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Effectiveness of Perceiving Normal and Extreme Outgroups' Bivalent Emotions in Reducing Infracommunication (Or Intergroup Preference)

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Abstract

People tend to consider groups with which they do not identify as inferior to their own group, often resulting in prejudice against these outgroups. One form of intergroup prejudice is denying outgroup members' ability to experience uniquely human (UH) emotions (i.e., infracommunication), although there have been critiques that people do not actually perceive those members as less human but simply prefer their ingroup to outgroups (i.e., intergroup preference). Given evidence that bivalent emotional experiences require cognitive complexity and are positively evaluated, we tested the effectiveness of a recently proposed strategy of presenting outgroup members' bivalent emotions in reducing infracommunication (or intergroup preference). We compared the effects between an unfamiliar and a heavily stigmatised outgroup. Results showed that the strategy had no effects on attitudes towards either outgroup and that the unfamiliar outgroup was not evaluated as any different from average humans. Yet, this work shed light on a new perspective on explaining hostility towards heavily stigmatised outgroups: Socially undesired emotions, are ascribed more strongly to these groups than socially desired ones, especially when these emotions are non-UH. This finding implies that both infracommunication and intergroup preference operate when intergroup relations are at their worst.

Keywords: bivalent emotions; dehumanisation; infracommunication; intergroup bias; prejudice

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