

INTERGROUP THREAT IN MASS MEDIA

The buffering role of perceived typicality and group norms



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1 Introduction

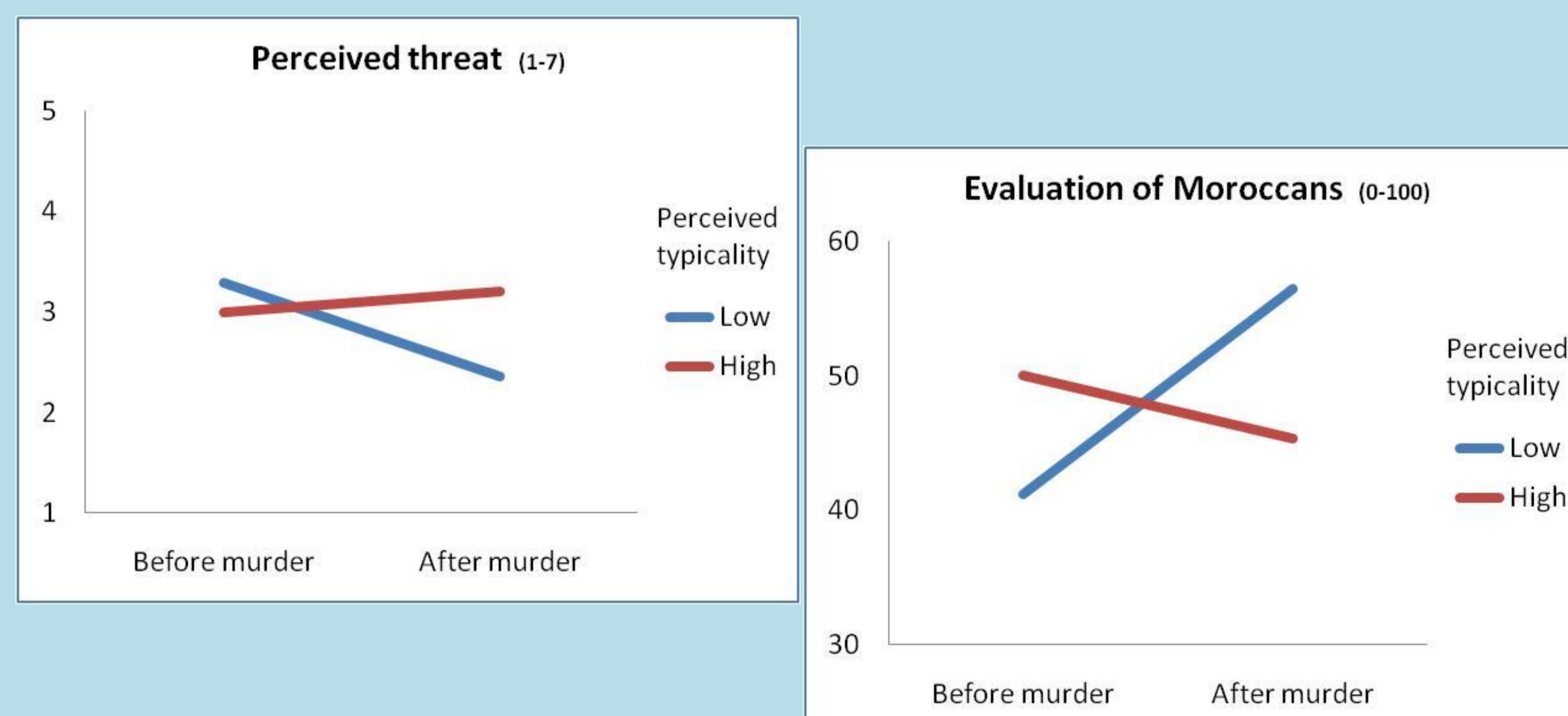
Mass media bring us threatening intergroup events on a daily basis. This research examines **when people do or do not go along with threatening media messages**, generalizing negative attitudes caused by a single outgroup offender to the whole outgroup.

We ask whether **reducing perceived typicality** of the offender as an outgroup member **buffers threat effects** on intergroup attitudes, i.e. perceived threat and outgroup evaluations; and how **referencing outgroup norms**, i.e. representing an outgroup offender as violating outgroup norms, affects perceived typicality.

2 The Van Gogh murder study

Longitudinal survey study, Dutch Social Science students (N=43)

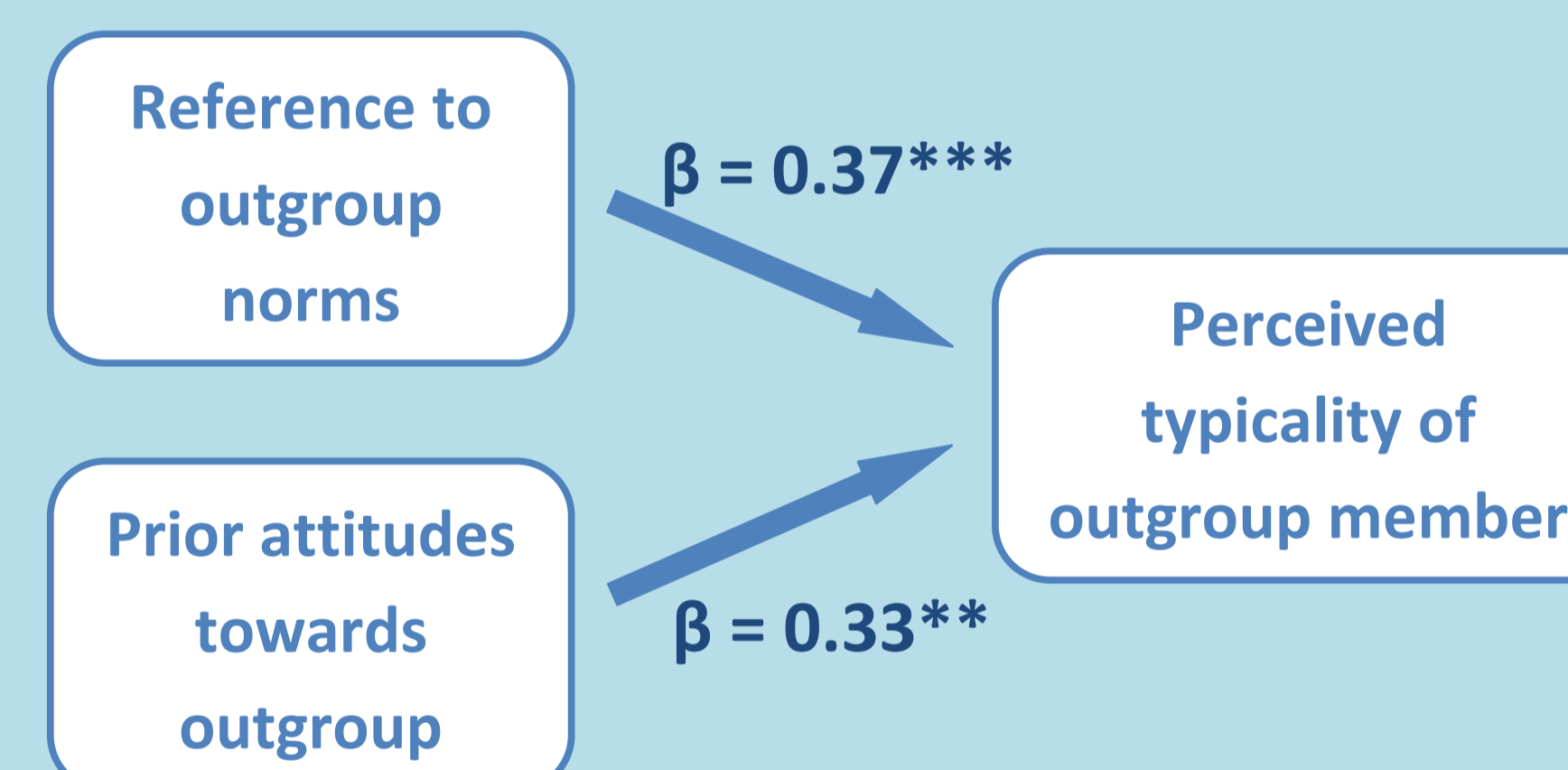
- *Before murder: attitudes towards Moroccans
- *After murder: perceived typicality of murderer attitudes towards Moroccans



3 The violent immigrant study

Experimental study, Belgian Psychology students (N=67)

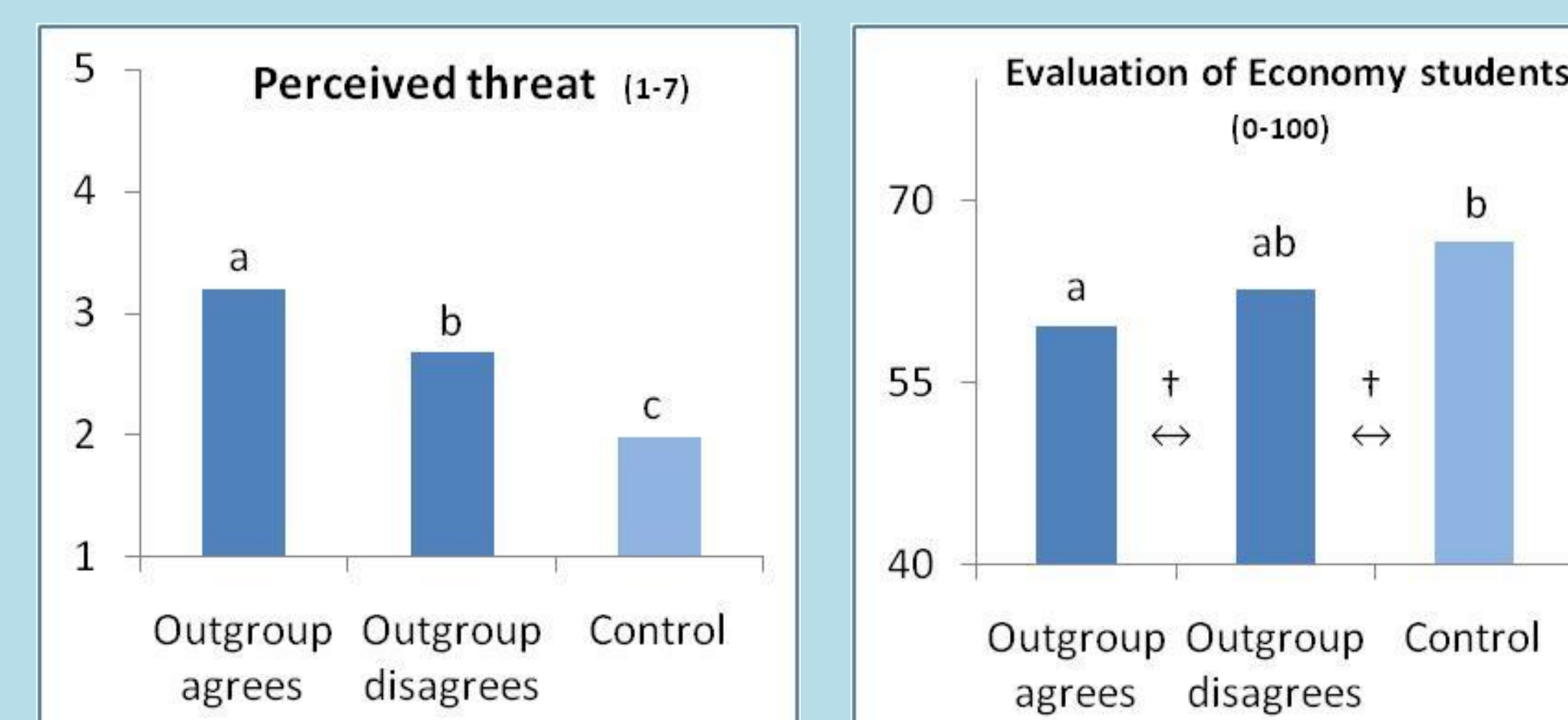
- *Measurement of prior attitudes towards Moroccans
- *Read fictive newspaper article: Moroccan attacks Belgian in dancing
- Manipulation of outgroup norms in article: Other Moroccans approve or disapprove of the offender's behavior
- *Measurement of perceived typicality of offender



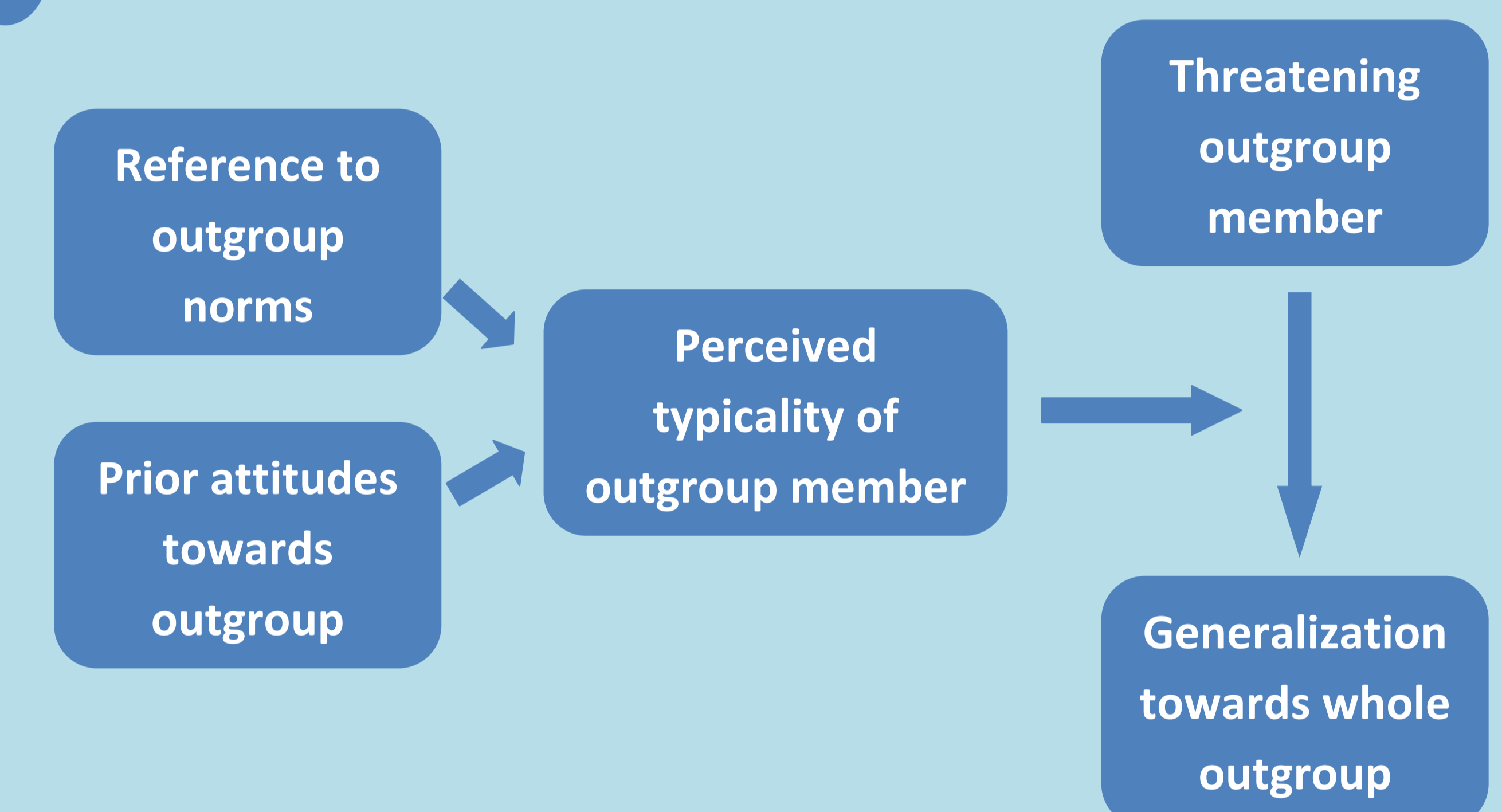
4 The arrogant economist study

Experimental study, Belgian Psychology students (N=402)

- *Read fictive article: Economy student insults 'Psychology is not science'
- Manipulation of outgroup norms in article: Economy students agree or not
- *Measurement of perceived typicality of student attitudes towards Economy students
- *Control condition: baseline attitudes towards Economy students



5 Conclusion



Our studies show that the impact of threatening media messages on generalized intergroup attitudes can be buffered by presenting threatening outgroup members as violating outgroup norms, which reduces the members' perceived typicality. This mechanism held over and above the effect of prior attitudes towards the outgroup.

6 References

- Brown, R., & Hewstone, M. (2005). An integrative theory of intergroup contact. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 37, 255-343.
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- Vergeer, M., Lubbers, M., & Scheepers, P. (2000). Exposure to newspapers and attitudes toward ethnic minorities: A longitudinal analysis. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 11, 127-143.