communication characteristics**

The persuasiveness of a communication also depends on the content of the communication itself—characteristics such as argument quality and quantity (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984), matching message content to the needs of audience (Petty and Briñol, 2008; Petty & Wegener, 1998), message framing (Block & Keller, 1995; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990; Mayer & Tormala, 2010; Smith & Petty, 1996), and message valence (Chang & Chou, 2008; Geers, Handley, & McLarney, 2003; Jacks & Lancaster, 2015). Most closely related to my research, past research shows that communications that praise listeners’ ingroup are more persuasive regardless of who the communicator is (ingroup or outgroup member) as compared to communications that criticize their group, which are less persuasive especially when the communicator is an outgroup member (Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002). Hornsey and colleagues termed this the intergroup
sensitivity effect (ISE), an effect that has been replicated many times (see Jetten & Hornsey, 2014 for a review).

Taken together, persuasion theories as well as social identity theory suggest that people are significantly more persuaded by critiques of their ingroup when communicators are ingroup members rather than outgroup members. While it is true that people are slow to embrace critical communications about their group in general (e.g. Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002), such communications coming from ingroup members are given more benefit of the doubt than those coming from outgroup members because of ingroup critics are assumed to have positive intentions toward the group (e.g. Eagly, Wood, & Chaiken, 1978; Hornsey & Imani, 2004), greater expertise (e.g. Hovland & Weiss, 1951), and be similar to the audience (e.g. Mackie, Worth, and Asuncion, 1990). While existing theories and data show that ingroup communicators have a persuasion advantage, they do not address two important questions: Under what conditions might there be backlash against ingroup critics? And why might that happen? These questions, not answered by past research, are the focus of my present investigation.

**How social context influences reactions to criticism**

I propose that the social context in which a critical communication is delivered serves as an important condition determining whether that criticism will be accepted or rejected, regardless of its source (i.e. ingroup or outgroup member). Several loosely related findings point to the hypothesis that social contexts perceived as threatening to one’s group are likely to reduce people’s tolerance toward critical communications even when they come from ingroup experts. First, in his classic work on groupthink, Janis (1972) suggested that when a group faces intense external pressure, there is increased
tendency for groupthink and conformity within the group. Second, other research suggests that people respond poorly to critical communications in the presence of intergroup conflicts as compared to the absence of such conflicts (Benard, 2012; Hornsey, 2006; Kelman, 1995; Matheson, Cole, and Majka, 2003). Specifically, intergroup conflict increases enforcement of within-group norms and limits openness to norm deviation (Benard, 2012). Third, perceived threat to one’s group makes people more politically intolerant towards members of outgroups (Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004) and, to a lesser degree, toward critical members of ingroups (Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter, 2006). For example, in the aftermath of a television show critical of past Croatian political leaders (a threat evoking situation) many Croatian government officials rejected criticism of the Croatian regime arguing that the international context was too threatening to allow an internal critique, which was documented in a qualitative study of public political discourse (Penic, Elcheroth, & Reicher, 2015).

The handful of studies mentioned above suggests how the presence of external threat affects reactions to ingroup critics only. Only three studies have compared whether threat differentially changes reactions toward ingroup compared to outgroup critics (see Ariyanto, Hornsey, & Gallois, 2010; Khoo & See, 2014; See & Petty, 2006). One of these studies (Ariyanto et al, 2010) shows that in the absence of threat people express more favorable attitudes toward ingroup than outgroup critics, but when primed with violent conflict they dislike all critics regardless of group membership. However, surprisingly, threat had no effect on the persuasive influence of the communication (Ariyanto et al. 2010). The other two studies (Khoo & See, 2014; See & Petty, 2006) did not test external threat vs. no threat per se, but rather tested how people responded to
either pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal messages or critical opinions after having been primed with either personal existential threat in the form of mortality salience (Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1989) or dental pain. See and Petty (2006) found that when people are primed with personal existential threat, they evaluate outgroup members more positively when they express a pro-attitudinal message and less positively when they express a counter-attitudinal message, whereas ingroup members are evaluated positively regardless of the content of their message. In contrast, when people are primed with dental pain, they evaluate ingroup members more positively than outgroup members regardless of the content of their message. Similarly, Khoo and See (2014) found that people evaluated ingroup critics more negatively after being primed mortality salience than after being primed with dental pain, whereas they evaluated the outgroup critic equally regardless of the prime. Importantly, these two studies (Khoo & See, 2014; See & Petty, 2006) tested the effects of mortality salience compared to dental pain without a true control condition and also did not measure persuasion. Thus, these studies are inconclusive as to whether threatening social contexts affect the persuasiveness of critical communications, and whether the communicator’s group membership moderates such persuasion.

Thus, one important goal of my research is to investigate this unanswered issue: will encountering threat significantly reduce the persuasive power of ingroup critics but have relatively less impact on outgroup critics? I predict that absent threat, people are more likely to be persuaded by communications, even ones that are critical of their ingroup, when they come from ingroup rather than outgroup communicators. But in the
presence of threat, they will become less tolerant of critical opinions, responding especially harshly to ingroup critics.

**Psychological mechanism that drives defensiveness under threat**

According to the intergroup sensitivity effect, criticism from ingroup members is typically attributed to the ingroup critic’s benevolent motives toward their own group whereas criticism from outgroup members is not, explaining why ingroup critics receive more positive responses than outgroup critics (Hornsey et al., 2007; Hornsey & Imani, 2004; Hornsey, Oppes, and Svensson, 2002; Hornsey, Trembath, & Gunthorpe, 2004). I predict that while this may be the case when a critical communication is delivered in the absence of threat, this dynamic will change when group members feel that their group is under threat. In the latter case, criticism from ingroup members is likely to be perceived as an act of betrayal, siding with the enemy, and be attributed to the critic’s malevolent motives.

**A possible remedy: Using value affirmation to promote openness to group criticism**

Criticism plays a central role in helping groups broaden their perspective and make better decisions (e.g., Baron, 2005; De Dreu and West, 2001; Postmes, Spears, and Cihangir, 2001). This is particularly important when groups feel threatened because these are circumstances in which group members are prone to making harmful decisions with potentially devastating consequences (Cadinu and Reggiori, 2002; Shamir & Sagiv-Schiffter, 2006; Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004; Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios Morrison, 2009). But ironically, this is exactly the situation in which people become less open to alternative critical communications even from within their group (Ariyanto et al., 2010). What intervention might mitigate such defensive reactions and increase openness to
criticism despite threat? Given that the underlying process driving the defensiveness is predicted to be attributional—attributing malevolent intentions to the critic—I sought to change people’s attributions by appealing to a fundamental value of their ingroup. In other words, I propose value affirmation as an intervention.

Past research has found that affirming values is an important way of ensuring that people act in a value-consistent manner (Greenberg, Simon, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Chatel, 1992; Rothschild, Abdollahi, & Pyszczynski, 2009; Verplanken & Holland, 2002). Affirming individual or personal values have been found to reduce intolerance towards outgroups (Greenberg et al., 1992), and protect against stereotype threat (Derks, Scheepers, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2010; Kinias & Sim, 2016). Affirming group values have also been found to reduce support for intergroup aggression and hostility (Rothschild, Abdollahi, & Pyszczynski, 2009), protect against sexism (Spencer-Rogers, Major, Forster, & Peng, 2016), increase willingness to accept responsibility for group losses (Sherman, Kinias, Major, Kim, & Prenovost, 2007), and protect stigmatized group members’ self-concept after negative performance feedback (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2006; 2009). Together, this work suggests that while situational threat can have many negative consequences, affirming important values may protect the self and one’s group against threat (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2006; 2009; Rothschild, Abdollahi, & Pyszczynski, 2009; Sherman et al., 2007; Spencer-Rogers, Major, Forster, & Peng, 2016).

A second line of research suggests that appealing to the value of free speech and dissent may reduce people’s negative reactions to criticism. Multiple studies on tolerance has found that free speech framings of rallies and public expression by groups that are
disliked or that have disliked opinions increases tolerance towards those groups and their
eexpressions (e.g., Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997; Ramirez & Verkuylten, 2011; see
also Sullivan & Transue, 1999). For example, Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) found
that framing a rally by the KKK (Ku Klux Klan) in terms of free speech rather than
public order lead to increased tolerance of the KKK. Similarly, Ramirez & Verkuylten
(2011) found that framing rallies by right-wing or Islamic groups in terms of civil
liberties rather than public order led to increased tolerance, and that people who
considered freedom of speech to be a relatively important value were more tolerant of
rallies by these disliked groups. Thus, this line of research suggests that priming people
with the value of free speech may make them more tolerant to disliked criticisms and
dissent.

Building on prior work, I propose that in the context of national groups, affirming
a central value of one’s nation (the USA in my case)—the freedom to dissent and
criticize (a core US value; see The Americans Value Poll, 2012)—may reduce defensive
reactions to dissenters who criticize their group even when the group is threatened. If
critical dissent is framed as valuable, then the ingroup critic may be seen as engaging in
an act of constructive patriotism (Schatz, Staub, and Lavine, 1999) and having
benevolent motives toward her or his group.

**Goals of the current research**

I conducted a series of four experiments to test three hypotheses. First, I
hypothesized that while people will be more persuaded by critical communications from
ingroup rather than outgroup members in the absence of threat, the presence of threat will
eliminate ingroup preference in terms of persuasion, positive attitudes toward the critic,
and intentions to share the critical communication within one’s social network. Second, I predicted that the shrinking influence of ingroup critics under threat will be driven by changing attributions about the critic’s intentions. While ingroup critics will be generally seen as having more benevolent intentions toward their group than outgroup critics, the introduction of threat will increase suspicion of malevolent intent, which in turn will mediate and reduce persuasion and increase negative attitudes and anger toward the ingroup critic. Third, affirming the freedom to criticize and dissent as a fundamental value of one’s group will change perceivers’ mindset, preventing them from attributing malevolent motives to the ingroup critic, which in turn will increase their receptivity to communications critical about their group even under threat.

**Identifying the Study Design through Pilot Studies**

To identify the right materials to test these questions, I first conducted a number of pilot studies. First, while the initial examples of how these phenomena are expressed were primarily related to physical and national security, Americans tend to be more concerned with the economy than national security issues (Americans Worry About Job Security, Affording Retirement, 2015; Gallup, 2017). Therefore, I used initial pilot studies to create articles that would successfully increase participants’ perceptions of economic threat and to create critical articles that were also related to the economy and that generated negative responses from readers. Only once I was able to test my research questions in the context of economic threat did I test whether or not they generalized to the context of national security even among American participants. Second, I used these initial pilot studies to test which outgroup to use. To avoid conflating outgroup status with conflict or dislike, I initially used an outgroup critic from
the United Kingdom in the pilot studies. The results from the pilot studies suggested that the United Kingdom was too similar to the ingroup, so I settled on a South Korean critic as the outgroup member, as South Korea is both very distinct from the United States of America, but also positively regarded.

Therefore, across all four experiments I used nationality to define my groups of interest—the United States of America as the target ingroup for American participants and South Korea as a foreign but friendly nation as the target outgroup. Across experiments I manipulated two different types of threat—economic threat and national security threat—in search of converging tests of my predictions. I used a wide variety of outcome variables including persuasion in relation to the critical communication, attitudes toward the critic (trustworthiness and likeability), emotional reactions to the communication (particularly negative emotions such as anger), and behavioral intentions to share the communication with others via social media (Experiments 2-4).
CHAPTER 2
EXPERIMENT 1: TESTING WHETHER SITUATIONAL THREAT IMPEDES OPENNESS TO CRITICISM

Experiment 1 used a 3 x 2 between-subjects factorial design and varied Type of Threat (no threat, economic threat [domestic], and economic threat [global competition]) and Type of Critic (ingroup vs. outgroup). I measured participants’ attitudes toward the critic, whether or not they were persuaded by the criticism, emotional reactions toward the critic, and perceived intentions of the critic. I sought to test three research questions (RQ) in Experiment 1: RQ1, whether people’s response to criticism aimed at their ingroup would be more favorable when the critic was a fellow ingroup member rather than an outgroup member; RQ2, if such ingroup preference would be weakened or eliminated when people felt their ingroup under a cloud of threat; and RQ3, if less openness to criticism from an ingroup member under threat would be driven by suspicion about the critic’s motives toward the group.

Method

Participants

Three hundred American participants were recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk to participate in the online study for 50 cents each (age: $M = 35.02, SD = 11.90$, range 18-75 years; gender: 51% male, 49% female; race: 75.5% White, 7.7% Asian-American, 7.4% Black, 6.7% Hispanic, .3% Native American or Pacific Islander, and 2.4% other; political affiliation: $M = 3.24, SD = 1.63$ [indicating a centrist political affiliation with response options ranging from (1) very liberal to (7) very conservative]).

Materials and Procedure
Participants entered the study through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk online work system. The cover story described the experiment as investigating how people think about different types of information they encounter on social media.

**Threat manipulation**

After giving consent, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three threat conditions. I manipulated economic threat in two ways. In the first threat condition, participants read an article taking a pessimistic view about the state of the American economy that emphasized falling wages, wage stagnation, and a corresponding drop in the quality of life. In the second threat condition participants read the same article plus an additional paragraph attributing American economic problems to international competition from other countries succeeding at the expense of the United States. I included both economic threat articles to explore whether one might be more impactful in eliciting threat than the other. After reading, participants in both conditions were asked to spend a minute writing about their reactions to the article. This was done to ensure that they had read and encoded the material. Those in the third control (“no threat”) condition did not read any article about the economy and proceeded to the next part of the study. See Appendix A for Experiment 1 manipulation materials.

**Manipulating Critic Type**

Next, participants were told that they would see another type of informational piece popular in social media, namely an op-ed article. They were randomly assigned to read an opinion article critical of the condition of the United States economy, allegedly written by a professor with expertise on the American economy who was either an American (an ingroup member) or a South Korean (an outgroup member from a country
that is clearly different from the U.S. but one Americans tend to have a positive opinion of; Gallup, 2014). The opinion article criticized US citizens’ poor work ethic as the reason for stagnating wages and other economic problems facing the United States. See Appendix A for Experiment 1 manipulation materials.

**Persuasiveness of the criticism**

After reading the criticism, participants were asked to report their opinion of the critical article using five items adapted from Hornsey, Oppes, and Svensson (2002) including “How persuaded or not persuaded are you by the opinion article you just read?” Participants responded on 7-point scales with response options ranging from “Not at all persuaded” (1) to “Completely persuaded” (7). See Appendix B for all dependent variables used in Experiment 1.

**Attitudes toward the critic**

Next, they reported their attitudes toward the critic using two items adapted from Hornsey et al. (2002) including “How trustworthy or untrustworthy is the person who wrote this opinion article?” They responded on 7-point scales ranging from “Not at all trustworthy” (1) to “Completely trustworthy” (7).

**Emotional reactions**

Participants then reported their emotional reactions to the author of the critical article using two items (e.g. “How angry or not angry do you feel at the person who wrote this opinion article?”) on 7-point scales ranging from “Not at all angry” (1) to “Very angry” (7).

**Perceived motives of the critic**
I measured participants’ attributions of the critic’s motives using three items (e.g. “How loyal to America is the person who wrote the opinion article above?”) on 7-point scales ranging from “Not at all loyal” (1) to “Completely loyal” (7).

**Demographics**

Finally, participants indicated their gender, age, race, political affiliation (7-point scale ranging from “Very liberal” [1] to “Very conservative” [7]), citizenship status, employment.

**Results**

Initial analyses of variance (ANOVAs) showed no differences in responses between the two threat conditions, so I combined the two threat conditions for all following analyses.

**Effect of threat and critic type on attitudes and persuasion**

I conducted a series of 2-way ANOVAs crossing Threat (threat, no threat) x Critic type (ingroup, outgroup) on each of the dependent variables to test my primary prediction that in the absence of threat, ingroup (American) critics would receive more positive reactions than outgroup (South Korean) critics, but when economic threat was primed, that ingroup preference would be reduced or eliminated.

**Persuasiveness of the criticism**

Participants’ responses to the 5 items measuring persuasion were strongly intercorrelated ($\alpha = .92$) and were combined into a single index. An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of critic type, $F(1, 294) = 19.65$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .063$, showing

---

2 A pilots study had suggested that people might differ between economic threat that was discussed in a general way and an economic threat that was discussed with a focus on how it might be part of an economic struggle with other countries. The results of the present study did not support any differentiation, and I therefore combined the two threat conditions in all of the analyses.
that overall American participants were more persuaded by criticism when it came from an ingroup member \((M = 3.63, SD = 1.60)\) rather than an outgroup member \((M = 2.98, SD = 1.39)\). As predicted, this was moderated by a significant Threat x Critic Type interaction, \(F(1, 294) = 5.89, p = .016, \eta^2 = .020\), showing that whereas participants in the no threat condition were significantly more persuaded by criticism from an ingroup \((M = 3.84, SD = 1.55)\) compared to an outgroup member \((M = 2.56, SD = 1.00)\), \(t(294) = 4.13, p < .001, d = 0.98\), when economic threat was salient, the ingroup persuasion advantage was significantly reduced \(M_{\text{ingroup}} = 3.53, SD = 1.62; M_{\text{outgroup}} = 3.15, SD = 1.49\), \(t(294) = 1.81, p = .072, d = 0.24\) (see Figure 1 Panel A and Table 1).

**Attitudes toward the critic**

Two items measuring positive attitudes were combined into a single index \((\alpha = .85)\). Once again, an ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of critic type, \(F(1, 294) = 26.07, p < .001, \eta^2 = .081\), such that Americans preferred the ingroup critic \((M = 3.64, SD = 1.55)\) over the outgroup critic \((M = 2.87, SD = 1.35)\), which was moderated by a 2-way interaction between Threat x Critic type, \(F(1, 294) = 4.56, p = .034, \eta^2 = .015\) (see Figure 1 Panel B). Similar to the previous finding, in the no threat condition participants preferred the ingroup critic \((M = 3.98, SD = 1.36)\) more than the outgroup critic \((M = 2.67, SD = 1.17)\), \(t(294) = 4.35, p < .001, d = 1.03\). However, when economic threat was salient this difference was substantially smaller although still significant \(M_{\text{ingroup}} = 3.49, SD = 1.62; M_{\text{outgroup}} = 2.95, SD = 1.41\), \(t(294) = 2.67, p = .008, d = 0.36\) See Table 1 for all statistics.

**Emotional reactions toward the critic**
Two items measuring negative emotions toward the critic, especially anger, were combined into a single index ($\alpha = .94$). An ANOVA showed a significant main effect of critic type, $F(1, 294) = 15.17, p < .001, \eta^2 = .049$, indicating that Americans felt less angry at the ingroup critic ($M = 3.64, SD = 1.87$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 4.26, SD = 1.82$). This was moderated by a significant Threat x Critic type interaction, $F(1, 294) = 9.47, p = .002, \eta^2 = .031$, such that in the absence of threat, people were less angry at the ingroup critic ($M = 3.27, SD = 1.84$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 4.86, SD = 1.67$), $t(294) = -4.19, p < .001, d = .91$, but in the presence of threat, they were equally angry at both critics ($M_{\text{ingroup}} = 3.81, SD = 1.86, M_{\text{outgroup}} = 4.00, SD = 1.82$), $t(294) = 0.74, p = .463, d = 0.10$ (see Figure 1 Panel C and Table 1).

**Perceived motives of the critic**

Three items measuring perceptions of the critic’s motives in criticizing the U.S. were combined ($\alpha = .94$). A subsequent ANOVA showed a large and significant main effect of critic type, $F(1, 294) = 267.60, p < .001, \eta^2 = .475$, indicating that participants felt that the ingroup critic had significantly more benevolent motives ($M = 3.78, SD = 1.49$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 1.46, SD = 0.81$). A significant Threat x Critic type interaction, $F(1, 294) = 4.62, p = .033, \eta^2 = .016$, indicated that in the absence of threat the ingroup critic was viewed as having much more benevolent motives ($M = 4.11, SD = 1.45$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 1.36, SD = 0.79$), $t(294) = 11.10, p < .001, d = 2.36$, but in the presence of threat, this difference was smaller ($M_{\text{ingroup}} = 3.62, SD = 1.49$, $M_{\text{outgroup}} = 1.51, SD = 0.81$), $t(294) = 12.74, p < .001, d = 1.76$ (see Figure 1 Panel D and Table 1).

**The mediating role of critic’s motives on attitudes, persuasion, and emotion**
I tested the underlying psychological process responsible for threat reducing the ingroup advantage in attitudes and persuasion. I first examined whether the presence of threat would magnify suspicion about the critic’s motives and in turn mediate and explain negative reactions to the critic. And second, I tested whether this mediation would be stronger for ingroup critics than outgroup critics (moderated mediation; see Figure 2). Using Hayes’ PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) and bootstrapping (5000) I conducted moderated mediation analyses in which threat vs. no threat served as the predictor, perceptions of the critic’s motives the mediator, and critic type (ingroup or outgroup) the moderator. Dependent variables included persuasion, attitudes toward the critic, and negative emotions toward the critic. The moderated mediations for all three outcome variables were significant (see Table 2 for all statistics).

Results showed that threat (vs. no threat) increased suspicion about the motives of the critic when he was an ingroup member rather than an outgroup member, $B = .64, SE = .30, 95\% CI [0.054, 1.229]$. Greater suspicion significantly predicted less persuasion upon reading critic’s opinion, $B = .53, SE = .07, 95\% CI [0.403, 0.663]$, less positive attitudes toward the critic, $B = .59, SE = .06, 95\% CI [0.473, 0.717]$, and more anger at the critic, $B = -.46, SE = .09, 95\% CI [-0.627, -0.292]$. These mediations were significant for the ingroup critic. Indirect effects for persuasion, $B = -.26, SE = .14, 95\% CI [-0.542, -0.007]$, and anger, $B = .23, SE = .12, 95\% CI [.015, .500]$, were significant, but the indirect effect for attitudes was non-significant, $B = -.20, SE = .23, 95\% CI [-0.636, 0.247]$. None of the equivalent mediations were significant for the outgroup critic: persuasion, $B = .08, SE = .08, 95\% CI [-0.075, 0.227]$, attitudes, $B = .20, SE = .23, 95\% CI [-0.246, 0.641]$, and anger, $B = -.07, SE = .07, 95\% CI [-0.196, 0.068]$. In other words, threat increased suspicion of the
ingroup critic’s motives which rendered his argument less persuasive and increased anger toward him, but had no such effect on an outgroup member who levied the same criticism.

**Discussion**

The results of Experiment 1 provide preliminary support for the first hypothesis by showing that in the absence of threat, people had more favorable attitudes toward an ingroup critic than an outgroup critic and were more persuaded by criticism of the United States when it came from an American than a South Korean. The second hypothesis was also supported showing that whereas the ingroup critic was favored in the absence of threat, in the presence of threat the ingroup preference disappeared.

The third hypothesis received partial support that the penalty suffered by the ingroup critic occurred because of increased suspicion that his intentions toward the U.S. were not benevolent. However, while two of the moderated mediations were significant (persuasion and negative emotions), one was not (attitudes toward the critic). I believe this occurred because the items assessing the critic’s motives in criticizing the United States (the predicted mediator) emphasized loyalty and patriotism, which by definition can only be used to describe ingroup members, not outgroup members. Because of the wording of the motivation items, the ingroup critic was always seen as more loyal to the U.S. than the outgroup critic, which may have weakened the moderated mediations. Experiment 2 used better measures to assess the critics’ motives toward the U.S. by assessing whether or not participants viewed them as being America’s well-wisher with benevolent intentions.
CHAPTER 3

EXPERIMENT 2: REPLICATING AND EXTENDING EXPERIMENT 1

Experiment 2 sought to replicate and extend the findings of the first experiment in several ways. First, I designed better items to capture the underlying psychological mechanism driving people’s reactions to critics and their criticism. Second, I sought to test whether increased persuasion about the point of view expressed by the criticism would increase participants’ willingness to share the critical op-ed with friends in their social network. Third, I increased the number of items assessing each of the dependent variables to increase the reliability of all measures. Finally, because there was no difference between the two threat conditions used in Experiment 1, in Experiment 2 I only used the general economic threat condition (without the additional international competition component). Other than that, Experiment 2 used the same factorial design as the previous experiment: 2 (Threat Type: economic threat, no threat) x 2 (Critic Type: American, South Korean) between subjects design. Dependent variables included the persuasiveness of the criticism, attitudes toward the critic, negative emotions toward the critic, behavioral intention to share the criticism on social media, and the perceived motives of the critic.

Method

Participants

Three hundred ninety two American participants were recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk to in exchange for 50 cents (age: $M = 37.86$ years, $SD = 13.08$, range 18-74 years; gender: 45.2% male, 54.3% female, .5% other; race: 83.7% White, 6.1% Black, 4.8% Asian American, 2.4% Hispanic, 1.6% Native American or
Pacific Islander, and 1.3% other; political affiliation: $M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.81$ [centrist political affiliation].

**Materials and Procedure**

The procedure and cover story for Experiment 2 were identical to that of the previous experiment.

**Threat manipulation**

After consenting, participants were randomly assigned to either the threat or no threat condition. Those in the threat condition were asked to read and respond to a news article about the state of the economy in the United States. This was the same economic threat article from Experiment 1 that made no mention of foreign competition. Those in the no threat (control) condition did not read any article and proceeded to the next part of the study. After reading the threat article, participants in the threat condition were asked four questions to assess whether they believed the threat was valid (e.g. “Do you share the author’s concern about the state of the U.S. economy?”). They were also asked one multiple choice question to test whether they had read and remembered the information accurately (“According to this article, how much has average monthly income dropped since 2008 adjusted for inflation?”; “$200”, “$500”, “$1000”, “Monthly income did not drop”). See Appendix C for Experiment 2 manipulations, and see Appendix D for all Experiment 2 measures. These items assessing the believability of the manipulation and participants’ memory for the information read were new to Experiment 2.

**Criticism manipulation**

Next, participants were randomly assigned to read an op-ed article critical of Americans’ work ethic allegedly written by an American or a South Korean writer. This
article and the byline describing the authors were identical to the previous experiment. After reading the op-ed, participants were asked a few open-ended questions about the content aimed at ensuring that they had paid attention to the article. This included questions about the type of article they read (e.g. was it news or opinion, etc.) and the identity of the author including his group membership. See Appendix C for Experiment 2 manipulations, and see Appendix D for all Experiment 2 measures.

**Persuasiveness of the criticism**

After reading the critical op-ed, participants reported how persuaded they were by the opinion in the critical article using six items; five original items from Experiment 1 and one new item. See Appendix D for all measures.

**Attitudes toward the critic**

Next, they reported their attitudes toward the critic using six items; two original items from Experiment 1 plus four new ones.

**Emotional reactions**

Participants reported their emotions toward the op-ed author using five items; two original items from Experiment 1 and three new items.

**Behavioral intentions**

Three new items were used to assess participants’ intentions to share this article with their friends through social media and read other articles by the same author (e.g. “Would you be willing to share this article on social media?”). Responses were given on 7-point scales ranging from “Not at all” (1) to “Very much” (7).

**Perceived motives of the critic**
Six new items were used to assess participants’ attributions about the critic’s motives (e.g. “In your opinion, does the author of this article care about the United States?”) on 7-point scales ranging from “Does not care at all” (1) to “Cares very much” (7).

Demographics

Finally, participants indicated their gender, age, race, political affiliation, citizenship status, employment. See Appendix D for all Experiment 2 measures.

Results

Effect of threat and critic type on reactions to the critic and the criticism

Once again, I conducted a series of 2-way ANOVAs crossing Threat (threat, no threat) x Critic type (ingroup, outgroup) for each of the dependent variables.

Persuasiveness of the criticism

When all six items measuring persuasion were used as a combined measure ($\alpha = .94$), I found a significant main effect of critic type, $F(1, 388) = 8.27$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .021$, showing that the ingroup critic was more persuasive ($M = 3.38, SD = 1.70$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 2.87, SD = 1.53$). A significant main effect of threat, $F(1, 388) = 5.53$, $p = .020$, $\eta^2 = .014$, indicated that criticism was more persuasive when delivered in the absence ($M = 3.29, SD = 1.64$) rather than in the presence of threat ($M = 2.91, SD = 1.61$). As predicted, these main effects were moderated by a significant interaction between Threat x Critic Type, $F(1, 388) = 4.52$, $p = .034$, $\eta^2 = .012$, showing that in the absence of threat, criticism was more persuasive coming from an ingroup member ($M = 3.70, SD = 1.63$) than an outgroup member ($M = 2.89, SD = 1.55$), $t(383) = 3.76$, $p < .001$, $d = .20$. In the presence of threat, this ingroup preference was eliminated ($M_{\text{ingroup}} = \ldots$)
2.97, SD = 1.71; M_{outgroup} = 2.85, SD = 1.52), t(388) = 0.50, p = .616, d = .07 (see Figure 3 Panel A and Table 3).

**Attitudes toward the critic**

When all six items measuring attitudes toward the critic were used as the dependent variable (α = .94), a significant main effect of critic type, $F(1, 388) = 18.59$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .046$, indicated that Americans had more positive attitudes toward the ingroup critic ($M = 3.61, SD = 1.47$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 2.97, SD = 1.33$). A significant main effect of threat, $F(1, 388) = 8.78$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2 = .022$, indicated less positive attitudes in the presence ($M = 3.05, SD = 1.40$) than in the absence of threat ($M = 3.47, SD = 1.44$). These main effects were moderated by a marginal 2-way interaction between Threat x Critic type, $F(1, 388) = 3.53$, $p = .061$, $\eta^2 = .009$. When disaggregated, the interaction indicated that in the absence of threat people had more positive attitudes toward an ingroup ($M = 3.91, SD = 1.34$) than an outgroup critic ($M = 3.04, SD = 1.42$), $t(388) = 4.66, p < .001, d = .63$. But in the presence of threat, this ingroup favoritism disappeared ($M_{ingroup} = 3.23, SD = 1.55; M_{outgroup} = 2.89, SD = 1.23$), $t(388) = 1.62, p = .105, d = .24$ (see Figure 3 Panel B and Table 3).

**Emotional reactions**

Five items measuring negative emotions especially anger, were combined into a single index (α = .94). A significant main effect of critic type, $F(1, 388) = 8.51$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .022$, indicated that people were less angry at the ingroup critic ($M = 4.18, SD = 1.77$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 4.73, SD = 1.71$). Another significant main effect of threat, $F(1, 388) = 7.22$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = .018$, indicated that they were also less angry at critics in the absence of threat ($M = 4.25, SD = 1.77$) than the presence of threat ($M =
As predicted, this was moderated by a significant interaction between Threat x Critic type, $F(1, 388) = 4.38, p = .037, \eta^2 = .011$, indicating that when threat was absent, people were less angry at the ingroup critic ($M = 3.81, SD = 1.69$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 4.69, SD = 1.75$), $t(388) = -3.77, p < .001, d = .51$. But when threat was present, this ingroup advantage was eliminated ($M_{\text{ingroup}} = 4.65, SD = 1.79, M_{\text{outgroup}} = 4.79, SD = 1.66$), $F(388) = -0.55, p = .581, d = .08$ (see Figure 3 Panel C and Table 3).

**Behavioral intentions**

After combining the three items measuring behavioral intentions into a single index ($\alpha = .92$), an ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of critic type, $F(1, 388) = 4.67, p = .031, \eta^2 = .012$, indicating that Americans were more willing to share the critical article on social media when it was written by an ingroup critic ($M = 2.97, SD = 2.02$) than an outgroup critic ($M = 2.49, SD = 1.77$). A significant main effect of threat, $F(1, 388) = 7.80, p = .006, \eta^2 = .020$, indicated more willingness to share the criticism in the absence ($M = 2.96, SD = 1.97$) than presence of threat ($M = 2.44, SD = 1.79$). This was moderated by a significant interaction between Threat x Critic type, $F(1, 388) = 9.10, p = .003, \eta^2 = .023$, such that under no threat people were more willing to share criticism written by the ingroup critic ($M = 3.45, SD = 1.99$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 2.47, SD = 1.82$), $t(388) = 3.90, p < .001, d = .51$, but when threat became salient, they were equally unwilling to share the criticism with others on social media ($M_{\text{ingroup}} = 2.35, SD = 1.89, M_{\text{outgroup}} = 2.52, SD = 1.71$), $t(388) = .57, p = .567, d = .09$ (see Figure 3 Panel D and Table 3).

**Perceptions of the critic’s motives**
After combining participants’ responses to all items measuring perceptions of the critic’s motives into a single index ($\alpha = .95$) I conducted a ANOVA which revealed a large significant main effect of critic type, $F(1, 388) = 181.97, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .319$, showing that Americans felt that the ingroup critic ($M = 4.30, SD = 1.60$) had more benevolent motives in criticizing the U.S. than the outgroup critic ($M = 2.31, SD = 1.26$). A main effect of threat, $F(1, 388) = 8.15, p = .005, \eta^2_p = .021$, similarly indicated that they believed both critics had more benign motives if the criticism was read in the absence of threat ($M = 3.48, SD = 1.82$) than the presence of threat ($M = 3.06, SD = 1.64$). These main effects were superseded by a significant interaction between Threat x Critic type, $F(1, 388) = 12.94, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .032$, showing that in the absence of threat, the ingroup critic was seen as having more benevolent motives ($M = 4.71, SD = 1.40$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 2.26, SD = 1.28$), $t(388) = 12.86, p < .001, d = 1.83$. But in the presence of threat, the ingroup advantage was substantially decreased, although still statistically significant ($M_{\text{ingroup}} = 3.78, SD = 1.68, M_{\text{outgroup}} = 2.37, SD = 1.25$), $t(388) = 6.62, p < .001, d = .95$ (see Figure 3 Panel E and Table 3).

**The mediating role of critic motives on attitudes, persuasion, emotions, and behavioral intentions**

I tested whether the presence of threat would magnify suspicion about the critic’s intentions and in turn mediate and explain negative reactions toward the critic, and whether this mediation would be stronger for ingroup than outgroup critics. I conducted moderated mediation analyses using Hayes’s PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) and bootstrapping (5000), in which threat vs. no threat served as the predictor, perceived motives of the critic the mediator, and critic type (ingroup or outgroup) the moderator.
Dependent variables included persuasion, attitudes toward the critic, emotions toward the critic, and behavioral intentions. The overall moderated mediations for all four dependent variables were significant (see Table 4 for all statistics).

Specifically, in the presence of threat (vs. no threat) participants were more suspicious of criticism coming from the ingroup member compared to the outgroup member, $B = 1.03$, $SE = .29$, $95\% CI [.466, 1.590]$; greater suspicion significantly predicted less persuasion, $B = .79$, $SE = .04$, $95\% CI [.703, .868]$, less positive attitudes toward the critic, $B = .73$, $SE = .03$, $95\% CI [.663, .796]$, more anger at the critic, $B = -.73$, $SE = .05$, $95\% CI [-.830, -.633]$, and less willingness to share the critical article on social media, $B = .76$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI [.649, .866]$. These mediations were only significant for the ingroup critic: indirect effects for persuasion, $B = -.72$, $SE = .18$, $95\% CI [-1.083, -.385]$; positive attitudes, $B = -.67$, $SE = .17$, $95\% CI [-.993, -.341]$; anger, $B = .68$, $SE = .17$, $95\% CI [.345, 1.010]$; and willingness to share the article, $B = -.70$, $SE = .18$, $95\% CI [-1.048, -.356]$. None of the mediations were significant for the outgroup critic: persuasion, $B = .08$, $SE = .14$, $95\% CI [-.194, .359]$; attitudes, $B = .08$, $SE = .13$, $95\% CI [-.173, .337]$; anger, $B = -.07$, $SE = .13$, $95\% CI [-.340, .183]$; and willingness to share the criticism, $B = .08$, $SE = .14$, $95\% CI [-.191, .349]$. In other words, external threat increased suspicion of the ingroup critic’s motives which made people’s reactions more negative, but had no effect on the outgroup critic.

**Discussion**

The results of Experiment 2 nicely replicate Experiment 1 by showing that at baseline, participants were more open to criticism about their country when it came from a fellow countryman than a foreign citizen. But when reminded of economic distress in
the nation, people closed ranks and became resistant to all criticism of their nation, regardless of the critic’s nationality. Importantly, this interaction effect was due to changing evaluations of the American (or ingroup) critic. The reminder of economic threat (vs. no reminder) made participants penalize the American critic, but had no effect on their evaluations of the foreign critic. Mediational analyses confirmed this was because people became suspicious about the motives of the American critic when under threat—thinking that he did not have the nation’s best interest at heart.

The findings of Experiment 2 advance the results of Experiment 1 in two important ways. First, Experiment 2 provided stronger evidence of mediation—that threat made people question the benevolence of the ingroup (American) critic’s motives, which did not happen for the outgroup (South Korean) critic. This increased suspicion about the ingroup critic’s motives was responsible for reducing the persuasive power of his communication, decreasing liking and trust, increasing anger toward him, and so on. A second contribution of Experiment 2 is that it extended earlier findings by showing that the impact of threat and subsequent suspicion about the ingroup critic made participants more wary about sharing their critical opinion with others in their social network, which is an important step in getting fellow ingroup members engaged with critical reflection about the ingroup.
CHAPTER 4

EXPERIMENT 3: TESTING THE PHENOMENON IN A NATIONAL SECURITY CONTEXT

In Experiment 3 I sought to replicate and extend my prior findings to a different type of threat that has been highly salient in American society since September 11, 2001—namely national security threat. In the 15 years since 9/11 there has been heightened focus on protecting the American people against threats to national security, which has raised counter-concerns about chipping away individual civil liberties. The rise of ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) and their successful attacks in the Middle East, Europe, and the U.S. have increased Americans’ national security fears (Pew Research Center, 2016). At the same time, Americans are becoming more concerned about their civil liberties and privacy in the wake of revelations about security organizations spying on American citizens, most notably in the revelations of former C.I.A. employee Edward Snowden (Rainie, 2016). In other words, there is considerable tension between competing goals of protecting the U.S. against national security threats and protecting the civil liberties of American citizens and residents (Finkelstein et al., 2016; Rainie & Maniam, 2016).

Experiment 3 examined this issue by drawing attention to national security threat in the threat manipulation in lieu of economic threat used in prior experiments. The topic of criticism was an op-ed that took the position that the American government tends to trample individual civil liberties in the interest of protecting national security. The critique made an argument for why civil liberties deserve more attention even if it means occasionally deemphasizing national security. As in previous experiments, the alleged
author of the critical op-ed was either an American citizen or a South Korean citizen. Thus, threat in Experiment 3 involved manipulating national security threat instead of economic threat and using a no threat control condition.

In sum, this experiment used a 2 Threat Type (national security threat vs. no threat) x 2 Critic Type (American, South Korean) between-subjects design. I measured whether threat type and critic type would influence how persuasive participants found the criticism, their attitudes toward the critic, anger toward the critic, attributions about the critic’s motives, and behavioral intentions to share the critical article on social media.

**Method**

**Participants**

I recruited 299 American participants through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk to participate in this study for 50 cents each (age: $M = 37.17$ years, $SD = 12.08$, range 18-72 years; gender: 58.4% female, 41.3% male, .3% other; race: 80.9% White, 6% Black, 5.7% Hispanic, 3.7% Asian American, 1.7% Native American or Pacific Islander, and 2% other; political affiliation: $M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.79$ [centrist] on a 7-point scale ranging from “very liberal” [1] to “very conservative” [7]).

**Materials and Procedure**

The procedure and cover story for Experiment 3 were identical to the previous experiments and are not described again. The threat and criticism manipulations were changed and described below.

**Threat manipulation**

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: threat or no threat conditions. Those in the threat condition read an article about the growing frequency of
terrorist incidents in the U.S. and the difficulty containing such incidents. After reading the threat article, participants were asked four questions measuring whether they believed the information they had read and testing their memory (see Appendix E for Experiment 3 materials). Participants in the control condition did not read any article on threat, and proceeded to the next part of the study.

**Criticism manipulation**

Next, participants were randomly assigned to read an opinion article critical of national security policy and law enforcement for trampling on individual civil liberties rights, both in the U.S. and outside, while overemphasizing national security. The article argued that protecting civil liberties should take precedence over national security concerns and offered ways to increase respect for civil liberties. As in prior experiments, I manipulated the nationality of the article’s author by presenting him as a national security expert on issues related to the United States who was either an American or a South Korean university professor. After reading the criticism, participants were asked a few open-ended questions about the article to ensure that they had paid attention to its contents. This included questions about the type of article they had just read (e.g. news, opinion, etc.), and the nationality of the author (see Appendix E for details).

**Dependent variables**

I measured the same five clusters of dependent variables as in Experiment 2: persuasiveness of the article, attitudes toward the critic, emotional reactions to the critic, behavioral intentions, and perceptions of the critic’s motives (see Appendix D).

**Demographics**
Finally, participants reported their age, gender, citizenship status, their race or ethnicity, and their national identity (attachment and glorification subscales, adapted from Roccas, Klar, & Leviatan, 2006; see also Leidner, Castano, Zaiser, & Giner-Sorolla, 2010). They were all then debriefed and paid for their participation.

**Results**

**Effect of threat and critic type on reactions to the critic and the criticism**

As in prior experiments I conducted a series of 2-way ANOVAs crossing Threat (threat, no threat) x Critic type (ingroup, outgroup) on each of the dependent variables.

**Persuasiveness of the criticism**

When the six items measuring persuasion were combined and used as a dependent variable ($\alpha = .93$), I found a significant main effect of critic type, $F(1, 295) = 6.03, p = .015, \eta^2 = .020$, showing that the ingroup critic was more persuasive ($M = 4.30, SD = 1.50$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 3.87, SD = 1.52$). This main effect was moderated by a significant interaction between Threat x Critic Type, $F(1, 295) = 7.28, p = .007, \eta^2 = .024$, that mirrored Experiments 1-2. Specifically, in the absence of threat, criticism from an ingroup member was more persuasive ($M = 4.54, SD = 1.56$) than from an outgroup member ($M = 3.64, SD = 1.58$), $t(295) = 3.67, p < .001, d = .57$. In the presence of threat, this ingroup preference was eliminated ($M_{ingroup} = 4.04, SD = 1.40; M_{outgroup} = 4.08, SD = 1.44$), $t(295) = -.17, p = .866, d = .03$ (see Figure 4 Panel A and Table 5).

**Attitudes toward the critic**

When the six items measuring attitudes toward the critic ($\alpha = .94$) were used as a dependent variable I replicated prior experiments again. A significant main effect of critic type, $F(1, 295) = 7.27, p = .007, \eta^2 = .024$, indicated that Americans had more positive
attitudes toward the ingroup critic \((M = 4.36, SD = 1.26)\) than the outgroup critic \((M = 3.96, SD = 1.25)\). A significant 2-way interaction between Threat x Critic type, \(F(1, 295) = 7.06, p = .008, \eta^2_p = .023\), indicated that in the absence of threat people had more positive attitudes toward an ingroup \((M = 4.55, SD = 1.36)\) than an outgroup critic \((M = 3.78, SD = 1.29)\), \(t(295) = 3.81, p < .001, d = .58\). However, in the presence of threat, this ingroup favoritism disappeared \((M_{\text{ingroup}} = 4.14, SD = 1.12; M_{\text{outgroup}} = 4.13, SD = 1.18)\), \(t(295) = -.03, p = .979, d = .01\) (see Figure 4 Panel B and Table 5).

**Emotional reactions**

The five negative emotion items were combined into a single index \((\alpha = .95)\). An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of critic type, \(F(1, 295) = 13.16, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .043\), indicating that people were less angry at the ingroup critic \((M = 3.25, SD = 1.68)\) than the outgroup critic \((M = 3.97, SD = 1.77)\). As predicted, this was moderated by a significant interaction between Threat x Critic type, \(F(1, 295) = 6.28, p = .013, \eta^2_p = .021\), indicating that in the absence of threat people were less angry at the ingroup critic \((M = 3.06, SD = 1.71)\) than the outgroup critic \((M = 4.28, SD = 1.76)\), \(t(295) = -4.37, p < .001, d = .70\). But in the presence of threat, this ingroup advantage was eliminated \((M_{\text{ingroup}} = 3.45, SD = 1.62; M_{\text{outgroup}} = 3.67, SD = 1.74)\), \(t(295) = -.79, p = .431, d = .13\) (see Figure 4 Panel C and Table 5).

**Behavioral intentions**

Participants’ responses to the three behavioral intentions items were combined into a single index \((\alpha = .91)\). A marginally significant interaction between Threat x Critic type, \(F(1, 293) = 3.29, p = .071, \eta^2_p = .011\), indicated that in the absence of threat people were more willing to share the critical op-ed on social media if it came from the ingroup
(M = 3.51, SD = 1.89) than outgroup critic (M = 2.81, SD = 1.72), t(293) = 2.32, p = .021, d = .39. But in the presence of threat, they were equally unwilling to share the criticism regardless of the critic’s identity (M_{ingroup} = 3.12, SD = 1.88, M_{outgroup} = 3.20, SD = 1.83), t(293) = -.26, p = .799, d = .04 (see Figure 4 Panel D and Table 5).

**Perceptions of the critic’s motives**

As before, six items measuring inferences about the critic’s motives toward the U.S. were combined into a single index (α = .93). A significant main effect of critic type, \(F(1, 295) = 90.62, p < .001, \eta^2 = .235\), indicated that Americans felt that the ingroup critic (M = 5.22, SD = 1.37) had more benevolent motives than the outgroup critic (M = 3.71, SD = 1.37). These main effects were moderated by a marginally significant interaction between Threat x Critic type, \(F(1, 295) = 3.59, p = .059, \eta^2 = .012\), showing that in the absence of threat, the ingroup advantage remained (M_{ingroup} = 5.35, SD = 1.41, M_{outgroup} = 3.55, SD = 1.37), t(295) = 8.13, p < .001, d = 1.29. But in the presence of threat, the ingroup advantage was diminished (M_{ingroup} = 5.07, SD = 1.31, M_{outgroup} = 3.87, SD = 1.36), t(295) = 5.35, p < .001, d = .90 (see Figure 4 Panel E and Table 5).

**The mediating role of critic motives on attitudes, persuasion, emotions, and behavioral intentions**

I tested whether threat would predict increased suspicion about the critic’s motives and in turn mediate negative reactions toward the critic especially for the ingroup critic. Hayes’s PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) and bootstrapping (5000) were used to conduct moderated mediation analyses in which threat vs. no threat served as the predictor, perceived motives of the critic the mediator, and critic type (ingroup or outgroup) the moderator. The proposed mediations were nonsignificant (see Table 6 for
Although threat increased suspicion about the motives of the ingroup critic relative to the outgroup critic, the interaction effect (Threat x Critic Type) for the critic’s motive was only marginally significant. Because motive, the proposed mediator, produced weaker results it rendered the moderated mediations nonsignificant unlike prior experiments. In the discussion below, I speculate about why the motive results might have been marginal in this experiment.

**The moderating role of national glorification**

As Experiment 3 focused on national security and nationalism more directly than the previous Experiments, I tested whether people’s openness to criticism depended not only on situational threat and the identity of the critic, but also on their national identity. Specifically, I tested whether people with different individual levels of glorification (glorifying the United States as superior to all other countries) would respond differently to ingroup and outgroup criticism as a function of whether or not they had been primed with threat.

I found significant three-way interactions between glorification (statistically controlling for attachment), threat, and the critic’s identity for attitudes toward the critic, $F(1, 290) = 5.37, p = .021, \eta^2 = .018$; emotional reactions, $F(1, 290) = 6.71, p = .010, \eta^2 = .023$; and perceived motives of the critic, $F(1, 290) = 4.55, p = .034, \eta^2 = .016$. The interaction between glorification, threat, and the critic’s identity on persuasiveness of the criticism was marginally significant, $F(1, 290) = 2.82, p = .094, \eta^2 = .010$, and the interaction on behavioral intentions was not significant, $F(1, 290) = 1.52, p = .218, \eta^2 = .005$. Specifically, participants who were relatively low in national glorification did not differ in openness to criticism from ingroup and outgroup critics regardless of whether
the criticism was delivered in the absence (Persuasiveness of the criticism: \( t(290) = 0.51, p = .608 \); Attitudes toward the Critic: \( t(290) = 0.20, p = .842 \); Emotional Reactions: \( t(290) = -0.39, p = .694 \); Perceived Motives of the Critic: \( t(290) = 3.49, p < .001 \)) or presence (Persuasiveness of the criticism: \( t(290) = -0.38, p = .704 \); Attitudes toward the Critic: \( t(290) = -0.22, p = .824 \); Emotional Reactions: \( t(290) = -0.73, p = .465 \); Perceived Motives of the Critic: \( t(290) = 3.89, p < .001 \) of threat. In contrast, participants who were relatively high in national glorification were more open to criticism from an ingroup than an outgroup critic in the absence of threat (Persuasiveness of the criticism: \( t(290) = 4.37, p < .001 \); Attitudes toward the Critic: \( t(290) = 5.21, p < .001 \); Emotional Reactions: \( t(290) = -5.31, p < .001 \); Perceived Motives of the Critic: \( t(290) = 7.97, p < .001 \)) than in the presence of threat (Persuasiveness of the criticism: \( t(290) = -0.01, p = .993 \); Attitudes toward the Critic: \( t(290) = 0.01, p = .994 \); Emotional Reactions: \( t(290) = -0.27, p = .784 \); Perceived Motives of the Critic: \( t(290) = 3.61, p < .001 \)). Thus, it appears that when the national context is particularly salient, people who glorify their country and the most likely to penalize fellow ingroup members who criticize when the group is under threat.

**Discussion**

Using a different form of threat (national security) and a different type of criticism (criticizing the American government for violating individual civil liberties), Experiment 3 replicated all prior findings from Experiments 1 and 2 with the exception of the moderated mediation. As in prior experiments, results from Experiment 3 showed that in the absence of threat, people were more open to criticism from a fellow American rather than a foreigner. When national security threat was made salient, however, this
ingroup advantage was eliminated or diminished, with people being equally closed to criticism about their nation’s policies from an American as well as a foreigner.

In contrast to previous experiments, however, the predicted moderated mediation did not emerge. I speculate that this may have occurred because national security threat (in Experiment 3) is a type of external threat coming from outside the group whereas economic threat (used in Experiments 1-2) is an internal threat emanating from within the group. Because national security threat comes from outside the group and primes intergroup conflict, it may harden group boundaries making people more resistant to critiques from outgroup members relative to ingroup members, which would explain why the Threat x Critic Type interaction was only marginally significant. Another possibility is that Americans are more concerned about the economy than they are about national security concerns (Americans Worry About Job Security, Affording Retirement, 2015; Gallup, 2017), and these effects may therefore be more difficult to capture. Additionally, although psychological theories about threat often treat threats to physical and economic safety similarly (e.g., Maslow, 1943; Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios Morrison, 2009), people may be expected to respond differently to absolute threats to physical safety such as death and threats to economic stability. Finally, the critical message in Experiment 3 was designed to be more explicitly constructive by proposing a solution and a way forward from the problem that was being criticized. This may have diluted the strength of the effect in Experiment 3.

Nonetheless, taken together, Experiments 1, 2, and 3 provide replicable evidence showing that while ingroup critics generally have an advantage convincing listeners about the ways in which their group needs to change compared to outgroup members, this
ingroup advantage is eliminated when listeners feel that their group is threatened in some way. The resulting unwillingness to entertain criticism even from an insider under threat suggests a defensive reaction, preventing learning and course correction on the part of the group. What might remedy such defensiveness and create greater openness to critical feedback about one’s ingroup? That is the focus of Experiment 4.
CHAPTER 5
EXPERIMENT 4: TESTING A FREE SPEECH INTERVENTION

The goal of Experiment 4 was to design an intervention to increase people’s openness to criticism about their group, especially when their group is under the specter of threat. One promising intervention involves vale affirmation. Based on past research showing that affirming important values protects the self and one’s group against threat (e.g. Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2006; Rothschild, Abdollahi, & Pyszczynski, 2009; Sherman et al., 2007), I propose that affirming core values of one’s national group—especially values that emphasize dissent and free speech—might serve as an effective remedy. Thus, in Experiment 4, I reminded participants that dissent and criticism are important values protected by the American constitution (i.e., dissent is patriotic), and investigated whether such value affirmation would increase the persuasiveness of the critical op-ed, increase positive attitudes toward the critic, and erase doubts about the critic’s motives. I had two competing predictions. First, a reminder that dissent and free speech are fundamental American values might increase openness to criticism regardless of who the critic is (ingroup or outgroup member) even under threat. Alternatively, such a reminder might increase openness to criticism only from ingroup critics when under threat.

Experiment 4 tested these competing hypotheses using a 2 Threat Type (economic threat, no threat) x 2 Critic Type (ingroup, outgroup) x 2 Value Affirmation (free speech affirmed, not affirmed) between subjects factorial design. I returned to economic threat and criticism about Americans’ work ethic identical to Experiments 1 and 2. The dependent measures were also identical to the prior two experiments.
Method

Participants

Five hundred and fifty one ($N = 551$) American participants were recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk to participate in the study in exchange for 70 cents (age: $M = 36.60$ years, $SD = 12.40$, range 18-83 years; gender: 47.0% male, 52.7% female, .3% other; race: 79.3% White, 8.8% Black, 4.8% Asian American, 4.7% Hispanic, .9% Native American or Pacific Islander, and 1.6% other; centrist political affiliation: $M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.83$ on a 7-point scale ranging from “very liberal” (1) to “very conservative (7).

Materials and Procedure

The procedure and cover story were identical to that of the previous experiments. The manipulations of economic threat and criticism were identical to Experiment 2.

Value affirmation: Criticism and free speech are American values

Half the participants read a short statement above the critical op-ed allegedly written by the editorial board of the newspaper that stated: “At this newspaper, we strongly believe that the American value of free speech is an important part of what makes the United States great because it encourages debate around a diversity of opinions. That’s why, in this newspaper, we bring you a wide variety of opinions.” At the end of the experiment, participants were presented with an attention check asking them to identify the editorial board’s statement from multiple options (see Appendix F for materials new to Experiment 4).

Results and Discussion

Effect of threat, critic type, and value affirmation on attitudes and persuasion
To test whether value affirmation would influence participants’ responses to criticism I conducted a series of ANOVAs crossing Threat (threat, no threat) x Critic Type (ingroup, outgroup) x Value Affirmation (affirmation, no affirmation) on all dependent variables.

**Persuasiveness of the criticism**

When all six items measuring persuasion were combined into a single dependent variable ($\alpha = .93$) results revealed no main effects but several significant two-way interaction effects (see Tables 7 & 8 for more details). First, as predicted, I found a significant Value x Threat interaction, $F(1, 543) = 5.26, p = .022, \eta^2 = .010$, indicating that when free speech was not affirmed, people were less persuaded by criticism delivered under a cloud of threat ($M = 2.99, SD = 1.44$) compared to no threat ($M = 3.40, SD = 1.70$), $t(543) = 2.37, p = .018, d = .26$. However, when free speech was affirmed, persuasion was equalized regardless of threat ($M_{\text{no threat}} = 3.08, SD = 1.44$; $M_{\text{threat}} = 3.28, SD = 1.63$), $t(543) = -.99, p = .322, d = .13$ (see Figure 5 Panel A). This finding indicates that value affirmation increased Americans’ openness to criticism about their nation even when they perceived a threat to their nation.

Second, a marginally significant Value x Critic Type interaction, $F(1, 543) = 2.74, p = .098, \eta^2 = .005$, indicated that when the value of free speech was not affirmed, the ingroup critic was viewed as more persuasive ($M = 3.41, SD = 1.65$) than the outgroup critic ($M = 2.97, SD = 1.49$), $t(543) = 2.59, p = .010, d = .28$. However, when free speech was affirmed both critics were equally persuasive ($M_{\text{ingroup}} = 3.19, SD = 1.56$; $M_{\text{outgroup}} = 3.15, SD = 1.51$), $t(543) = .03, p = .969, d = .03$ (see Figure 5 Panel B). This indicates that value affirmation equated perceivers’ openness to criticism about their
nation regardless of the group membership of the critic. The 3-way interaction between Value Affirmation x Threat x Critic Type was nonsignificant, \( F(1, 543) = .02, p = .895, \eta^2 < .001 \).

Third, a significant Threat x Critic Type interaction, \( F(1, 543) = 4.68, p = .031, \eta^2 = .009 \), replicated Experiments 1-3. That is, in the absence of threat, criticism from an ingroup member was more persuasive (\( M = 3.52, SD = 1.69 \)) than criticism from an outgroup member (\( M = 2.99, SD = 1.45 \)), \( t(543) = 2.81, p = .005, d = .34 \). But in the presence of threat, this ingroup preference was eliminated (\( M_{\text{ingroup}} = 3.10, SD = 1.50; M_{\text{outgroup}} = 3.12, SD = 1.55 \)), \( t(543) = -.31, p = .757, d = .01 \).

**Attitudes toward the critic**

Six items measuring attitudes toward the critic were combined (\( \alpha = .93 \)). An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of threat, \( F(1, 543) = 4.55, p = .033, \eta^2 = .008 \) indicating that people held more positive attitudes toward critics in the absence (\( M = 3.57, SD = 1.32 \)) rather than presence (\( M = 3.28, SD = 1.38 \)) of threat. And a significant main effect of critic type, \( F(1, 543) = 5.84, p = .016, \eta^2 = .011 \) indicated preference for ingroup (\( M = 3.59, SD = 1.39 \)) over outgroup (\( M = 3.27, SD = 1.30 \)) critics.

Several two-way interaction effects replicated the findings obtained for persuasion described above (see Tables 7 & 8 for more details). First, and important to this experiment, as predicted, affirming the value of free speech moderated reactions to criticism. A significant Value x Threat interaction, \( F(1, 543) = 6.00, p = .015, \eta^2 = .011 \), indicated that in the absence of value affirmation, people expressed less positive attitudes toward the critics in the context of economic threat (\( M = 3.14, SD = 1.31 \)) compared to no threat (\( M = 3.65, SD = 1.41 \)), \( t(543) = 3.52, p < .001, d = .37 \). However, when the value
of free speech was affirmed, threat had no effect on attitudes toward critics ($M_{\text{threat}} = 3.50, SD = 1.45; M_{\text{no threat}} = 3.47, SD = 1.20$), $t(543) = -.21, p = .835, d = .02$ (Figure 5 Panel C).

Second, a Value x Critic Type interaction, $F(1, 543) = 5.41, p = .020, \eta^2 = .010$, indicated that while ingroup critics were evaluated more positively ($M = 3.66, SD = 1.43$) than outgroup critics ($M = 3.13, SD = 1.29$) in the absence of value affirmation, $t(543) = 3.64, p < .001, d = .39$, both critics were evaluated equally positively in the presence of value affirmation ($M_{\text{ingroup}} = 3.50, SD = 1.33; M_{\text{outgroup}} = 3.46, SD = 1.31$), $t(543) = .06, p = .952, d = .03$ (Figure 5 Panel D). The 3-way interaction between Value Affirmation x Threat x Critic Type was nonsignificant, $F(1, 543) = .03, p = .860, \eta^2 < .001$. See Table 7 for all descriptive and inferential statistics.

Third, replicating Experiments 1-3, a significant interaction between Threat x Critic Type, $F(1, 543) = 8.79, p = .003, \eta^2 = .016$, showed that in the absence of threat, people preferred the ingroup critic ($M = 3.89, SD = 1.36$) over the outgroup critic ($M = 3.25, SD = 1.19$), $t(543) = 3.90, p < .001, d = .50$. But in the presence of threat, this ingroup preference was eliminated ($M_{\text{ingroup}} = 3.28, SD = 1.34; M_{\text{outgroup}} = 3.29, SD = 1.42$), $t(543) = -.38, p = .706, d < .01$.

**Emotional reactions**

Participants’ negative emotions ($\alpha = .95$) replicated most of the findings described above (see Tables 7 & 8 for details). I found significant two-way interactions similar to those obtained for attitudes and persuasion. First, a marginal Value x Critic Type interaction, $F(1, 543) = 3.45, p = .064, \eta^2 = .006$, suggested that while people were less angry at ingroup critics ($M = 4.04, SD = 1.80$) than outgroup critics ($M = 4.59, SD = 1.80$)
1.80) when the value of free speech was not affirmed, $t(543) = -2.71$, $p = .007$, $d = .31$, anger toward both critics was equalized when free speech had been affirmed (ingroup $M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.79$; outgroup $M = 4.34$, $SD = 1.91$), $t(543) = .11$, $p = .909$, $d < .01$ (Figure 6 Panel A).

Second, a significant interaction between Threat x Critic Type, $F(1, 543) = 5.31$, $p = .022$, $\eta^2 = .010$, showed that in the absence of threat, people were less angry at an ingroup critic ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.80$) than an outgroup critic ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.72$), $t(543) = -2.89$, $p = .004$, $d = .37$. But in the presence of threat, this ingroup preference was eliminated ($M_{\text{ingroup}} = 4.44$, $SD = 1.76$; $M_{\text{outgroup}} = 4.40$, $SD = 1.98$), $t(543) = .43$, $p = .667$, $d = .02$.

The interaction between Value x Threat, $F(1, 543) = .51$, $p = .475$, $\eta^2 < .001$ (Figure 6 Panel B), and the 3-way interaction between Value Affirmation x Threat x Critic Type, $F(1, 543) = .00$, $p = .957$, $\eta^2 < .001$, were nonsignificant.

**Behavioral intentions**

Three items measuring willingness to share the critical article via social media were combined into a single index ($\alpha = .88$). I found three interaction effects similar to those reported above for attitudes and persuasion. First, a significant Value x Threat interaction, $F(1, 543) = 4.65$, $p = .032$, $\eta^2 = .009$, indicated that when the value of free speech was not affirmed, people were less willing to share the critical op-ed when they felt their group was under a cloud of threat ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.51$) as compared to no threat ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.80$), $t(543) = 2.97$, $p = .003$, $d = .33$. However, when the value of free speech was affirmed, they were equally willing to share the critical op-ed
regardless of threat \((M_{\text{no threat}} = 2.64, SD = 1.62; M_{\text{threat}} = 2.69, SD = 1.90)\), \(t(543) = -.29, p = .772, d = .03\) (Figure 6 Panel C).

Second a Value x Critic Type interaction, \(F(1, 543) = 9.82, p = .002, \eta^2 = .018\), showed that when the value of free speech was not affirmed people were more willing to share criticism on social media if it came from ingroup critics \((M = 2.88, SD = 1.79)\) than outgroup critics \((M = 2.32, SD = 1.51)\), \(t(543) = 2.98, p = .003, d = .34\), however, when the value of free speech was affirmed they were equally willing to share criticism regardless of the critic’s identity \((M_{\text{ingroup}} = 2.51, SD = 1.66; M_{\text{outgroup}} = 2.82, SD = 1.82)\), \(t(543) = -1.57, p = .117, d = .18\) (Figure 6 Panel D).

Third, a significant interaction between Threat x Critic Type, \(F(1, 543) = 6.91, p = .009, \eta^2 = .013\), showed that in the absence of threat, people were more willing to share criticism on social media if it came from an ingroup critic \((M = 3.03, SD = 1.88)\) than an outgroup critic \((M = 2.51, SD = 1.51)\), \(t(543) = 2.45, p = .015, d = .30\). But in the presence of threat, ingroup preference was eliminated \((M_{\text{ingroup}} = 2.39, SD = 1.53; M_{\text{outgroup}} = 2.56, SD = 1.83)\), \(t(543) = -1.30, p = .196, d = .10\) (see Tables 7 & 8 for more details).

Perceptions of the critic’s motives

Six items measuring perceived motives of the critic were combined together \((\alpha = .95)\). A significant main effect of threat, \(F(1, 543) = 4.32, p = .038, \eta^2 = .008\) indicated that people perceived both critics as having less benevolent intentions in the presence of threat \((M = 3.49, SD = 1.71)\) compared to its absence \((M = 3.80, SD = 1.72)\). A main effect of critic type, \(F(1, 543) = 117.55, p < .001, \eta^2 = .178\), indicated that they also attributed more benevolent motives to the ingroup critic \((M = 4.38, SD = 1.60)\) than
outgroup critic ($M = 2.90, SD = 1.51$). An additional main effect of value affirmation, $F(1, 543) = 15.80, p < .001, \eta^2 = .028$, indicated that people perceived critics to have more benevolent motives when the value of free speech was affirmed ($M = 3.95, SD = 1.64$) than when it was not ($M = 3.43, SD = 1.74$).

These main effects were moderated by significant two-way interaction effects similar to the ones reported earlier. First, a marginally significant Value x Threat interaction, $F(1, 543) = 3.55, p = .060, \eta^2 = .007$, showed that when the value of free speech was not affirmed, people perceived both critics as having less benevolent motives in the presence of threat ($M = 3.19, SD = 1.60$) compared to its absence ($M = 3.67, SD = 1.85$), $t(543) = 3.04, p = .003, d = .28$. But when the value of free speech was affirmed, they attributed equally benevolent motives to all critics regardless of threat ($M_{\text{no threat}} = 3.97, SD = 1.54; M_{\text{threat}} = 3.93, SD = 1.77$), $t(543) = .13, p = .899, d = .02$ (Figure 7 Panel A).

Second, a Value x Critic Type interaction, $F(1, 543) = 11.79, p < .001, \eta^2 = .021$, indicated that when free speech was not affirmed, ingroup critics were considered to have far more benevolent motives ($M = 4.34, SD = 1.62$) than outgroup critics ($M = 2.50, SD = 1.32$), $t(543) = 10.95, p < .001, d = 1.25$, but when free speech was affirmed this intergroup difference was reduced ($M_{\text{ingroup}} = 4.43, SD = 1.57; M_{\text{outgroup}} = 3.45, SD = 1.58$), $t(543) = 4.88, p < .001, d = .62$ (Figure 7 Panel B).

Third, replicating Experiments 1-3, an interaction between Threat x Critic Type, $F(1, 543) = 6.83, p = .009, \eta^2 = .012$, showed that in the absence of threat, people perceived the ingroup critic as having more benevolent motives ($M = 4.70, SD = 1.48$) than an outgroup critic ($M = 2.90, SD = 1.45$), $t(543) = 9.73, p < .001, d = 1.23$. But in
the presence of threat, this ingroup preference was reduced (ingroup $M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.65$; outgroup $M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.58$), $t(543) = 5.69$, $p < .001$, $d = .71$. The 3-way interaction between Value Affirmation x Threat x Critic Type was nonsignificant, $F(1, 543) = .17$, $p = .683$, $\eta^2 < .001$.

In sum, Experiment 4 revealed four primary findings. First, replicating Experiments 1-3, I found that while in the absence of threat people preferred to hear criticism from ingroup members than outgroup members, activation of situational threat led people to become closed to criticism about their group regardless of who the critic was—an ingroup or outgroup member. Second, new to this experiment, results revealed that affirming free speech as a fundamental national value increased openness to group criticism even when the group was under threat, regardless of the identity of the critic. Third, affirming the value of free speech also overcame preferential treatment of ingroup over outgroup critics. While people preferred ingroup critics in the absence of value affirmation, reminding them of the constitutional value of free speech was sufficient to erase or reduce ingroup preference. Finally, I did not find any evidence suggesting that value affirmation only benefits ingroup critics, as indicated by the consistent lack of three-way interactions between Threat, Critic Type, and Value Affirmation for all dependent variables. This suggests that the benefit of reminding people of the fundamental value of free speech is not restricted to critics from their group. Rather, it saves all critics from defensive responses due to threat.

The mediating role of critic’s motives on reactions to criticism

As in the prior experiments I tested whether threat increases suspicions about the motives of the ingroup critic more than the outgroup critic, and if suspicion, in turn,
makes them respond negatively to group criticism. I conducted moderated mediation analyses in which threat vs. no threat served as the predictor, perceived motives of the critic the mediator, and critic type (ingroup or outgroup) the moderator. Four types of reactions to criticism were dependent variables. The moderated mediations for all four dependent variables were significant (see Table 9 for all statistics). Similar to Experiments 1-2 I again found that in the presence of threat (vs. no threat) participants were more suspicious of criticism coming from the ingroup member compared to the outgroup member, $B = .67, SE = .26, 95\% CI [.150, 1.182] $; greater suspicion significantly predicted less persuasion, $B = .66, SE = .03, 95\% CI [.599, .727] $, less positive attitudes, $B = .63, SE = .03, 95\% CI [.584, .683] $, more anger at the critic, $B = -.77, SE = .04, 95\% CI [-.843, -.693] $, and less willingness to share the critical article, $B = .61, SE = .04, 95\% CI [.534, .688] $. These mediations were significant for the ingroup critic, but nonsignificant for the outgroup critic (see Table 9 for all statistics). In other words, like my prior experiments, threat erased the benefit of doubt usually granted to ingroup members even when they were critical of their group. But threat has no such effect on outgroup critics who were regarded with greater suspicion in general.

I also tested whether adding value affirmation would erase the negative effect of threat on reactions to criticism by decreasing suspicion about the critics’ motives. A series of moderated mediations in which threat vs. no threat served as the predictor, critics’ motives the mediator, and value affirmation the moderator, did not reach significance (see Table 9 for all statistics). However, given my a priori hypotheses, I separately examined mediational models for the no affirmation condition and the affirmation condition. Results showed that in the no affirmation condition, all mediations
were statistically significant. That is, the presence of threat (vs. no threat) significantly increased suspicion of the critic’s motives, $B = -.48, SE = .19$, 95% CI [-.864, -.099], which in turn significantly predicted less persuasion, $B = .60, SE = .04$, 95% CI [.528, .680], less positive attitudes toward the critics, $B = .57, SE = .03$, 95% CI [.513, .633], more anger at them, $B = -.69, SE = .04$, 95% CI [-.781, -.606], and less willingness to share the article on social media, $B = .54, SE = .04$, 95% CI [.456, .632]. However, once free speech was affirmed as a fundamental American value, all these mediations became nonsignificant. Now, the presence of threat (vs. no threat) had no effect on suspicion about the critics’ motives, $B = -.03, SE = .22$, 95% CI [.877, -.459], or downstream reactions (see Table 9). These results suggest that reminding people that dissent is an American value, a patriotic value, makes them less likely to consider criticism against their nation as evidence of malevolent motives, which in turn makes them more open to being persuaded by any critic regardless of their group membership.
CHAPTER 6

POST-HOC POWER ANALYSES

To measure the achieved power for the effects that I found across the studies, I conducted post-hoc power analyses using the G*Power software program (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996). I averaged four of the dependent variables (persuasiveness of the criticism, attitudes toward the critic, emotional reactions toward the critic, and willingness to share the criticism with others) from each experiment\(^3\) into a single composite of openness to criticism and used the effect size of the interaction to conduct the post-hoc tests. The post-hoc analyses of achieved power revealed that Experiment 1 had achieved power of .86, Experiment 2 has achieved power of .71, Experiment 3 had achieved power of .74, and Experiment 5 had achieved power of .79. While three of these four tests fell below the recommendation of .80 power (Cohen, 1977), these tests suggest that none of the studies were severely underpowered, as is common on the psychological literature (Bakker, van Dijk, & Wicherts, 2012; Fraley & Vazire, 2014; Marszalek, Barber, Kohlhart, & Holmes, 2011). However, these tests come with a few caveats. More generally, statisticians have long been criticizing the misuse of post-hoc power analyses, as they are likely to overstate the actual power because they are based on a likely biased achieved effect size (e.g., Hoenig & Heisey, 2001; but see Gelman & Carlin, 2014). More specifically to this test of post-hoc power, however, is that the choice to use the effect size for a single composite of 3-4 dependent variables likely leads to an overstatement of

\(^3\) Experiment 1 did not include one of those dependent variables (willingness to share the criticism) and therefore the composite from Experiment 1 was created using the average of the remaining three dependent variables.
the power for the individual dependent variables. Therefore, in addition to calculating the effect sizes, I also conducted a mini meta-analysis on the results of the four studies.
CHAPTER 7
MINI META-ANALYSIS

To conduct the mini meta-analysis, I used the instructions and materials from Goh, Hall, and Rosenthal (2016) to use t-tests from each of the individual studies to determine effect sizes that could be compared across studies ($r$), which were then used to compute a weighted $r$ effect size, which then allowed us to compute Stouffer’s Z, which in turn enables the computation of a significance test across the four studies. Importantly, I calculated these effect sizes and tests of meta analytic significance for ingroup critics (control vs. threat) as well as outgroup critics (control vs. threat).

The meta-analyses for the effects of threat when the critic was an ingroup member were all significant\(^4\) (persuasiveness of the criticism: $r_{\text{weighted}} = 0.10$, $z = 4.33$, $p < .001$; attitudes toward the critic: $r_{\text{weighted}} = 0.13$, $z = 5.72$, $p < .001$; negative emotional reactions $r_{\text{weighted}} = 0.10$, $z = 4.34$, $p < .001$; willingness to share the criticism: $r_{\text{weighted}} = 0.12$, $z = 5.15$, $p < .001$; perceptions of the critic’s motives: $r_{\text{weighted}} = 0.12$, $z = 5.52$, $p < .001$), indicating that combined across all of the studies, there was a small effect such that ingroup critics were less persuasive, and were treated more negatively when they criticized their own group when it was facing threat. Interestingly, the mini meta analysis also allowed us to test whether the trend across a few studies for outgroup critics to benefit from threat also emerged. Results indicate that it did (persuasiveness of the criticism: $r_{\text{weighted}} = 0.07$, $z = 2.82$, $p = .002$; attitudes toward the critic: $r_{\text{weighted}} = 0.05$, $z = 2.21$, $p = .014$; negative emotional reactions $r_{\text{weighted}} = 0.07$, $z = 2.93$, $p = .002$; willingness to share the criticism: $r_{\text{weighted}} = 0.05$, $z = 1.60$, $p = .045$ [not significant using

\[^4\] As my hypotheses for the mini meta-analysis were clearly directional, I used a one-tailed test of significance. I also identify which effects would not be significant using a two-tailed test.
two-tailed tests]; perceptions of the critic’s motives: \( r_{\text{weighted}} = 0.04, z = 1.76, p = .039 \) (not significant using two-tailed tests), such that while outgroup critics were unpersuasive and unwelcome when the ingroup wasn’t threatened, they became more persuasive and welcome in the presence of threat.
CHAPTER 8
GENERAL DISCUSSION

I started this investigation with a paradox captured by the story of Mehdi Hassan: while people are typically open to critical feedback about their group when it comes from sources within their group than from sources outside, sometimes critics from within can be fiercely rejected. My investigation sought to explain this paradox through a social psychological lens using national groups as a case in point. I predicted that social contexts that increase threat to ingroup (American) safety and well-being will produce defensive reactions to criticism even when it comes from fellow Americans. Second, I specified and empirically tested the underlying psychological mechanism that drives this effect. I proposed that in the presence of a threat facing the United States, Americans will view fellow American critics with heightened suspicion thinking that their criticism aims to further harm the United States. Under threat, the benefit of positive attributions typically granted to fellow American critics will become erased and Americans will circle the wagons around their nation and not tolerate dissent. Because external critics (foreign nationals) are not expected to be loyal, the introduction of threat does not change reactions to them. My third goal was to identify a psychological remedy to prevent the metaphorical circling of wagons and increase openness to criticism. I used value affirmation. I proposed that reminding American participants of the value of free speech and dissent in the context of their nation would increase receptivity to criticism.

Across these four experiments, I find support for these hypotheses. In Experiments 1-4, I showed that while American people are more open to criticism of their nation from fellow Americans than foreign nationals in the absence of a situational
threat, they were equally unreceptive to criticism from both Americans and non-Americans in the presence of threat. This pattern of results emerged when the threat is relevant to the national economy and economic decline (Experiments 1, 2, and 4) concerns, and also when the threat is relevant to national security (Experiment 3). Furthermore, a mini meta-analysis revealed that, across the four studies, not only were ingroup members punished for criticizing in the presence of situational threat compared to its absence, but also that outgroup critics benefited from criticizing in the presence of situational threat.

In support of my second hypothesis, I found that these negative reactions under threat can be partially explained by increased suspicion about the motives of the American critic (Experiments 1-4). In the absence of threat to the nation, a fellow American who was critical about his nation was seen as having far more benevolent motives for criticizing compared to a critic from another country who levied the same criticism. However, when Americans felt their nation was under threat (either economic or national security threat) they became more suspicious of fellow American critics, who were now seen as disloyal and unpatriotic and became as unpersuasive as non-American critics.

In support of my third hypothesis, Experiment 4 showed that affirming the core American value of free speech protected against the negative effects of threat and prevented biased perceptions of outgroup critics. Reminding Americans of the value of free speech made them open to criticism even in the presence of threat and eliminated the typical ingroup preference for criticism from an American, rather than foreign, critic.
Together, the four experiments reported here provide strong support for my hypotheses and add to the theoretical understanding of inter- and intragroup relations.

**How threat reduces openness to criticism by change attributions of critics’ intentions**

My findings extend past research in theoretically important ways. Whereas past research showed that threat affects people’s attitudes toward ingroup critics (Ariyanto, Hornsey, & Gallois, 2010; Khoo & See, 2014), I extend it further by showing that threat also makes critical communications from ingroup members become less persuasive, increases negative attitudes and anger toward those critics, and increases people’s reluctance to share the critical communication with others in their social network. I demonstrate that these ripple effects occur across two very different types of threat (economic threat and national security threat).

My findings also amplify the importance of threat in shutting down dissent. Ample extant research shows that groups are open to criticism if that criticism comes from individuals within the group (see Jetten & Hornsey, 2014 for a review). This openness is likely because people construe ingroup criticism as a form of constructive patriotism (Schatz, Staub, & Lavine, 1999) coming from critics who are motivated to help their group improve (Packer, 2009; Packer & Chasteen, 2009; Packer, Fujita, & Chasteen, 2013). The evidence from this research shows how powerful the experience of threat can be that it erases the benefit of the doubt typically given to ingroup members. Future research might investigate whether varying the types of threat will affect people’s openness to criticism, and if people’s pre-existing beliefs about the threat or the topic of criticism changes reactions to criticism.
A key finding from the present research is that the negative effects of threat on people’s openness to criticism can be explained by changing attributions about the ingroup critic’s intentions. Under threat, people assume that ingroup critics must have more malevolent intentions if they are criticizing the group at a time when it is under threat. Past research has shown that the general preference for criticism coming from ingroup vs. outgroup critics is due to people’s implicit trust in the benevolent intentions of fellow ingroup members compared to outgroup members (Hornsey et al., 2007; Hornsey & Imani, 2004; Hornsey et al., 2002; Hornsey et al., 2004), which aligns with classic research on the ultimate attribution error, ascribing better intentions to ingroup rather than outgroup members (Hewstone, 1990; Pettigrew, 1979). However, my research points to a boundary condition of the ultimate attribution error by demonstrating that while it applies in the absence of threat, the presence of threat eliminates preferential attributions about the intentions of ingroup members.

In the three experiments where I found consistent mediational evidence supporting my hypothesis that threat increased suspicion about the motives of ingroup (relative to outgroup) critic, which in turn eliminated ingroup preference, the source of threat was economic insecurity. When I tested the same hypothesis using national security threat the mediation was nonsignificant but all other results remained the same. I speculate that this may have occurred because national security threat is an external threat coming from outside the group whereas economic threat is an internal threat emanating from within the group. Because national security threat coming from the outside primes intergroup conflict, it may strengthen group boundaries and present a higher bar for removing the benefit of the doubt granted to ingroup members only. Alternatively,
despite psychological theories frequently regarding physical and economic threats similarly (e.g., Maslow, 1943; Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios Morrison, 2009), they may lead people to respond to them differently, as physical threats may require more immediate responses to immediate danger while economic threat pose more of a longer-term threat to financial stability. Finally, as I noted previously, the criticism manipulations in Experiment 3 were designed to be more constructive than in previous studies which may have diluted the effects in Experiment 3. Future research should test these findings across more types of threat to explore boundary conditions.

**Increasing openness to criticism through value affirmation despite threat or critics’ identity**

A final goal of this research was to test an intervention that might overcome people’s inclination to become more suspicious of critic’s intentions when under threat. To do this, I provided people with a reminder that free speech is a fundamental value of the United States with the goal of legitimizing criticism. I started with two a priori predictions. On the one hand, reminders of the value of free speech might erase the inclination to mistrust criticism under threat regardless of whether it came from a fellow American or a foreigner. Because value affirmation targets the way that people process the content of criticism, I reasoned that the beneficial effects of this reminder ought to apply regardless of the nationality of the critic. However, another plausible a priori hypothesis was that American participants might only extend the benefits of free speech to fellow Americans because free speech is specifically an American value. The results of Experiment 4 supported the former prediction, not the latter. Being reminded of the fundamental American value of free speech erased defensive reactions to threat and led
people to become more open to criticism regardless of the critic’s group membership, not just for critics who were fellow ingroup members.

A second finding from Experiment 4 was that regardless of threat, reminding people of the value of free speech erased ingroup preference by making people equally open to criticism from ingroup and outgroup members. This finding complements Hornsey and colleagues’ finding that openness to outgroup critics increases when the critic includes praise of the target group along with the criticism, or acknowledges that their own group is also guilty of the same problem (Hornsey, Robson, Smith, Esposo, & Sutton, 2008). I demonstrate an alternative way of allowing outgroup critics to be heard by using the power of value affirmation. This intervention does not place the onus on the outgroup critic. Instead, it changes the perceiver’s mindset and reframes their interpretation of criticism, which influences the motivations perceivers attribute to the critic.

Thus, I have evidence that affirming the value of free speech and dissent can erase bias in people’s reactions to critiques in two ways. First, reminders of the value of free speech helps temper the impulse to become more closed to critical communications delivered under threat. Second, these reminders also help people overcome their instinct to only trust and listen to people who are members of their own group rather than also listen to people making the same argument from other groups. In both cases, this happens because affirming the value of free speech helps overcome biases in attributing malign motives to all critics when perceivers feel threatened vs. not threatened and to outgroup critics more than ingroup critics.

**Differential Effects of Situational Threat on Ingroup and Outgroup Critics**
The mini meta-analysis conducted on these four experiments revealed two interesting patterns. First, as predicted, while Americans were open to group criticism from ingroup members in the absence of threat, the presence of threat made them less open to criticism. Interestingly, however, the meta-analysis also suggested that while threat is harmful to ingroup critics, it may actually make people more open to group criticism from outgroup members. Across the four studies, the meta-analysis showed that situational threat increased openness to the outgroup critic and his message. While it is unclear why this happens, it may be that while ingroup critics are expected to “circle the wagons” and defend the ingroup when it is being threatened, outgroup critics may face no such expectation. This might lead people to see ingroup critics who criticize when the group is threatened as betrayers and disloyal (Moreland & McGinn, 1999) while outgroup members may be rewarded for their interest in group affairs during threatening situations. Further research is necessary to better understand this counter-intuitive finding.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

While these studies show consistent effects confirming a priori predictions, there are a number of limitations that will require additional study and experimentation. First, across all four studies, the criticism was delivered in the form of an article purportedly printed in the International Herald Tribune. This raises the possibility that the effects reported here are dependent on the audience’s perception that the criticism is being delivered not solely to an ingroup (American) audience, but to a wider international audience. Past research has found that people are less open to ingroup criticism when it is made to an outgroup audience (Elder, Sutton, & Douglas, 2005), and that strongly
identified ingroup members are less likely to criticize their group in the presence of an outgroup audience (Packer, 2014). Thus, it may be that the international nature of the newspaper that the criticism was purportedly published in might be affecting the results. It is important to note, however, that all participants saw articles published in the identical source. However, one possible confounding variable may be the way in which the articles included grammatical changes to indicate the audience, as the ingroup critic referred to Americans as “we,” suggesting an ingroup (American) audience, whereas the outgroup critic referred to Americans as “they,” suggesting an outgroup (non-American) audience, as the correct referent for an American audience would have been “you.” At the same time, politeness may preclude the use of the more accusatory “you,” which leaves the question open of who the readers were imagining the audience to be (this potential confound may also affect other research on group criticism; e.g., Ariyanto et al., 2010; Hornsey et al., 2002). Thus, it may be that uncertainty over the identity of the audience may be affecting the results reported here. Further research should ask readers who they imagine the intended audience to be for the critical articles, and may also test whether the effects reported here are dependent on the composition of the perceived audience.

Another potential weakness of this research is that the samples reported here are not truly representative of Americans as a whole, and these effects may also not generalize beyond Americans to other cultures and societies. The studies reported here were all conducted through Amazons Mechanical Turk, which granted access to a more diverse and representative convenience sample than can be accessed through all-student university samples. However, despite increased diversity, these samples are still drawn from a self-selected population that likely differs from the general population.
Furthermore, effects that generalize to the broader U.S. population may not generalize to other populations and cultural contexts (see Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Therefore, further research should test whether threat similarly decreases openness to ingroup criticism in other social and cultural contexts.

Additionally, it is important to note that the criticisms used in the studies reported here, as well as in previous research on group criticism (e.g., Ariyanto et al., 2010; Hornsey et al., 2002), included harsh statement about the group in question and are not explicitly constructive. For example, in Hornsey and colleagues (2002), the target group (Australians) were referred to as “racist,” “intolerant,” and “[not as] cultured as other societies.” Similarly, the criticism used by Ariyanto and colleagues (2010) included references to Muslims as being “fanatical,” “easily provoked,” and “intolerant.” This raises the question of whether the roles of group membership and threat on openness to criticism remain the same for a wide range of criticism or are specifically the case for harsher criticism. This is particularly relevant as Experiment 3, in which I intentionally sought to make the criticism less harsh and more constructive, revealed somewhat weaker effects than the Experiments with harsher and less constructive criticism. Therefore, further research should investigate to what extent the harshness and lack of explicit constructiveness of the criticism affect people’s reactions.

Finally, in the experiments reported here, attention checks were used to identify and remove participants who did not pay enough attention to the content of the threat manipulation article or to the identity of the author of the critical article. However, with the exception of Experiment 3, these Experiments did not include measures of how concerned participants were about the economy or national security. Unfortunately, the
manipulation check in Experiment 3 did not reveal any difference in perceived threat between those in the threat vs. control conditions⁵. Further research should include validated manipulation checks to identify the way in which the threat and critic nationality manipulations change participants’ perceptions.

**Conclusion**

As Mehdi Hasan discovered, being a valued member of a group is not always sufficient to protect one from harsh reactions to criticism of ingroup behavior. People sometimes respond to perceptions that their group is embattled and under threat by closing themselves off to all criticism. The dangers of this approach are self-evident, both to the group itself but also to other groups around them. By showing how publicly affirming the value of free speech and dissenting opinions can help people overcome the defensive impulse to circle the wagons and close themselves off to all forms of criticism, this research proposes a way forward to improve intra- and intergroup dialogue allowing the free flow of ideas and dissenting opinions essential to good group decision-making.

---

⁵ The manipulation check found that, on average, participants were more concerned and had more negative emotions (fear, anger, anxiety, worry, and calmness) about the state of national security than not, although there were no significant differences between the threat and control conditions.
### Table 1: Experiment 1 inferential and descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Critic Type</th>
<th>Threat Condition</th>
<th>Main Effects</th>
<th>Interaction Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Threat</td>
<td>Threat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Threat Condition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main effect of</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main effect of Critic Type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effect</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ingroup</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persuasion</strong></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.84 (1.55)</td>
<td>3.53 (1.62)</td>
<td>t(294)=1.20, p=.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>2.56 (1.00)</td>
<td>3.15 (1.49)</td>
<td>t(294)=2.23, p=.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.98 (1.36)</td>
<td>3.49 (1.62)</td>
<td>t(294)=1.92, p=.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>2.67 (1.17)</td>
<td>2.95 (1.41)</td>
<td>t(294)=1.11, p=.269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Reactions</strong></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.27 (1.84)</td>
<td>3.81 (1.86)</td>
<td>t(294)=1.71, p=.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>4.86 (1.67)</td>
<td>4.00 (1.82)</td>
<td>t(294)=2.64, p=.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critic's Motives</strong></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>4.11 (1.45)</td>
<td>3.62 (1.49)</td>
<td>t(294)=2.36, p=.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>1.36 (0.79)</td>
<td>1.51 (0.81)</td>
<td>t(294)=6.9, p=.489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The *t*-tests beneath the No Threat and Threat columns compare the reaction to ingroup vs. outgroup critics within that column. The *t*-tests to the right of the ingroup and outgroup rows compare the reaction to ingroup or outgroup critics across Threat and No Threat.
Table 2: Experiment 1 conditional process analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable (X)</th>
<th>Moderating Variable (W)</th>
<th>Mediator (M)</th>
<th>Outcome (Y)</th>
<th>a path (X*W --&gt; M)</th>
<th>b path (M --&gt; Y)</th>
<th>c' path (X*W --&gt; Y)</th>
<th>a*b path (indirect effect)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat vs. No Threat</td>
<td>Critic Type: Ingroup vs. outgroup</td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>B = .64, SE = .30, 95% CI [.054, 1.229]</td>
<td>B = .53, SE = .07, 95% CI [.403, .663]</td>
<td>B = .55, SE = .34, 95% CI [-.107, 1.235]</td>
<td>B = -.26, SE = .14, 95% CI [-.542, -.007]</td>
<td>B = .08, SE = .08, 95% CI [-.075, .227]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Attitudes</td>
<td>B = .64, SE = .30, 95% CI [.054, 1.229]</td>
<td>B = .59, SE = .06, 95% CI [.473, .717]</td>
<td>B = .39, SE = .31, 95% CI [-.236, 1.020]</td>
<td>B = -.20, SE = .23, 95% CI [-.636, .247]</td>
<td>B = .20, SE = .18, 95% CI [-.246, .641]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Reactions</td>
<td>B = .64, SE = .30, 95% CI [.054, 1.229]</td>
<td>B = -.46, SE = .09, 95% CI [-.627, -.292]</td>
<td>B = -1.11, SE = .44, 95% CI [-1.972, .244]</td>
<td>B = .23, SE = .12, 95% CI [.015, .500]</td>
<td>B = -.07, SE = .14, 95% CI [-.196, .068]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The "a" path denotes the effect of the interaction between Threat and Critic Type on the mediator, perceived intentions. The "c" path denotes the same interaction on the outcome variable, controlling for the effect of critic's intentions.
Table 3: Experiment 2 inferential and descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Critic Type</th>
<th>No Threat</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Main effect of Threat</th>
<th>Main effect of Critic Type</th>
<th>Threat x Critic Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.70 (1.63)</td>
<td>2.97 (1.71)</td>
<td>t(388)=3.15, p=.002</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 5.53</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.89 (1.55)</td>
<td>2.85 (1.52)</td>
<td>t(388)=.50, p=.616</td>
<td>p = .019</td>
<td>p = .034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>3.77, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>3.77, p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mcontrol 3.29(1.64); Mthreat 2.91(1.61)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.91 (1.34)</td>
<td>3.23 (1.55)</td>
<td>t(388)=3.40, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 8.78</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.66, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>1.63, p=.105</td>
<td>t(388)=.42, p=.672</td>
<td>p = .003</td>
<td>p = .061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>3.04 (1.42)</td>
<td>2.88 (1.23)</td>
<td>t(388)=.77, p=.442</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 18.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.81 (1.69)</td>
<td>4.65 (1.79)</td>
<td>t(388)=3.36, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 7.22</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactions</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.77, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>3.55, p=.581</td>
<td>t(388)=.42, p=.672</td>
<td>p = .008</td>
<td>p = .037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>4.69 (1.75)</td>
<td>4.79 (1.66)</td>
<td>t(388)=.77, p=.442</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 4.72(1.72)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.45 (1.99)</td>
<td>2.35 (1.89)</td>
<td>t(388)=4.08, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 7.80</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 9.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentions</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.90, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>1.89, p=.567</td>
<td>t(388)=1.16, p=.873</td>
<td>p = .006</td>
<td>p = .003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>2.47 (1.82)</td>
<td>2.52 (1.71)</td>
<td>t(388)=.77, p=.442</td>
<td>Mcontrol 2.96(1.97); Mthreat 2.44(1.79)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.90, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>1.89, p=.567</td>
<td>t(388)=1.16, p=.873</td>
<td>p = .006</td>
<td>p = .003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critic’s</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>4.71 (1.40)</td>
<td>3.78 (1.68)</td>
<td>t(388)=4.54, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 8.15</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 12.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motives</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.86, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>6.62, p=.598</td>
<td>t(388)=3.53, p=.598</td>
<td>p = .005</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>2.26 (1.28)</td>
<td>2.37 (1.25)</td>
<td>t(388)=.62, p=.598</td>
<td>F(1, 388) = 3.06(1.64)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.86, p&lt;.001</td>
<td>6.62, p=.598</td>
<td>t(388)=3.53, p=.598</td>
<td>p = .005</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The t-tests beneath the No Threat and Threat columns compare the reaction to ingroup vs. outgroup critics within that column. The t-tests to the right of the ingroup and outgroup rows compare the reaction to ingroup or outgroup critics across Threat and No Threat.
Table 4: Experiment 2 conditional process analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable (X)</th>
<th>Moderating Variable (W)</th>
<th>Mediator (M)</th>
<th>Outcome (Y)</th>
<th>a path X*W --&gt; M</th>
<th>b path M --&gt; Y</th>
<th>c’ path X*W --&gt; Y</th>
<th>a*b path (indirect effect)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat vs. No Threat</td>
<td>Critic Type: Ingroup vs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>outgroup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critic's Motives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>B = 1.03, SE = .29, 95% CI [.466, 1.590]</td>
<td>B = .79, SE = .04, 95% CI [.703, .868]</td>
<td>B = -.12, SE = .24, 95% CI [-.587, .358]</td>
<td>B = -.72, SE = .18, 95% CI [-1.083, -.385]</td>
<td>B = .08, SE = .14, 95% CI [.352, 1.243]</td>
<td>B = .75, SE = .21, 95% CI [.346, 1.163]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Attitudes</td>
<td>B = 1.03, SE = .29, 95% CI [.466, 1.590]</td>
<td>B = .73, SE = .03, 95% CI [.663, .796]</td>
<td>B = -.22, SE = .19, 95% CI [-.599, .160]</td>
<td>B = -.67, SE = .17, 95% CI [-.993, -.341]</td>
<td>B = .08, SE = .13, 95% CI [-.173, .337]</td>
<td>B = -.75, SE = .22, 95% CI [-1.181, -.324]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactions</td>
<td>B = 1.03, SE = .29, 95% CI [.466, 1.590]</td>
<td>B = -.73, SE = .05, 95% CI [-.830, -.633]</td>
<td>B = .02, SE = .29, 95% CI [-.543, .582]</td>
<td>B = .68, SE = .17, 95% CI [.345, 1.010]</td>
<td>B = -.07, SE = .13, 95% CI [-.340, .183]</td>
<td>B = -.75, SE = .22, 95% CI [-1.181, -.324]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Intentions</td>
<td>B = 1.03, SE = .29, 95% CI [.466, 1.590]</td>
<td>B = .76, SE = .06, 95% CI [.649, .866]</td>
<td>B = .36, SE = .32, 95% CI [-.258, .985]</td>
<td>B = -.70, SE = .18, 95% CI [-1.048, -.356]</td>
<td>B = .08, SE = .14, 95% CI [.359, .349]</td>
<td>B = .79, SE = .22, 95% CI [.359, 1.231]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The "a" path denotes the effect of the interaction between Threat and Critic Type on the mediator, perceived intentions. The "c" path denotes the same interaction on the outcome variable, controlling for the effect of critic's intentions.
Table 5: Experiment 3 inferential and descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Critic Type</th>
<th>No Threat</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Main effect of Threat</th>
<th>Main effect of Critic Type</th>
<th>Interaction Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>4.14 (1.83)</td>
<td>3.75 (1.68)</td>
<td>t(666)=2.04, p=.042</td>
<td>Mcontrol 3.68(1.83); Mthreat 3.71(1.71)</td>
<td>F(1, 666) = 12.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>3.24 (1.72)</td>
<td>3.68 (1.75)</td>
<td>t(666)=-2.33, p=.020</td>
<td>Mingroup 3.96(1.77); Moutgroup 3.45(1.75)</td>
<td>F(1, 666) = 9.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>t(666)=.82, p=.737</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F(1, 666) = .02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>4.46 (1.55)</td>
<td>4.15 (1.39)</td>
<td>t(666)=1.94, p=.052</td>
<td>Mcontrol 4.06(1.56); Mthreat 4.04(1.40)</td>
<td>F(1, 666) = 17.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>3.69 (1.47)</td>
<td>3.95 (1.40)</td>
<td>t(666)=-1.65, p=.099</td>
<td>Mcontrol 3.83(1.86); Mthreat 3.79(1.69)</td>
<td>F(1, 666) = 6.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>t(666)=.86, p=.729</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F(1, 666) = .882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactions</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.32 (1.80)</td>
<td>3.58 (1.63)</td>
<td>t(666)=-1.42, p=.156</td>
<td>Mcontrol 3.83(1.86); Mthreat 3.79(1.69)</td>
<td>F(1, 666) = 5.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>4.31 (1.78)</td>
<td>3.96 (1.72)</td>
<td>t(666)=1.95, p=.052</td>
<td>Mcontrol 3.30(1.98); Mthreat 3.35(1.94)</td>
<td>F(1, 666) = .574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>t(666)=.53, p=.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F(1, 666) = .11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Intentions</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.70 (1.98)</td>
<td>3.41 (1.99)</td>
<td>t(664)=1.32, p=.189</td>
<td>Mcontrol 3.56(1.98); Mthreat 3.11(1.91)</td>
<td>F(1, 664) = 5.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>2.93 (1.91)</td>
<td>3.31 (1.90)</td>
<td>t(664)=1.86, p=.063</td>
<td>Mcontrol 3.30(1.98); Mthreat 3.35(1.94)</td>
<td>F(1, 664) = .025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>t(664)=.72, p=.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F(1, 664) = .727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critic's Motives</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>5.12 (1.56)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.50)</td>
<td>t(666)=1.03, p=.302</td>
<td>Mcontrol 4.26(1.78); Mthreat 4.30(1.63)</td>
<td>F(1, 666) = 3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>3.46 (1.60)</td>
<td>3.73 (1.53)</td>
<td>t(666)=1.68, p=.094</td>
<td>Mcontrol 5.04(1.53); Mthreat 5.59(1.57)</td>
<td>F(1, 666) = .647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>t(666)=1.08, p=.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F(1, 664) = .025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The t-tests beneath the No Threat and Threat columns compare the reaction to ingroup vs. outgroup critics within that column. The t-tests to the right of the ingroup and outgroup rows compare the reaction to ingroup or outgroup critics across Threat and No Threat.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable (X)</th>
<th>Moderating Variable (W)</th>
<th>Mediator (M)</th>
<th>Outcome (Y)</th>
<th>a path</th>
<th>b path</th>
<th>c' path</th>
<th>a*b path (indirect effect)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat vs. No Threat</td>
<td>Critic Type: Ingroup vs. outgroup</td>
<td>Critic's Motives</td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>B = .44, SE = .24, 95% CI [-.033, .908]</td>
<td>B = .82, SE = .03, 95% CI [.766, .883]</td>
<td>B = .46, SE = .19, 95% CI [.013, .096]</td>
<td>B = -.13, SE = .14, 95% CI [-.405, .147]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Attitudes</td>
<td>B = .44, SE = .24, 95% CI [-.033, .908]</td>
<td>B = .72, SE = .02, 95% CI [.671, .763]</td>
<td>B = .25, SE = .15, 95% CI [.034, .542]</td>
<td>B = -.12, SE = .12, 95% CI [-.353, .128]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Reactions</td>
<td>B = .44, SE = .24, 95% CI [-.033, .908]</td>
<td>B = -.82, SE = .03, 95% CI [-.874, -.757]</td>
<td>B = -.25, SE = .19, 95% CI [-.618, -.110]</td>
<td>B = .13, SE = .14, 95% CI [-.126, .409]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Behavioral Intentions</td>
<td>B = .43, SE = .24, 95% CI [-.044, .898]</td>
<td>B = .75, SE = .04, 95% CI [.678, .830]</td>
<td>B = .35, SE = .24, 95% CI [-.126, .818]</td>
<td>B = -.12, SE = .13, 95% CI [-.379, .133]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The "a" path denotes the effect of the interaction between Threat and Critic Type on the mediator, perceived intentions. The "c" path denotes the same interaction on the outcome variable, controlling for the effect of critic's intentions.
Table 7: Experiment 4 descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Value Affirmation</th>
<th>Critic Type</th>
<th>No Threat</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Threat Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.76 (1.79)</td>
<td>3.08 (1.43)</td>
<td>t(543)=2.78, p=.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>3.04 (1.54)</td>
<td>2.90 (1.44)</td>
<td>t(543)=.57, p=.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>4.11 (1.40)</td>
<td>3.23 (1.32)</td>
<td>t(543)=4.20, p&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>3.21 (1.27)</td>
<td>3.05 (1.31)</td>
<td>t(543)=.78, p=.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>No Affirmation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.72 (1.83)</td>
<td>4.36 (1.72)</td>
<td>t(543)=.97, p=.335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>4.62 (1.70)</td>
<td>4.56 (1.91)</td>
<td>t(543)=.70, p=.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactions</td>
<td>Value Affirmation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.32 (1.99)</td>
<td>2.45 (1.47)</td>
<td>t(543)=3.25, p=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>2.45 (1.48)</td>
<td>2.19 (1.55)</td>
<td>t(543)=.95, p=.341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Intentions</td>
<td>Value Affirmation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>4.80 (1.54)</td>
<td>3.90 (1.59)</td>
<td>t(543)=3.80, p=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>2.56 (1.40)</td>
<td>2.44 (1.25)</td>
<td>t(543)=.51, p=.611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critic's Motives</td>
<td>Value Affirmation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.24 (1.53)</td>
<td>3.13 (1.61)</td>
<td>t(543)=.37, p=.709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>2.92 (1.34)</td>
<td>3.43 (1.66)</td>
<td>t(543)=-1.75, p=.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>Value Affirmation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>3.63 (1.27)</td>
<td>3.35 (1.39)</td>
<td>t(543)=1.16, p=.245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>3.30 (1.09)</td>
<td>3.65 (1.51)</td>
<td>t(543)=1.43, p=.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Value Affirmation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>4.13 (1.75)</td>
<td>4.57 (1.82)</td>
<td>t(543)=-1.30, p=.195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>4.48 (1.75)</td>
<td>4.17 (2.08)</td>
<td>t(543)=.90, p=.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactions</td>
<td>Value Affirmation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>2.69 (1.69)</td>
<td>2.30 (1.63)</td>
<td>t(543)=-1.66, p=.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>2.58 (1.55)</td>
<td>3.10 (2.07)</td>
<td>t(543)=-2.48, p=.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Intentions</td>
<td>Value Affirmation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>4.58 (1.42)</td>
<td>4.27 (1.73)</td>
<td>t(543)=1.13, p=.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>3.33 (1.40)</td>
<td>3.59 (1.76)</td>
<td>t(543)=.93, p=.354</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The t-tests beneath the No Threat and Threat columns compare the reaction to ingroup vs. outgroup critics within that column. The t-tests to the right of the rows compare the reaction to ingroup or outgroup critics across Threat and No Threat.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Main effect of Value Affirmation</th>
<th>Main effect of Threat</th>
<th>Main effect of Critic Type</th>
<th>Threat x Critic Type</th>
<th>Value Affirmation x Threat</th>
<th>Value Affirmation x Critic Type</th>
<th>Value Affirmation x Threat x Critic Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persuasion</strong></td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .01$ $p = .904$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .62$ $p = .430$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 2.94$ $p = .087$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 4.68$ $p = .031$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 5.26$ $p = .022$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 2.74$ $p = .098$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .02$ $p = .895$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .52$ $p = .470$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 4.55$ $p = .033$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 5.84$ $p = .016$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 8.79$ $p = .003$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 6.00$ $p = .015$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 5.41$ $p = .020$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .03$ $p = .860$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Reactions</strong></td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .02$ $p = .880$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 1.24$ $p = .266$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 2.83$ $p = .093$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 5.31$ $p = .022$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .51$ $p = .475$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 3.45$ $p = .064$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .00$ $p = .957$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral Intentions</strong></td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .20$ $p = .657$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 2.94$ $p = .087$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .57$ $p = .451$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 6.91$ $p = .009$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 4.65$ $p = .032$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 9.82$ $p = .002$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .27$ $p = .603$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critic’s Motives</strong></td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 15.80$ $p &lt; .001$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 4.32$ $p = .038$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 117.55$ $p &lt; .001$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 6.83$ $p = .009$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 3.55$ $p = .060$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = 11.79$ $p &lt; .001$</td>
<td>$F(1, 543) = .17$ $p = .683$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 9: Experiment 4 conditional process analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable (X)</th>
<th>Moderating Variable (W)</th>
<th>Mediator (M)</th>
<th>Outcome (Y)</th>
<th>a path $X*W \rightarrow M$</th>
<th>b path $M \rightarrow Y$</th>
<th>c’ path $X*W \rightarrow Y$</th>
<th>Ingroup critic</th>
<th>Outgroup critic</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat vs. No Threat</td>
<td>Critic Type: Ingroup vs. outgroup</td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>B = .67, SE = .26, 95% CI [.150, 1.182]</td>
<td>B = .66, SE = .03, 95% CI [.599, .727]</td>
<td>B = .11, SE = .20, 95% CI [-.286, .503]</td>
<td>B = -.43, SE = .12, 95% CI [-.685, -.189]</td>
<td>B = .01, SE = .12, 95% CI [-.229, .243]</td>
<td>B = .44, SE = .17, 95% CI [.110, .792]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Attitudes</td>
<td>B = .67, SE = .26, 95% CI [.150, 1.182]</td>
<td>B = .63, SE = .03, 95% CI [.584, .683]</td>
<td>B = .24, SE = .16, 95% CI [-.068, .542]</td>
<td>B = -.41, SE = .12, 95% CI [-.657, -.187]</td>
<td>B = .01, SE = .17, 95% CI [-.215, .254]</td>
<td>B = .42, SE = .11, 95% CI [.096, .761]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Reactions</td>
<td>B = -.67, SE = .26, 95% CI [.150, 1.182]</td>
<td>B = -.77, SE = .04, 95% CI [-.843, -.693]</td>
<td>B = -.18, SE = .24, 95% CI [-.646, .281]</td>
<td>B = .50, SE = .14, 95% CI [.225, .789]</td>
<td>B = -.01, SE = .14, 95% CI [-.292, .273]</td>
<td>B = -.51, SE = .20, 95% CI [-.913, -.114]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Behavioral Intentions</td>
<td>B = .67, SE = .26, 95% CI [.150, 1.182]</td>
<td>B = .61, SE = .04, 95% CI [.534, .688]</td>
<td>B = .29, SE = .24, 95% CI [-.182, .768]</td>
<td>B = -.40, SE = .12, 95% CI [-.638, -.172]</td>
<td>B = .01, SE = .11, 95% CI [-.212, .229]</td>
<td>B = .41, SE = .17, 95% CI [.097, .756]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Threat vs. No Threat     | Value Affirmation: Unaffirmed vs. affirmed | Persuasion | B = .45, SE = .29, 95% CI [-.127, 1.023] | B = .58, SE = .03, 95% CI [.525, .644] | B = .34, SE = .21, 95% CI [.071, .745] | B = -.28, SE = .11, 95% CI [-.513, -.065] | B = .02, SE = .13, 95% CI [-.270, .234] | B = .26, SE = .17, 95% CI [.082, .592] |
|                          |                                           | Positive Attitudes | B = .45, SE = .29, 95% CI [-.127, 1.023] | B = .57, SE = .02, 95% CI [.519, .612] | B = .29, SE = .16, 95% CI [.029, .611] | B = -.27, SE = .11, 95% CI [-.495, -.059] | B = .02, SE = .12, 95% CI [.276, .212] | B = .25, SE = .17, 95% CI [.080, .580] |
|                          |                                           | Emotional Reactions | B = .45, SE = .29, 95% CI [-.127, 1.023] | B = .68, SE = .04, 95% CI [-.754, -.614] | B = .10, SE = .24, 95% CI [.078, .603] | B = .33, SE = .13, 95% CI [.078, .603] | B = .02, SE = .15, 95% CI [.272, .305] | B = .31, SE = .20, 95% CI [.702, .093] |
|                          |                                           | Behavioral Intentions | B = .45, SE = .29, 95% CI [-.127, 1.023] | B = .53, SE = .04, 95% CI [.459, .602] | B = .37, SE = .25, 95% CI [.121, .859] | B = -.26, SE = .10, 95% CI [-.465, -.065] | B = -.02, SE = .12, 95% CI [.252, .201] | B = .24, SE = .15, 95% CI [.063, .543] |

**Note.** The "a" path denotes the effect of the interaction between Threat and Critic Type on the mediator, perceived intentions. The "c’" path denotes the same interaction on the outcome variable, controlling for the effect of critic’s intentions.
FIGURES

(A) Effect of Threat x Critic Type on Persuasion

(B) Effect of Threat x Critic Type on Attitudes

(C) Effect of Threat x Critic Type on Emotional Reactions

(D) Effect of Threat x Critic Type on Critic’s Motives

Figure 1. Experiment 1 interactions on the primary outcome variables. Paneled by dependent variable. Threat reduces or eliminates ingroup preference in relation to persuasion (Panel A), attitudes (Panel B), negative emotions (Panel C), and perceptions of the critic’s motives (Panel D).
Figure 2. Graph of the proposed moderated mediation. Threat (X) reduces the perceived benevolent motives of the critic (M) for ingroup rather than outgroup critics (W). Reductions in perceived benevolence, in turn, predict less persuasion and positive attitudes (Y).
Figure 3. Experiment 2 interactions on the primary outcome variables. Paneled by dependent variable. Threat reduces or eliminates ingroup preference in relation to persuasion (Panel A), attitudes (Panel B), negative emotions (Panel C), behavioral intentions (Panel D), and perceptions of the critic’s motives (Panel E).
Figure 4. Experiment 3 interactions on the primary outcome variables. Paneled by dependent variable. Threat reduces or eliminates ingroup preference in relation to persuasion (Panel A), attitudes (Panel B), negative emotions (Panel C), behavioral intentions (Panel D), and perceptions of the critic’s motives (Panel E).
Figure 5. Experiment 4 interactions on persuasion and attitudes. Value affirmation eliminates the negative effect of threat on persuasion (Panel A), and also eliminates ingroup advantage in relation to persuasion (Panel B). Similarly, value affirmation eliminates the negative effect of threat on attitudes (Panel C) and eliminates the attitude preference for an ingroup critic (Panel D).
Figure 6. Experiment 4 interactions on emotions and behavioral intentions. Value affirmation eliminates the effect of threat on negative emotions (Panel A), and eliminates ingroup preference in relation to negative emotions (Panel B). Similarly, value affirmation eliminates the negative effect of threat on behavioral intentions to share the criticism (Panel C) and eliminates the behavioral intention to share the criticism from ingroup compared to outgroup critics (Panel D).
Figure 7. Experiment 4 interactions on the critic’s motives. Value affirmation eliminates the negative effect of threat on perceptions of the critic’s motives (Panel A), and reduces the preferential attribution of benevolent motives to ingroup critics (Panel B).
APPENDIX 1

EXPERIMENT 1 MANIPULATIONS

Study shows that US wages are stagnating and falling as money moves overseas

CNN
By: Michael Hughes

Washington- The American economy is in bad shape. This was the conclusion reached by researchers at the Center for the Economy, a non-partisan think-tank based in Washington, DC. They conducted a large-scale economic survey that was released early on Wednesday which analyzed economic growth and the average wages of American workers to reach this conclusion.

The study reveals that even when accounting for inflation, Americans wages have been stagnating or falling across a wide range of industries. Dr. Brandon Ciernow, an economist and co-author of the study, explains that this trend is not new, but that the true extent of it is only now being uncovered. "Most surveys of the economy only focus on the overall economy without looking at average wages. We decided to look at average wages overall and wages within industries to reach our conclusions. We were shocked to find that not only are wages stagnating for lower income jobs, but that the wages of even relatively higher paying jobs have been stagnant for years or are starting to fall."

Dr. Ciernow explained that because of inflation over time, a salary that doesn't grow is actually falling in terms of purchasing power. Jay Kornet, an industry adviser, has spent decades studying salaries and wages. "The most telling statistic is that, adjusted for inflation, average monthly income has dropped $500 since 2012."

Jay Kornet explains that wage stagnation is likely to affect most Americans. As wages fall or stagnate, less money circulates in the economy. Even those who are not themselves seeing their salaries drop or stagnate will be directly affected as prices rise to compensate for falling sales. "If you are a student, you will see tuition costs skyrocketing and be forced to take out more money in debilitating loans. If you are trying to start your career, you will be getting lower starting wages with fewer opportunities to get a raise. If you are trying to start a family, you will not be able to afford a house, a new car, or cover the costs of raising children. If you are approaching retirement, you will see your retirement funds drying up faster, and have a harder time maintaining the quality of your life."

The study also showed that while wages are stagnant in the U.S., the money that is no longer in the U.S. economy is moving elsewhere. The rapid growth of the Chinese and Indian economies, along with the economic growth in Southeast Asia, has opened up a very profitable market. Many American companies are now sending jobs overseas, and those countries are enjoying an economic boom as wages for local workers rise and companies compete for skilled labor.

Dr. Ciernow is unsure of whether wages will start rising again, but he says that most signs don't point in that direction. "Without the political will in the U.S. to change the current direction things are going in, we are unlikely to see any of this change in the near future."

Threat manipulation article emphasizing international competition.
Study shows that US wages are stagnating and falling

CNN
By: Michael Hughes

Washington—The American economy is in bad shape. This was the conclusion reached by researchers at the Center for the Economy, a non-partisan think-tank based in Washington, DC. They conducted a large-scale economic survey that was released early on Wednesday which analyzed economic growth and the average wages of American workers to reach this conclusion.

The study reveals that even when accounting for inflation, Americans wages have been stagnating or falling across a wide range of industries. Dr. Brandon Ciernow, an economist and co-author of the study, explains that this trend is not new, but that the true extent of it is only now being uncovered. “Most surveys of the economy only focus on the overall economy without looking at average wages. We decided to look at average wages overall and wages within industries to reach our conclusions. We were shocked to find that not only are wages stagnating for lower income jobs, but that the wages of even relatively higher paying jobs have been stagnant for years or are starting to fall.” Dr. Ciernow explained that because of inflation over time, a salary that doesn’t grow is actually falling in terms of purchasing power. Jay Kornet, an industry adviser, has spent decades studying salaries and wages. “The most telling statistic is that, adjusted for inflation, average monthly income has dropped $500 since 2012.”

Jay Kornet explains that wage stagnation is likely to affect most Americans. As wages fall or stagnate, less money circulates in the economy. Even those who are not themselves seeing their salaries drop or stagnate will be directly affected as prices rise to compensate for falling sales. “If you are a student, you will see tuition costs skyrocketing and be forced to take out more money in debilitating loans. If you are trying to start your career, you will be getting lower starting wages with fewer opportunities to get a raise. If you are trying to start a family, you will not be able to afford a house, a new car, or cover the costs of raising children. If you are approaching retirement, you will see your retirement funds drying up faster, and have a harder time maintaining the quality of your life.”

Dr. Ciernow is unsure of whether wages will start rising again, but he says that most signs don’t point in that direction. “Without the political will in the U.S. to change the current direction things are going in, we are unlikely to see any of this change in the near future.”

Threat manipulation article without emphasis on international competition.
The Harsh Truth about America Today

By: Alan Greene

Let's talk about the state that America is in today. We can't keep on pretending that everything is alright. The economy has slowed down, and wage stagnation is at an all-time high. We are becoming internationally isolated, and the empire is crumbling. But why?

Let's call it what it is. We Americans are lazy. We live in an entitled country where nobody puts that much effort into anything but demands the highest praise for every mealy accomplishment. We are quick to discuss our "rights" and what we deserve but not so quick to actually work. We all seem to want praise for the barest minimum in behavior and effort, and if no praise is given we believe that we are being punished.

This isn't anything new. Everyone knows that we are lazy and don't like to work very hard. So are we surprised that people don't want to hire American workers anymore? I wouldn't want to hire many Americans to work for me. Are we surprised that the US economy keeps on slowing down? Are we surprised that wages have been stagnating for years? Are we really surprised about any of that?

The problem is that we love talking about how great we are, how much America has accomplished, and how we are the superpower, but that's not us anymore. What we really are is the spoiled child of the world: lazy, entitled, and blissfully unaware of it. It's time we admitted it to ourselves.

About the author

Alan Greene is an American writer and professor at a major university in Washington DC. He was born and raised in the Midwest and now lives with his family in DC. He frequently publishes in leading newspapers, and is also a political commentator on American television.

Critical article by an ingroup member (American).
The Harsh Truth about America Today

International Herald Tribune
By: Kyung-soo Yun

Let’s talk about the state that America is in today. They can’t keep on pretending that everything is alright. The economy has slowed down, and wage stagnation is at an all-time high. They are becoming internationally isolated, and the empire is crumbling. But why?

Let’s call it what it is. Americans are lazy. They live in an entitled country where nobody puts that much effort into anything but demands the highest praise for every measly accomplishment. They are quick to discuss our “rights” and what we deserve but not so quick to actually work. They all seem to want praise for the barest minimum in behavior and effort, and if no praise is given they believe that they are being punished.

This isn’t anything new. Everyone knows that they are lazy and don’t like to work very hard. So are they surprised that people don’t want to hire American workers anymore? I wouldn’t want to hire many Americans to work for me. Are they surprised that the US economy keeps on slowing down? Are they surprised that wages have been stagnating for years? Are they really surprised about any of that?

The problem is that they love talking about how great they are, how much America has accomplished, and how they are the superpower, but that’s not them anymore. What they really are is the spoiled child of the world: lazy, entitled, and blissfully unaware of it. It’s time they admitted it to themselves.

About the author
Kyung-soo Yun is a South Korean writer and professor at a major university in Seoul, South Korea. He was born and raised in Daegu and now lives with his family in Seoul. He frequently publishes in leading newspapers, and is also a political commentator on South Korean television.

Critical article by an outgroup member (South Korean).
APPENDIX 2

EXPERIMENT 1 DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Persuasiveness of the criticism

1) How much do you agree or disagree with the opinion article you just read?
2) How persuaded or not persuaded are you by the opinion article you just read?
3) How important is it to think about the issues raised by this opinion article?
4) How fair is this opinion article?
5) How constructive is the opinion article you just read?

Attitudes toward the critic

1) How trustworthy or untrustworthy is the person who wrote this opinion article?
2) How much do you think you would like or dislike the person who wrote this opinion article?

Emotional reactions

1) How angry or not angry do you feel at the person who wrote this opinion article?
2) How upset or not upset do you feel at the person who wrote this opinion article?

Perceived intentions of the critic

1) How much of a patriotic American is the person who wrote the opinion article above?
2) How loyal to America is the person who wrote the opinion article above?
3) Would the person who wrote the opinion article above defend America if it was being unfairly criticized?

Demographics

1) Please indicate your gender:
2) Please indicate your age:
3) Please indicate your Race or Ethnicity:
4) Politically, I see myself as being... ([1] Very Liberal – [7] Very Conservative)
5) What is your citizenship status?
6) What is your current employment status?
APPENDIX 3

EXPERIMENT 2 MANIPULATIONS

Study shows that US wages are stagnating and falling

CNN
By: Michael Hughes

Washington: The American economy is in bad shape. This was the conclusion reached by researchers at the Center for the Economy, a non-partisan think-tank based in Washington, DC. They conducted a large-scale economic survey that was released early on Wednesday which analyzed economic growth and the average wages of American workers to reach this conclusion.

The study reveals that even when accounting for inflation, Americans’ wages have been stagnating or falling across a wide range of industries. Dr. Brandon Clemow, an economist and co-author of the study, explains that this trend is not new, but that the true extent of it is only now being uncovered. “Most surveys of the economy only focus on the overall economy without looking at average wages. We decided to look at average wages overall and wages within industries to reach our conclusions. We were shocked to find that not only are wages stagnating for lower income jobs, but that the wages of even relatively higher paying jobs have been stagnant for years or are starting to fall,” Dr. Clemow explained that because of inflation over time, a salary that doesn’t grow is actually falling in terms of purchasing power. Jay Kornet, an industry adviser, has spent decades studying salaries and wages. “The most telling statistic is that, adjusted for inflation, average monthly income has dropped $500 since 2008.”

Jay Kornet explains that wage stagnation is likely to affect most Americans. As wages fall or stagnate, less money circulates in the economy. Even those who are not themselves seeing their salaries drop or stagnate will be directly affected as prices rise to compensate for falling sales. “If you are a student, you will see tuition costs skyrocketing and be forced to take out more money in debilitating loans. If you are trying to start your career, you will be getting lower starting wages with fewer opportunities to get a raise. If you are trying to start a family, you will not be able to afford a house, a new car, or cover the costs of raising children. If you are approaching retirement, you will see your retirement funds drying up faster, and have a harder time maintaining the quality of your life.”

Dr. Clemow is unsure of whether wages will start rising again, but he says that most signs don’t point in that direction. “Without the political will in the U.S. to change the current direction things are going in, we are unlikely to see any of this change in the near future.”

Threat article from Experiment 2.
The Harsh Truth about America Today

By Kyung-soo Yun

Let’s talk about the state that America is in today. They can’t keep on pretending that everything is alright. The economy has slowed down, and wage stagnation is at an all-time high. They are becoming internationally isolated, and the empire is crumbling. But why?

Let’s call it what it is. Americans are lazy. They live in an entitled country where nobody puts that much effort into anything but demands the highest praise for every measly accomplishment. They are quick to discuss their “rights” and what they deserve but not so quick to actually work. They all seem to want praise for the barest minimum in behavior and effort, and if no praise is given they believe that they are being punished.

This isn’t anything new. Everyone knows that they are lazy and don’t like to work very hard. So are they surprised that people don’t want to hire American workers anymore? I wouldn’t want to hire many Americans to work for me. Are they surprised that the US economy keeps on slowing down? Are they surprised that wages have been stagnating for years? Are they really surprised about any of that?

The problem is that they love talking about how great they are, how much America has accomplished, and how they are the superpower, but that’s not them anymore. What they really are is the spoiled child of the world: lazy, entitled, and blissfully unaware of it. It’s time they admitted it to themselves.

About the author
Kyung-soo Yun is a South Korean writer and professor at a major university in Seoul, South Korea. He was born and raised in Daegu and now lives with his family in Seoul. He frequently publishes in leading newspapers, and is also a political commentator on South Korean television.

Critical article by an outgroup member (South Korean) for Experiment 2.
The Harsh Truth about America Today

International Herald Tribune
By: Alan Greene

Let’s talk about the state that America is in today. We can’t keep on pretending that everything is alright. The economy has slowed down, and wage stagnation is at an all-time high. We are becoming internationally isolated, and the empire is crumbling. But why?

Let’s call it what it is. We Americans are lazy. We live in an entitled country where nobody puts that much effort into anything but demands the highest praise for every measly accomplishment. We are quick to discuss our "rights" and what we deserve but not so quick to actually work. We all seem to want praise for the barest minimum in behavior and effort, and if no praise is given we believe that we are being punished.

This isn’t anything new. Everyone knows that we are lazy and don’t like to work very hard. So are we surprised that people don’t want to hire American workers anymore? I wouldn’t want to hire many Americans to work for me. Are we surprised that the US economy keeps on slowing down? Are we surprised that wages have been stagnating for years? Are we really surprised about any of that?

The problem is that we love talking about how great we are, how much America has accomplished, and how we are the superpower, but that’s not us anymore. What we really are is the spoiled child of the world: lazy, entitled, and blissfully unaware of it. It’s time we admitted it to ourselves.

About the author

Alan Greene is an American writer and professor at a major university in Washington DC. He was born and raised in the Midwest and now lives with his family in DC. He frequently publishes in leading newspapers, and is also a political commentator on American television.

Critical article by an ingroup member (American) for Experiment 2.
APPENDIX 4

EXPERIMENT 2 DEPENDENT VARIABLES, MEDIATORS, AND MANIPULATION CHECKS

Threat manipulation check

1) According to this article, how much has average monthly income dropped since 2008 adjusted for inflation?
   a. $200
   b. $500
   c. $1000
   d. Average monthly income did not drop

2) Do you think that the article does a poor job or a good job of explaining the economic situation in the U.S. today?

3) Do you find this article to be convincing or unconvincing?

4) Do you dislike or like this article?

5) Do you share the author’s concern about the state of the U.S. economy?

Open-ended questions about the critical article

1) What type of article did you just read (e.g. news, analysis, opinion, etc.)?

2) If you had to choose one word to describe your reaction to the article, what word would that be?

3) In a few words, what do you remember about the author?

Persuasiveness of the criticism

1) How much do you agree or disagree with the opinion article you just read?

2) How persuaded or not persuaded are you by the opinion article you just read?

3) How important is it to think about the issues raised by this opinion article?

4) How fair is this opinion article?

5) How constructive is the opinion article you just read?

6) How helpful is the opinion article you just read?

Attitudes toward the critic

1) How trustworthy or untrustworthy is the person who wrote this opinion article?

2) How much do you like or dislike the person who wrote this opinion article?

3) How intelligent or unintelligent is the author of this opinion article?

4) How much do you respect or not respect the author of this opinion article?

5) How kind or unkind is the author of this opinion article?

6) How competent or incompetent is the author of this opinion article?

Emotional reactions
1) As an American, how angry or not angry do you feel at the author of this opinion article?
2) As an American, how upset or not upset do you feel at the author of this opinion article?
3) As an American, how irritated do you feel by the author of this opinion article?
4) As an American, how insulted do you feel by the author of this opinion article?
5) As an American, how positively do you feel toward the author of this opinion article?

Behavioral intentions

1) Would you be willing to read more articles by this author?
2) Would you be willing to share this article on social media?
3) Would you be willing to suggest this article to people you know?

Perceived intentions of the critic

1) In your opinion, does the author of this article want to make the U.S. a better country?
2) In your opinion, does the author of this article care about the United States?
3) In your opinion, does the author of this article care about Americans?
4) In your opinion, does the author of this article feel good when the U.S. succeeds?
5) In your opinion, does the author of this article want to see the U.S. fail?
6) In your opinion, does the author of this article enjoy insulting Americans?

Demographics

1) Please indicate your gender:
2) Please indicate your age:
3) Please indicate your Race or Ethnicity:
4) Politically, I see myself as being... ([1] Very Liberal – [7] Very Conservative)
5) What is your citizenship status?
6) What is your current employment status?
Increased “lone wolf” terrorism threatens Americans here at home

July 5, 2016
CNN
By: Michael Hughes

Washington- This is a dangerous time to be American. Samantha Headley, a leading U.S. official in the Department of Homeland Security emphasized the danger posed by “lone wolf” terrorist attacks to the United States in a press briefing today. “Over the past few years, we’ve seen a series of gun and bomb attacks on Americans all across this country, from San Bernardino, California to Orlando, Florida, and from Chattanooga, Tennessee to Boston, Massachusetts.”

She explained that these attacks are becoming much more difficult to stop. “It used to be that only large and well-organized organizations could organize these attacks, but that’s no longer the case. The internet makes it easier to plan attacks and get weapons and materials than ever before, and it’s getting harder for us to identify them and stop them in time. If there is someone out there right now who wants an automatic weapon or explosives, there are a dozen ways to get them and it’s very hard for us to find or stop them.”

This also means that the next target can be anywhere, Headley stressed. “In the past, terrorism has targeted specific people or specific buildings, but that’s not the case anymore. Now the target is the American people. All of us and any of us. This is why it’s so important that we are all very vigilant. This not just about the big cities, anymore. Now attacks are happening in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, in Wichita, Kansas, and in Garland, Texas.”

The Department of Homeland Security has also released a guide to improve security and identified key locations to be concerned about. The report highlighted the vulnerability of people at universities, colleges, and elementary schools across the country, at workplaces, and at key roads, bridges, and tunnels. Jim Mickle, a former FBI investigator, agrees. “Anywhere where people are is a target. Schools and universities are all soft targets with many potential victims in small spaces. Workplaces are also easy targets because you know who will be there and at what times. Centrally located bridges and tunnels offer terrorists targets with many easy targets and also offer very high profile attacks.”

It’s also likely to become more frequent. In a recent analysis by the non-partisan Bureau of National Security (BNS) think-tank, “lone wolf” terrorism is on the rise all over the world, and is only likely to increase given the success of recent attacks. Martha Jameson, a researcher at the center, is pessimistic about the near future. “When they launch these attacks, these terrorists want to increase fear and insecurity. Given how easy it is to plan and prepare for lone wolf attacks, I have to believe that we will see many more in the days ahead. All we can do right now is be aware of the threat and be very vigilant.”

National security threat article.
Stop Talking About Terrorism: Rights matter more than safety

By: Alan Smythe Washington, D.C.

Fifteen years after 9/11, the U.S. still faces a constant threat to American lives. It’s easier than ever to become radicalized and have access to many dangerous weapons. The news is full of alarming examples of terrorist threats in every community—from small towns to big cities. In response, we Americans have acted to protect ourselves, our families, and our friends through restrictions on other people that are intended to keep us Americans safe.

Many Americans think that if our country wants to protect itself and stop terrorists, we must allow our government to hack phones, listen to conversations, and monitor social media. If we want to protect ourselves we need tighter border control, racial and religious profiling, and more law enforcement in our streets and in minority communities.

But I think that this threat to American lives is really our fault as Americans. Do you want to know why people hate us as Americans? Because our actions both in the United States and abroad have violated people’s rights, invaded their privacy, and enraged many communities, all in the name of national security. Because we Americans are selfish, only care about ourselves, and put our safety above other people’s rights. So how will more policies that invade people’s privacy and strip their rights make our country safer? Is America really a great country when a few terrorist attacks is enough to start us denying other people’s rights? We need to stop sacrificing individual rights in the name of national security. Yes, there may be more attacks and fewer terrorism plots will be stopped. But we, as Americans, have to accept that risk and protect individuals’ rights to privacy and freedom. We are not going to make Americans safer by sacrificing individual rights—which is what made people hate America in the first place.

About the author: Alan Smythe is an American writer and professor at a major university in Washington DC. He was born and raised in the Midwest and now lives with his family in DC. He frequently publishes in leading newspapers, and is also a political commentator on American television.
Stop Talking About Terrorism: Rights matter more than safety

By: Kyung-soo Yun Seoul, South Korea

Fifteen years after 9/11, the U.S. still faces a constant threat to American lives. It’s easier than ever to become radicalized and have access to many dangerous weapons. The news is full of alarming examples of terrorist threats in every community—from small towns to big cities. In response, Americans have acted to protect themselves, their families, and their friends through restrictions on other people that are intended to keep Americans safe.

Many Americans think that if the U.S. wants to protect itself and stop terrorists, Americans must allow their government to hack phones, listen to conversations, and monitor social media. If Americans want to protect themselves they need tighter border control, racial and religious profiling, and more law enforcement in their streets and in minority communities.

But I think that this threat to American lives is really the fault of the American people. Do you want to know why people hate Americans? Because American actions both in the United States and abroad have violated people’s rights, invaded their privacy, and enraged many communities, all in the name of national security. Because Americans are selfish, only care about themselves, and put their safety above other people’s rights. So how will more policies that invade people’s privacy and strip their rights make America safer? Is America really a great country when a few terrorist attacks is enough to start them denying other people’s rights? America needs to stop sacrificing individual rights in the name of national security. Yes, there may be more attacks against Americans and fewer terrorism plots will be stopped. But Americans have to accept that risk and protect individuals’ rights to privacy and freedom. They are not going to make Americans safer by sacrificing individual rights—which is what made people hate America in the first place.

About the author: Kyung-soo Yun is a South Korean writer and professor at a major university in Seoul, South Korea. He was born and raised in Daegu and now lives with his family in Seoul. He frequently publishes in leading newspapers, and is also a political commentator on South Korean television.
Attention check items for the threat article.

1) According to this article, what is one of the main reasons why lone wolf attacks are not likely to end soon?
   a. More people hate America today than ever before.
   b. It's easier for people to get weapons.
   c. The FBI and US police do not have the tools to stop them.
   d. This article was not about that.

2) Do you think that the article does a poor job or a good job of explaining how safe or unsafe the U.S. is today? (“Very Poor Job” [1] – “Very Good Job” [7])

3) Do you find this article to be convincing or unconvincing? (“Not at all Convincing” [1] – “Very Convincing” [7])

4) Do you dislike or like this article? (“Completely Dislike” [1] – “Completely Like” [7])


Manipulation check for critic’s nationality.

1) Earlier you read an opinion article from the International Herald Tribune. Where was the author of the opinion article from?
   a. United States
   b. France
   c. South Korea
   d. The article didn't say
APPENDIX 6

EXPERIMENT 4 UNIQUE MANIPULATIONS

At this newspaper, we strongly believe that the American value of free speech is an important part of what makes the United States great because it encourages debate around a diversity of opinions. That’s why, in this newspaper, we bring you a wide variety of opinions. - The Editorial Board

The Harsh Truth about America Today

International Herald Tribune
By: Alan Greene

Let’s talk about the state that America is in today. We can’t keep on pretending that everything is alright. The economy has slowed down, and wage stagnation is at an all-time high. We are becoming internationally isolated, and the empire is crumbling. But why?

Let’s call it what it is. We Americans are lazy. We live in an entitled country where nobody puts that much effort into anything but demands the highest praise for every measly accomplishment. We are quick to discuss our “rights” and what we deserve but not so quick to actually work. We all seem to want praise for the barest minimum in behavior and effort, and if no praise is given we believe that we are being punished.

This isn’t anything new. Everyone knows that we are lazy and don’t like to work very hard. So are we surprised that people don’t want to hire American workers anymore? I wouldn’t want to hire many Americans to work for me. Are we surprised that the US economy keeps on slowing down? Are we surprised that wages have been stagnating for years? Are we really surprised about any of that?

The problem is that we love talking about how great we are, how much America has accomplished, and how we are the superpower, but that’s not us anymore. What we really are is the spoiled child of the world: lazy, entitled, and blissfully unaware of it. It’s time we admitted it to ourselves.

About the author

Alan Greene is an American writer and professor at a major university in Washington DC. He was born and raised in the Midwest and now lives with his family in DC. He frequently publishes in leading newspapers, and is also a political commentator on American television. He has gained fame in recent years as a strong defender of U.S. policies and the American political model, and he often participates in panels in defense of U.S. policies.
Critical article allegedly written by an ingroup (American) author.

At this newspaper, we strongly believe that the American value of free speech is an important part of what makes the United States great because it encourages debate around a diversity of opinions. That’s why, in this newspaper, we bring you a wide variety of opinions.-

The Editorial Board

The Harsh Truth about America Today

International Herald Tribune
By Kyung-soo Yun

Let’s talk about the state that America is in today. They can’t keep on pretending that everything is alright. The economy has slowed down, and wage stagnation is at an all-time high. They are becoming internationally isolated, and the empire is crumbling. But why?

Let’s call it what it is. Americans are lazy. They live in an entitled country where nobody puts that much effort into anything but demands the highest praise for every measly accomplishment. They are quick to discuss their “rights” and what they deserve but not so quick to actually work. They all seem to want praise for the barest minimum in behavior and effort, and if no praise is given they believe that they are being punished.

This isn’t anything new. Everyone knows that they are lazy and don’t like to work very hard. So are they surprised that people don’t want to hire American workers anymore? I wouldn’t want to hire many Americans to work for me. Are they surprised that the US economy keeps on slowing down? Are they surprised that wages have been stagnating for years? Are they really surprised about any of that?

The problem is that they love talking about how great they are, how much America has accomplished, and how they are the superpower, but that’s not them anymore. What they really are is the spoiled child of the world: lazy, entitled, and blissfully unaware of it. It’s time they admitted it to themselves.

About the author

Kyung-soo Yun is a South Korean writer and professor at a major university in Seoul, South Korea. He was born and raised in Daegu and now lives with his family in Seoul. He frequently publishes in leading newspapers, and is also a political commentator on South Korean television. He has gained fame in recent years as a strong defender of U.S. policies and the American political model, and he often participates in panels in defense of U.S. policies.
Critical article allegedly written by an outgroup (South Korean) author.

Attention check for the value affirmation manipulation.

1) The editorial board added a note to the opinion article. Which of the following did their note include?
   a. "The opinions in this article do not reflect this newspaper's position."
   b. "We are only able to provide our content to our loyal readers thanks to the generosity of readers like yourselves. Please consider contributing."
   c. "We strongly believe that the American value of free speech is an important part of what makes the United States great because it encourages debate around a diversity of opinions."
   d. "We welcome articles and opinions from all people. All articles that are sent to us will be evaluated for public consumption and will be considered for publication."
BIBLIOGRAPHY


