

**Divide and Conquer: Effects of Highlighting Sub-Group Divisions on Leader Support from  
the Majority**

by

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## Abstract

All groups have prototypes, “fuzzy sets” of attributes that define the group’s identity. These prototypes are dynamic, creating opportunities for leaders to promote versions of the group prototype that fit their vision for this group’s future. Previous studies have suggested leaders can use rhetoric to manipulate the boundaries of their groups, expanding the group to include more people, or attempting to create new categorizations altogether. However, these studies have been qualitative in nature, drawing their conclusions through analyzing historical documents and transcripts from large observational studies. The current study empirically tested the effects of exclusionary and inclusionary leader rhetoric on perceptions of the leader as well as perceptions of the group. Participants were 110 Albertan university students. They read arguments by a student leader suggesting that non-Albertan students either did or did not share the values of Albertan students. The student leader’s rhetoric (exclusionary or inclusionary) and their prototypicality (high or low) was manipulated. Results show that using exclusionary rhetoric led to decreased support for both prototypical and non-prototypical leaders. Participants who strongly identified with being Albertan showed greater support for excluding non-Albertans when they were exposed to a prototypical leader who used exclusionary rhetoric. From these findings we conclude that while the use of exclusionary rhetoric may not always be an effective tool for leaders seeking to gain more support from majority subgroup members, exposure to this rhetoric may still cause highly-identified majority subgroup members to become more amenable to policies that exclude minority subgroup members from positions of authority within the group.

*Keywords:* social identity, leadership, prototypes, rhetoric, identification

## Preface

This thesis is an original work by Angela Ma. The research project, of which is thesis is a part, received ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Exclusive/Inclusive Rhetoric on Leader Support”, PRO No. 00093575, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020.

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## Introduction

Throughout the 2016 US presidential election, newspapers across the country were ablaze with commentary and editorials on then-candidate Donald Trump's unusually divisive rhetorical style. Columnists noted his use of "us versus them" language, casting his political opponents as "foes that must be beaten, sent away, or discredited" (Berenstein, 2015). On the political left, commentators expressed concern about the "dark power" of Trump's words (Healy & Haberman, 2015) and whether his rhetoric might incite violence against members of ethnic minorities ("Mr. Trump's Immigrant-bashing," 2015). On the political right, some worried that Trump's rhetoric could awaken "negative impulses" that would "further polarize the country and alienate non-whites for a generation" (Anonymous, 2016). When a leader uses their position to exclude specific group members it could not only change who is included in the group, it could also change the way group members treat the excluded members.

The social identity theory of leadership would predict that leaders who are group prototypical would have greater leeway to transgress group norms and encourage changes to the group's social identity. However, it is currently unclear whether leaders have the ability to alter group boundaries simply by implying that certain minority sub-group members do not belong. Moreover, it is not clear whether the use of these exclusionary appeals might constitute a useful strategy for leaders trying to gain support from the majority subgroup. This current study examines how the use of exclusionary rhetoric by group prototypical and group non-prototypical leaders affects support among majority subgroup members, and whether exposure to exclusionary leader rhetoric influences these majority subgroup members to become more amenable to exclusionary policies targeted at minority subgroup members.

## **Social Identity Theory of Leadership**

Traditional leadership theory and research focuses on trait-based (e.g., Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002) and dyadic relationship-based (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) frameworks to explain effective leadership. The leadership literature rarely considers the roles of groups, followers, or collective identity when explaining effective or ineffective leaders. The last decade or two witnessed a resurgence in leadership research among social psychologists interested in group processes (Thomas, Martin, & Riggio, 2013), social cognition (Lord & Hall, 2003), gender (Carli & Eagly, 2001), and intergroup relations (Hogg, van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012a). However, the most influential in reconnecting leadership to the study of groups is the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003; Hogg, van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012b). The social identity framework views leadership as a reciprocal process where leaders influence followers, and followers influence leaders.

The social identity theory of leadership owes much of its theoretical foundation to the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). The central premise of this theory is that an individual's sense of who they are and their place in the world, is informed by the groups they belong and feel emotionally attached to. Individuals who self-categorise as members of a group will seek to pattern their behaviours off the group's prototype. A prototype refers to the "fuzzy set" of attributes associated with membership in a group (Hogg & Reid, 2006). It is "fuzzy" because the contents of a group's prototype are context-dependent and shifts based on which relevant outgroups are salient. Groups conceptualize their prototype in accordance with the metacontrast principle, meaning they will seek to maximize intergroup differences, while minimizing intragroup differences (Hogg, Turner, & Davidson, 1990). Members who are better at filling this set are prototypical within the context of that group.



Members of groups will generally prefer to interact and associate with fellow group members (Hogg & Hardie, 1992; Hogg, Copper-Shaw, & Holzworth, 1993). Specifically, they will be drawn to members who are good representatives of the group's culture, beliefs, and values. In other words, members who fit the group's prototype well are more socially attractive. And, we perceive ourselves as being more similar to prototypical ingroup members but more dissimilar to non-prototypical ingroup members (e.g., Alabastro, Rast, Lac, Hogg, & Crano, 2013).

In part because of social attraction, the social identity theory of leadership predicts that as group membership becomes more important in defining one's self-concept, leader selection and effectiveness hinges on the extent to which a leader is perceived as group prototypical (Hogg, 2001; Hogg, van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012b). This prediction has been consistently supported in the literature, where we find that leaders who are described as prototypical of their group tend to receive more positive evaluations (e.g. more support from followers, greater trust, higher perceived effectiveness) than leaders described as non-prototypical (for meta-analytic reviews, see Barreto & Hogg, 2017; van Knippenberg, 2011). When the group is made salient, leaders who are prototypical of the group are preferred, even when they do not fit the "mold" of how a leader should generally look or behave (Hains, Hogg, & Duck, 1997; Hogg, Hains, & Mason, 1998; Platow, & van Knippenberg, 1999). Prototypical leaders are viewed as better at upholding the group's values and beliefs and are more trusted to have the group's best interests at heart compared to lowly prototypical or non-prototypical leaders (De Cremer & Tyler, 2005). They also experience relatively more freedom to deviate from group norms (Abrams, Randsley de Moura, Marques, & Hutchinson, 2008), retain higher levels of perceived effectiveness following failure or setback (Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008), and even retain more support following

serious transgressions of group norms (Abrams, Randsley de Moura, & Travaglino, 2013) when compared to non-prototypical group leaders. These findings on the relative advantages prototypical leaders experience have motivated new lines of research into how leaders can use their prototypicality to alter aspects of the group's social identity.

### **Leaders as “Entrepreneurs of Identity”**

A group prototype is not static. The prototype for any given group can shift in response to the group's needs and the social context surrounding the group (Hogg, Turner, & Davidson, 1990; Tajfel, 1959). This flexibility means that leaders can construct and “sell” different variations of the group prototype to their groups. For example, a politician might play up their nation's self-reliant, thrifty character to increase support for cutting social welfare programs. A different politician in the same country might defend social spending by emphasizing the nation's more communal values, such as concern for others (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011). In both cases, the leaders are presenting their vision for the group as prototypical, while casting their opponent's vision as non-prototypical.

The extent to which a leader can credibly make claims about what the group prototype ought to be is dependent on the leader's own standing and prototypicality within the group. If followers see the leader as a good representative for the group and its values, they will tend to show greater liking for this individual, resulting in what has been termed the prototypical leader advantage (Hogg, 2001). Prototypical leaders enjoy numerous advantages compared to non-prototypical leaders, but of relevance to the discussion of identity entrepreneurship is so-called “deviance credit.” Studies by Abrams and colleagues (2018) found that group members' willingness to continue supporting a transgressive leader was mediated by that leader's accrued in-group prototypicality. This means that if a member rated the leader as highly prototypical of their group, they were more likely to give the leader a positive evaluation even after reading

about how this person had violated an ingroup norm. Building from the findings of this study, it is possible that prototypical leaders receive greater license from their fellow group members to question aspects of the group's identity and to suggest changes to the group prototype.

Therefore, in a situation where calling for the explicit exclusion of a minority subgroup is not normative for the group, we would expect that a prototypical leader who used such rhetoric would retain more support from followers than a non-prototypical leader.

Group members will not all be equally receptive to a leader's attempts at identity entrepreneurship. Even when the leader is prototypical of the group, the extent to which this prototypicality matters can vary based on how strongly members identify with the group. A study by Hogg, Hains, and Mason (1998) found that the preference for highly prototypical leader was greatest among participants who identified strong with their group. suggesting members' group identification plays an important role in moderating the strength of the prototypical leader advantage. As previous studies have found that a leader's ability to retain support while deviating from group norms is mediated by that leader's prototypicality, it is possible that identity entrepreneurship is also influenced by leader prototypicality. In other words, highly identified group members may be more receptive than lowly identified members of a prototypical leader presenting new claims about what the group prototype ought to be, such as calling for the exclusion of a minority subgroup.

### **The Current Study**

The current study examined how members of a majority subgroup would respond to a leader advocating for the exclusion of minority subgroup members. While theory suggests leaders can modify or redefine group boundaries with their rhetoric, much of the past research has focused on contexts where groups are involved in pre-existing conflict (e.g. Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, & Levine, 2006; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005; Subašić, Reynolds, & Turner, 2008). This creates the possibility that leaders in these cases are simply articulating the group or identity divisions followers already perceive in their day-to-day lives. To examine the effects of leader rhetoric in a context of little pre-existing intergroup conflict, we decided to use Albertan students at the University of Alberta, and to have them read about a leader advocating for or against the exclusion of non-Albertan students from a student government position. Students at this university tend not to delimit themselves as Albertan or non-Albertan (usually differentiating instead by program of study, faculty, or whether they are domestic or international students), creating an opportunity to examine the effects of leader rhetoric in a context where strong to moderate group identification is present, yet long-standing intergroup animosity is absent.

Participants read a fictional news article stating that their Students' Union was putting together a delegation to represent the university at an upcoming student governance conference, and could not decide whether non-Albertan students should be included in the delegation. We constructed this scenario so as not to imply that our participants stood to personally benefit from the exclusion of the non-Albertan students. The article included a quote from a student councillor arguing either for or against the exclusion of non-Albertan students. In the article, the leaders justified their stances by claiming that non-Albertans either did not (exclusionary condition) or did (inclusionary condition) share the values of the other wider university community. The

article then described this student councillor as either typical or atypical of the student population, manipulating the councillor's prototypicality. After reading the article, participants responded to items asking them to evaluate the student councillor and rate how much they supported barring non-Albertan students from the Students' Union delegation.

Consistent with past research on the social identity theory of leadership, we hypothesised prototypical leaders would receive higher ratings of support, trust, and effectiveness than non-prototypical leaders (H1). We hypothesized a 2-way interaction such that prototypical leaders would receive comparable ratings of support, trust, and perceived effectiveness across the two rhetoric conditions; however, non-prototypical leaders were expected to receive lower support in the exclusionary rhetoric condition than in the inclusionary rhetoric condition (H2). We also hypothesized a 3-way interaction between leader rhetoric, prototypicality, and group identification such that support for barring non-Albertan students from the delegation would be highest among participants strongly identified with the province of Alberta who read about a prototypical leader using exclusionary rhetoric (H3).

## **Methods**

**Participants and design.** Participants were 110 (male = 35%, female = 65%, age = 18.9) undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory psychology course. Following recent recommendations by Aberson (2019), we conducted a post-hoc power analysis using obtained model parameters. Results show that our statistical models were sufficiently powered for support for excluding non-Albertans: power = .85. First year undergraduates made up the majority of the sample (60%), with all other participants being either second, third, or fourth year undergraduates. The participants' mean age was 18.64, and the modal responses for ethnicity were East Asian (29%) and Euro-North American (27%). They were recruited via a subject pool maintained by the Department of Psychology at the University of Alberta and told that the study

examined “how participants respond to student journalism.” In exchange for their participation, they received partial course credit. There were two manipulated predictor variables: rhetoric (exclusionary versus inclusionary) and prototypicality (high versus low). There were five measured outcome variables: leaders support, leader trust, perceived leader effectiveness, support for a policy that excluded non-Albertans from being part of a Students’ Union delegation, and intergroup differentiation.

**Procedure and materials.** Participants completed the study in a computer lab under the supervision of a research assistant. After consenting to take part in the study, participants completed a measure assessing their identification with Alberta, followed by a series of demographic items assessing age, gender, ethnicity, and year of study. They then read the study materials, which they were told was “an excerpt taken from a news article originally published in the Gateway, the University of Alberta’s student news website.” The article described a male student councillor who either opposed or supported a proposal to ban non-Albertan students joining a Students’ Union delegation. The article also described the student councillor as either prototypical or non-prototypical of the students he represented. For attention checks, participants were asked to correctly answer a true/false comprehension question before continuing the study. After reading the article and correctly answering the comprehension question, participants were directed to a page where they responded to the five main dependent variables, two manipulation checks, and an additional measure included for exploratory purposes. Participants were then thanked for their participation and fully debriefed.

**Rhetoric Manipulation.** The article shown to participants included a quote from the supposed student councillor. This quote contained the inclusionary/exclusionary rhetoric manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to either receive the inclusionary or

exclusionary statement from the leader. In the exclusionary rhetoric condition, the councillor says:

“I believe that non-Albertan students have different values than us. They go to the same classes as us, study at the same places, but when it comes to really being part of the U of A community, there’s a difference between non-Albertan and Albertan students. The issues they care about are not the same issues that we care about. The things they strive for are not the same things that we strive for. Some of my fellow councillors might disagree, but I think they are pushing an overly inclusive definition of what it means to be part of the U of A community, and I don’t think it makes any sense at all.”

In the inclusionary rhetoric condition, the councillor says:

"I don’t believe that non-Albertan students have different values than us. They go to the same classes as us, study at the same places, and when it comes to really being part of the U of A community, there’s no difference between non-Albertan and Albertan students. The issues they care about are the same issues that we care about. The things they strive for are the same things that we strive for. Some of my fellow councillors might disagree, but I think they are pushing an overly exclusive definition of what it means to be part of the U of A community, and I don’t think it makes any sense at all."

***Prototypicality manipulation.*** In addition to the quote, participants also read a description of the leader. Participants were randomly assigned to read a description painting the leader as prototypical or non-prototypical of their ingroup. In the prototypical condition, the councillor was described as “a rather typical U of A student,” “a lot like the students [he] represents in council,” and as having worked on “a number of widely supported, and very successful policy proposals.” In the non-prototypical condition, the councillor is described as “a

rather atypical U of A student,” “not a lot like the students [he] represents in council,” and as having worked on “a number of unorthodox, yet very successful policy proposals.” This manipulation was adapted from previous research (Rast, Gaffney, Hogg, & Crisp, 2012).

**Leader support.** Participants responded to seven items using a 9-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*). Items were, “This leader is effective”; “This leader represents the interests of U of A students”; “This leader fits in at the U of A”; “I trust this leader”; “I support this leader”; “This leader is likely to be elected next year;” “I would vote for this leader at next year’s SU elections.” This measure was adapted from Rast, Gaffney, Hogg and Crisp (2012) and its use in previous studies has shown that these items form a reliable scale ( $\alpha = .96$ ).

**Leader trust.** Participants rated the extent to which they trusted the student leader by responding to six items adapted from Rast, Hogg, Giessner (2013). These items were “I trust this leader absolutely”; “I think this leader does the right thing”; “I think this leader is trustworthy”; “This leader is very committed to U of A students”; “This leader wants the best for U of A students”; “This leader is gaining benefits for all U of A students.” When used in a previous study, these items formed a reliable scale ( $\alpha = .97$ ; Rast, Hogg, & Giessner, 2013).

**Leader effectiveness.** Participants rated the perceived effectiveness of the leader by answering four items adapted from Giessner and van Knippenberg (2012). These items were “This is a good leader”; “This leader is very effective”; “This leader leads the group in a way that motivates others”; “I would like working with this leader.” In previous studies, these items formed a reliable measure ( $\alpha = .89$ ; Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2012)

**Proposal support.** Participants rated how much or how little they supported barring non-Albertan students from the delegation described in the news article they had just read. The items were “I find the arguments supporting the restriction convincing”; “I think the restriction will be



beneficial to the University of Alberta”; “I support the implementation of the restriction proposed in the article.” These items were developed for the purposes of this study. An exploratory factor analysis conducted on this measure shows that all three items loaded onto a single factor that explained 24.9% of the variance. This measure has a high degree of internal consistency,  $\alpha = .91$ .

***Intergroup differentiation.*** The extent to which participants viewed non-Albertan and Albertan students as forming two distinct groups was assessed using four measures adapted from Jetten, McAuliffe, Hornsey, and Hogg (2006). Each measure focused on a facet of intergroup differentiation: representation preference, leader preference, contact preference, and funding allocation. Participants were instructed to imagine that they were a part of the Students’ Union committee tasked with overseeing the delegation, and helping delegates prepare. Each is described in greater detail below. The four items were analyzed separately as they did not form a reliable four-item scale:  $\alpha = .30$ .

***Representation preference.*** Participants were asked to rate how they would feel if the delegation was composed entirely of Albertan students, and then asked how they would feel if it was composed entirely of non-Albertan students. They gave their responses on a 9-point scale ranging from “not very good” (1) to “very good” (9). Responses for non-Albertan representation were subtracted from responses for Albertan leadership, such that a positive difference score indicated a preference for being represented exclusively by Albertans, and a negative score indicated a preference for being represented exclusively by non-Albertans ( $M = 1.79$ ,  $SD = 2.38$ ).

***Leader preference.*** Participants were asked how they would feel if the delegation leader was an Albertan student. They were then asked how they would feel if the delegation leader was a non-Albertan student. Responses for non-Albertan leadership were subtracted from responses

for Albertan leadership, such that positive differences scores indicated a preference for an Albertan delegation leader while a negative score indicated a preference for a non-Albertan delegation leader ( $M = 2.03$ ,  $SD = 2.08$ ).

*Contact preference.* For this item, participants were instructed to imagine that they were a volunteer tasked with working one-on-one with a delegation member to prepare for the conference. Participants were asked how they would feel if they were assigned to work with an Albertan delegate, followed by how they would feel if they were assigned to work with a non-Albertan delegate. Responses for contact with a non-Albertan were subtracted from responses for contact with an Albertan, such that positive difference scores reflect a preference for working with an Albertan delegate, while negative scores indicate a preference for working with a non-Albertan delegate ( $M = 0.27$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ).

*Funding allocation.* Participants were asked to imagine they were responsible for administering a travel award to help delegates attend the conference. They were asked what percentage of the funding should be allocated to Albertan and non-Albertan students, if there was an equal number of students from both groups attending. The percentage allocated to non-Albertans was subtracted from the percentage allocated to Albertans, such that a positive difference score meant that the participant allocated a larger percentage of the funding to Albertan students, while a negative score meant a larger percentage of the funding was allocated to non-Albertan students. A difference score of zero meant the funding was divided equally between the two groups ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 11.06$ ).

*Manipulation checks and exploratory variables.* The effectiveness of the prototypicality manipulation was checked using a two-item measure. These items were “This leader is a typical member of the U of A community,” and “This leader represents the attributes of the U of A;” (1=

*strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*). These two items formed a reliable scale ( $\alpha = .88$ ). To ensure that inclusionary rhetoric was not viewed as a threat to their subgroup's distinctive identity, we included a 3-item measure of distinctiveness threat ( $\alpha = .88$ ), adapted from Schmid, Hewstone, Cairns, and Hughes (2009). The identity leadership inventory (Steffens, et al., 2014) was included at the end of the study. This inventory has 15 items, and four subscales, each measuring a different facet of identity leadership: identity prototypicality, identity advancement, identity entrepreneurship, and identity impresarioship. The identity prototypicality subscale ( $\alpha = .97$ ) will serve as an additional manipulation check for leader prototypicality. The identity advancement ( $\alpha = .95$ ), identity entrepreneurship ( $\alpha = .93$ ), and identity impresarioship ( $\alpha = .94$ ) subscales will be analysed on an exploratory basis, to help provide a more comprehensive view of what effect leader rhetoric is having on participant's perceptions of their leader.

### **Statistical Analyses**

**Regression Models.** Results for leader support, leader trust, leader effectiveness, and support for excluding non-Albertans were analyzed using hierarchical regression. The models tested at each of the three steps are shown below. *Prototypicality* refers to what level of the leader prototypicality manipulation the participant received, *rhetoric* refers to what level of the leader rhetoric manipulation the participants received, and *identification* refers to the participant's self-reported level of identification with the province of Alberta.  $Y_i$  refers the  $i^{\text{th}}$  participant's score on the dependent variable being modelled.  $B_0$  refers to the grand mean of the dependent variable.  $E_i$  refers to residual variance not accounted for by the model for this participant.

$$\text{Step 1: } Y_i = b_0 + b_1 \textit{prototypicality}_i + b_2 \textit{rhetoric}_i + b_3 \textit{identification}_i + e_i$$

$$\text{Step 2: } Y_i = b_0 + b_1\textit{prototypicality}_i + b_2\textit{rhetoric}_i + b_3\textit{identification}_i + \\ b_4\textit{prototypicality}_i \times \textit{rhetoric}_i + b_5\textit{prototypicality}_i \times \textit{identification}_i + \\ b_6\textit{rhetoric}_i \times \textit{identification}_i + e_i$$

$$\text{Step 3: } Y_i = b_0 + b_1\textit{prototypicality}_i + b_2\textit{rhetoric}_i + b_3\textit{identification}_i + \\ b_4\textit{prototypicality}_i \times \textit{rhetoric}_i + b_5\textit{prototypicality}_i \times \textit{identification}_i + \\ b_6\textit{rhetoric}_i \times \textit{identification}_i + b_7\textit{prototypicality}_i \times \textit{rhetoric}_i \times \\ \textit{identification}_i + e_i$$

**Intergroup differentiation.** For each of the four intergroup differentiation items, participants' responses regarding the minority subgroup (non-Albertans) was subtracted from their responses regarding the majority subgroup (Albertans). This means that a higher score signifies greater preference for the majority subgroup. For example, if a participant has a positive score for leader preference, this would mean that they reported feeling more positively about being represented by a majority subgroup member, than by a minority subgroup member. The obtained difference scores were analyzed using hierarchical regression, according to the same models as described previously.

**Identity Leadership Scale.** Results for each of the four subscales were analyzed using hierarchical regression, according to the same three models that were used in the other regression analyses. This scale was included as an exploratory measure to further probe how participants felt about the leader they were presented with. Since this study's rhetoric manipulation was new, we were interested in seeing whether participants would rate the leader described in the study materials as high on the four identity leadership dimensions. This would also make it possible to test how differing levels of leader group prototypicality, and identification with Alberta would influence participants' perceptions of the leader on these identity leadership dimensions.

## Results

There were two manipulated dichotomous independent variables (leader rhetoric and leader prototypicality), one measured independent variable (Alberta identification), and five dependent measures (leader support, leader trust, leader effectiveness, support for excluding non-Albertans, and identity leadership). Data were analyzed using hierarchical, multiple regression and simple slope analyses were conducted for significant three-way interactions (Aiken & West, 1991).

**Manipulation checks.** Responses to the leader prototypicality measure indicate that our manipulation was not successful in producing the desired differences in perceived prototypicality of the leader. A t-test showed no significant difference in the perceived prototypicality of the non-prototypical leader ( $M = 5.26$ ;  $SD = 1.96$ ;  $95\% CI = 4.89, 5.63$ ) and the prototypical one,  $M = 5.45$ ,  $SD = 1.94$ ,  $95\% CI = 5.08, 5.82$ ,  $t(108) = -0.53$ ,  $p = .59$ . Moreover, when both the prototypicality manipulation and the rhetoric manipulation were included as predictors, results suggest that the rhetoric manipulation exerted significant influence on participants' evaluations of the leader's prototypicality,  $F(1,106) = 39.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.27$ . When the leader used inclusionary rhetoric, participants rated them as more prototypical ( $M = 6.49$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ,  $95\% CI = 6.22, 6.75$ ) compared to leaders who used exclusionary rhetoric:  $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 1.84$ ,  $95\% CI = 4.16, 4.85$ . A hierarchical multiple regression of leader rhetoric, leader prototypicality, and Alberta identification on the identity prototypicality subscale from the ILI found a similar pattern of results. The regression ( $adj. R^2 = .38$ ,  $F(3,106) = 23.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ) showed that while there was a main effect of leader rhetoric on identity prototypicality ( $\beta = -.63$ ,  $t = -8.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ), leader prototypicality did not have a significant effect on ratings of identity prototypicality:  $\beta = -.04$ ,  $t = -0.5$ ,  $p = .62$ . Although these manipulation checks failed, versions of this manipulation have been successfully used in the past (e.g. Rast, Gaffney, Hogg, & Crisp, 2012). The placement of the

manipulation check at the end of the study may also have meant the manipulation's effects had worn off by the time participants reached the measure. Therefore, we include the prototypicality manipulation in subsequent analyses.

A two-way ANOVA conducted on the distinctiveness threat measure suggests that neither manipulation produced significant changes in perceptions of distinctiveness threat. A subsequent regression analysis which included Alberta identification as an additional predictor confirmed that none of the predictors significantly influenced distinctiveness threat. The model was non-significant at Step 1 ( $adj. R^2 = -.003, F(3, 106) = 0.90, p = .45$ ), and continued to be non-significant in Step 2 with the inclusion of the two-way interaction ( $\Delta R^2 = .01, \Delta F(3, 103) = 0.35, p = .77$ ) and Step 3 with the three-way interaction:  $adj. R^2 = .05, F(4, 102) = 1.37, p = .25$ .

**Leader support.** We conducted a hierarchical multiple regression of Alberta identification, leader prototypicality, and leader rhetoric onto leader support. The model was significant at Step 1:  $adj. R^2 = .40, F(3, 106) = 24.59, p < .001$ . Two main effects were significant. Support for the leader decreased with the use of exclusionary rhetoric ( $\beta = -.61, t = -8.11, p < .001$ ), but increased with participants' identification with Alberta:  $\beta = .29, t = 3.87, p < .001$ . We did not find support for hypothesis 1, as there was not a significant main effect of leader prototypicality:  $\beta = .01, t = 0.17, p = .87$ . We also did not find support for hypothesis 2, as the addition of two-way interactions at Step 2 did not account for additional variance in the model:  $\Delta R^2 = .002, \Delta F(3, 103) = 0.11, p = .95$ . Similarly, we did not find support for hypothesis 3. The addition of a three-way interaction at Step 3 did not significantly improve the model:  $\Delta R^2 = .02, \Delta F(4, 102) = 0.94, p = .45$ .

**Leader trust.** We performed a hierarchical multiple regression of Alberta identification, leader rhetoric, and leader prototypicality onto leader trust. Our findings here follow the same

pattern as our findings for leader support. The model was significant at Step 1:  $adj. R^2 = .35$ ,  $F(3, 106) = 20.47$ ,  $p < .001$ . Exclusionary leader rhetoric led to lowered trust ( $\beta = -.61$ ,  $t = -7.76$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while higher levels of Alberta identification were associated with increased trust:  $\beta = .17$ ,  $t = 2.14$ ,  $p = .04$ . Leader prototypicality did not have a significant effect on trust:  $\beta = -.02$ ,  $t = -0.03$ ,  $p = .79$ . The addition of two-way interactions at Step 2 did not significantly improve the model:  $\Delta R^2 = .004$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 103) = 0.23$ ,  $p = .87$ . The addition of a three-way interaction at Step 3 also failed to significantly improve the model:  $\Delta R^2 = .006$ ,  $\Delta F(4, 102) = 0.25$ ,  $p = .91$ . The findings for leader trust support did not support hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.

**Leader effectiveness.** A hierarchical multiple regression of Alberta identification, leader rhetoric, and leader prototypicality onto leader effectiveness produced a similar pattern of results to what we found for leader support and leader trust. At Step 1, we found two significant main effects:  $adj. R^2 = .30$ ,  $F(3, 106) = 16.87$ ,  $p < .001$ . The use of exclusionary rhetoric was associated with lowered rating of leader effectiveness ( $\beta = -.55$ ,  $t = -6.77$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while higher levels of Alberta identification was associated with higher ratings of leader effectiveness:  $\beta = .24$ ,  $t = 2.98$ ,  $p < .001$ . At Step 2, we found no significant two way interactions:  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 103) = 1.05$ ,  $p = .38$ . At Step 3, we found that the three-way interactions are also not significant:  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ,  $\Delta F(4, 102) = 0.95$ ,  $p = .44$ . The results for leader effectiveness did not support our three hypotheses.

**Support for excluding non-Albertans.** To test H3, we conducted a hierarchical multiple regression on the effects of leader prototypicality, leader rhetoric, and Alberta identification on support for excluding non-Albertans from a student delegation. The regression was non-significant at Step 1:  $adj. R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(3, 106) = 2.09$ ,  $p = .10$ . The inclusion of two-way interactions at Step 2 accounted for significantly more variance:  $\Delta R^2 = .07$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 103) = 2.77$ ,  $p$

= .05. When presented with exclusionary rhetoric, support for the proposal to exclude non-Albertans increased with Alberta identification:  $\beta = 0.21, t = 2.29, p = .02$ .

This effect was qualified by a three-way interaction at Step 3:  $\Delta R^2 = .05, \Delta F(3, 103) = 5.92, p = .02, \beta = 0.22, t = 2.43, p = .02$ . As predicted by hypothesis 3, when participants read about a prototypical leader who used exclusionary rhetoric, support for excluding non-Albertans increased with Alberta identification:  $\beta = 0.83, t = 2.43, p = .02$ . When participants read about a non-prototypical leader using the same rhetoric, identification did not produce changes in support for exclusion:  $\beta = 0.37, t = 0.99, p = .33$ . When participants read about a prototypical leader using inclusionary rhetoric, their support for exclusion decreased as identification increased:  $\beta = -0.85, t = -2.35, p = .02$ . As with the exclusionary rhetoric, identification did not moderate participants' support for exclusion when they read about a non-prototypical leader using inclusionary rhetoric:  $\beta = 0.41, t = 1.23, p = .22$ .



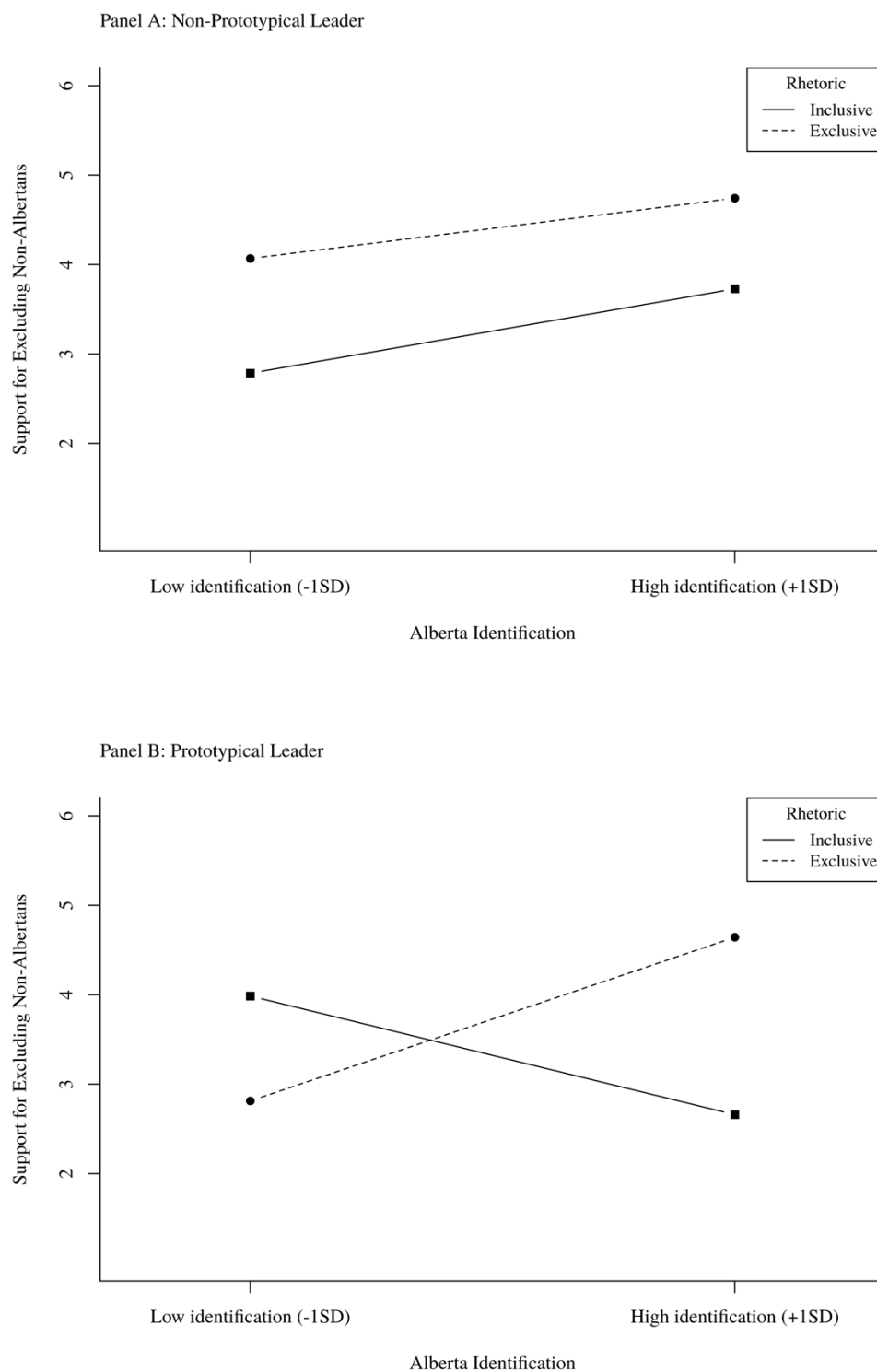


Figure 1: Average ratings for support for excluding non-Albertans as a function of Alberta identification, moderated by leader prototypicality and leader rhetoric.

**Intergroup differentiation.** The hierarchical multiple regression of leader prototypicality, leader rhetoric, and Alberta identification onto representation preference was significant at Step 1:  $adj. R^2 = .11$ ,  $F(3, 105) = 5.45$ ,  $p < .01$ . When presented with a leader who used exclusionary rhetoric, participants reported a stronger preference for representation by members of their ingroup (Albertans) over members of their outgroup (non-Albertans):  $\beta = .31$ ,  $t = 3.39$ ,  $p = .001$ . The addition of two-way interactions in Step 2 did not significantly improve the model:  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 102) = 0.8$ ,  $p = .49$ . The addition of a three-way interaction at Step 3 also failed to significantly increase the amount of variance accounted for:  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ,  $\Delta F(4, 101) = 0.62$ ,  $p = .65$ .

The regression of leader prototypicality, leader rhetoric, and Alberta identification onto leader preference was non-significant at Step 1:  $adj. R^2 = .02$ ,  $F(3, 106) = 1.70$ ,  $p = .17$ . The addition of two-way and three-way interactions at Step 2 ( $\Delta R^2 = .006$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 103) = 0.22$ ,  $p = .88$ ) and Step 3 ( $\Delta R^2 = .008$ ,  $\Delta F(4, 102) = 0.21$ ,  $p = .93$ ) failed to produce significant improvements in the model.

Similarly, the regression of prototypicality, rhetoric, and Alberta identification onto contact preference was non-significant at Step 1 ( $adj. R^2 = -.02$ ,  $F(3, 106) = 0.41$ ,  $p = .74$ ) and the model was not significantly improved upon by the addition of two-way and three-way interaction effects at Steps 2 ( $\Delta R^2 = .001$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 103) = 0.04$ ,  $p = .99$ ) and 3 ( $\Delta R^2 = .001$ ,  $\Delta F(4, 102) = 0.04$ ,  $p = .99$ ). We found the same pattern of results for funding preference: non-significance at Step 1 ( $adj. R^2 = -.03$ ,  $F(3, 106) = 0.12$ ,  $p = .94$ ) and no improvement in the model at Steps 2 ( $\Delta R^2 = .05$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 103) = 1.86$ ,  $p = .14$ ) and 3:  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ,  $\Delta F(4, 102) = 1.54$ ,  $p = .2$ .

**Identity Leadership Scale.** Responses to the ILI were analyzed by subscale (see "Manipulation checks" section for discussion of the identity prototypicality subscale).

**Identity advancement.** The hierarchical regression of prototypicality, rhetoric, and Alberta identification on identity advancement was significant at Step 1:  $adj. R^2 = .29$ ,  $F(3, 106) = 16.06$ ,  $p < .001$ . Leaders who used exclusionary rhetoric were rated as lower in identity advancement than leaders who used inclusionary rhetoric:  $\beta = -.55$ ,  $t = -6.81$ ,  $p < .001$ . The model was not improved by the addition of two-way interactions in Step 2 ( $\Delta R^2 = -.19$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 103) = -1.13$ ,  $p = 1$ ) or the three-way interaction in Step 3;  $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ,  $\Delta F(4, 102) = 1.45$ ,  $p = .22$ .

**Identity entrepreneurship.** The pattern of results for identity entrepreneurship replicates the pattern found for identity advancement. A hierarchical regression of prototypicality, rhetoric, and Alberta identification on identity entrepreneurship was significant at Step 1:  $adj. R^2 = .67$ ,  $F(3, 105) = 73.04$ ,  $p < .001$ . Use of exclusionary rhetoric was associated with decreased ratings of identity entrepreneurship for the leader compared to when the leader used inclusionary rhetoric:  $\beta = -.83$ ,  $t = -14.75$ ,  $p < .001$ . There were no significant two-way interactions ( $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 102) = 1.4$ ,  $p = .25$ ) and the three-way interaction was also not significant:  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $\Delta F(4, 101) = 1.08$ ,  $p = .37$ .

**Identity impressarioship.** The pattern of results found for identity impressarioship was the same as what was found for identity advancement and identity entrepreneurship. A hierarchical regression of prototypicality, leader rhetoric, and Alberta identification on identity impressarioship found significant main effects:  $adj. R^2 = .3$ ,  $F(3, 106) = 16.17$ ,  $p < .001$ . Leaders who used exclusionary rhetoric received lower ratings of identity impressarioship than leaders who used inclusionary rhetoric:  $\beta = -.56$ ,  $t = -6.91$ ,  $p < .001$ . There were no significant two-way

( $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 103) = 1.05$ ,  $p = .37$ ) or three way interactions:  $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ,  $\Delta F(4, 102) = 1.57$ ,  $p = .19$ .

### **Discussion**

This study experimentally examined the effects of exclusionary and inclusionary leader rhetoric on followers' perceptions of both their leader and of the group they share with this leader. We provide preliminary evidence to suggest that while promoting an exclusionary conceptualization of the group can cause a leader to lose support, this rhetoric can make some members more receptive of policies that exclude minority subgroup members. Although we did not find evidence to support our first two hypotheses, we did find support for our third. Prototypical leaders were not generally preferred over non-prototypical ones, and they did not retain more support from group members following the use of exclusionary rhetoric than non-prototypical leaders using the same rhetoric. However, among participants who identified strongly with being Albertan, exposure to exclusionary rhetoric from a prototypical leader did make them more receptive to policies that excluded non-Albertan students.

#### **“Selling” an Identity to the Group**

The identity leadership literature suggests that part of being an “entrepreneur of identity” is being able to define “category boundaries” (Haslam et al., 2011). These are the boundaries that separate one's ingroup from the outgroup. Effective identity leaders can move category boundaries by presenting the group with arguments for why some individuals should be included in or excluded from this group. The findings of this current study show that under certain conditions, this category boundary movement is possible. Our exclusionary leader rhetoric manipulation caused some Albertan participants to become more supportive of policies that bar non-Albertans from participating in aspects of student governance, and increased their preference

for being represented exclusively by fellow Albertan students. However, this shift in support only occurred among Albertans who were highly identified with the province. These findings are further complicated by the fact that, in general, evaluations of these exclusionary leaders were markedly more negative than evaluations of leaders who used inclusionary rhetoric. Despite being supported less, trusted less, and viewed as less effective, the exclusionary leader's rhetoric still softened some participants' views towards policies which sought to exclude non-Albertan students from parts of the wider student community.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The relatively small sample used in this study is a potential methodological limitation. While a post-hoc power analysis suggested that there was sufficient power to detect effects, this type of analysis has been criticized for being misleading or ineffective (e.g. Zhang, Hedo, Rivera, Rull, Richardson, & Tu, 2019). While the results of this study are promising, they would benefit greatly from replication in a larger study with more participants. The decision to rely exclusively on self-report measures to assess leader support and participants' views about non-Albertans is also problematic. Replicating the findings of this study using behavioural measures such as giving participants the opportunity to vote of a leader from a list of candidates, or donate time or money to their election campaign would allow us to gauge whether self-reported support for the leader actually translates into behaviours that would be influential in a real-world context. Using non-Albertan students as the target group for this study may also have struck participants as unrealistic, given the lack of any real-life precedent for Albertan students at this university encouraging discrimination against non-Albertans. The lack of suspicion checks in this study means that we are unable to probe what participants thought the aims of this research were. It is unlikely that participants would have been able to guess the exact hypotheses of the study, given that they did not have access to all study materials, and had little reason to suspect that other

participants may be reading different versions of the materials than them. However, participants may have discerned that the researchers were interested in discrimination, and this may have affected their responses to questions posed during the study.

The manipulation for leader rhetoric appears to have been far too strong relative to the prototypicality manipulation. Manipulating prototypicality has produced robust and reliable effects in past leadership research (van Knippenberg, 2011). However, in this case it seemed over-shadowed by leader rhetoric which accounted for more of the variance in all measures, even the prototypicality manipulation check. This is problematic as it limits our ability to properly examine how a leader's prototypicality, or lack thereof, might influence the degree to which they are able to shift category boundaries. Future research should use a shorter manipulation of leader rhetoric and manipulate prototypicality earlier in the study, prior to manipulating rhetoric. The prototypicality manipulation could also be lengthened to include more details on how the leader does or does not fit with the rest of the student population.

Another potential concern is that some participants could have viewed the rhetoric as a proxy for political orientation. In a political climate where some politicians suggest that the province of Alberta would be better served by having looser ties to the rest of Canada (Cecco & Agren, 2019), participants might infer from the rhetoric that the leader was either conservative or liberal in political orientation, despite provincial or federal politics not being explicitly discussed in the study materials.

The current study examines the effects of rhetoric in a context where there is little pre-existing intergroup tension. While this allowed us to isolate the leader's effect on the group, in the real world, decisions by groups to become more exclusionary rarely, if ever, occur in a vacuum. Leaders often advocate for more exclusionary conceptualizations of the group in times

of crisis, usually in response to perceived increases in intergroup tension. Future research should examine how external factors acting on the group influence this process. This can include examining whether threats to the group's distinctiveness or feelings of collective angst make groups members more receptive to exclusionary rhetoric or policies.

### **Conclusion**

The results presented here suggest that leaders who advocate for policies that exclude minority subgroup members do not always gain support from majority subgroup members. However, the use of exclusionary rhetoric does seem to make highly identified members of the majority subgroup more receptive to excluding minority subgroup members. That is, leaders using exclusionary rhetoric do seem to have some success re-drawing or defining intergroup boundaries, even if they lose support for themselves in the process. Participants who were highly identified with the majority subgroup reported more support for policies that excluded members of a minority subgroup and reported a stronger preference for being represented by members of their own subgroup. This study empirically tested the effects of exclusionary leader rhetoric and leader prototypicality on participants' perceptions of the leader and of their group. With more research, we will be able to further advance the study of identity-based leadership, and better understand how leaders use their position to change the identity of their groups.

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