Can Self-Verification Strivings Fully Transcend the Self–Other Barrier? Seeking Verification of Ingroup Identities

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Recent research has demonstrated self-verification strivings in groups, such that people strive to verify collective identities, which are personal self-views (e.g., "sensitive") associated with group membership (e.g., "women"). Such demonstrations stop short of showing that the desire for self-verification can fully transcend the self–other barrier, as in people working to verify ingroup identities (e.g., "Americans are loud") even when such identities are not self-descriptive ("I am quiet and unassuming"). Five studies focus on such ingroup verification strivings. Results indicate that people prefer to interact with individuals who verify their ingroup identities over those who enhance these identities (Experiments 1–5). Strivings for ingroup identity verification were independent of the extent to which the identities were self-descriptive but were stronger among participants who were highly invested in their ingroup identities, as reflected in high certainty of these identities (Experiments 1–4) and high identification with the group (Experiments 1–5). In addition, whereas past demonstrations of self-verification strivings have been limited to efforts to verify the content of identities (Experiments 1 to 3), the findings also show that they strive to verify the valence of their identities (i.e., the extent to which the identities are valued; Experiments 4 and 5). Self-verification strivings, rather than self-enhancement strivings, appeared to motivate participants' strivings for ingroup identity verification. Links to collective self-verification strivings and social identity theory are discussed.

Keywords: ingroup identity, collective self-verification, social identity, identification

People possess a wealth of knowledge regarding the identities of their groups. For example, most Spaniards know that their countrymen are believed to be sociable but tardy: As considerable as their enjoyment of social engagements may be, it cannot compel them to show up on time. Members of groups often recognize that some of the qualities associated with their group do not apply to them. The first author of this article, for example, recognizes tardiness as an aspect of the Spanish ingroup identity but does not see himself as tardy. He may nevertheless encourage others to confirm this aspect of his ingroup identity, even though doing so means seeking support for an ingroup identity that conflicts with a personal self-view. Such strivings for verification of ingroup identities are the focus of this report.

We begin by noting how ingroup identity verification fits into recent work on self-verification processes. For several decades, research on self-verification theory (Swann, 1983) focused on people's efforts to confirm their personal selves, which refer to qualities that make them unique, such as intelligence, sociability, and so on (for a review, see Swann, Chang-Schneider, & Angulo, 2007). Recently, researchers have begun linking self-verification strivings to group processes. Some have shown that group members perform better when their personal self-views are verified (Swann, Milton, & Polzer, 2000). Others have demonstrated that people work to verify personal self-views that are linked to group membership or "collective self-views" (e.g., Chen, Chen, & Shaw, 2004; Chen, Shaw, & Jeung, 2006). To the best of our knowledge, however, researchers have yet to ask if self-verification strivings may completely transcend the self–other barrier. In particular, do people actively work to verify qualities of their ingroups even when they do not themselves possess these qualities?

On the face of it, the answer to this question ought to be an emphatic "no." After all, people presumably work to verify their self-views due to the vital role such self-views play in organizing reality, positioning people in the world, and guiding behavior. Although it is easy to see how personal self-views fulfill this role,

it is less obvious how ingroup identities might do so, especially if such identities do not even describe the person. Upon further consideration, however, it seems that an ingroup identity should motivate self-verification strivings insofar as people are invested in that identity. Such investment may take at least two forms. First, people should become invested in ingroup identities as they become more certain of the identity, for certainty should bolster people's conviction that the identity offers accurate insights into the nature of social reality (e.g., Swann, 1983). Consistent with this possibility, research indicates that the more certain people are of their personal identities, the more apt they are to seek self-verification (e.g., Pelham & Swann, 1994; Swann & Ely, 1984; Swann & Pelham, 2002; Swann, Pelham, & Chidester, 1988). Second, people should be more invested in ingroup identities when they are highly identified with the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), as identification is believed to increase the extent to which the group is a resource that confirms identities and reduces anxiety (Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005; Haslam & Reicher, 2006). For this reason, people should become more invested in ingroup identities as they become more identified with the group.

Evidence that people work to verify their ingroup identities would be important for several reasons. Such evidence would extend theory on the interplay of identity and group processes by showing that self-verification strivings are not limited to properties that characterize the self-verifier. Instead, it would be clear that self-verification strivings generalize to externalizations of the self: ingroup identities that are linked to the person only by virtue of feelings of investment in the group identity. Somewhat paradoxically, this finding would demonstrate that people work to protect identities that are simultaneously alien to the self (in instances in which they do not describe the self) yet closely aligned with the self (in instances in which the person is invested in the identity). The irony of this possibility becomes clearer upon examining self-verification theory and the theoretical and empirical work that it has inspired.

Self-Verification Theory

The notion that people work to maintain their self-views was first proposed by Lecky (1945) and later resurfaced in various self-consistency theories such as dissonance theory (e.g., Aronson, 1968; Secord & Backman, 1965). There were important differences in the two traditions, however. Whereas Lecky emphasized the processes through which people strive to create around themselves social worlds that confirm their chronic, firmly held self-views, consistency theories emphasized the symmetric processes through which people bring their transient beliefs about themselves into agreement with their recent actions. As did Lecky, self-verification theorists emphasize the ways in which self-views serve as a cause rather than an effect of social interaction.

The self-verification formulation begins with the assumption that people base their self-views on the treatment they receive from others (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). Once formed, self-views presumably enable people to make predictions about their worlds, guide behavior, and maintain the perception that the world is knowable and coherent. Because self-views serve these important functions, people become invested in them and motivated to maintain them. The result is the development of a preference for

evaluations that confirm their self-views. For example, just as those who regard themselves as relatively extroverted will want others to recognize their extraversion, so too will those who see themselves as relatively introverted want others to recognize their introversion.

The most controversial aspect of self-verification theory has been its assumption that people work to confirm negative as well as positive self-views. This assumption clashes with self-enhancement theory (Jones, 1973; Sedikides & Strube, 1997), which holds that people prefer and seek positive, self-enhancing evaluations. Self-enhancement is a key motivational assumption in many social–psychological theories of the self, including Abrams and Hogg's (1988) variation of social identity theory (Tajfel & Tuner, 1979), self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988), self-evaluation maintenance theory (Tesser, 1988), and the notion that people strive to construct "positive illusions" regarding their abilities and other qualities (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Indeed, some have argued that self-enhancement strivings actually motivate the putatively competing process of dissonance reduction (Brehm & Cohen, 1963; Festinger, 1957), characterizing dissonance theory as an account of "what people do to recover from experimentally engineered major embarrassments" (Abelson, 1983, p. 43; see also Greenwald & Ronis, 1978).

However pervasive the self-enhancement assumption may be, support for it comes primarily from studies in which researchers have examined the responses of unselected samples of participants. Because most people in unselected samples have positive self-views (e.g., Swann, 1987; Taylor & Brown, 1988), what appear to be self-enhancement strivings may in reality reflect self-verification strivings (displayed by the majority of participants who happen to have positive self-views). This possibility is supported by evidence that when investigators have measured the self-views of participants, they report that self-verifying evaluations are more legitimate and credible than disconfirming evaluations, even if these verifying evaluations are negative (Swann, Griffin, Predmore, & Gaines, 1987). Moreover, people prefer and seek evaluators who confirm negative as well as positive self-views. For example, when asked whether they would prefer to interact with evaluators who have positive or negative impressions of them, people with positive self-views preferred to interact with positive evaluators and people with negative self-views preferred to interact with negative partners (e.g., Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992).

Numerous replications of such self-verification effects using diverse methodologies have confirmed that people prefer evaluations and interaction partners that provide confirmation for their negative as well as positive self-views (e.g., Hixon & Swann, 1993; Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 1992; Swann, Hixon, Stein-Seroussi, & Gilbert, 1990; Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989; Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull, & Pelham, 1992). Both men and women display this propensity, regardless of how changeable the self-views are or whether the self-views are associated with specific qualities (intelligence, sociability, dominance) or global self-worth (self-esteem, depression). Finally, people are particularly likely to seek self-verifying evaluations if their self-views are confidently held (e.g., Pelham & Swann, 1994; Swann & Ely, 1984; Swann et al., 1988), important (Swann & Pelham, 2002), or extreme (Giesler, Josephs, & Swann, 1996). In short, in addition to a desire for self-enhancement, people possess a competing desire for self-

verification that is strong enough that it sometimes overrides self-enhancement strivings (e.g., Swann et al., 2007).

Although extensive, the foregoing investigations of self-verification processes have been limited in at least two ways. First, self-verification researchers have emphasized personal self-views (i.e., beliefs about the qualities that make people unique, such as "intelligent," "unsociable," etc.) at the expense of social self-views. Second, researchers have focused exclusively on people's efforts to verify the *content* of their identities by seeking evaluations that confirm the *nature* of their identities (e.g., Do others see me as "competitive" or "cooperative"?). Conspicuously absent in this research has been consideration of people's efforts to verify the *valence* they attach to their identities (e.g., "Do others value competitiveness as I do?"). Although the content–valence distinction has received little attention from identity researchers, it has been a very significant distinction within other literatures. Stereotyping researchers, for example, have repeatedly documented the importance of the distinction between content and valence of group evaluations (e.g., Felipe, 1970; Mackie, 1973; Park & Judd, 2005; Peabody, 1968; Suitner & Mass, 2008). Similarly, students of intergroup relations have also acknowledged the importance of valence of intergroup attitudes in their discussions of ingroup favoritism (e.g., Brewer, 1979, 1999; Brewer & Kramer, 1986; Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Messick & Mackie, 1989). In our research, we address both of these shortcomings of past self-verification research. We begin with a discussion of recent studies that have begun to explore the verification of social self-views.

From Self-Verification to Ingroup Identity Verification

Several self-verification researchers have recently proposed that people will work to verify group-related identities. For example, Chen et al. (2004, 2006) have argued that self-verification strivings generalize to collective self-views (cf. Ashmore, Deaux, & Mclaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Cotting, 1999; Simon et al., 1998). In support of this position, they have shown that people prefer evaluations that confirm personal attributes associated with group membership, even when the relevant self-views are negative. For example, people who are highly identified with the group "women" seek evaluations that confirm aspects of themselves that they associate with the group, such as "emotional" and "nurturing."

In work related to such studies of collective self-verification, Lemay and Ashmore (2004) explored the impact of the self-categorization process on people's information processing activities. They discovered that the initial categories participants placed themselves in (e.g., "preppy" or "activist") served to "anchor" their perceptions, such that over time they became increasingly convinced that others saw them as members of the same groups that they themselves did. Although Lemay and Ashmore interpreted their findings as support for collective self-verification, in reality they focused on the verification of abstract categorizations rather than the personal self-views associated with those categorizations. As such, we suggest that Lemay and Ashmore actually provided evidence that people are motivated to verify the categories that they had chosen to enter rather than their collective self-views.

The present research extended past research on the verification of social identities in three ways. First, whereas Chen et al. (2004, 2006) focused on the verification of collective self-views, we

focused on the verification of ingroup identities. Because the novelty of our focus required that participants make a clear distinction between their personal and ingroup identities, we studied groups who are known to make this distinction: natives of Madrid, Spain (Studies 1–3) and Spaniards in general (Studies 4 and 5). For example, many Madrilenians do not see themselves as "arrogant" but acknowledge this trait to be part of the Madrilenian ingroup identity (e.g., Sangrador, 1996). Our decision to conduct our research in Spain led to the second contribution of this research, which was to determine if a sample of Europeans would strive for self-verification as their counterparts in the United States have been shown to do. A third contribution was to explore the possibility that self-verification strivings would generalize from the content of their identities to the valence of their identities. That is, past work has focused on efforts to verify the specific content of identities—the particular qualities people associate with their group. To address this possibility, we first determined if people would seek verification of the content of their ingroup identities in Experiments 1–3. Then, in Experiments 4 and 5, we determined if people would seek verification of the value they placed on their ingroup identities—whether they regarded particular qualities of the ingroup as good or bad.

As noted earlier, we assumed that strivings for ingroup identity verification would be moderated by the extent to which people were invested in these identities. We accordingly tested the hypothesis that verification strivings would be stronger among participants who were relatively certain of their ingroup identities and highly identified with their group. At the same time, we predicted that ingroup verification strivings would not be influenced by the extent to which the ingroup identity was self-descriptive.

Finally, we sought to illuminate the specific motivational mechanisms underlying the responses of our participants. For example, social identity theorists have posed several overlapping but conceptually distinct mechanisms that could potentially give rise to ingroup identity strivings. One hypothesis has been that people identify with groups as a means of buttressing their positive conceptions of themselves or "self-enhancement" (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Fuller, Barnett, Hester, & Relyea, 2003). A second viewpoint has emphasized the epistemic functions of social identities, specifically the role identities play in making sense of the world (e.g., Turner, 1999; Turner & Reynolds, 2001). A final approach has been to sidestep issues related to motivation by assuming that group processes can be understood in purely cognitive terms (Turner & Oakes, 1989). Cognizant of the lack of consensus concerning why people are invested in their group identities, we designed our research with an eye to testing the relative viability of these various motivational analyses.

In summary, we sought to test the prediction that people prefer and seek evaluations that confirm their ingroup identities, especially if they are highly invested in those identities. In a critical test of self-verification versus self-enhancement, in Experiment 1 we assessed whether people preferred interacting with outgroup members who provided verifying feedback about the content of a negative ingroup identity over interacting with outgroup members who provided enhancing feedback about the content of the negative ingroup identity. In Experiment 2 we examined whether participants were more interested in interacting with outgroup

members who verified the content of their negative ingroup identities even if these identities were not self-descriptive. We designed Experiment 3 to empirically distinguish ingroup identity verification from collective identity verification and to demonstrate that the pattern obtained in Experiments 1 and 2 was not merely self-enhancement strivings masquerading as ingroup identity verification strivings. We designed Experiment 4 to test our assumption that people would strive to verify the valence that they attached to their ingroup identities. In Experiment 5 we sought further evidence that self-verification strivings, rather than rival motivations such as self-enhancement, motivated ingroup verification strivings. To this end, we tested the prediction that participants would eschew an overly positive or negative evaluator and would instead prefer interacting with an evaluator whose impression of their ingroup identity was unspecified. We also tested whether the predicted effects were particularly likely to emerge if participants were certain of the ingroup identity (Experiments 1–4) and identified with the ingroup (Experiments 1–5). In all studies we included measures of the reasons underlying participants' choice of interaction partners, with an eye to determining if self-verification or self-enhancement strivings were responsible for our effects.

Preliminary Experiment: Do Spaniards Strive to Verify Their Personal Self-Views?

With a few exceptions, past demonstrations of self-verification have been conducted in North America (e.g., English, Chen, & Swann, 2008). This raises the possibility that self-verification strivings may not emerge among participants in some parts of the world. To address this issue, we conducted a preliminary experiment to determine if the conventional self-verification effect (consisting of efforts to verify a personal self-view) would replicate with Spanish nationals. We focused specifically on the personal self-view "emotional intelligence" (Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995).

The participants were 101 high school students (50 boys, 51 girls, mean age = 15 years) who resided in Madrid, Spain and scored in the upper or lower quartile on a Spanish version of the Emotional Intelligence Scale (Fernández-Berrocal, Extremera, & Ramos, 2004). We first established that being perceived as low rather than high in emotional intelligence was seen as negative, $F(1, 99) = 1,168.57, p < .001$ ($M = 2.02, SD = 0.78$ vs. $M = 4.42, SD = 0.83$, respectively),[1] on a 5-point scale ranging from 1–5. These perceptions were not moderated by raters' self-perceived emotional intelligence ($F < 1$). Next, we had participants who viewed themselves as low or high in social perceptiveness choose between interacting with an evaluator who perceived them as low or high in emotional intelligence. Consistent with self-verification theory, a significant interaction between self-perceived emotional intelligence and positivity of evaluation emerged wherein participants chose to interact with evaluators who saw them as they saw themselves, $F(1, 97) = 21.61, p < .001$. Simple effects analyses indicated that participants who perceived themselves to be high in emotional intelligence preferred the evaluator who rated them positively, $F(1, 48) = 5.64, p < .001$ ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.10$ vs. $M = 3.12, SD = 1.17$), and participants who perceived themselves to be low in emotional intelligence

preferred the evaluator who perceived them negatively, $F(1, 49) = 19.98, p < .001$ ($M = 3.44, SD = 1.23$ vs. $M = 2.66, SD = 0.97$).

In short, the results offered clear evidence that Spanish participants are motivated to verify their personal self-views. With this evidence in hand, we were prepared to determine if Spanish participants would seek verification of their ingroup identities.

Experiment 1: Verification Versus Enhancement of the Content of Negative Ingroup Identities

To determine if people would seek verification of their ingroup identities even if these identities were negative and not self-descriptive, we conducted an experiment that consisted of two waves. In the first wave, participants who varied in the extent to which they were identified with the group designated either five traits that they were certain represented negative qualities of Madrilenians (high-certainty conditions) or five traits that they were uncertain represented negative qualities of Madrilenians (low-certainty conditions). They also indicated the extent to which each trait described the ingroup and themselves. In the second wave, participants received feedback regarding the content of their ingroup identity that was either enhancing or verifying. The design was therefore a 2 (feedback about the content of the ingroup identity: verifying vs. enhancing) × 2 (ingroup identity certainty: low vs. high) between-subjects factorial design with identification and perceived self-descriptiveness as continuous measures.

We expected that participants would prefer outgroup members who offered evaluations of the ingroup that were negative (and thus verifying) over those who offered evaluations that were enhancing (and thus nonverifying). Furthermore, we expected that participants in the high-certainty conditions and who were highly identified with their group would be particularly likely to display a preference for the verifying evaluators over enhancing evaluators. Finally, we expected that none of these effects would be qualified by the perceived self-descriptiveness of the characteristics.

Method

Participants

All participants were Madrilenians (i.e., born in Madrid) enrolled in a high-school psychology class. Each participant volunteered to participate in this research with the consent of his or her parents. The experiment was conducted in two waves separated by 10 days. There was little attrition between the two waves; 207 students completed Wave 1 and 200 participants (97 girls and 103 boys; mean age = 15.78 years, $SD = 0.99$) completed Wave 2.

Procedure

The experimenter began Wave 1 by explaining that the experiment was designed to determine the image that people from different autonomous communities (ACs) within Spain have of themselves and one another (Spain is organized as a semi-federal state with 17 ACs that are salient and meaningful socio-political

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[1] All "versus" comparisons of means and standard deviations henceforth in this article refer respectively to the qualities described.

categories for members). Participants then completed two questionnaires. First came Mael and Ashforth's (1992) Group Identification Scale with Madrid as the focal group. The scale consisted of six items such as "When someone criticizes Madrid, it feels like a personal insult." Participants responded to each on a scale ranging from 0 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*). Item analyses revealed that these items loaded onto one factor and were substantially interrelated ($\alpha = .85$). Participants then completed a values questionnaire. Participants ranked a list of 12 values and personal characteristics (i.e., *sense of humor*, *spontaneity*, *social skills*, *creativity*, *friendliness*) on a scale ranging from 1 (*most important to me*) to 12 (*least important to me*).

The manipulations of certainty and feedback. To set the stage for the experimental manipulations, participants first learned that they should construct a list of 10 traits that referred to negative qualities of Madrilenians. From this list, they were then asked to select five traits. Those randomly assigned to the high-certainty condition chose those five traits that they were certain represented negative qualities of Madrilenians. Those randomly assigned to the low-certainty condition chose those five traits they were uncertain represented negative qualities of Madrilenians. After choosing the five traits, participants offered an example of how each of these traits might be reflected in a naturally occurring situation. Examples of traits that were high in certainty were *stressed* and *arrogant*; examples of traits they were low in certainty were *tardy* and *stubborn*.

To ensure that the positivity of the traits did not vary as a function of the participants having selected them for inclusion in the high- or low-certainty conditions, we included a manipulation check in which participants rated the valence of the five traits that they did and did not choose on a scale ranging from –3 (*completely negative*) to 3 (*completely positive*). We submitted these ratings to a 2 (low vs. high certainty) × 2 (traits chosen vs. traits not chosen) mixed-model analysis of variance (ANOVA), with repeated measures on the last factor. No main nor interaction effects emerged (Fs < 1.5), indicating that the traits were seen as similarly negative regardless of certainty condition or whether the traits had been included or excluded. In addition, all the traits were rated as being more negative than the theoretical midpoint of the scale (ps < .001). We still obtained these findings when we added identification as a covariate.

A second manipulation check assessed the effectiveness of the certainty manipulation. On a 7-point scale ranging from –3 (*totally disagree*) to 3 (*totally agree*), participants rated the extent to which they were certain that Madrilenians had each of the five traits they had identified. The ratings of participants in the low-certainty condition were lower than the theoretical midpoint ($M = -1.25$, $SD = 0.65$), $t(99) = -34.78$, $p < .001$, and the ratings of those in the high-certainty condition were above the theoretical midpoint ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 0.59$), $t(99) = 23.52$, $p < .001$. These findings were not altered when identification was added as a covariate.

Once participants rated the valence and the certainty of the traits included in their description of the ingroup identity, they indicated the extent to which they agreed that each of the traits describing the ingroup also described themselves as a group member (from $0 = totally disagree$ to $6 = totally agree$). We created a single measure with the mean of the five items ($\alpha = .87$). The mean of the index was lower than the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($M = 1.46$, $SD = 0.77$), $t(199) = -28.19$, $p < .001$, indicating that

participants did not consider the traits they chose to describe the ingroup as self-descriptive. Self-descriptiveness of the traits did not vary as a function of certainty condition, $F(1, 198) < 1$, *ns*, nor was it related to identification ($B = -0.02$), $t(199) = -0.36$, $p = .72$.

Ten days later, the experimenter began the second wave of the study by informing participants that residents of an unnamed AC from Spain (whose members' status and values were similar to Madrid's) had selected five traits to describe Madrilenians. To enhance the credibility of our manipulation, the feedback was tailored to each individual participant based on his or her responses during Wave 1. Participants in the verifying condition learned that when residents of the AC described Madrilenians, the traits that they used matched the content that the participant had selected four of five times. Participants in the enhancing condition learned that residents of the AC described Madrilenians using traits that were the opposite of those that the participant had selected four of five times.

To check the effectiveness of the feedback manipulation, participants rated the traits included in the evaluation on a 7-point scale ranging from –3 (*completely negative*) to 3 (*completely positive*). We used a multiple regression including identification, ingroup identity certainty, feedback (about the content of the ingroup identity), perceived self-descriptiveness, all two-way interactions, all three-way interactions, and the four-way interaction as predictors. We represented both ingroup identity certainty and feedback using –1/1 effects coding. Also, as suggested by Aiken and West (1991), identification and perceived self-descriptiveness were centered. As expected, a main effect of feedback emerged ($B = 0.93$), $t(184) = 9.92$, $p < .001$, such that participants in the verifying feedback condition perceived the feedback to be more negative than did participants in the enhancing feedback condition ($M = -0.81$, $SD = 1.36$ vs. $M = 1.03$, $SD = 1.37$). Both means were different compared to the theoretical midpoint of the scale (ps < .001). No other effects were significant.

To test the possibility that our manipulations influenced the extent to which participants perceived the evaluators to possess similar status, we had participants indicate their perception of the relative status of the outgroup by responding to the question, "I think that, in general, the status of the other autonomous community is similar to the status of the autonomous community of Madrid," on a scale ranging from 0 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*). A multiple regression analysis did not produce any significant effect (ps > .10). Apparently, participants perceived the status of the outgroup and ingroup to be equal, as indicated by the fact that the mean exceeded the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 0.69$), $t(199) = 40.10$, $p < .001$.

Finally, to test the possibility that our manipulations influenced the perceived similarity of the participant and the evaluators, we asked participants to complete two questions. On a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*), they indicated the extent to which they considered that "The evaluator is very similar to me in general (sex, age, autonomous community, and socioeconomic status)" and "The evaluator has the same values and interest as me" ($\alpha = .76$). A multiple regression analysis did not produce any significant effect (ps > .10). All participants rated the evaluator as being more similar to them than average (as indicated by the theoretical midpoint of the scale; $M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.46$), $t(102) = 12.81$, $p < .001$.

Dependent measures. After reading the feedback, participants completed the dependent measures described below. In each case, participants responded on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*).

Desire to interact with outgroup members was measured using two items: "I think it would be easy for me to relate to most people from this AC," and "I would like to interact with people from this AC" ($\alpha = .91$).

Perception of ingroup identity verification was assessed using three items: "People from the other AC treat Madrilenians in a way that makes Madrilenians feel that our group is understood," "People from the other AC make feel Madrilenians that we can be ourselves," and "People from the other AC understand Madrilenians" ($\alpha = .88$).

Perception of self-enhancement was measured using the following statements: "I think that people from the other AC see Madrilenians in a positive way" and "I think that people from the other AC see Madrilenians more favorably than Madrilenians see ourselves" ($\alpha = .91$).

To tap the perceived competence of the evaluators, we asked participants if they considered outgroup members to be *competent*, *intelligent*, *credible*, *realistic*, *convincing*, *sincere*, and *reliable* ($\alpha = .85$).

After participants completed the dependent measures, we asked them to guess what AC the feedback came from. Preliminary analyses showed that our manipulations had no impact on the AC participants selected. We therefore dropped this variable from the primary analyses.

Results

To test the effect of our experimental manipulation on our outcome variables, we used a series of multiple regressions. The predictors were identification, ingroup identity certainty, feedback (about the content of the ingroup identity), perceived self-descriptiveness, all two-way interactions, all three-way interactions, and the four-way interaction. We represented both ingroup identity certainty and feedback using –1/1 effects coding. Also, as suggested by Aiken and West (1991), identification and perceived self-descriptiveness were centered.

Desire to Interact With Outgroup Members

The multiple regression analysis yielded the predicted triple interaction between feedback, certainty, and identification ($B = 0.67$), $t(184) = 7.95$, $p < .001$. Further analyses traced the triple interaction to a tendency for the interaction between identification and feedback to take different forms among participants who were low versus high in certainty of their ingroup identities. As shown in Figure 1A, among participants who were high in certainty, the interaction between identification and feedback was significant ($B = 0.91$), $t(184) = 6.62$, $p < .001$. Whereas high-identified participants were more inclined to interact with outgroup members in the verifying feedback condition than in the enhancing feedback condition ($B = 1.75$), $t(184) = 11.30$, $p < .001$, no such pattern emerged among the low-identified participants ($B = 0.26$), $t(184) = 1.12$, $p = .26$. In contrast, as shown in Figure 1B, among participants who were low in certainty, identification did not
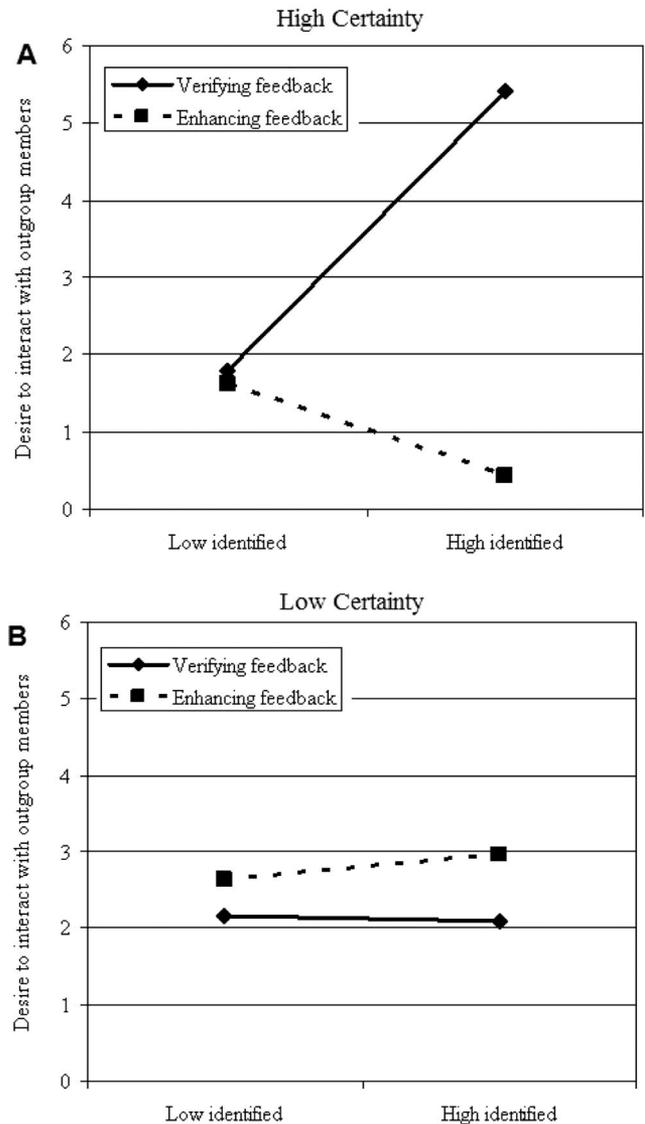

High Certainty

Low Certainty

Figure 1. Experiment 1: Desire to interact with outgroup members in the high-certainty (A) and low-certainty (B) conditions as a function of group identification and feedback type. Values for high and low group identification were ±1 *SD* from the mean ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.25$).

interact with feedback ($B = 0.03$), $t(184) = 0.21$, $p = .83$. These effects were not qualified by any higher order interactions.

Perception of Ingroup Identity Verification

The multiple regression analysis yielded the predicted triple interaction between feedback, certainty, and identification for perception of ingroup identity verification ($B = 0.43$), $t(184) = 8.99$, $p < .001$. Further analyses traced the triple interaction to a tendency for the interaction between identification and feedback to take different forms among participants who were low versus high in certainty of their ingroup identities. Among participants who were high in certainty, the interaction between identification and feedback was significant ($B = 0.92$), $t(184) = 9.90$, $p < .001$, such

that high-identified participants perceived more ingroup identity verification in the verifying feedback condition than in the enhancing feedback condition ($B = 0.74$), $t(184) = 7.98$, $p < .001$. In contrast, no such differences emerged for low-identified participants ($B = -0.04$), $t(184) = -0.33$, $p = .74$. Among participants who were low in certainty, identification did not interact with feedback ($B = -0.12$), $t(184) = -1.03$, $p = .30$. These effects were not qualified by any higher order interactions.

Perceived Competence of the Evaluators

The analysis revealed a certainty by feedback interaction ($B = 0.58$), $t(184) = 17.69$, $p < .001$. In the high-certainty condition, participants who received the verifying feedback perceived the evaluators as more competent than did participants who received the enhancing feedback ($B = 0.94$), $t(184) = 18.44$, $p < .001$ ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.54$ vs. $M = 1.83$, $SD = 0.33$). In contrast, in the low-certainty condition participants who received the enhancing feedback perceived the evaluators as more competent than did participants who received the verifying feedback ($B = -0.23$), $t(184) = -2.77$, $p < .01$ ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 0.52$ vs. $M = 2.24$, $SD = 0.41$). There was also a main effect of feedback ($B = 0.36$), $t(184) = 11.05$, $p < .001$, such that participants perceived the evaluators as more competent in the verifying condition than in the enhancing condition ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.88$ vs. $M = 2.26$, $SD = 0.61$). Finally, a significant effect of certainty emerged ($B = 0.15$), $t(184) = 4.72$, $p < .001$. Participants in the high-certainty condition perceived the evaluators as more competent than did participants in the low-certainty condition ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.04$ vs. $M = 2.47$, $SD = 0.52$). No other significant effect emerged from the analysis.

Perception of Self-Enhancement

The multiple regression analysis on perception of self-enhancement revealed only a main effect of feedback ($B = -1.28$), $t(184) = -21.32$, $p < .001$. Not surprisingly, participants in the enhancing condition (who received predominantly positive feedback) perceived more self-enhancement than did participants in the verifying condition (who received predominantly negative feedback; $M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.82$ vs. $M = 1.57$, $SD = 0.88$). No other significant effect emerged from the analysis.

Correlational Analyses

As expected, in the high-certainty conditions, desire to interact with outgroup members was related to perception of ingroup identity verification, $r(100) = .73$, $p < .001$, and perceived competence of the evaluators, $r(100) = .62$, $p < .001$. In contrast, desire to interact was negatively related to desire for self-enhancement, $r(100) = -.62$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the correlation between desire to interact with outgroup members and perception of ingroup identity verification was higher than the correlation between desire to interact and perception of self-enhancement ($Z = 7.45$, $p < .001$). In contrast, in the low-certainty condition, desire to interact with outgroup members was not related to perception of ingroup identity verification, perceived competence of the evaluators, nor perception of self-enhancement, rs$(100) = .08$, $-.02$, and $-.10$, respectively, ps $< .32$. Perceived

self-descriptiveness was not related to any of these variables in the high- or low-certainty conditions (ps $> .10$).

Discussion

As predicted, the results of Experiment 1 indicated that participants preferred and sought evaluations that confirmed ingroup identities in which they were highly invested. In particular, participants were more interested in interacting with members of an outgroup that offered negative but verifying evaluations than members of an outgroup that offered positive but nonverifying evaluations. These effects emerged, however, only among participants who were highly certain of the identity and identified with the group; no such preferences emerged for participants who were low in certainty or identification. In addition, a similar pattern of results emerged when we examined perception of ingroup identity verification. Analyses of the perceived competence ratings, however, revealed that whereas participants who were certain of their negative ingroup identity imputed the most competence to the negative but verifying outgroup members, participants who were relatively uncertain of their negative ingroup identity imputed the most competence to the positive but nonverifying outgroup members. Moreover, ingroup identification and perceived self-descriptiveness had no impact on perceived competence of the outgroup members. Finally, correlational analyses revealed that choice of partner was associated with perception of ingroup identity verification but not perception of self-enhancement.

In short, the results of Experiment 1 provided clear support for our major hypotheses. The fact that participants were most interested in interacting with negative but verifying evaluators offers compelling testimony to the power of the desire for ingroup identity verification, for in this instance verification came at the cost of frustrating self-enhancement strivings. No wonder, then, that this preference emerged only when participants were certain of, and identified with, the ingroup identity. Such support for the impact of belief certainty is consistent with a spate of previous studies inspired by self-verification theory (e.g., Pelham & Swann, 1994; Swann & Ely, 1984; Swann et al., 1988). Similarly, evidence of the moderator role of group identification is consistent with numerous investigations inspired by collective self-verification (Chen et al., 2004, Study 3), social identity theory (e.g., Castano, Yzerbyt, Paladino, & Sacchi, 2002; Crisp & Beck, 2005; Hall & Crisp, 2008; Hodson, Dovidio, & Esses, 2003), and self-categorization theory (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Jackson & Smith, 1999).

Nevertheless, although we encountered no evidence that the perceived self-descriptiveness of the identities was responsible for our effects, it is possible that this reflected restriction of range on this dimension (i.e., the results of the manipulation check indicated that, on average, participants regarded the traits we used in the evaluations as below the theoretical midpoint of the scale). This is important because any contribution of perceived self-descriptiveness to strivings for ingroup identity verification makes it less distinct from strivings for collective self-verification. To address this limitation, we conducted a follow-up investigation in which we systematically varied the perceived self-descriptiveness of the identities. In addition, to add to the methodological diversity of our research, in Experiment 2 we measured the certainty of

participants' identities rather than randomly assigning participants to low- and high-certainty conditions (as we did in Experiment 1).

Experiment 2: Does Perceived Self-Descriptiveness of Evaluations Contribute to Ingroup Identity Verification?

To determine if people would seek verification of their ingroup identities independent of perceived self-descriptiveness, we assessed preferences for interacting with a member of an outgroup whose evaluations were either self-descriptive or not and either enhanced or verified their ingroup identity. We included measures of ingroup identification and identity certainty, with an eye to determining if these variables moderated our findings. The design was therefore a 2 (perceived self-descriptiveness: self-descriptive vs. non-self-descriptive traits) $\times$ 2 (feedback about the content of the ingroup identity: verifying vs. enhancing) between-subjects factorial design with identification and certainty as continuous measures.

We expected that participants would prefer outgroup members who verified the content of the traits that were stereotypic of their group over those who offered enhancing evaluations of their ingroup. Furthermore, we expected that this outcome would emerge whether or not the identities were self-descriptive. Finally, we expected that people who were certain of their ingroup identities and highly identified with their group would be particularly likely to strive for ingroup identity verification.

Method

Participants

All participants were Madrilenians who were enrolled in a high-school psychology class. Each participant volunteered to participate in this research with the consent of his or her parents. The experiment was conducted in two waves separated by 1 week. There was little attrition between the two waves, with 236 students completing Wave 1 and 223 participants (106 girls and 117 boys; mean age = 15.59 years, $SD = 1.08$) completing Wave 2.

Procedure

Wave 1. As in Experiment 1, the experimenter began Wave 1 by explaining that the experiment was designed to determine the image that people from different ACs within Spain have of themselves and one another. Participants then completed the same measures of group identification and values included in Experiment 1.

The classification of ingroup self-descriptive and non-self-descriptive traits. To set the stage for the experimental manipulations, participants first learned that they should construct a list of 10 traits that referred to negative qualities of Madrilenians. They also were to indicate to what extent they were certain that Madrilenians possess each of these traits on a scale ranging from -3 (*totally uncertain*) to 3 (*totally certain*). The latter measure served as our index of ingroup identity certainty.

Participants then divided the 10 negative traits into two lists of five traits. One list consisted of the five traits they considered self-descriptive; the second consisted of the five traits they considered non-self-descriptive. After completing both lists, participants offered an example of how each of these traits might be

self-descriptive or non-self-descriptive. Examples of traits that were self-descriptive were *proud* and *overbearing*; examples of traits that were non-self-descriptive were *materialist* and *loudmouthed*. When we compared the certainty scores of the traits each participant chose as self-descriptive or non-self-descriptive, there were no differences ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.48$ vs. $M = 1.62$, $SD = 0.32$), $t(222) = -1.53$, $p = .13$.

The manipulation check of ingroup self-descriptive and non-self-descriptive traits. A manipulation check assessed the effectiveness of the self-descriptive versus non-self-descriptive classification. On a 7-point scale ranging from -3 (*not self-descriptive at all*) to 3 (*totally self-descriptive*), participants rated the extent to which they considered the traits from each list to be self-descriptive or non-self-descriptive. The ratings of participants for the self-descriptive traits were higher than the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($M = 1.27$, $SD = 0.34$), $t(222) = 55.96$, $p < .001$, and the ratings for the non-self-descriptive traits were lower than the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($M = -1.26$, $SD = 0.68$), $t(222) = -27.61$, $p < .001$.

To ensure that the positivity of the traits did not vary as a function of participants having selected them as self-descriptive or non-self-descriptive, we included a manipulation check in which participants rated the valence of the traits that they did and did not consider as self-descriptive on a scale ranging from -3 (*completely negative*) to 3 (*completely positive*). No differences emerged in the perceived valence of the self-descriptive traits versus the non-self-descriptive traits ($M = -1.32$, $SD = 0.57$ vs. $M = -1.35$, $SD = 0.54$), $t(222) = 0.82$, $p = .41$. In addition, all the traits were rated as being more negative than the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($ps < .001$).

Wave 2: The manipulation of perceived self-descriptiveness and feedback about the content. One week later, the experimenter began the second wave of the study by informing participants that residents of an unnamed AC from Spain (whose members' status and values were similar to Madrid's) had selected five traits to describe Madrilenians. To enhance the credibility of our manipulation, the feedback was tailored to each individual participant based on his or her responses during Wave 1.

Each of the five traits that each participant received were descriptive of the ingroup. However, these traits varied in their perceived self-descriptiveness. Participants in the self-descriptive ingroup identity condition received traits that they had identified as self-descriptive during Wave 1. Participants in the non-self-descriptive ingroup identity condition received traits that they had identified as non-self-descriptive during Wave 1. We also manipulated whether the traits provided for each of these two conditions were verifying or enhancing. Participants in the enhancing condition received five traits that were positive but nonverifying four of five times. Participants in the verifying condition received five traits that were negative but verifying four of five times.

Manipulation check of verification of ingroup identity. To ensure that group self-descriptive and group non-self-descriptive traits provided by the evaluators verified the ingroup identity, participants indicated the extent to which they were certain that Madrilenians has each of the traits provided by the evaluator on a scale ranging from -3 (*totally uncertain*) to 3 (*totally certain*). We submitted these ratings to a multiple regression with the following predictors: identification, ingroup identity certainty, feedback (about the content of the ingroup identity), perceived self-

descriptiveness, all two-way interactions, all three-way interactions, and the four-way interaction. We represented both perceived self-descriptiveness and feedback using −1/1 effects coding. Identification and certainty were centered. A main effect of feedback emerged ($B = 0.87$), $t(208) = 35.99$, $p < .001$, such that participants in the verifying feedback condition were more certain that the feedback verified their ingroup identity than participants in the enhancing feedback condition ($M = 0.98$, $SD = 0.32$ vs. $M = −0.75$, $SD = 0.38$). Both means differed from the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($ps < .001$). More importantly, no effect of perceived self-descriptiveness was found ($p = .99$), indicating that both group self-descriptive and group non-self-descriptive traits provided by the evaluators verified the ingroup identity. No other effects were significant.

Manipulation check of perceived self-descriptiveness. To determine the extent to which participants perceived the traits they received as self-descriptive, we had them rate each of the traits on a 7-point scale ranging from −3 (*not self-descriptive at all*) to 3 (*totally self-descriptive*). A multiple regression analysis on the self-descriptive feedback yielded a main effect of the perceived self-descriptiveness variable ($B = 1.09$), $t(208) = 28.76$, $p < .001$, such that participants evaluated self-descriptive traits as more self-descriptive than non-self-descriptive traits ($M = 1.18$, $SD = 0.36$ vs. $M = −0.99$, $SD = 0.69$). No other effects were significant.

Manipulation check of feedback positivity. Participants also rated the valence of the traits they received on a 7-point scale ranging from −3 (*completely negative*) to 3 (*completely positive*). A multiple regression analysis yielded a main effect of feedback ($B = −1.09$), $t(208) = −32.34$, $p < .001$, such that participants in the enhancing feedback condition perceived the traits as more negative than did participants in the verifying feedback condition ($M = 1.19$, $SD = 0.72$ vs. $M = −0.97$, $SD = 0.66$). No other effects were significant.

To test the possibility that our manipulations influenced the perceived status of the evaluators, participants indicated their perception of the relative status of the outgroup by responding to the question, "I think that, in general, the status of the other autonomous community is similar to the status of the autonomous community of Madrid," on a scale ranging from 0 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*). A multiple regression analysis produced no significant effects ($ps > .10$). Apparently, participants perceived both the outgroup and ingroup to have high status, as indicated by the fact that the mean exceeded the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.80$), $t(222) = 19.56$, $p < .001$.

To test the possibility that our manipulations influenced the perceived similarity of the participant and the evaluators, we asked participants to complete the same two questions included in Experiment 1 ($\alpha = .75$). Multiple regression analyses of participants' responses revealed no significant effects ($ps > .11$), with all participants rating the evaluator as being more similar to them than average, as indicated by the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.56$), $t(222) = 102.93$, $p < .001$.

Dependent measures. The same dependent measures used in Experiment 1 were included: desire to interact with outgroup members, perception of ingroup identity verification, perception of self-enhancement, and perceived competence of the evaluators (all αs $> .71$).

After participants completed the dependent measures, we asked them to guess what AC the feedback came from. Preliminary analyses showed that our manipulations had no impact on the AC participants selected. We accordingly dropped this variable from the primary analyses.

Results

To test the effect of our experimental manipulation on our outcome variables, we used a series of multiple regressions. The predictors were identification, ingroup identity certainty, feedback (about the content of the ingroup identity), perceived self-descriptiveness, all two-way interactions, all three-way interactions, and the four-way interaction. We represented both perceived self-descriptiveness and feedback using −1/1 effects coding. Also, as suggested by Aiken and West (1991), identification and certainty were centered.

Desire to Interact With Outgroup Members

The multiple regression analysis yielded the predicted triple interaction between feedback, certainty, and identification ($B = 0.27$), $t(208) = 4.32$, $p < .001$. Further analyses traced the triple interaction to a tendency for the interaction between identification and feedback to take different forms among participants who were low versus high in certainty of their ingroup identities.

As shown in Figure 2A, among participants who were high in certainty, the interaction between identification and feedback was significant ($B = 0.76$), $t(208) = 6.91$, $p < .001$. Whereas high-identified participants were more inclined to interact with outgroup members in the verifying condition than in the enhancing condition ($B = 1.97$), $t(208) = 15.35$, $p < .001$, no such pattern emerged among the low-identified participants ($B = 0.14$), $t(208) = 0.90$, $p = .37$. In contrast, as shown in Figure 2B, among participants who were low in certainty, identification did not interact with feedback ($B = 0.02$), $t(208) = 0.14$, $p = .89$. These effects were not qualified by any higher order interactions.

Perception of Ingroup Identity Verification

The multiple regression analysis yielded the predicted triple interaction between feedback, certainty, and identification for perception of ingroup identity verification ($B = 0.29$), $t(208) = 5.27$, $p < .001$. Further analyses traced the triple interaction to a tendency for the interaction between identification and feedback to take different forms among participants who were low versus high in certainty of their ingroup identities. Among participants who were high in certainty, the interaction between identification and feedback was significant ($B = 0.67$), $t(208) = 6.75$, $p < .001$, such that high-identified participants displayed a stronger perception of ingroup identity verification in the verifying condition than in the enhancing condition ($B = 1.84$), $t(208) = 16.10$, $p < .001$, but no such differences emerged for low-identified participants ($B = 0.18$), $t(208) = 1.27$, $p = .21$. In contrast, among participants who were low in certainty, identification did not interact with feedback ($B = −0.05$), $t(208) = −0.02$, $p = .73$. These effects were not qualified by any higher order interactions.

Perceived Competence of the Evaluators

The multiple regression analysis showed the expected triple interaction between feedback, certainty, and identification for per-
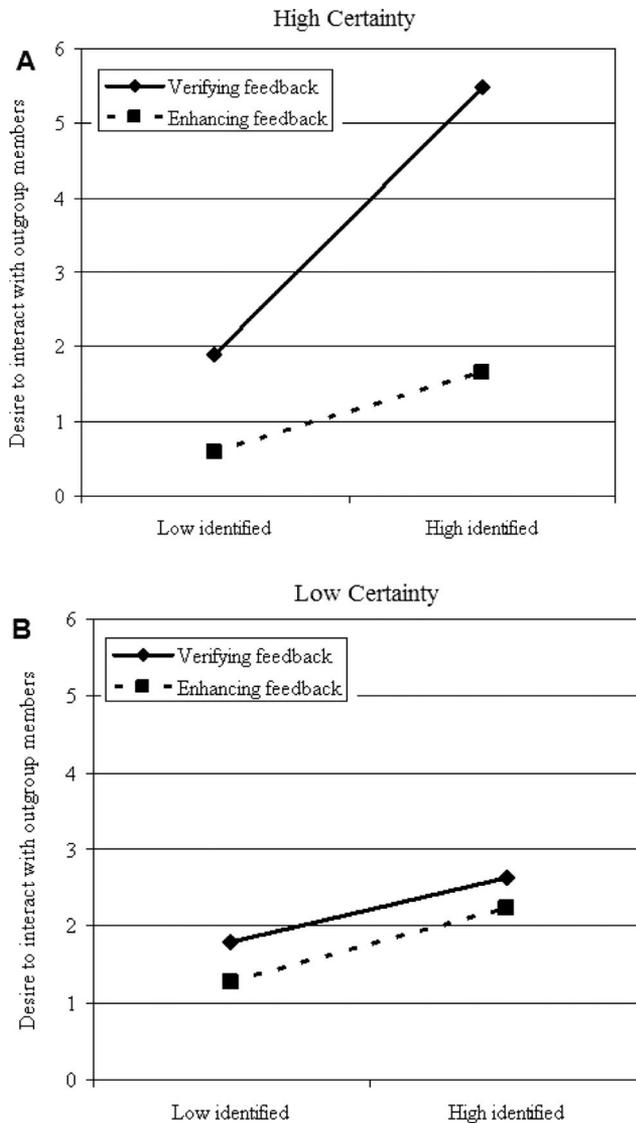
Figure 2. Experiment 2: Desire to interact with outgroup members in the high-certainty (A) and low-certainty (B) conditions as a function of group identification and feedback type. Values for high and low group identification were ±1 *SD* from the mean (*M* = 3.37, *SD* = 0.77).

ceived competence of the evaluators (*B* = 0.23), *t*(208) = 5.72, *p* < .001. Additional analyses traced the triple interaction to a tendency for the interaction between identification and feedback to take different forms among participants who were low versus high in certainty of their ingroup identities. Among participants who were high in certainty, the interaction between identification and feedback was significant (*B* = 0.57), *t*(208) = 9.25, *p* < .001, such that high-identified participants perceived the evaluators as more competent in the verifying feedback condition than in the enhancing feedback condition (*B* = 1.37), *t*(208) = 21.33, *p* < .001, but no such differences emerged for low-identified participants (*B* = 0.01), *t*(208) = 0.11, *p* = .91. In contrast, among participants who were low in certainty, identification did not interact with feedback (*B* = −0.08), *t*(208) = −0.87, *p* = .39. These effects were not qualified by any higher order interactions.

Perception of Self-Enhancement

The multiple regression analysis on perception of self-enhancement revealed only a main effect of feedback (*B* = −0.84), *t*(208) = −17.21, *p* < .001. Not surprisingly, participants in the enhancing condition (who received predominantly positive feedback) perceived more self-enhancement than did participants in the verifying condition (who received predominantly negative feedback; *M* = 3.65, *SD* = 0.63 vs. *M* = 1.95, *SD* = 0.78). No other significant effects emerged.

Correlational Analyses

As expected, in the high-certainty condition, desire to interact with outgroup members was related to perception of ingroup identity verification, *r*(137) = .77, *p* < .001, and perceived competence of the evaluators, *r*(137) = .61, *p* < .001. In contrast, desire to interact was negatively related to desire for self-enhancement, *r*(137) = −.43, *p* < .001. Furthermore, the correlation between desire to interact with the outgroup and perception of ingroup identity verification was higher than the correlation between desire to interact and perception of self-enhancement (*Z* = 16.98, *p* < .001). In the low-certainty condition, desire to interact with outgroup members was not related to perception of self-enhancement, *r*(86) = −.11, *p* = .29. Desire to interact was related to perception of ingroup identity verification and perceived competence of the evaluators, but at a lower level than in the high-certainty condition (*Z*s > 6.47, *p*s < .001), *r*s(86) = .18 and .22, respectively, *p*s < .05. Finally, identification was unrelated to certainty of self-descriptive traits, *r*(137) = −.05, and only weakly correlated to certainty of non-self-descriptive traits, *r*(137) = −.11, *p* > .094.

Discussion

As in Experiment 1, the results indicated that participants preferred and sought evaluations that confirmed their ingroup identities, but only if they were highly invested in these identities (i.e., high certainty and identification). Moreover, strivings to verify ingroup identities were not influenced by the extent to which the identities happened to involve self-descriptive traits. A similar pattern of results emerged when we examined perception of ingroup identity verification and perceived competence ratings. Lastly, correlational analyses revealed that choice of partner was associated with perception of ingroup identity verification but not perception of self-enhancement.

The fact that variations in the perceived self-descriptiveness of the identities did not influence strivings for ingroup identity verification clearly distinguishes our findings from previous research on collective self-verification, in which the driving force appeared to be perceived self-descriptiveness of the evaluation. Indeed, the unique contribution of strivings for verification of ingroup identities compared to personal self-views was driven home even more forcefully by written comments that participants made after the experiment but before the debriefing. For example, when we asked participants if they preferred verification for ingroup characteristics that were versus were not self-descriptive, most participants indicated that they preferred to verify non-self-descriptive over self-descriptive traits (64 vs. 29%), $\chi^2(1, N = 207) = 30.89$, *p* <

.001 (note that *N* is not 223 because some participants did not answer this question). When asked to explain this preference, participants explained that although it is good is to share some traits with one's group, having unique traits allows one to be similar but different at the same time. Such reasoning is consistent with optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991), which posits that people seek equilibrium between the need for differentiation of the self from others and the need for inclusion of the self in larger social groups. We return to this theme in the General Discussion.

Although the results of the first two experiments confirmed expectations, they are limited in at least two ways. First, it is possible that the index of perceived self-descriptiveness failed to produce effects due to insufficient variability of scores on this measure. Conceivably, had we maximized variability on the perceived self-descriptiveness index by specifically focusing on traits viewed as quite self-descriptive or quite non-self-descriptive, the perceived self-descriptiveness index may have yielded significant effects. Second, it is possible that our evidence for ingroup verification strivings in Experiments 1 and 2 may have actually reflected self-enhancement strivings. That is, in both investigations, we examined the extent to which participants sought verification of negative traits that characterized the ingroup but not themselves. The fact that the traits were always negative raises the possibility that participants may have been striving for self-enhancement by seeking feedback that highlighted their virtues, as in "Members of my group may be lazy, but I am hardworking."

To address these shortcomings, we conducted a third experiment in which we (a) specifically recruited participants who viewed traits that characterized their ingroup as either self-descriptive or non-self-descriptive and (b) determined whether people would seek verification of ingroup qualities that were positive as well as negative. We expected that neither of these procedural variations would moderate ingroup verification strivings.

Experiment 3: Might Perceived Self-Descriptiveness or Self-Enhancement Strivings Motivate Ingroup Verification Strivings?

To rule out the role of perceived self-descriptiveness and self-enhancement strivings in people's efforts to verify their ingroup identities, we conducted an experiment that consisted of two waves. In the first wave, participants were randomly assigned to list traits that were (a) "very descriptive of both you and your group" or traits that were (b) "very descriptive of your group but nondescriptive of you." In addition, some participants focused only on positive traits while some participants focused only on negative traits. We included a measure of ingroup identification with an eye to determining if this variable moderated our findings.

In the second wave, participants received feedback regarding the content of their ingroup identity that was either enhancing or verifying. The design was therefore a 2 (perceived self-descriptiveness: self-descriptive vs. non-self-descriptive traits) × 2 (valence of ingroup traits: positive vs. negative) × 2 (feedback about the content of the ingroup identity: verifying vs. enhancing) between-subjects factorial design with identification as a continuous measure.

We expected that participants would prefer outgroup members who offered evaluations of the ingroup that were verifying over those who offered evaluations that were enhancing. Furthermore, we expected that participants who were highly identified with their group would be particularly likely to display a preference for the verifying evaluators over enhancing evaluators. Finally, we predicted no main nor interaction effects involving perceived self-descriptiveness or valence of ingroup traits, thus indicating that neither perceived self-descriptiveness nor self-enhancement played a role in our findings.

Method

Participants

Two hundred and sixty-one undergraduate Madrilenian students (138 women and 123 men; mean age = 35.49 years, SD = 5.42) enrolled in the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) completed this research on the Internet for course credit. The experiment was conducted in two waves separated by 1 week. There was little attrition between the two waves, with 250 participants (131 women and 119 men; mean age = 35.50 years, SD = 5.46) completing the second wave.

Procedure

Wave 1. The experiment was conducted online. As in Experiments 1 and 2, participants learned that the study was designed to determine the image that people from different ACs within Spain have of themselves and one another. Participants then completed the same measures of group identification and values included in Experiments 1 and 2.

The manipulation of self-descriptive versus non-self-descriptive traits, and the valence of the ingroup traits. Participants who had been randomly assigned to focus on traits that varied in perceived self-descriptiveness (self-descriptive vs. non-self-descriptive) as well as positivity (positive vs. negative traits) listed four traits that reflected the appropriate levels of perceived self-descriptiveness and positivity. After completing the list, participants in the self-descriptive condition offered an example of how each of these traits was self-descriptive and participants in the non-self-descriptive conditions offered an example of how each of the traits was not self-descriptive. Examples of positive traits that were self-descriptive were *sociable* and *nice*; examples of negative traits that were self-descriptive were *unpunctual* and *stressed*; examples of positive traits that were non-self-descriptive were *hospitable* and *open-minded*; and examples of negative traits that were non-self-descriptive were *arrogant* and *materialist*.

To ensure that certainty of the traits included in the ingroup identity did not vary as a function of perceived self-descriptiveness or valence, participants were asked to indicate to what extent they were certain that Madrilenians had each of these traits on a scale ranging from –3 (*totally uncertain*) to 3 (*totally certain*). We submitted the ratings to a 2 (perceived self-descriptiveness: self-descriptive vs. non-self-descriptive traits) × 2 (valence of ingroup traits: positive vs. negative) ANOVA. No main nor interaction effects emerged (Fs < 0.54), indicating that self-description and valence did not influence certainty of ingroup identity (M = 2.10, SD = 0.20). These findings were not altered when identification was added as a covariate.

A manipulation check assessed the effectiveness of the self-descriptive versus non-self-descriptive classification. On a 7-point

scale ranging from –3 (*not self-descriptive at all*) to 3 (*totally self-descriptive*), participants rated the extent to which they considered the traits from each list as self descriptive or non-self-descriptive. A 2 (perceived self-descriptiveness: self-descriptive vs. non-self-descriptive traits) × 2 (valence of ingroup traits: positive vs. negative) ANOVA yielded a main effect of perceived self-descriptiveness, $F(1, 249) = 4,445.19$, $p < .001$. Participants imputed more perceived self-descriptiveness to traits in the self-descriptive condition compared to the non-self-descriptive condition ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.49$ vs. $M = -1.72$, $SD = 0.25$). No other effects emerged ($Fs < 0.01$). These findings were not altered when identification was added as a covariate.

Finally, we included a manipulation check in which participants rated the valence of the traits that they did, and did not, consider self-descriptive on a scale ranging from –3 (*completely negative*) to 3 (*completely positive*). A 2 (perceived self-descriptiveness: self-descriptive vs. non-self-descriptive traits) × 2 (valence of ingroup traits: positive vs. negative) ANOVA yielded a main effect of the valence of ingroup traits, $F(1, 249) = 4,192.57$, $p < .001$. Participants in the positive valence condition rated the traits as more positive than did participants in the negative valence condition ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.27$ vs. $M = -1.41$, $SD = 0.43$). No other significant effects emerged ($Fs < 0.10$). These findings were not altered when identification was added as a covariate.

Wave 2: The manipulation of feedback about the content.   One week later, participants were informed that residents of an unnamed AC from Spain (whose members' status and values were similar to Madrid's) had selected four traits to describe Madrilenians. To enhance the credibility of our manipulation, the feedback was tailored to each individual participant based on his or her responses during Wave 1.

Participants in the verifying condition received feedback regarding Madrilenians that verified three of four traits he or she identified as self-descriptive or non-self-descriptive during Wave 1 and disconfirmed the remaining trait. For example, participants in the verifying positive ingroup identity condition who described Madrilenians as sociable, nice, friendly, and respectful received feedback telling them that outgroup members saw Madrilenians as *sociable, nice, friendly,* and *disrespectful*; participants in the verifying negative ingroup identity condition who described Madrilenians as *unpunctual, stressed, nervous,* and *haughty* received feedback telling them that outgroup members saw Madrilenians as *unpunctual, stressed, nervous,* and *modest*. In contrast, participants in the enhancing condition received feedback regarding Madrilenians that was more positive than three of four traits he or she used during Wave 1. For example, participants in the enhancing positive ingroup identity condition who described Madrilenians as *sociable, nice, friendly,* and *respectful* received feedback telling them that outgroup members saw Madrilenians as *strong, organized, modest,* and *thrifty*; participants in the enhancing negative ingroup identity condition who described Madrilenians as *unpunctual, disorganized, nervous,* and *haughty* received feedback telling them that outgroup members saw Madrilenians as *punctual, organized, calm,* and *harried*.

This design allowed us to determine directly whether people would prefer negative but verifying feedback over positive but enhancing feedback.

Manipulation check of verification of ingroup identity.   To ensure that the traits provided by the evaluator verified the ingroup

identity, participants indicated the extent to which they were certain that Madrilenians had each of these traits on a scale ranging from –3 (*totally uncertain*) to 3 (*totally certain*). We used a multiple regression including the following predictors: identification, perceived self-descriptiveness, valence of ingroup traits, feedback (about the content of the ingroup identity), all two-way interactions, all three-way interactions, and the four-way interaction. We represented perceived self-descriptiveness, valence of ingroup traits, and feedback using –1/1 effects coding. Also, as suggested by Aiken and West (1991), identification was centered. A main effect of feedback emerged ($B = 1.23$), $t(234) = 41.95$, $p < .001$, such that participants in the verifying feedback condition were more certain that the feedback verified their ingroup identity than participants in the enhancing feedback condition ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.28$ vs. $M = -1.03$, $SD = 0.43$). Both means differed from the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($ps < .001$). No other effects were significant.

Manipulation check of perceived self-descriptiveness.   To determine the extent to which participants perceived the traits they received as self-descriptive or not, we had them rate each of the traits on a 7-point scale ranging from –3 (*not self-descriptive at all*) to 3 (*totally self-descriptive*). A multiple regression analysis on the self-descriptive feedback yielded a main effect of perceived self-descriptiveness ($B = 1.18$), $t(234) = 50.44$, $p < .001$, such that participants evaluated self-descriptive traits as more self-descriptive than non-self-descriptive traits ($M = 1.17$, $SD = 0.23$ vs. $M = -1.24$, $SD = 0.35$). No other effects were significant.

Manipulation check of feedback positivity.   Participants also rated the traits they received on a 7-point scale ranging from –3 (*completely negative*) to 3 (*completely positive*). A multiple regression analysis yielded a feedback by valence interaction ($B = 0.50$), $t(234) = 9.16$, $p < .001$. Participants in the positive valence condition perceived the feedback to be more positive in the enhancing condition compared to the verifying condition ($M = 1.60$, $SD = 0.78$ vs. $M = 1.00$, $SD = 0.82$). Those in the negative valence condition perceived the feedback to be more positive in the enhancing condition than in the verifying condition ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 0.56$ vs. $M = -1.01$, $SD = 0.95$). The analysis also yielded a main effect of feedback ($B = -0.80$), $t(234) = -14.51$, $p < .001$, and a main effect of valence ($B = 0.53$), $t(234) = 9.64$, $p < .001$. No other effects were significant. Note that the fact that participants imputed just as much positivity to the traits in the two enhancing conditions ($Ms = 1.60$ and 1.54, for positive and negative valence, respectively) is not surprising. After all, participants were simply asked to rate the positivity of the traits without considering the relation of those traits to the source traits from which they were derived (which did vary in positivity). The crucial finding here is that, in both valence conditions, participants imputed more positivity to the traits in the enhancing than in the verifying condition. This pattern is telling because it meant that participants could strive for self-verification only at the expense of their self-enhancement strivings.

Participants were also asked about the perceived status of the evaluators and the perceived similarity of the participant and the evaluators. A multiple regression analysis revealed no significant effects.

Dependent measures.   The same dependent measures used in Experiments 1 and 2 were included: desire to interact with outgroup members, perception of ingroup identity verification, per-

ception of self-enhancement, and perceived competence of the evaluators (all αs > .77). After participants completed the dependent measures, we asked them to guess which AC the feedback came from. Preliminary analyses showed that our manipulations had no impact on the AC participants selected. We therefore dropped this variable from the primary analyses.

Results

To test the effect of our experimental manipulation on our outcome variables, we used a series of multiple regressions. The predictors were identification, perceived self-descriptiveness, valence of ingroup traits, feedback (about the content of the ingroup identity), all two-way interactions, all three-way interactions, and the four-way interaction. We represented perceived self-descriptiveness, valence of ingroup traits and feedback using –1/1 effects coding. Also, as suggested by Aiken and West (1991), identification was centered.

Desire to Interact With Outgroup Members

The multiple regression analysis yielded the predicted two-way interaction between feedback and identification (B = 0.69), $t(234)$ = 10.71, p < .001. As shown in Figure 3, whereas high-identified participants were more inclined to interact with outgroup members in the verifying condition than in the enhancing condition (B = 1.06), $t(234)$ = 12.07, p < .001, no such pattern emerged among the low-identified participants (B = 0.04), $t(234)$ = 0.39, p = .70. There was also a main effect of feedback (B = 0.43), $t(234)$ = 7.65, p < .001. Participants in the verifying feedback condition showed higher desire to interact with outgroup members than did participants in the enhancing feedback condition (M = 3.12, SD = 1.42 vs. M = 2.26, SD = 0.78). No other significant effects emerged.

Perception of Ingroup Identity Verification

The multiple regression analysis yielded the predicted two-way interaction between feedback and identification (B = 0.63),
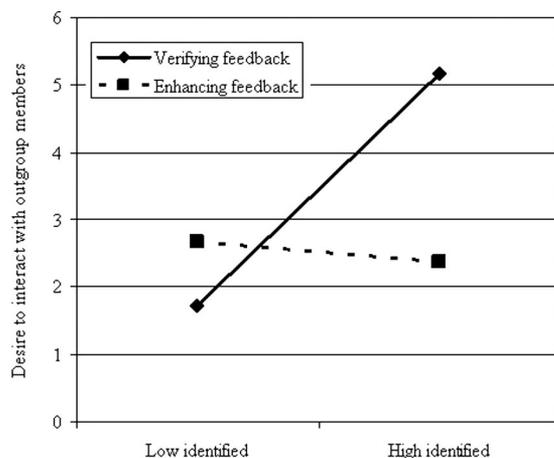

Figure 3. Experiment 3: Desire to interact with outgroup members as a function of group identification and feedback type. Values for high and low group identification were ±1 *SD* from the mean (M = 3.38, SD = 0.73).

$t(234)$ = 10.25, p < .001. Whereas high-identified participants perceived more ingroup identity verification in the verifying condition than in the enhancing condition (B = 1.03), $t(234)$ = 11.83, p < .001, no such pattern emerged among low-identified participants (B = 0.09), $t(234)$ = 0.79, p = .43. These effects were not qualified by any higher order interactions.

Perceived Competence of the Evaluators

The multiple regression analysis yielded the predicted two-way interaction between feedback and identification (B = 0.53), $t(234)$ = 9.12, p < .001. Whereas high-identified participants perceived the evaluator as more competent in the verifying condition than in the enhancing condition (B = 0.93), $t(234)$ = 12.05, p < .001, no such pattern emerged among the low-identified participants (B = 0.06), $t(234)$ = 0.64, p = .52. No other significant effects emerged.

Perception of Self-Enhancement

The multiple regression analysis on perception of self-enhancement revealed only a main effect of feedback (B = –0.64), $t(234)$ = –17.45, p < .001. Not surprisingly, participants in the enhancing condition (who received predominantly positive feedback) perceived more self-enhancement than did participants in the verifying condition (who received predominantly negative feedback; M = 3.55, SD = 0.45 vs. M = 2.19, SD = 0.50). No other significant effects emerged.

Correlational Analyses

As expected, desire to interact with outgroup members was related to perception of ingroup identity verification, $r(250)$ = .66, p < .001, and perceived competence of the evaluators, $r(250)$ = .46, p < .001. In contrast, desire to interact was negatively related to desire for self-enhancement, $r(250)$ = –.55, p < .001. Furthermore, the correlation between desire to interact with the outgroup and perception of ingroup identity verification was higher than the correlation between desire to interact and perception of self-enhancement (Z = 7.35, p < .001).

Discussion

This experiment was designed to determine if strivings for ingroup identity verification would persist even when the effects of perceived self-descriptiveness of the feedback and self-enhancement strivings were systematically controlled. The results supported our hypothesis. In particular, participants who were identified with the ingroup sought verification for their ingroup identities even when doing so meant verifying ingroup identities that were clearly not self-descriptive. Moreover, ingroup verification strivings emerged among highly identified participants when the verifying feedback was positive and non-self-descriptive. The latter finding rules out the possibility that participants were attempting to self-enhance by confirming negative ingroup identities that were not self-descriptive.

Although the results of Experiments 1–3 clearly indicate that people eschew nonverifying evaluations even if they are self-enhancing, we acknowledge that evaluators who disconfirm the content of ingroup identities are likely restricted to outgroup

members. After all, although the stereotypic beliefs of outgroup members can be expected to clash with the content of their own group identities (Gómez, 2002; Klein & Azzi, 2001; Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998), ingroup members are likely to agree among themselves regarding the content of ingroup identities. But if ingroup members seldom challenge the content of their ingroup identities, they may differ in the valence they attach to their ingroup identities. For example, although most Americans acknowledge that competitiveness is an aspect of the American ingroup identity, some people regard it as a virtue and others regard it as a vice. Therefore, among ingroup members, attaining verification for the content of their ingroup identities may be a given, but attaining verification of the valence of their ingroup identities may require selecting relationship partners with care and discretion. With such considerations in mind, in Experiments 4 and 5 we shifted our attention to people's efforts to obtain verification for the valence of their ingroup identities from ingroup members.

Experiment 4: Verification Versus Enhancement of the Valence of Ingroup Identities

In addition to shifting to people's reactions to feedback from ingroup members regarding the valence of their self-views, in Experiments 4 and 5 we also sought to establish the generality of our effects using an Internet-based methodology. As in Experiments 1–3, we wondered if people would be more inclined to seek ingroup identity verification if they were highly invested in their identities, that is, when they are certain of the ingroup identity and identified with the group. Similarly, our interest in testing self-verification versus self-enhancement theories led us to focus on participants' interest in verifying their negative ingroup identities only.

To address these issues, we employed a 2 (ingroup identity certainty: low vs. high) $\times$ 2 (feedback about the valence of the ingroup identity: verifying vs. enhancing) between-subjects factorial design with identification and perceived self-descriptiveness as continuous measures. Our major prediction was that people would prefer verifying feedback regarding the valence of their ingroup identities, especially if they were highly invested in their ingroup identities. We also expected that none of these effects would be qualified by the perceived self-descriptiveness of the characteristics.

Preliminary Investigations

We conducted two preliminary studies to identify traits to be used in the experiment proper. Our goal was to find traits that Spaniards ascribed to themselves that they perceived as possessing ambiguous valence. Drawing from a list of 100 traits typically associated with Spaniards (Sangrador, 1996), 200 Spanish undergraduates first identified 40 traits they believed applied to more than 50% of Spaniards. A second group of 44 students then identified the extent to which each of the 40 traits were "ambiguous in valence" on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*). Participants identified 14 traits that were higher than the midpoint of the scale ($ts > 3.95$, $ps < .001$, $Ms > 4.78$). These 14 traits (i.e., *ambitious, big-eater, conservative, idealistic, impulsive, independent, individualistic, fun-loving, proud, practical, religious, sentimental, serious,* and *traditional-*

istic) were used in both Experiments 4 and 5. With this list of traits in hand, we were prepared to conduct Experiment 4.

Method

Participants

One hundred and six undergraduate Spanish students (88 women and 18 men; mean age = 33.28 years, SD = 9.18) enrolled in UNED completed this research on the Internet for course credit. Data from 3 participants were discarded due to incompleteness. Thus, the final sample consisted of 103 students (85 women and 18 men; mean age = 33.85 years, SD = 9.09).

Procedure

The experiment was conducted online. Participants learned that the study was designed to determine the image that people from different countries within the European Union have of themselves and each other. Participants then completed the same measures of group identification and values included in Experiments 1–3.

The manipulations of certainty and feedback. The stage was set for the certainty manipulation by presenting participants with the list of 14 ambiguous traits that had been prepared prior to the experiment. Those in the high-certainty condition were asked to identify five traits that they deemed negative and they were certain described Spaniards. In contrast, those in the low-certainty condition were asked to identify five traits that they deemed negative but they were uncertain described Spaniards. A manipulation check revealed that when asked to evaluate each of these five traits on a 7-point scale ranging from –3 (*completely negative*) to 3 (*completely positive*), participants rated all five traits more negatively than the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($M = -0.95$, $SD = 0.62$), $t(102) = -15.37$, $p < .001$. Moreover, there was no impact of the certainty manipulation on the perceived valence of the traits ($M = -0.99$, $SD = 0.66$ vs. $M = -0.92$, $SD = 0.60$), $F(1, 102) = 0.36$, $p = .55$. A second manipulation check revealed that when asked to rate the extent to which they were certain that Spaniards had each of the five traits on a 7-point scale ranging from –3 (*totally disagree*) to 3 (*totally agree*), participants in the low-certainty condition rated themselves lower than the midpoint ($M = -1.04$, $SD = 0.79$), $t(52) = -9.55$, $p < .001$, and participants in the high-certainty condition rated themselves higher than the midpoint ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 0.73$), $t(49) = 14.83$, $p < .001$.

Once participants rated the valence and the certainty of the traits included in their description of the ingroup identity, they also had to indicate to what extent they agreed that each of these traits describing the ingroup also described themselves as a group member (on a scale from 0 = *totally disagree* to 6 = *totally agree*). We created a single measure with the mean of the five items ($\alpha = .77$). The mean of the index was lower than the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($M = 1.74$, $SD = 0.64$), $t(102) = -20.11$, $p < .001$, indicating that participants did not consider the traits they chose to describe the ingroup as self-descriptive. Also, these ratings were independent of the certainty manipulation ($p = .97$).

To set the stage for the feedback manipulation, participants learned that the five traits they had chosen were entered into a computerized database that contained ratings by many other Spanish participants. After giving the computer several minutes to

"think," participants learned that another Spaniard (who had similar demographic characteristics and values) had rated the same traits that the participants themselves had selected. In the enhancing feedback condition, participants learned that the evaluator had evaluated four of the five traits positively. In the verifying feedback condition, participants learned that the evaluator had evaluated four of the five traits negatively.

Participants were asked to judge the positivity of the other Spaniard's rating on a scale ranging from –3 (*completely negative*) to 3 (*completely positive*). We used a multiple regression including identification, ingroup identity certainty, feedback (about the valence of the ingroup identity), perceived self-descriptiveness, all two-way interactions, all three-way interactions, and the four-way interaction as predictors of the feedback manipulation. We represented both ingroup identity certainty and feedback using –1/1 effects coding. Also, as suggested by Aiken and West (1991), identification and perceived self-descriptiveness were centered. A main effect of feedback ($B = 0.74$), $t(87) = 6.80$, $p < .001$, indicated that participants in the enhancing evaluator condition perceived the evaluation of the other Spaniard as more positive than did participants in the verifying condition ($M = 0.78$, $SD = 1.30$ vs. $M = -0.73$, $SD = 1.52$). No other effects were significant.

To determine if our manipulations influenced participants' perception of the similarity of the evaluator, we asked participants the same two questions included in Experiments 1–3 ($\alpha = .76$). The multiple regression analysis did not produce any significant effect. In addition, participants perceived that the evaluator was similar to them as indicated by the fact that the mean was significantly higher than the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.46$), $t(102) = 12.81$, $p < .001$.

Dependent measures. The same dependent measures used in Experiments 1–3 were included: desire to interact with the evaluator, perception of ingroup identity verification, perception of self-enhancement, and perceived competence of the evaluator (all αs > .75).

Results

To test the effect of the predictor variables on the outcome variables, we used a series of multiple regressions. The predictors were identification, ingroup identity certainty, perceived self-descriptiveness and feedback (about the valence of the ingroup identity), all two-way interactions, all three-way interactions, and the four-way interaction. We represented both ingroup identity certainty and feedback using –1/1 effects coding. Also, as suggested by Aiken and West (1991), identification and perceived self-descriptiveness were centered.

Desire to Interact With the Evaluator

The predicted triple interaction between feedback, certainty, and ingroup identification emerged ($B = -0.20$), $t(87) = -2.01$, $p < .05$. Further analysis traced the triple interaction to a tendency for the two-way interaction between identification and feedback to take different forms among participants who were low versus high in certainty of their ingroup identities. As shown in Figure 4A, among participants who were high in certainty, the interaction between identification and feedback was significant ($B = 0.48$), $t(87) = 3.39$, $p < .001$, with high-identified participants preferring
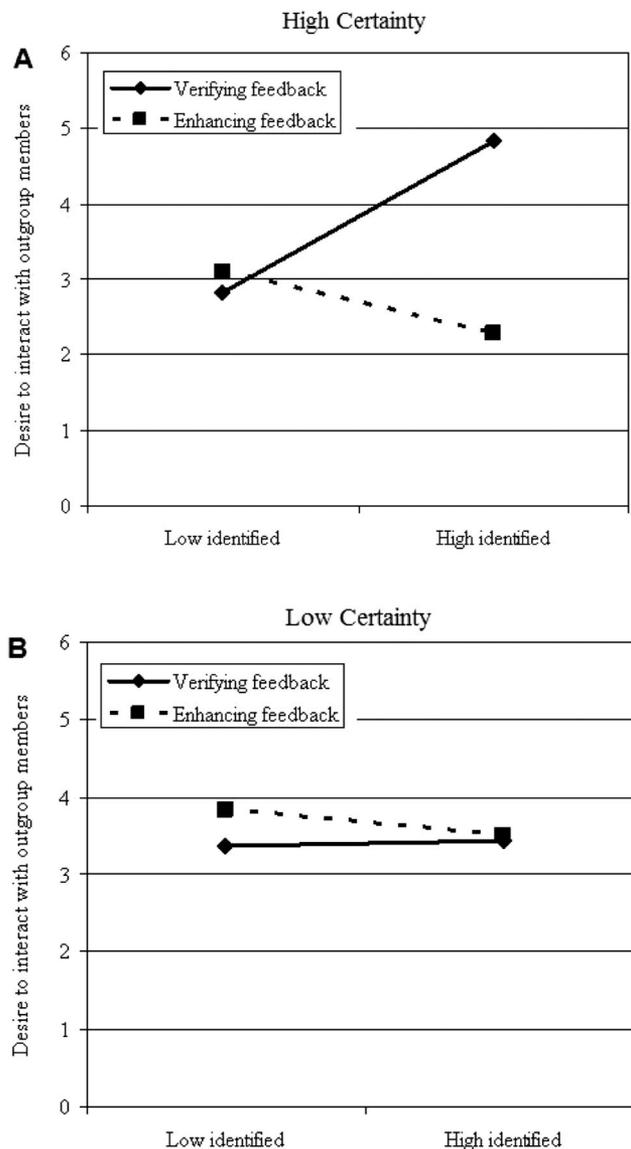

Figure 4. Experiment 4: Desire to interact with the evaluator in the high-certainty (A) and low-certainty (B) conditions as a function of group identification and feedback type. Values for high and low group identification were ±1 *SD* from the mean ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.82$).

to interact with the evaluator in the verifying feedback condition more than in the enhancing feedback condition ($B = 0.34$), $t(87) = 3.64$, $p < .001$, but low-identified participants displayed no such differences ($B = -0.13$), $t(87) = -0.84$, $p = .40$. In contrast, as shown in Figure 4B, among participants who were low in certainty, identification did not interact with feedback ($B = 0.18$), $t(87) = 1.27$, $p = .21$. These effects were not qualified by any higher order interactions.

Perception of Ingroup Identity Verification

The analysis revealed a triple interaction between certainty, feedback, and ingroup identification ($B = -0.33$), $t(87) = -4.00$,

$p < .001$. The triple interaction emerged due to a tendency for the interaction between identification and feedback to take different forms among participants who were low versus high in certainty of their ingroup identities. Among participants who were high in certainty, the interaction between identification and feedback was significant ($B = 0.49$), $t(87) = 4.19$, $p < .001$, such that high-identified participants perceived more ingroup identity verification in the verifying feedback condition than in the enhancing feedback condition ($B = 0.51$), $t(87) = 3.82$, $p < .001$, but among low-identified participants this pattern did not emerge ($B = -0.16$), $t(87) = -1.24$, $p = .22$. Among participants who were low in certainty, identification did not interact with feedback ($B = -0.09$), $t(87) = -0.73$, $p = .47$. These effects were not qualified by any higher order interactions.

Perceived Competence of the Evaluator

The analysis revealed a certainty by feedback interaction ($B = -0.43$), $t(87) = -5.46$, $p < .001$. Among high-certainty participants, those who received the verifying feedback perceived the evaluator as more competent than did those who received the enhancing feedback ($B = 0.68$), $t(87) = 6.64$, $p < .001$ ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.60$ vs. $M = 2.57$, $SD = 0.82$). In contrast, no difference emerged among low-certainty participants between the enhancing and the verifying feedback conditions ($B = -0.14$), $t(87) = -1.15$, $p = .25$ ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.75$ vs. $M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.64$). These effects were not qualified by any higher order interactions.

Perception of Self-Enhancement

The regression on perception of self-enhancement produced only a main effect of feedback ($B = 0.23$), $t(87) = 1.98$, $p < .05$. Participants in the enhancing feedback condition perceived more self-enhancement than did participants in the verifying feedback condition ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.08$ vs. $M = 2.38$, $SD = 1.11$).

Correlational Analyses

As expected, among those high in certainty, desire to interact with the evaluator was related to perception of ingroup identity verification, $r(50) = .68$, $p < .01$, and perceived competence of the evaluator, $r(50) = .26$, $p < .05$. In contrast, desire to interact with the evaluator was not related to perception of self-enhancement, $r(50) = -.07$, *ns*. Furthermore, the correlation between desire to interact with the evaluator and perception of ingroup identity verification was higher than the correlation between desire to interact with the evaluator and perception of self-enhancement ($Z = 4.39$, $p < .001$).

In contrast, in the low-certainty condition, desire to interact with the evaluator was not related to perception of ingroup identity verification, perceived competence of the evaluator, or perception of self-enhancement, $rs(53) = .09$, $.17$, and $-.14$, respectively, $ps < .23$. Perceived self-descriptiveness was not related to any of these variables within either the high- or the low-certainty conditions ($ps > .15$).

Discussion

As in Experiments 1–3, participants sought evaluations that confirmed ingroup identities in which they were highly invested.

In particular, participants were more inclined to interact with a negative but verifying evaluator than a positive but nonverifying evaluator, but only when they were highly certain of the ingroup identity and identified with the group. No such preference emerged for participants who were low in certainty or identification. The evidence that both identification with the group and ingroup identity certainty interactively predicted the outcome variables confirms predictions from both self-verification and social identity theories regarding the likely moderators of the strength of our effects (e.g., Chen et al., 2004; Kraus & Chen, 2009; Pelham & Swann, 1994; Swann & Ely, 1984).

Our findings extend evidence of a desire for ingroup identity verification in two ways. First, whereas the results of Experiments 1–3 indicate that people seek verification of the content of their ingroup identities, the results of Experiment 4 generalize this effect to the valence of ingroup identities. Apparently, people want others to validate not only their beliefs about the properties of their group, but also their feelings about the desirability of those properties. Second, whereas the results of Experiments 1–3 revealed that people desire ingroup identity verification from members of an outgroup, the results of Experiment 4 revealed that people desire ingroup identity verification from members of their group.

Analyses of the perceived competence of the evaluator revealed that whereas participants who were certain of their negative ingroup identity imputed the most competence to the negative but verifying evaluator, participants who were uncertain of their negative ingroup identity displayed no such preference. Moreover, ingroup identification had no impact on perceived competence of the evaluator. Finally, our correlational analyses also parallel the results of Experiments 1–3 in that choice of interaction partner was associated with perception of ingroup identity verification but not perception of self-enhancement.

With this evidence of strivings for ingroup identity verification in hand, we conducted another study that was designed to further explore the psychological mechanisms underlying this effect. In particular, Experiment 5 was designed to provide an additional test of the hypothesis that self-verification strivings motivated the feedback-seeking activities of participants rather than rival motivations such as self-enhancement. Given the evidence from Experiments 1–4 that people seek to verify ingroup identities of which they are certain, we focused exclusively on identities that were high in certainty in Experiment 5.

Experiment 5: Choosing Between an Overly Positive, Overly Negative, or Unspecified Evaluator

In Experiment 5 we assessed interest in interacting with an evaluator from the ingroup who was similar to the participant. The evaluator appraised the ingroup identity of the participant in one of three ways: an overly positive manner, an overly negative manner, or an unspecified manner. The research literature could generate at least two distinct predictions here. Self-enhancement theory would predict that the overly positive evaluator would be most preferred, followed by the unspecified evaluator, with the overly negative evaluator being least preferred. Self-verification theory would predict that participants would prefer the unspecified evaluator over the overly positive and overly negative evaluators. The rationale underlying the self-verification theory prediction is twofold. First, the overly positive and overly negative evaluators were

clearly nonverifying and would thus be undesirable. Although the evaluation of the unspecified evaluator was not stated, the fact that the unspecified evaluator was described as a Spaniard who resembled participants in many respects (e.g., sex, age, values, interest, AC, socioeconomic status, etc.) presumably encouraged them to assume that the unspecified evaluator perceived Spaniards as the participants themselves did. Finally, we expected that the preference for the unspecified evaluator would emerge among high-identified participants but not among low-identified participants, consistent with the results of Experiments 1–4 and research on collective self-verification.

Method

Participants

Seventy-seven undergraduate Spanish students (69 women and 8 men; mean age = 33.20 years, SD = 7.27) enrolled at UNED completed this research on the Internet for course credit. Data from 4 participants were discarded due to incompleteness. Thus, the final sample consisted of 73 students (65 women and 8 men; mean age = 33.31 years, SD = 7.45).

Procedure

The experiment was conducted online and it was introduced as part of research designed to determine the image that people from different countries within the European Union have of themselves as well as the extent to which they are certain of these images. Participants then completed the same measures of group identification and values included in Experiments 1–4.

The manipulation of discrepant feedback. Participants were presented with the list of 14 ambiguous traits developed for Experiment 4 and were asked to choose five traits they were highly certain were characteristic of Spaniards. After choosing the traits, participants were asked to provide an illustrative example of each of the five traits. The most cited traits were *ambitious*, *big-eater*, *impulsive*, *fun-loving*, and *traditionalistic*. They then rated the extent to which they considered each of the five traits (from the list of 14) to characterize Spaniards in a positive or negative light on a scale ranging from –3 (*completely negative*) to 3 (*completely positive*). Participants rated all five traits slightly more positively than the midpoint of the scale (M = 0.18, SD = 0.79), $t(72)$ = 1.94, p < .06. These ratings did not differ as a function of experimental condition (F = 0.07, p = .93). A manipulation check revealed that when asked to rate the extent to which they were certain that Spaniards had each of the five traits on a 7-point scale ranging from –3 (*totally disagree*) to 3 (*totally agree*), the ratings exceeded the theoretical midpoint (M = 1.66, SD = 0.66), $t(72)$ = 21.43, p < .001.

Once participants rated the valence and the certainty of the traits included in their description of the ingroup identity, they also had to indicate to what extent they agree that each of these traits describing the ingroup also describes themselves as a group member (from 0 = *totally disagree* to 6 = *totally agree*). We created a single measure with the mean of the five items (α = .75). The mean of the index was lower than the theoretical midpoint of the scale (M = 1.74, SD = 0.91), $t(72)$ = –17.28, p < .001, indicating

that participants did not consider the traits they chose to describe the ingroup as self-descriptive.

To set the stage for the evaluator manipulation, participants learned that the five traits that he or she identified were entered into a large database that contained ratings by many other Spaniards. After giving the computer several minutes to "think," the participant was informed that another Spaniard who was similar in many ways to the participant (e.g., sex, age, AC, socioeconomic status, and values) was randomly selected from the database and the participant's ratings were compared to those of this other Spaniard.

Participants were then shown a chart comparing their own ratings with those of the other Spaniard. Participants in the overly positive evaluator condition learned that the evaluator rated the five traits more positively than the participant had; participants in the overly negative evaluator conditions learned that the evaluator rated the five traits more negatively that the participant had. The difference between the participant rating and the evaluator rating depicted in the chart was equivalent in the two conditions. Participants randomly assigned to the unspecified evaluator condition were told that they should try to imagine the other Spaniard's evaluation of the five traits in anticipation of learning the actual evaluations later in the experiment.

We assumed that participants in the unspecified evaluator condition assumed that the evaluator perceived the group as they did. To test this assumption, participants were asked at the end of the questionnaire, "Compared to your own evaluation, how do you think that the evaluator has rated the traits you selected?" (from –3 = *much more negative than me* to 3 = *much more positive*, with 0 = *equal*). We used a multiple regression using an orthogonal coding method for the experimental manipulation, the Helmert contrast (West, Aiken, & Krull, 1996). We also wanted to test if ingroup identification and perceived self-descriptiveness moderated the effect of the experimental manipulation. The predictors were two Helmert-coded main effects (the first of which compares the two nonverifying conditions with the unspecified evaluator condition and the second of which compares the two nonverifying conditions), ingroup identification, perceived self-descriptiveness, and the two-way and three-way interactions. A main effect of the first Helmert code emerged (B = –0.40), $t(61)$ = –2.12, p < .05, indicating that the means on the overly positive and the overly negative conditions were significantly different than the mean on the unspecified condition (Ms = 1.82, –1.64, and –0.09, and SDs = 0.49, 0.39, and 0.79, respectively). Participants in this condition expected that the evaluator would see the group in the same way they saw the group, $t(22)$ = –0.70, p = .49. A main effect of the second Helmert code also emerged (B = –1.15), $t(61)$ = –6.56, p < .001, indicating that the difference between the overly positive and the overly negative conditions was significant. No other significant effect emerged from the analysis.

Participants were asked to judge the positivity of the other Spaniard's rating on a scale ranging from –3 (*completely negative*) to 3 (*completely positive*). A multiple regression analysis yielded a main effect of the second Helmert code (B = –1.24), $t(61)$ = –5.53, p < .001, indicating that the difference between the overly positive and the overly negative conditions was significant (M = 1.75, SD = 0.52 vs. M = –1.18, SD = 0.91). No other significant effect emerged from the analysis.

To determine if our manipulations influenced the perceived similarity between the participant and the evaluator, we asked participants to respond to the same questions included in Experiment 4 ($\alpha = .75$). A regression analysis did not produce any significant effect ($ps > .24$), indicating that responses revealed that the experimental manipulation had no impact on perceived similarity. In addition, participants perceived that the evaluator was similar to them ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.52$). The mean was significantly higher than the theoretical midpoint of the scale, $t(72) = 61.65$, $p < .001$.

Dependent measures. After reading the feedback, participants completed the same dependent measures as in Experiments 1–4: desire to interact with the evaluator, perception of ingroup identity verification, perception of self-enhancement, and perceived competence of the evaluator (all $\alpha s > .71$).

Results

We were interested in two comparisons: (a) the unspecified condition (control) versus the overly positive and the overly negative conditions and (b) the overly positive versus the overly negative conditions. To make this comparison directly, we used an orthogonal coding method, the Helmert contrast (West et al., 1996). We also wanted to test if ingroup identification and perceived self-descriptiveness moderated the effect of the experimental manipulation. The predictors were two Helmert-coded main effects (the first of which compares the two nonverifying conditions with the unspecified evaluator condition and the second of which compares the two nonverifying conditions); ingroup identification; perceived self-descriptiveness; the interaction of identification with each of the two Helmert-coded effects; the interaction of perceived self-descriptiveness with each of the two Helmert-coded effects; and the interaction between identification, perceived self-descriptiveness, and each the two Helmert-coded effects.

Desire to Interact With the Evaluator

The regression analysis on desire to interact with the evaluator revealed the predicted interaction between the first Helmert code and ingroup identification ($B = 0.43$), $t(61) = 4.90$, $p < .001$. As shown in Figure 5, high-identified participants in the unspecified condition showed a higher desire to interact with the evaluator than did participants in the two nonverifying conditions ($B = 0.66$), $t(61) = 3.35$, $p < .001$. However, no differences emerged for participants who were low in identification ($B = 0.06$), $t(61) = 0.28$, $p = .78$.

The regression analysis on desire to interact with the evaluator also revealed the predicted main effect of the first Helmert code ($B = 0.19$), $t(61) = 2.03$, $p < .05$, such that participants in the overly positive and the overly negative conditions ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 0.80$ and $M = 1.89$, $SD = 0.94$, respectively) were less willing to interact with the evaluator than participants in the unspecified condition ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.65$). No other significant effect emerged from the analysis.

Perception of Ingroup Identity Verification

The regression analysis on perception of ingroup identity verification showed the predicted interaction between the first Helmert
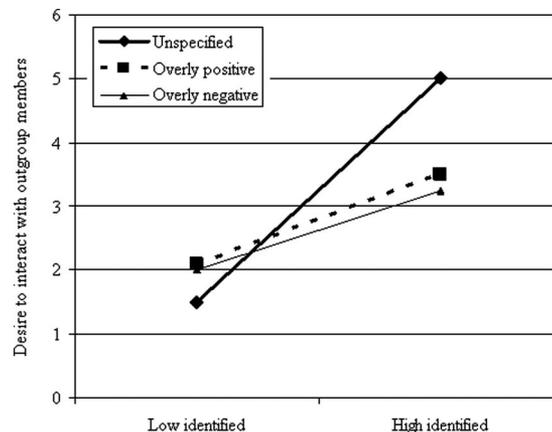

Figure 5. Experiment 5: Desire to interact with the evaluator as a function of group identification and feedback type. Values for high and low group identification were ±1 *SD* from the mean ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.74$).

code and ingroup identification ($B = 0.39$), $t(61) = 5.14$, $p < .001$. High-identified participants in the unspecified condition showed a higher perception of ingroup identity verification than did participants in the two nonverifying conditions ($B = 1.24$), $t(61) = 7.60$, $p < .001$. However, this propensity was considerably lower for participants low in identification ($B = 0.39$), $t(61) = 1.91$, $p = .06$. The regression analysis on perception of ingroup identity verification also revealed the predicted main effect of the first Helmert code ($B = 0.57$), $t(61) = 7.15$, $p < .001$, such that participants in the overly positive and the overly negative conditions ($M = 1.47$, $SD = 0.50$ and $M = 1.25$, $SD = 1.23$, respectively) perceived less ingroup identity verification than did participants in the unspecified condition ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.09$). No other significant effect emerged from the analysis.

Perceived Competence of the Evaluator

The regression analysis on perceived competence of the evaluator indicated a main effect of the first Helmert code ($B = 0.33$), $t(61) = 4.29$, $p < .001$, such that participants in the overly positive and the overly negative conditions ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.94$ and $M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.04$, respectively) perceived the evaluator as less competent than did participants in the unspecified condition ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.75$). No other significant effect emerged from the analysis.

Perception of Self-Enhancement

As expected, the regression analysis yielded a significant effect of the second Helmert code ($B = -1.13$), $t(61) = -7.74$, $p < .001$, reflecting a tendency for the overly positive evaluator to be seen as most self-enhancing ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.93$), followed by the unspecified evaluator ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 0.86$), followed by the overly negative evaluator ($M = 0.73$, $SD = 1.25$; all differences significant at $p < .05$). No other significant effect emerged from the analysis.

Correlational Analyses

Desire to interact with the evaluator was associated with perception of ingroup identity verification, $r(73) = .36$, $p < .001$, and

perceived competence of the evaluator, $r(73) = .37$, $p < .001$. However, desire to interact with the evaluator was not related to self-enhancement, $r(73) = .03$, *ns*. Perceived self-descriptiveness was not related to any of these variables.

Discussion

Consistent with self-verification theory, the results of Experiment 5 revealed that participants who were highly identified with Spain eschewed evaluators whose impressions of Spaniards were more positive or more negative than their Spanish ingroup identities. Instead, highly identified participants preferred evaluators whose impressions were unspecified, apparently because they assumed that such evaluators would evaluate Spaniards as they themselves did (an assumption that they would not have made if the evaluators were outgroup members, for outgroup members are generally assumed to be negative toward the ingroup; cf. Gómez, 2002; Vorauer et al., 1998). Participants who were not identified with Spain displayed no such effects. Moreover, participants imputed less competence to the overly positive or negative evaluator than to the evaluator whose impressions were unspecified.

Finally, participants' desire to interact and perception of evaluator competence were correlated with the extent to which they perceived the evaluations to be self-verifying but not the extent to which they perceived the evaluations as self-enhancing. These findings, together with the fact that the unspecified evaluator was preferred over the overly positive evaluator, support self-verification theory at the expense of self-enhancement theory.

General Discussion

To the best of our knowledge, the findings that we report here represent the first evidence that people take active steps to seek verification for an externalization of the self, namely ingroups in which they are psychologically invested. In five studies, we showed that people sought verification for their convictions regarding the characteristics of their social group, even if it meant choosing to interact with a negative but verifying evaluator over a positive but disconfirming one. This pattern emerged, however, only when people were invested in the ingroup identity due to either certainty of the identity (cf. Chen et al., 2004, 2006; Kraus & Chen, 2009; Pelham & Swann, 1994; Swann & Ely, 1984; Swann et al., 1988) or identification with the group (e.g., Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999).

Our findings also provided evidence for the generality of ingroup verification strivings. For example, participants not only preferred to interact with evaluators who verified their ingroup identities, they also perceived such evaluators to be more competent than evaluators who enhanced their ingroup identities. Further, in addition to replicating past evidence that people seek verification for what they believe about themselves (i.e., the content of their identities; Experiments 1–3), we found that people seek verification for how they feel about their identities (i.e., the valence of their identities; Experiments 4 and 5). Moreover, despite extensive evidence that opinions of ingroup members influence individuals' attitudes and actions more than do the opinions of outgroup members (Ariyanto, Hornsey, & Gallois, 2006; Mackie, Worth, & Asuncion, 1990; see also Tajfel & Turner, 1979), our findings revealed strong strivings for ingroup identity verification

whether the feedback came from members of an outgroup (Experiments 1–3) or a member of the ingroup (Experiments 4 and 5). Finally, we employed two distinct methodologies, including traditional questionnaires in Experiments 1 and 2 as well as Internet methodology in Experiments 3, 4, and 5.

Our findings dovetail nicely with Lemay and Ashmore's (2004) evidence that people failed to assimilate evaluations that challenged their self-categorizations. Particularly relevant in this regard is our evidence that participants' ingroup identities not only guided their choice of interaction partners, they also encouraged participants to dismiss nonverifying evaluators as incompetent (cf. Swann et al., 1987). Insofar as ingroup identities serve to channel people's perceptions of the credibility of evaluations, they may "anchor" people's reactions to evaluations in a fashion that parallels the influence of self-categorizations.

At the same time, our findings are distinct from efforts to verify collective self-views (e.g., Chen et al., 2004, 2006). For example, whereas Chen et al. (2004, 2006) related personal self-views (on qualities associated with group membership) to feedback preferences, we related participants' beliefs about the groups of which they were members to their feedback preferences. Indeed, we uncovered strivings for verification of ingroup identities even among participants who believed that the group identity was not at all self-descriptive. Moreover, whereas Chen et al. focused on verification of the content of participants' identities, we have in addition considered people's efforts to verify the valence of their ingroup identities. Furthermore, whereas Chen et al.'s studies focused on reactions to evaluations from a member of the ingroup, our studies focused on reactions to evaluations from members of the ingroup as well as the outgroup. Finally, whereas Chen et al. focused on a group (gender) in which a large number of personal attributes happen to be aligned with the group category (e.g., McCrae & Terracciano, 2005; Terracciano et al., 2005), our findings indicate that this was not true of the groups that we studied (Madrilenians, Spaniards). Conceivably, rates of concordance between personal attributes and the group identity vary considerably, and the preponderance of different forms of self-verification (e.g., collective vs. group identity) may vary with it.

Like the work reported by Chen et al. (2004, 2006), our findings are difficult to explain using rival explanations based on self-enhancement theory. For example, contrary to the notion that people sought evaluations that enhanced their group identities, in all investigations participants preferred verifying negative evaluations over nonverifying positive ones. Moreover, the fact that people also sought feedback that verified positive (as well as negative) ingroup identities that were not self-descriptive (Experiment 3) indicated that such activities were not motivated by a desire to highlight personal virtues that other group members lacked.

One of our most theoretically intriguing findings was that identity investment served as a swing variable that determined when the desire for ingroup identity verification overrode the desire for self-enhancement. In Experiments 1–4, participants who were invested in their identities preferred negative but verifying appraisals of their ingroup identities over positive but nonverifying appraisals (see also Chen et al., 2004, 2006). In Experiment 5, participants eschewed an opportunity to interact with an evaluator who had an overly positive or negative appraisal of their ingroup identity and instead chose to interact with an evaluator whose

appraisal was unspecified. Furthermore, all five experiments revealed that the desire to interact with the evaluator was closely associated with the extent to which the evaluator was perceived as verifying ingroup identities but weakly or completely unrelated to the extent to which evaluators were perceived as self-enhancing. Our evidence that verification strivings trumped self-enhancement strivings among people who were certain of their self-views clashes with the notion that a desire for positive appraisals provides the motivational glue that joins individuals to groups (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1998). Rather, people appear to look to their group memberships for self-verification.

Links to Related Research on Self and Identity

The propensity for the desire for ingroup identity verification to override the desire for self-enhancement among people who were invested in their self-views may be relevant to recent contentions that self-enhancement strivings are pancultural (e.g., Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005; but see Heine, 2005; Heine & Hamamura, 2007; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). In contrast, our evidence of self-verification strivings among those who were highly invested in their self-views suggests that the desire for coherent, temporally stable self-views may be a cultural universal (for a discussion, see English et al., 2008). These findings suggest that it may be useful for future research to determine the boundary conditions of self-enhancement and self-verification to consider the potential moderator role of identity investment.

Our findings may also offer insight into the viability of several recent variations of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As noted earlier, at this juncture there is little consensus among social identity theorists regarding the critical question of why people align themselves with groups. Our findings bear upon several possibilities that social identity and self-categorization theorists have raised. For example, our evidence that participants sought to verify their negative as well as positive ingroup identities challenges the notion that people identify with groups as a means of enhancing their self-views (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1988). Furthermore, evidence that choice of evaluators was positively associated with the extent to which people felt that the evaluator verified their ingroup identity, but not with feelings of self-enhancement, supports the relative superiority of a self-verification account of our findings.

Nevertheless, our findings do seem compatible with versions of social identity theory that have emphasized the role that these identities play in making sense of the world (e.g., Ellemers & Van Knippenberg, 1997; Reynolds, Turner, & Haslam, 2000; Turner, 1999). In fact, our findings offer interesting parallels to evidence that people who identify themselves as having low status embrace these negative identities (e.g., Spears, Jetten, & Scheepers, 2002). Considered together, these findings suggest that although people may prefer to think well of themselves in an ideal world, they are at least, if not more, concerned with coming to terms with who they really are and structuring their lives accordingly (e.g., Spears et al., 2002). From this vantage point, it is not surprising that the more people face discrimination, the more they will emphasize that devalued identity (e.g., Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). The latter finding also fits nicely with self-verification theory's (Swann, 1983) prediction that as people gather more

support for a self-view, that self-view will grow in certainty and the desire to verify that self-view will increase accordingly.

Self-verification theory makes a related prediction regarding people's responses to challenges to self-views. That is, insofar as people become certain of their self-views, when those self-views are threatened they will engage in compensatory activity (Swann & Hill, 1982; Swann & Read, 1981) in an effort to stabilize their self-views and thus restore their belief that their self-views offer accurate images of reality. Presumably, such compensatory activities also operate at the level of ingroup identities, as self-verification theory argues that threats to any aspect of self knowledge (whether related to positive or negative aspects of personal or ingroup identity) should trigger compensatory activity designed to restore the integrity of the self system. Consistent with this notion, there is recent evidence that among people who indicate that their personal and group identities are "fused," challenging their personal self-views increases their willingness to fight and die for the group (Swann, Gómez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009).

Some of our findings also seemed related to optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991). That is, there was some evidence that people were more interested in verifying ingroup identities that were *not* self-descriptive, apparently because such identities allowed them to feel aligned with the group while maintaining their sense of individuality. From this vantage point, verification of ingroup identity may offer people the opportunity to balance the need to retain some sense of individuality with the need to belong to a group. This finding complements recent suggestions that group identification and individualization might be compatible (e.g., Sheldon & Bettencourt, 2002; Simon, Aufderheide, & Hastedt, 2000) and that individuation may actually increase with group identification (Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002). From this perspective, ingroup identity verification could be even more beneficial for ingroup members than collective self-verification because it permits distinctiveness. In such instances, people may balance their need to belong and their need to be different without violating social identity principles (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004).

Links to Related Research on Stereotyping and Intergroup Contact

One novel contribution of our research is our evidence that people sought verification of the valence as well as the content of their ingroup identities. Although this distinction has not been made by self-verification researchers, it has a long history in the stereotyping literature. For example, Peabody (1967, 1968, 1970) made a clear distinction between the descriptive and evaluative aspects of stereotyping. His examination of the stereotypes of the Chinese and the Filipinos, for example, led him to conclude that although each group agreed about the descriptive characteristics of the other (i.e., content), they differed about their evaluations of each other (i.e., valence). More recent work on this topic has echoed and embellished this work. Park and Judd (2005), for instance, noted that it is possible for two people to describe a group with the same semantic content (e.g., conservative with money) but with different evaluations (e.g., thrifty vs. cheap). Similarly, Mackie (1973) argued that because one can separate the content of stereotypes from the evaluation of the group, it is possible to ask about the accuracy of descriptive content without implicating a particular evaluation of the group.

Our findings are also related to recent work on meta-stereotypes, or beliefs about how one's group is seen by other groups (e.g., Gómez, 2002; Lammers, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008; Vorauer et al., 1998). Research suggests that people generally assume that outgroup members will have a negative image of the ingroup (e.g., Kramer & Messick, 1998; Kramer & Wei, 1999; Krueger, 1996). Expectations of being seen not only negatively but also inaccurately lead people to experience intergroup anxiety and negative expectancies about possible interactions with the outgroup (Blair, Park, & Bachelor, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Tropp, 2003; Vorauer et al., 1998). This could degrade social interaction. For example, Gómez and Huici (2008) showed that vicarious intergroup contact fostered positive meta-stereotypes, which in turn produced positive attitudes toward the outgroup. In addition, however, the degree of perceived ingroup identity verification (i.e., overlap between meta-stereotypes and ingroup stereotype) has also shown to be important. In general, people expect a relatively high level of inconsistency between ingroup and meta-stereotypes (Gómez, 2002; Klein & Azzi, 2001; Vorauer et al., 1998). Gómez, Huici, and Morales (2004) demonstrated that several strategies directed to improve outgroup evaluations (as intergroup contact and value similarity) increased the overlap between meta-stereotypes and ingroup stereotypes, which in turn improved intergroup relations. These results suggest that verification of the valence and content of ingroup stereotypes has positive effects on evaluations of the source of verification.

Conclusions

Whereas self-verification theory originally focused on people's efforts to verify and maintain their personal self-views in dyadic relationships, recent work has begun to examine the implications of the theory for group processes. Swann et al. (2000), for example, reported that the extent to which members of groups verify one another's personal self-views predicted the extent to they felt connected to the group as well as the quality of their performance (see also Polzer, Milton, & Swann, 2002; Swann, Kwan, Polzer, & Milton, 2003; for overviews, see London, 2003; Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004). More recent work has extended the theory further by demonstrating that people act to verify self-views that are linked to group membership (e.g., Chen et al., 2004, 2006; Lemay & Ashmore, 2004; Swann et al., 2009). The present research extends this theme one step further by demonstrating that people choose evaluators who seem likely to confirm their ingroup identities. From this perspective, people are concerned not merely with verifying their beliefs about their personal qualities associated with group memberships, but they will also take active steps to confirm their beliefs about the groups themselves, even when these beliefs do not describe their personal selves.

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Call for Nominations: *Journal of Neuroscience, Psychology, and Economics*

The Publications and Communications (P&C) Board of the American Psychological Association has opened nominations for the editorship of the *Journal of Neuroscience, Psychology, and Economics*, for the years 2011–2016. The editor search committee is chaired by Peter Ornstein, PhD.

The *Journal of Neuroscience, Psychology, and Economics (JNPE),* first published by Educational Publishing Foundation of the APA in 2009, publishes original research dealing with the application of psychological theories and/or neuroscientific methods to business and economics. Therefore, it is the first peer-reviewed scholarly journal that publishes research on neuroeconomics, decision neuroscience, consumer neuroscience, and neurofinance, besides more classical topics from economics and business research.

As an interdisciplinary journal, *JNPE* serves academicians in the fields of neuroscience, psychology, business, and economics and is an appropriate outlet for articles designed to be of interest, concern, and value to its audience of scholars and professionals.

Editorial candidates should be available to start receiving manuscripts in July 2010 to prepare for issues published in 2011. Please note that the P&C Board encourages participation by members of underrepresented groups in the publication process and would particularly welcome such nominees. Self-nominations are also encouraged.

Candidates should be nominated by accessing APA's EditorQuest site on the Web. Using your Web browser, go to http://editorquest.apa.org. On the Home menu on the left, find "Guests." Next, click on the link "Submit a Nomination," enter your nominee's information, and click "Submit."

Prepared statements of one page or less in support of a nominee can also be submitted by e-mail to Molly Douglas-Fujimoto, Managing Director, Education Publishing Foundation, at mdouglas-fujimoto@apa.org.

Deadline for accepting nominations is January 31, 2010, when reviews will begin.