Audience Effects on Group Identity Expression; Identity Management and Out-group Social Perception among Macedonian Immigrants and Natives

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Abstract

This study examined how symbolic cues (survey language and researcher membership) and structural context (home vs. diaspora location) shape intergroup stereotypes and in-group identification among 102 ethnic Macedonians. Participants completed surveys in Macedonian or English, administered by in-group or out-group researchers, while residing in Macedonia or Western Europe. Consistent with the Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE), responses in Macedonian amplified in-group identification and produced strategic shifts in warmth, competence, and agency ratings—particularly toward high-status out-groups—despite participants being fully identifiable. This supports SIDE's emphasis on identity salience and audience-based expression rather than deindividuation. Stereotype Content Model (SCM) predictions were also confirmed: diaspora participants rated Western Europeans as more competent and less warm, reflecting competitive status dynamics. The study highlights how symbolic and structural factors jointly trigger strategic identity signaling and competition-based stereotypes, advancing theory and informing future survey design.

Keywords: social identity theory, stereotype content model, SIDE model, intergroup perception, in-group identification

Introduction

In our increasingly globalized environment, contact between groups and nations is becoming more prevalent. Due to migration, different groups that have their own values and norms have to coexist with one another. In each situation, some form the majority (native inhabitants) and the minority (those who come from abroad to live and work in the land of the natives due to economic or other reasons). How these groups interact with one another is crucial for maintaining social cohesion and harmony. Based on the power dynamics between these groups, we aim to uncover the mechanisms underlying the interactions between the powerful majority and the less powerful minority. We will draw on our participant sample in both cases, where participants will be categorized as the majority and minority based on their location.

When trying to understand such interactions, we turn to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which states that we view ourselves based on the in-group (the group we belong to) in relation to the out-groups (the group of the other(s)). Intercultural contact means that individuals will make comparisons and compromises based on the group norms of the respective groups. The Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) (Spears & Lea, 1994; Reicher, Spears & Postmes, 1995; Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007) explains how anonymity influences group behavior. When individuals are anonymous in a group, they are more likely to conform to the group's norms and values rather than act based on their personal identity. SIDE proposes that anonymity shifts focus from personal identity to social identity, making people more sensitive to group norms (sometimes referred to as “depersonalization”

and the “cognitive side of SIDE”). The cognitive component refers to the level of self-definition that is salient in a given context, in other words, whether or not a social identity is cognitively salient. This model is particularly relevant in online interactions, where anonymity can strengthen group cohesion and influence behavior in digital spaces. Since participants in this field experiment will fill out our questionnaire online, it is of particular interest to us to see how it will apply in this case.

SIDE states that in addition to cognitive, there are also strategic aspects (the “strategic SIDE”) to how individuals interact with their identity with the in-group and out-group. The strategic component refers to the concern that identity expression be contextually appropriate or acceptable, and implies a sensitivity to the nature of the audience addressed. Research on impression management suggests that people monitor the image that they provide of themselves to the audiences they address (Baumeister, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). This type of research has been done concerning individual identities; however, as we will discuss later, this can also be applied to social identities, and more precisely, if the audience is part of the in-group or the out-group. The implications of this, particularly when the outgroup is in a position of power, are to disapprove of or even sanction expressed responses seen as non-normative or unacceptable to this powerful outgroup. Thus, given the power imbalance between the majority and minority groups, we want to investigate what sort of strategies play a role when presenting oneself to the in-group vs the out-group, given that the minority often feels pressure to accommodate to the majority's point of view. Specifically, people tailor their answer based on the audience, not only to promote or protect their individual identity (a la Baumeister) but also their social identity, meaning that they are also concerned as to how the out-group will view their in-group based on the actions they take (Klein & Azzi, 2001; Klein et al., 2007). The majority typically holds more power in the interaction, and the minority typically tailors their responses to seem less confrontational in their beliefs towards the

majority. If two members of the same group communicate with each other (i.e., the in-group audience) they will likely express their attitudes about the out-group more truthfully. Evidence from previous literature indicates that group behavior is clearly normative, but also strategically constrained by power relations. Participants can be manipulated by varying the language a questionnaire is written in (language indicating in-group or out-group audience). This type of procedure finds that research participants take into account the group membership of the researcher when responding to questionnaires (Klein & Azzi, 2001), and specifically whether or not the audience of the questionnaire is part of the in-group or the out-group.

Based on the stereotype content model (SCM) by Fiske, Cuddy and Glick (2007) how we view the out-group is based on certain stereotypes called stereotype content dimensions, these are warmth and competence. Abel et. al., (2016) further elaborated these dimensions to include other factors in order to understand cultural attitudes such as agency with competence and assertiveness, and community with warmth and morality. Higher-status (how prestigious a group is) groups favor status differences when differentiating themselves from the out-group as high status is often associated with higher competence. On the other hand, lower-status groups favor their in-group on dimensions that are irrelevant to status (e.g., warmth), thereby ensuring a positive outlook of the in-group in both situations, dubbed the social creativity strategy (Spears & Manstead, 1989). Status predicts higher competence and perceived competition (of resources) predicts lower warmth (Fiske et al., 2018).

Macedonia boasts a population of about two million, one-third of whom consider themselves of Albanian ethnicity (Klarin, et al., 2012). Macedonia also has one of the largest emigrant populations based on population living within its borders. It is estimated that around twenty-six percent of Macedonians have emigrated outside of Macedonia since 1993 (Hamiti,

2019), which is the reason we have picked this cohort as our sample, as well as the lack of sampling of this group within the scientific literature. This project aims to investigate the attitudes of the in-group (i.e., Macedonians) about the out-groups (i.e., Albanians, Dutch, Germans) based on contextual factors such as the type of audience (in-group/out-group) indicated by the type of language used (Macedonian/English) in samples where Macedonians are the native majority in-group (i.e., Macedonia) or the minority (i.e., Germany, Netherlands). In the case of Macedonians in Macedonia, they are the native majority, meaning that in that environment, they are the ones who have the most power. The closest out-group in this case would be the Albanian minority; this is the group they have the most contact with. Although participants will also be asked about Germans and Dutch, this condition is used to contrast the relationship between Macedonians and Albanians since Albanians are seen as competition within the hierarchy in Macedonia. In the case of Macedonians living in Germany and the Netherlands, we would see the Macedonians there as the minority compared to the native Dutch or German (in the same vein as Albanians living in Macedonia). In this condition, we expect that Macedonians will use different strategies when asked about their attitude towards the majority (Dutch/German), since here they would be facing a different power dynamic between groups than they would in Macedonia.

We believe that given the salience of different identities, the power imbalance between the groups, and the resulting audience effects, we would see differences between the conditions. Specific predictions about the conditions are discussed below. We assume that the dimensions on which Macedonians see the out-group will coincide with their view of relative cultural norms, their location, as well as the power hierarchy within the European environment. We predict that they will see Albanians as warmer (less warm than in the native majority condition) but not as competent as Germans and Dutch, and they will see the Dutch as more competent but less warm in a similar fashion to the Germans. This type of assumption is also

backed by previous research on the SCM by Cuddy et al., (2009), which evaluated the SCM on its universality across cultures. Within this research it was found that warmth and competence differentiate societal group stereotypes; most out-groups receive ambivalent stereotypes (high on one dimension; low on the other); high status groups are seen as competent, while competitive groups (perceived competition for resources i.e., closest out-group) lack warmth, which is line with Fiske et al., (2018). We believe the Macedonians in the Macedonian condition (Macedonian researcher as well as Macedonian questionnaire) will report their attitudes about the out-group more truthfully than in the English condition (Barreto et al., 2003; Bond & Hewstone, 1988; Reicher & Levine, 1994; Klein & Azzi, 2001). Barreto et al. (2003) also showed that participants exhibit higher in-group identification when answering in their native language rather than a foreign language.

We will collect samples of native Macedonians living in Germany, Netherlands, and Macedonia and test SCM dimensions on all respective out-groups (German, Dutch, and Albanian). The name of the researcher as well as the language will be changed, resulting in two general versions (Macedonian questionnaire and Macedonian researcher or English questionnaire and English researchers) across the 3 national contexts (Macedonia, Netherlands, Germany). We want to change the audience that the participant thinks they are responding to, to elicit the audience effect, specifically different ratings of the out-group, the in-group, and in-group affiliation. This is done on the basis of previous literature stated above such as social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the SIDE model (Reicher, et al., 1995; Spears & Lea, 1994).

Research Questions:

What is the reported rating of stereotype content dimensions of Macedonians living in the Netherlands/Germany towards the Dutch/Germans/Albanians in the Macedonian language (in-group) vs English language (out-group) condition?

What is the reported rating of stereotype content dimensions of Macedonians living in Macedonia towards Dutch/Germans/Albanians in the Macedonian (ingroup) vs English (outgroup) condition?

Does in-group identification differ based on (a) geographic location—Macedonians living in Macedonia versus those living in the Netherlands or Germany—and (b) questionnaire language—English (out-group researcher) versus Macedonian (in-group researcher)?

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Strategic Audience Effect (Language Condition)

Participants will rate out-groups—Dutch, Germans, and Albanians—higher on warmth variables (warmth, community, morality) and agency variables (agency, competence) when responding in the English language condition (out-group researcher) compared to the Macedonian language condition (in-group researcher). This pattern reflects a strategic audience effect.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived Competition Effect Toward Higher-Status Groups (Location Condition)

Participants will rate high-status out-groups (Germans and Dutch) higher on warmth and agency variables in the Macedonian location condition than in the German or Dutch location conditions, where these groups represent close competitive out-groups. This pattern reflects the perceived competition effect within the framework of the Stereotype Content Dimensions (SCD).

Hypothesis 3: Perceived Competition Effect Toward Lower-Status Group (Albanians in Location Condition)

Participants will rate the lower-status out-group (Albanians) higher on agency variables (agency, competence) and lower on warmth variables (warmth, community, morality) in the Macedonian location condition compared to the German and Dutch conditions, where Albanians are considered the closest competitive out-group.

Hypothesis 4: Control Group (Perceptions of Macedonians)

Stereotype Content Dimensions are primarily used to assess out-groups. Therefore, ratings of the Macedonian group are not expected to show significant variation across language or location conditions. Perceptions of Macedonians will serve as a control for warmth and agency variables.

Hypothesis 5: Control Variable (Aggression)

The variable aggression, which is not part of the SCD framework, will show no significant differences based on language or location conditions for either out-groups or the in-group.

Hypothesis 6: In-Group Identification

In-group identification will be influenced by both language and location conditions:

- Participants will report stronger identification with the Macedonian group when responding to a Macedonian researcher (Macedonian language condition) than to an out-group researcher (English language condition).
- Participants located outside of Macedonia (Germany or the Netherlands) will report higher in-group identification than those residing in Macedonia, likely due to their in-group identity becoming more salient when living in a foreign country.

Methods

Design

This study employed a 2×2 factorial ANOVA with a between-subjects design. The two independent variables were:

1. **Location:** Originally intended as a three-level factor (Macedonia, the Netherlands, and Germany), the location variable was recoded into two levels. Due to limitations in participant numbers and statistical power—combined with theoretical grounds suggesting that participants from the Netherlands and Germany would provide similar responses regarding out-group attitudes as they are both high-status out-groups—the regions of Germany and the Netherlands were merged into a single "Western Europe" category.
2. **Type of Questionnaire:** This variable had two levels, based on the language and the researcher administering it: (a) a Macedonian questionnaire conducted by a Macedonian researcher and (b) an English questionnaire administered by English researchers.

The dependent variables comprised measures from the extended version of the Stereotype Content Model (assessing dimensions such as warmth, morality, competence, community, agency, and aggression) as well as an in-group identification scale. For items assessing out-group attitudes, separate scores originally collected for Germans and Dutch participants were combined into a single "Western Europe" measure. For example, the warmth scores for Western Europe were computed as a weighted average using the formula:

$$N\_German\_Warmth * M\_German\_Warmth + N\_Dutch\_Warmth * M\_Dutch\_Warmth / N\_German\_Warmth + N\_Dutch\_Warmth$$

This method ensured that the combined scores accurately reflected the contribution of each subgroup, proportional to their sample sizes.

Participants

An initial sample of 235 participants was collected. 117 participants were excluded because they either did not answer the question concerning country of residence ("Which country do you reside in the most? Macedonia/Netherlands/Germany") or did not provide scores for one or more dependent variables. As a result, the sample consisted of 118 participants. In the end, 102 participants who completed all relevant measures were included because we combined the German and Dutch scores.

Participants were primarily recruited through Facebook groups related to the Netherlands and Germany, the researcher's private social network, and Reddit. To protect anonymity and minimize answering fatigue, personal demographic details were not collected. Exclusion criteria were based on the responses to the independent variables. Specifically, participants were excluded if they did not respond to questions pertaining to location (if they indicated that they did not live in one of the three countries) or if they did not have a score on German warmth. Since this was the first question and they could not move on to the next question without answering it, it meant that they did not have a score on any of the subsequent dependent variables.

A priori power analyses were conducted using *G*Power* to determine the required sample size for detecting a medium effect (Cohen's $f = 0.25$). With an alpha level of 0.05 and a power of 0.80, the analysis indicated that a minimum of 128 participants was necessary to detect a main effect. Given that the final sample size (102) falls below this threshold, the study may

not have sufficient power to reliably detect medium main effects. Moreover, power analysis indicated that detecting an interaction between the independent variables would require a sample size of 179, meaning that no definitive conclusions about interactions can be drawn from the current data.

Materials

The study employed several established measures:

- **Extended Stereotype Content Model (SCD) Questionnaires:** These questionnaires were based on the extended version of the SCD as outlined by Fiske et al. (2002) and Abele et al. (2016).
- **Aggression Measure:** Aggression was assessed using the measure developed by Buss and Perry (1992).
- **In-Group Identification Scale:** In-group identification was measured using the scale from Leach et al. (2008).

All of these measures were integrated into a single questionnaire, which was delivered using Qualtrics, a cloud-based software platform for creating, distributing, and analyzing surveys. The questionnaire was designed to assess participants' attitudes toward various out-groups (Germans, Dutch, and Albanians) as well as attitudes toward Macedonians, and to measure in-group identification

Procedure

Participants were assigned to one of two questionnaire conditions—English or Macedonian—via three possible entry channels. When participants indicated that they knew

only Macedonian, they were automatically assigned to the Macedonian questionnaire. Similarly, those who reported knowing only English were assigned to the English questionnaire. For participants proficient in both languages, random assignment was implemented using Qualtrics' "Survey Flow" function. The randomization was controlled to ensure an approximately equal distribution across both conditions, thereby avoiding any disproportionate representation.

In the English language condition, the questionnaire introduction adopted a professional and impersonal tone, stating that the research was conducted by the University of Groningen (the ou-group audiance). In contrast, the Macedonian introduction was more personal and relatable, noting that the study was conducted by a Master's student of Macedonian origin studying at the University of Groningen. Once assigned to a condition, participants completed the questionnaire, which required them to rate four target groups—Germans, Dutch, Albanians, and Macedonians—on several dimensions. These included the dimensions from the extended Stereotype Content Model (warmth, morality, competence, community, and agency), a measure of aggression, and an in-group identification scale.

After completing the questionnaire, participants were fully debriefed. The debriefing explained the true purpose of the study; specifically, that there were two conditions, and the intent was to determine whether participant responses differed based on the language condition and related framing. Data was collected online via Qualtrics and subsequently exported to SPSS for analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS. For each dependent variable—including the extended Stereotype Content Model dimensions (warmth, morality, competence, community, agency,

aggression) and in-group identification—separate 2×2 factorial ANOVAs were conducted with the independent variables of Location (Macedonia vs. Western Europe) and Questionnaire Type (Macedonian vs. English). As described in the Design section, for variables assessing out-group attitudes (e.g., warmth), scores originally collected separately for German and Dutch participants were combined through a weighted-average computation to form composite "Western Europe" scores. This procedure ensured that each group's contribution was proportional to its sample size.

Before assessing the results of the ANOVAs, the following assumptions were evaluated:

- **Normality:** Residuals for each dependent variable were tested for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test via the Explore procedure.
- **Homogeneity of Variance:** Levene's Test was used to assess homogeneity of variances across groups.

The significance threshold was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. For each ANOVA, effect sizes were estimated using partial eta squared. Given that both independent variables included two levels, post-hoc comparisons were generally unnecessary; however, should significant interactions emerge, simple effects analyses would be conducted with appropriate adjustments for multiple comparisons.

Results

Assumption Checks

We first evaluated the normality of residuals for each of the six stereotype-content dimensions and the in-group identification scale using Shapiro–Wilk tests. No variable showed a significant departure from normality ($W = .96–.99$, $p > .05$). For any minor

violations, visual inspection of Q–Q plots revealed no pronounced nonlinearity or extreme outliers, supporting the normality assumption.

Next, we assessed homogeneity of variance with Levene's tests. Variance was equal across language and location conditions for all variables except aggression, $F(3, 92) = 4.05$, $p = .047$, and agency, $F(3, 92) = 3.12$, $p = .030$. To address these violations, we conducted Welch's ANOVAs for aggression and agency, which yielded the same pattern of effects as the primary GLMs. All other variables met the homogeneity assumption, permitting the use of standard ANOVA procedures in subsequent analyses.

Perceptions of Macedonians

Table 1

Univariate GLM Results for Perceptions of Macedonians

Variable	M (SD)	Language (F, p, η^2)	Location (F, p, η^2)	Interaction (F, p, η^2)
Warmth	4.76 (0.98)	0.13, .72, .00	0.11, .74, .00	0.31, .58, .00
Morality	3.67 (1.09)	0.24, .62, .00	2.13, .15, .02	0.03, . 87, .00
Competence	3.97 (0.91)	0.53, .47, .01	0.03, .86, .00	0.09, .77, .00
Community	3.06 (1.11)	0.23, .63, .00	0.26, .61, .00	0.44, .51, .00
Agency	3.20 (0.94)	1.68, .20, .02	1.20, .28, .01	0.02, .88, .00
Aggression	2.38 (1.16)	2.97, .09, .03	0.02, .90, .00	0.30, .30, .01

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation; p = significance level; η^2 = partial eta squared; N = 96. No main effects of Language or Location, nor any Language × Location interactions, reached significance for any of the six perception dimensions (all $p > .05$).

In contrast to the other two demographics, none of the six dimensions concerning Macedonians yielded a significant result. The largest effect was for language on aggression, $F(1, 92) = 2.97$, $p = .088$, $\eta p^2 = .03$, followed by location on morality, $F(1, 92) = 2.13$, $p = .148$, $\eta p^2 = .02$. Ratings of warmth, morality, competence, community, agency, and aggression toward Macedonians did not differ whether the questionnaire was in English or Macedonian, nor between respondents in Macedonia versus Western Europe (all $p > .05$). This suggests that participants' judgments of Macedonians were stable across both language and geographic context. These analyses were based on responses from $N = 96$ participants (see Table 1 for full statistics). The outlook of Macedonians have of themselves partly correlates with the SCM expectations; however community is lower than expected, considering its the participants' in-group

In-group identification

A Univariate GLM on in-group identification revealed a significant overall model, $F(3, 92) = 2.88$, $p = .040$, $\eta p^2 = .086$. Importantly, there was a significant main effect of survey language, $F(1, 92) = 8.20$, $p = .005$, $\eta p^2 = .082$, indicating that participants in the Macedonian language/In-group researcher condition reported stronger in-group identification than those in the English language/out-group researcher condition. This might suggest an audience effect as the participants wanted to confirm to the Macedonian researcher their in-group attribution while downplaying their in-group loyalty to the out-group researcher. No effect was found for the location condition when it came to reported in-group identification.

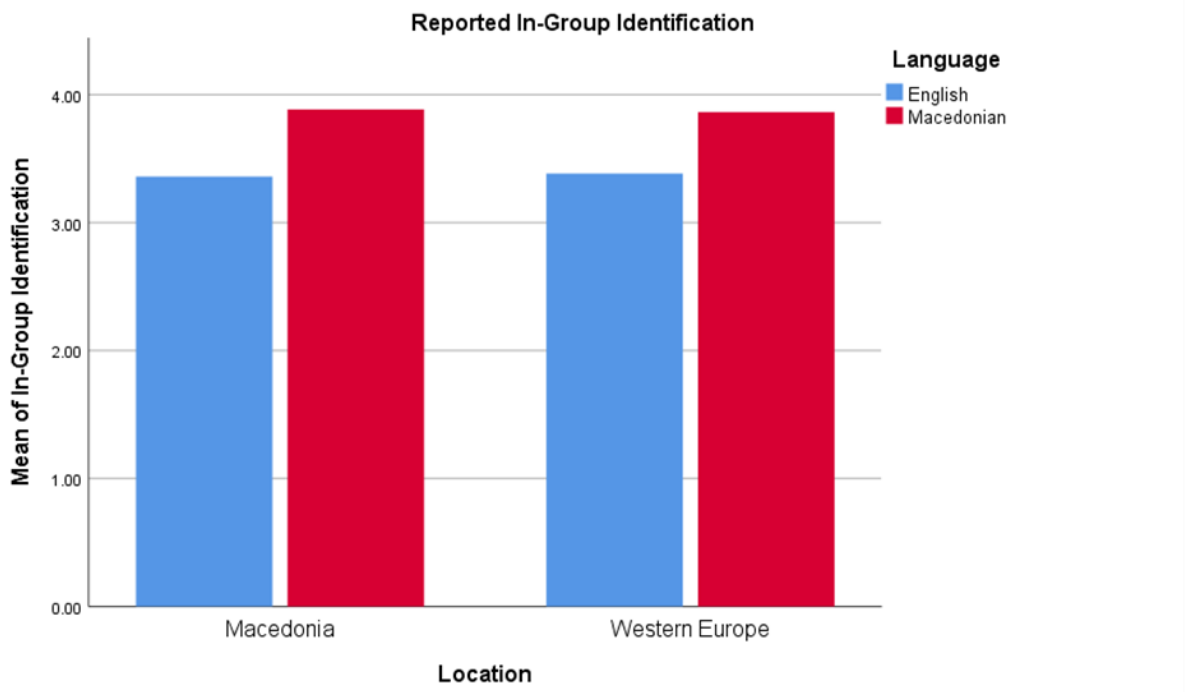

Figure 1

Mean reported in-group identification as a function of survey language and participant location.

Perceptions of Albanians

Table 2

Univariate GLM Results for Perceptions of Albanians

Variable	*M* (*SD*)	Language (*F*, *p*, η^2)	Location (*F*, *p*, η^2)	Interaction (*F*, *p*, η^2)
Warmth	3.10 (1.27)	0.01, .91, .00	0.14, .71, .00	0.01, .92, .00
Morality	2.82 (1.21)	0.00, .98, .00	0.54, .46, .01	1.61, .21, .02
Competence	2.72 (1.10)	1.07, .30, .01	0.97, .33, .01	0.03, .87, .00
Community	4.50 (1.12)	0.01, .94, .00	2.09, .15, .02	0.15, .70, .00
Agency	3.45 (1.20)	0.21, .65, .00	4.05, .05, .04	1.02, .32, .01
Aggression	4.11 (1.28)	1.21, .28, .01	0.17, .69, .00	1.63, .21, .02

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *p* = significance level; η^2 = partial eta squared; *N* = 98. Results derived from Univariate GLM analyses with Language and Location as independent variables.

Albanians do not follow the usual pattern of ambivalent stereotype dimensions according to the SCM. We expected there to be higher warmth dimensions and lower agency. While competence is in line with the ambivalent stereotype, they were given lower scores for morality and warmth compared to Macedonians and Western Europeans.

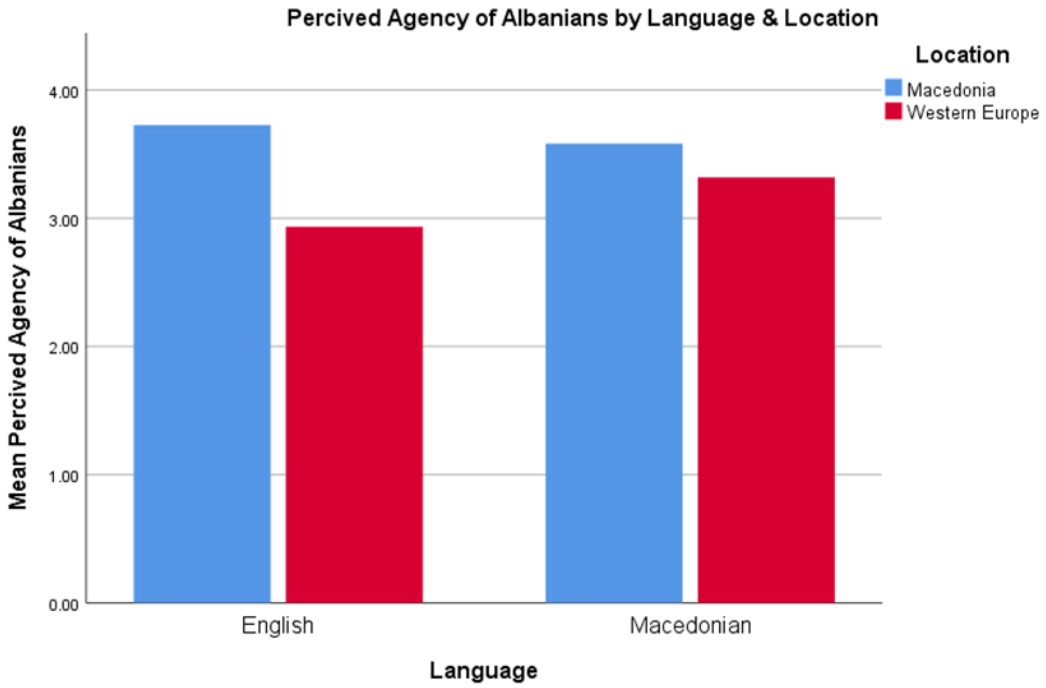

Figure 2

Mean perceived agency of Albanians as a function of survey language and participant location.

Participants residing in Western Europe (M = 3.17, SE = 0.20) rated agency significantly lower than those in Macedonia (M = 3.62, SE = 0.15), $F(1, 94) = 4.05$, $p = .047$, $\eta^2 = .04$. This might mean that Macedonians see Albanians as a competitive threat when living on home soil, however when participants are removed from that environment they rate Albanians as less threatening, line with the SCM. No other significant main effects were found. These analyses were based on responses from N = 98 participants (see Table 2 for full statistics).

Perceptions of Western Europeans

Western Europeans also do not follow the standard ambivalent stereotype of the SCM model. They were given high scores of warmth and community while retaining high scores on competence and agency.

Table 3

Univariate GLM Results for Perceptions of Western Europeans

Variable	*M* (*SD*)	Language (*F*, *p*, η^2)	Location (*F*, *p*, η^2)	Interaction (*F*, *p*, η^2)
Warmth	3.63 (0.71)	4.12, .05, .04	0.64, .43, .01	2.04, .16, .02
Morality	4.08 (0.96)	2.00, .14, .02	0.54, .47, .01	0.87, .35, .01
Competence	4.52 (0.91)	4.32, .04, .04	0.00, .96, .00	0.09, .77, .00
Community	3.52 (0.74)	0.60, .44, .01	3.85, .05, .04	0.60, .44, .01
Agency	4.28 (0.92)	4.66, .03, .05	6.32, .01, .06	0.11, .74, .00
Aggression	2.35 (1.05)	0.01, .94, .00	0.15, .70, .00	1.10, .30, .01

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *p* = significance level; η^2 = partial eta squared; *N* = 102. Results derived from Univariate GLM analyses with Language and Location as independent variables.

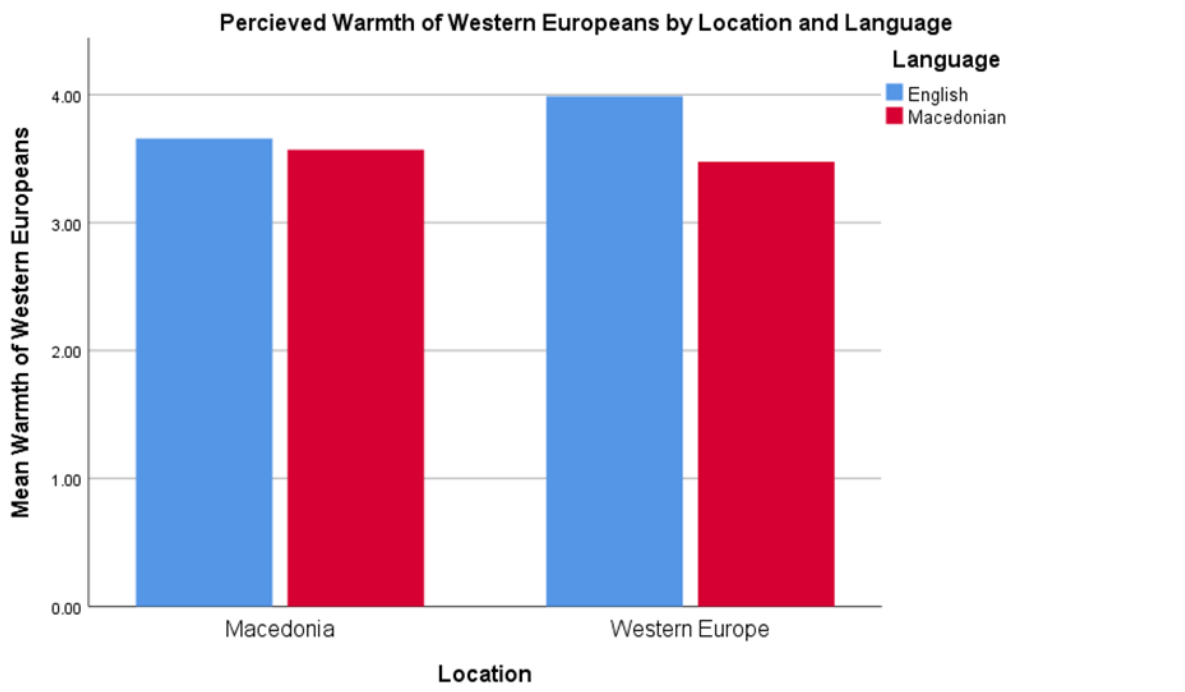

Figure 3

Mean perceived warmth of Western Europeans by location and survey language (English vs. Macedonian).

A significant main effect of Language was found, $F(1, 98) = 4.12$, $p = .045$, $\eta^2 = .040$, with participants in the English questionnaire/out-group researcher condition reporting higher warmth ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.64$) than Macedonian questionnaire/in-group researcher condition ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.73$). This is further evidence for the strategic side of SIDE.

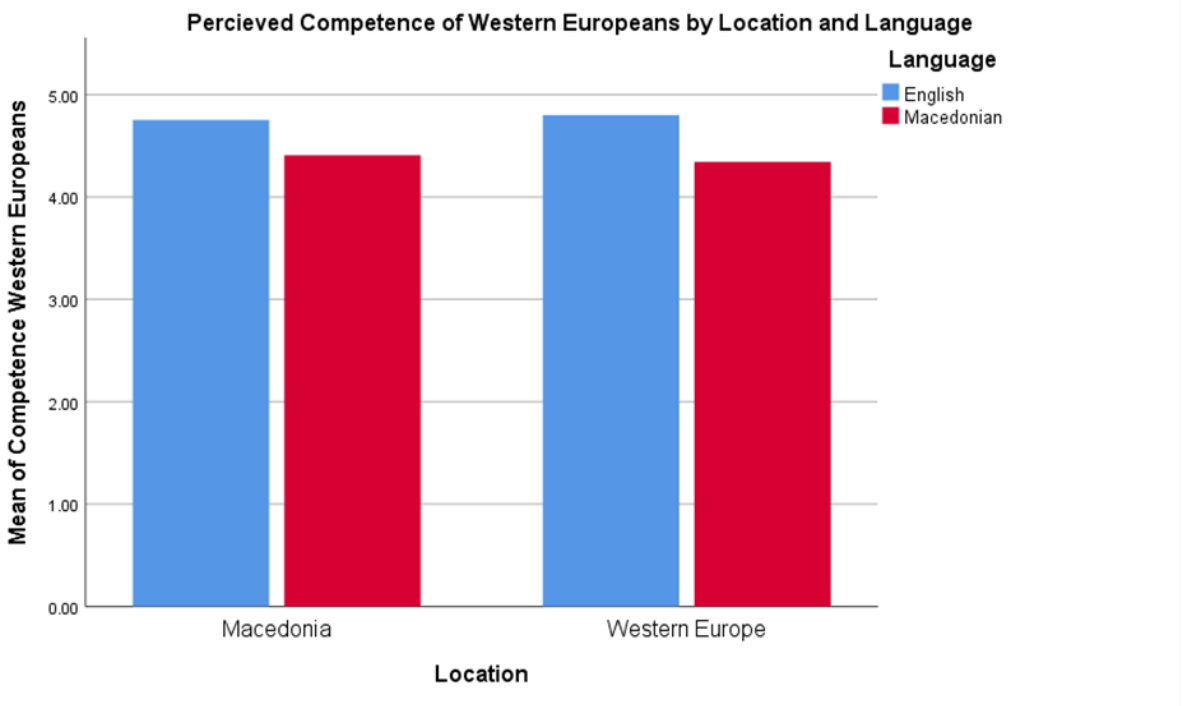

Figure 4

Mean perceived competence of Western Europeans by location and survey language (English vs. Macedonian). Error bars represent standard error.

A significant main effect of Language was observed, $F(1, 97) = 4.66$, $p = .040$, $\eta^2 = .043$, with participants in the English questionnaire/out-group researcher condition rating competence higher ($M = 4.78$) than Macedonian questionnaire/in-group researcher condition ($M = 4.38$). This signifies competence as a variable that is used to signal good will from the Macedonian participants to the powerful out-group of which they thought the researchers were a part of.

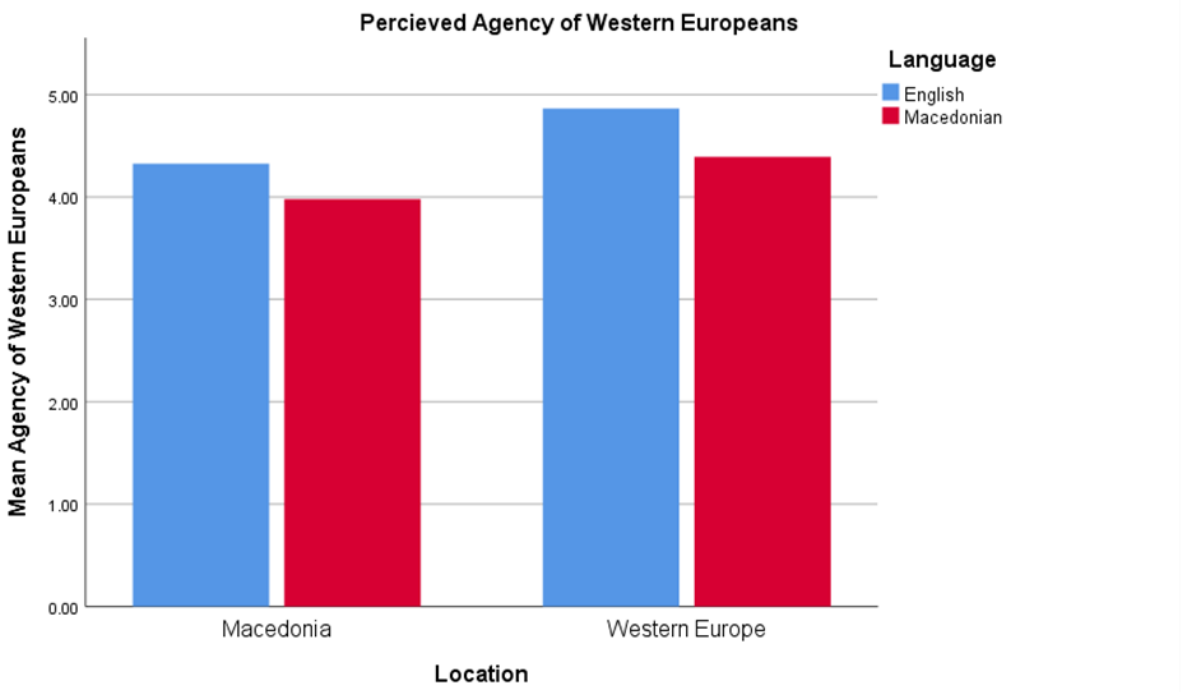

Figure 5

Mean perceived agency of Western Europeans by location and survey language (English vs. Macedonian).

Significant main effects of both Language ($F(1, 98) = 4.53$, $p = .033$, $\eta^2 = .046$) and Location ($F(1, 98) = 6.06$, $p = .014$, $\eta^2 = .062$) were observed. Participants in the English questionnaire/out-group researcher condition rated agency higher ($M = 4.59$) than Macedonian questionnaire/in-group researcher condition ($M = 4.13$), and participants in Western Europe rated agency higher ($M = 4.58$) than those in Macedonia ($M = 4.08$). This signifies agency as a variable that is changed based on proximity to the out-group as well a measure that participants reported to appease the powerful out-group, in this case Western Europeans. This is further evidence of the audience effect of SIDE and perceived competition effect of the SCM.

No other main or interaction effects reached significance (see Table 1), suggesting that perceptions were generally consistent across groups for morality and aggression. Although the

Main effect of location on perceived community was not significant, it is trending towards significance, same as the interaction effect of location and language on warmth. Mean ratings were highest for competence (M = 4.52) and morality (M = 4.08), while aggression was rated notably lower (M = 2.35). These analyses were based on responses from N = 102 participants (see Table 1 for full statistics).

Discussion

Overview of the Present Study

The present study examined how two contextual cues, questionnaire language/perceived researcher (Macedonian language questionnaire administered by an in-group researcher vs. English language questionnaire administered by an out-group researcher) and participant location (Macedonia vs. Western Europe [the Netherlands/Germany])—shape Macedonian respondents' ratings of two out-groups (Western Europeans [Dutch, Germans] and Albanians) on five stereotype content dimensions (warmth, community, morality, agency, competence). We also assessed aggression as a control variable and in-group identification as a complementary measure. By crossing questionnaire language and perceived audience membership with physical context, this study's design allowed us to test the strategic audience effect predicted by the Social Identity Deindividuation (SIDE; Spears & Lea, 1994) model alongside perceived competition effects theorized by the Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002).

Hypothesis 1: Strategic Audience Effect

As predicted by the strategic audience effect of SIDE (Hypothesis 1), Macedonian participants rated Western European out-groups (Dutch, Germans) higher on warmth, competence, and agency when the questionnaire was administered by an out-group researcher

(English language condition) than by an in-group researcher (Macedonian language condition). This pattern indicates that respondents strategically adjusted their evaluations to appear more favorable to a foreign (out-group) audience. In contrast, ratings of the Albanian out-group did not differ between the in-group and out-group researcher conditions, suggesting the strategic audience effect was specific to high-status Western European targets. Even though not all variables were significant, our hypothesis was partly correct.

Hypotheses 2 & 3: Perceived Competition Effects

Concerning the perceived competition effect (Hypotheses 2 and 3) predicted by the SCM, participants' location influenced their ratings of both Western European and Albanian out-groups. In the Western Europe (Germany/Netherlands) condition, Macedonian respondents rated Dutch and Germans higher on agency (a competence-related dimension) but lower on community (a warmth-related dimension) than did participants in Macedonia. Within the SCM framework, this low-warmth/high-competence profile identifies Western Europeans as the closest competitive out-group to Macedonians living in Western Europe. Conversely, in the Western European location condition, agency ratings for the Albanian out-group were lower than in the Macedonian location condition, indicating that Albanians ceased to be perceived as the closest competitive out-group—again aligning with SCM predictions. However, no significant main effect between location and any of the warmth variables (warmth, morality, community) was observed for the perception of Albanians.

Hypothesis 4: Control Condition (Macedonian In-Group)

As predicted (Hypothesis 4), Macedonian participants' evaluations of their in-group did not differ significantly by questionnaire language (Macedonian vs. English) or participant location (Macedonia vs. Western Europe). This stability in in-group ratings confirms that our

manipulations specifically influenced out-group stereotypes without altering evaluations of the in-group.

Hypothesis 5: Aggression (Control Scale)

As predicted by Hypothesis 5, participants' self-reported aggression did not differ by questionnaire language/audience (Macedonian/in-group researcher vs. English/out-group researcher) or by location (Macedonia vs. Western Europe). Mean aggression ratings remained stable across all four conditions, indicating that neither audience cues nor physical context elicited generalized hostile attitudes. This pattern validates aggression as a neutral control measure, confirming that our manipulations selectively influenced out-group stereotype content without producing affective spillover.

Hypothesis 6: In-group Identification

As predicted by Hypothesis 6, questionnaire language significantly influenced in-group identification: participants felt closer to their Macedonian group when the survey was in Macedonian versus English. Two complementary SIDE-based processes can account for this. The first is Identity salience, where the use of the Macedonian language anchored participants' sense of in-group belonging and pride. The second is the strategic audience effect of SIDE, where in the English (out-group) condition, participants may have downplayed their attachment to seem less parochial or nationalistic to a foreign researcher. Conversely, in the Macedonian (in-group) condition, they may have signaled stronger identification to affirm solidarity and signal loyalty to an in-group audience.

In contrast, participant location did not significantly influence identification levels. Overall, these results offer partial support for Hypothesis 6: they underscore the power of symbolic in-group cues (language, researcher membership) in heightening social identity

salience, while indicating that mere physical relocation, absent such cues, is insufficient to strengthen group attachment.

Integration of Findings

Across all six hypotheses, two overarching themes emerge.

Symbolic In-Group Cues Drive Identity and Strategy

Questionnaire language and researcher membership consistently activated SIDE's strategic audience and depersonalization processes (Spears & Lea, 1994). Participants rated Western Europeans higher on warmth, competence, and agency when responding in English under an out-group researcher, but no such shift occurred for Albanian targets (Hypothesis 1).

Macedonian respondents may have perceived the English-language survey as an opportunity to manage impressions before a powerful out-group audience. Conversely, completing the survey in Macedonian or under an in-group researcher amplified in-group identification, whereas English administration with an out-group researcher led participants to downplay their attachment (Hypothesis 6).

Physical Context Tunes Competition, Not Identity

Being located in Western Europe versus Macedonia shaped SCM-predicted competition profiles without affecting in-group or out-group aggression, supporting the validity of the SCM scales (Fiske et al., 2002).

- Participants in the Western European location condition saw Western Europeans as more competitive (high competence/low warmth) and Albanians as less competitive (Hypotheses 2 & 3).

- Neither in-group evaluations nor aggression scores changed across location or language conditions (Hypotheses 4 & 5).

This pattern suggests that language cues and perceived researcher membership are powerful levers for amplifying or attenuating social identity and intergroup judgments, whereas mere relocation primarily shifts competitive stereotypes—such as competence and agency—without altering how participants feel about their own group.

Theoretical Implications

The findings support the Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) in terms of identity salience and strategic audience management, rather than through mechanisms associated with deindividuation. Participants were fully identifiable, yet their responses aligned with in-group norms when symbolic cues such as language or perceived researcher affiliation activated their social identity. This aligns with the cognitive SIDE proposition that behavior shifts not due to anonymity or a loss of self-awareness, but because the social identity becomes the most salient basis for self-definition.

Furthermore, the use of Macedonian versus English acted as a strategic signal to different perceived audiences. Ratings of out-group warmth, competence, and agency varied based on whether participants believed they were addressing an in-group or out-group researcher, showcasing SIDE's strategic dimension, where individuals **t**ailor identity expression based on audience composition and perceived power dynamics. This strategic modulation highlights that participants did not merely reflect internal identity salience but managed identity performance to align with social context and audience expectations.

Together, these findings reinforce SIDE's premise: people express identity not because they are masked or anonymous, but because social cues make group membership relevant and

purposeful in context (Spears & Lea, 1994). Consistent with the SCM, physical context shaped competition profiles: diaspora participants rated Western Europeans as high in competence but low in warmth, and saw Albanians as less competitive abroad (Fiske et al., 2002). However, warmth-related dimensions for Albanians did not vary by location, suggesting that competence judgments are more sensitive to structural competition cues than are warmth judgments.

Building on Barreto et al. (2003), who found that Portuguese respondents reported stronger in-group bonding when surveyed in Portuguese, we demonstrate that this language effect also interacts with perceived audience membership. Identification increased when the Macedonian survey was explicitly tied to an in-group researcher, and decreased under an out-group researcher, revealing a strategic modulation of self-reported identity. Together, these findings call for an integrated model in which symbolic primes (language, researcher membership) invoke SIDE's audience-presentation mechanisms, setting the stage for SCM competition dynamics to shape out-group stereotypes.

Unexpected Findings & Null Effects

Despite our clear pattern of strategic audience and competition effects, several results deviated from predictions. Reflecting on these surprises helps refine our theories and points to important boundary conditions. We anticipated that questionnaire language would shift warmth, competence, and agency ratings for both out-groups, yet Albanian evaluations remained identical across Macedonian language and English language conditions. One possibility is that the deep-rooted history of interethnic animosities created a rigid stereotype that resists strategic adjustment. Alternatively, participants may feel less need to manage impressions when evaluating a lower-status or more socially distant group, or a greater need to cater to higher-status out-groups such as the Dutch and Germans.

Hypothesis 6b predicted stronger Macedonian identification among diaspora respondents, but living in Western Europe did not lead to greater in-group identification. This null effect could reflect heterogeneity within the diaspora: length of residence, integration level, or personal motivations may moderate how relocation shapes identity. It may also indicate that everyday environmental cues, absent explicit language or researcher group affiliation primes, are too mild to alter self-reported attachment.

While SCM predicted shifts in both competence and warmth with location, only competence/agency ratings for Albanians decreased abroad; warmth-related dimensions remained unchanged. This suggests that perceived resource competition (reflected in competence) is more context-sensitive than affective judgments of warmth. It also raises the possibility that warmth stereotypes are anchored by enduring cultural narratives, making them less malleable. Contrary to SCM expectations, Macedonians scored high on warmth but not on community, whereas Albanians scored high on community but not on morality. Western Europeans also exhibited higher-than-expected warmth and morality scores. These deviations imply that warmth is a multifaceted construct and that its sub-dimensions, warmth, community, and morality, can diverge depending on group and context. Cultural conceptions of each sub-dimension may explain these nuances.

Limitations

Although our study offers novel insights, several limitations warrant caution. A post-hoc *G*Power* analysis indicated that our final *N* was insufficient to detect a medium effect (Cohen's $d = .50$) at 80% power, two-tailed, $\alpha = .05$. Consequently, null results, specially for Hypotheses 1 (Albanian audience) and 6b (location → identity) should be interpreted with caution, as the study may simply lack the sensitivity to pick up effects. = .05. Consequently, null results, specifically for Hypotheses 1 (Albanian audience) and 6b (location → identity),

should be interpreted with caution, as the study may simply lack the sensitivity to pick up effects. We relied on convenience sampling within Macedonia and the Macedonian diaspora communities, which may not represent the broader population or other ethnic groups. Our one-time survey captures only a snapshot; we cannot determine how language or context effects evolve over time. Language prime was confounded with explicit mention of researcher identity in the Macedonian condition, making it hard to isolate each effect.

Physical location differences may reflect unmeasured factors (e.g., local media exposure, economic conditions) rather than structural competition alone. Participants who only spoke Macedonian were automatically placed in the Macedonian-language condition, whereas bilinguals could opt for random assignment, which can lead to self-selection bias. It creates a confound between language prime and language proficiency: any observed "language" effects may partially reflect differences in comfort, fluency, or cultural engagement rather than purely the symbolic prime. Addressing these limitations will strengthen the validity and scope of future investigations.

Practical Implications

Our study offers concrete guidance for anyone working with foreign populations. Our research suggests administering instruments in participants' mother tongue to boost engagement and elicit truer self-reports. Researchers should be aware of announcing their background to participants to anticipate strategic reporting biases. Community outreach, such as using native-language materials and local "in-group" messengers to reinforce solidarity as well as policy integration to pair language services with visible co-ethnic in-group and representation to maintain rapport with expats and asylum seekers. Finally, to recognize that relocation by itself won't strengthen group pride or connectedness, symbolic support matters.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that identity salience and strategic audience effects, not anonymity or loss of individuality, drive group-consistent expression in intergroup settings. Symbolic primes such as language and researcher membership can intensify in-group identification and elicit strategic modulation of out-group judgments. These effects emerged even when participants were fully identifiable, challenging classic deindividuation assumptions and bolstering SIDE's reinterpretation through social identity theory. By integrating SIDE's audience presentation logic with SCM's framework of perceived out-group competition, we offer a nuanced account of how symbolic and structural cues jointly shape intergroup perception. Future applications of SIDE should emphasize identity salience and strategic expression as core mechanisms for understanding group behavior.

In parallel with the SIDE model, the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) provided a complementary framework for understanding how structural context specifically geographic location influences out-group evaluations. Consistent with SCM predictions, out-groups perceived as high-status competitors were rated higher on competence and agency, particularly by diaspora participants residing in Western Europe. These findings reinforce SCM's premise that perceived competition for resources drives colder, more utilitarian judgments of warmth, while status amplifies competence-related evaluations. Interestingly, warmth-related dimensions proved less malleable than agency or competence, suggesting that affective judgments may be more culturally anchored and resistant to contextual shifts. This partial dissociation between warmth and competence profiles invites future research to re-examine the dimensional fluidity of SCM across sociopolitical environments. By integrating SCM with the strategic identity expression of SIDE, this thesis offers a multi-layered account of intergroup perception, one that is attuned to both symbolic and structural cues.

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