



# Does Intergroup Contact on Social Media Change Intergroup Attitudes? An Experimental Evidence from Instagram

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Foto (Karla Fritze)



# Virtual Influencer

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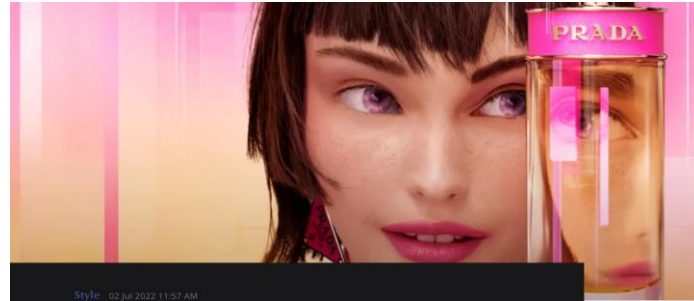
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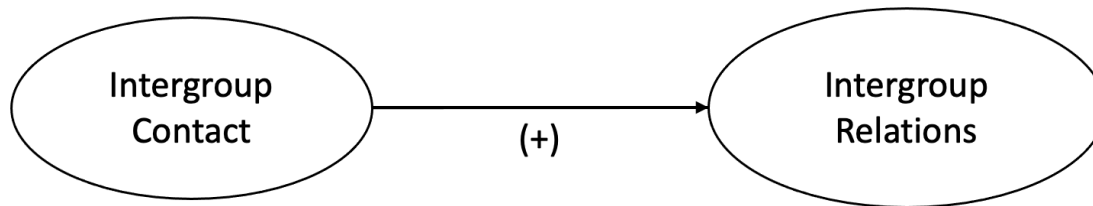


## What is a Virtual Influencer?

- A virtual influencer (VI) is a computer-generated 3D social media character that looks human or non-human-like, that has been created for a specific purpose (Hofeditz et al., 2022)
- VIs are in most cases created and controlled by humans, but can also be managed with the help of AIs (Robinson, 2020)

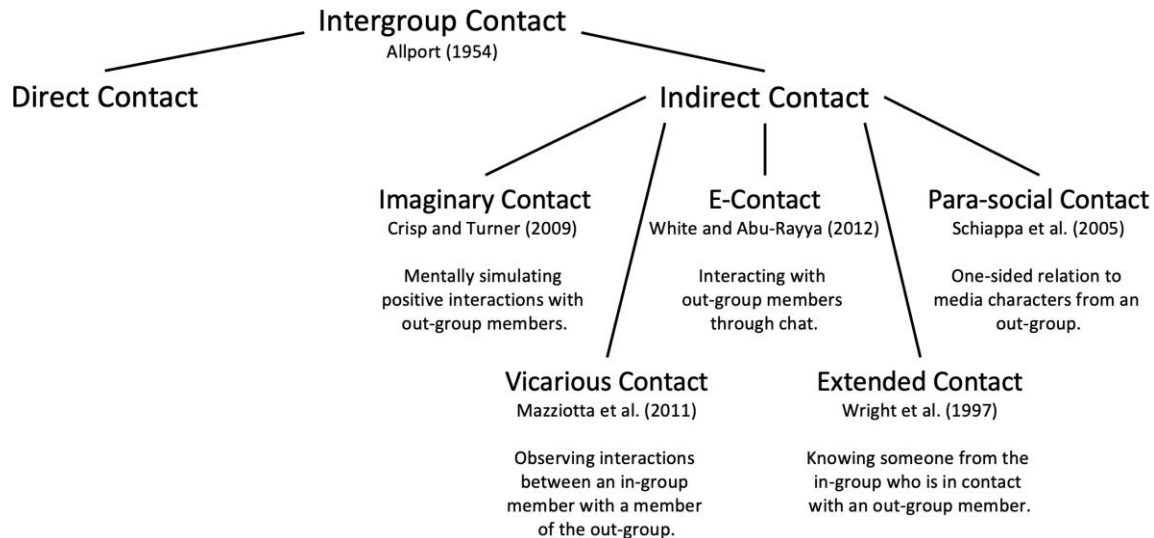
## Intergroup Contact Theory

- Intergroup contact improves intergroup relations (Allport, 1954).
- Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) review 515 studies demonstrating the positive relationship.



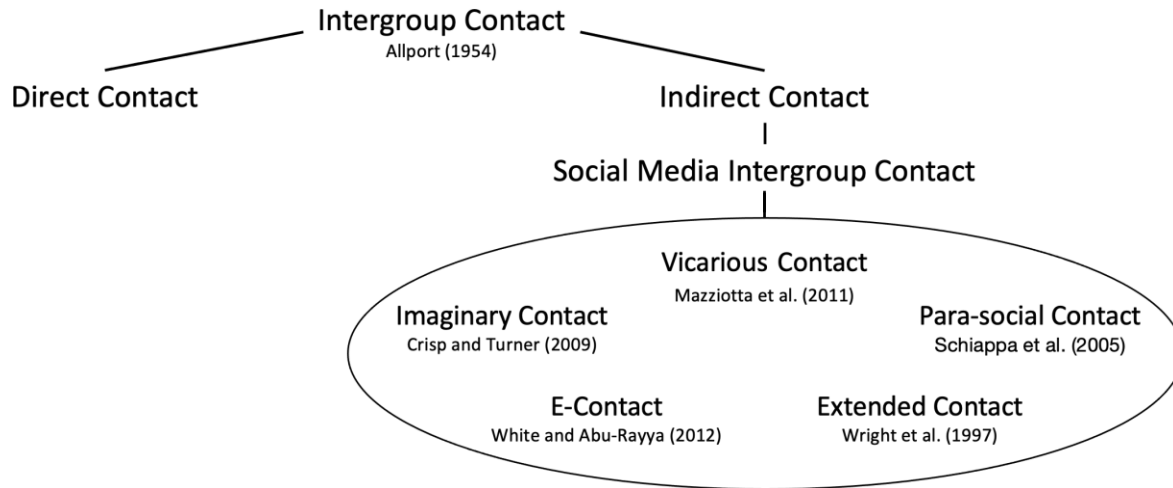


# Prior Research – Indirect Intergroup Contact





# Current Research – Social Media Intergroup Contact (SMIC)



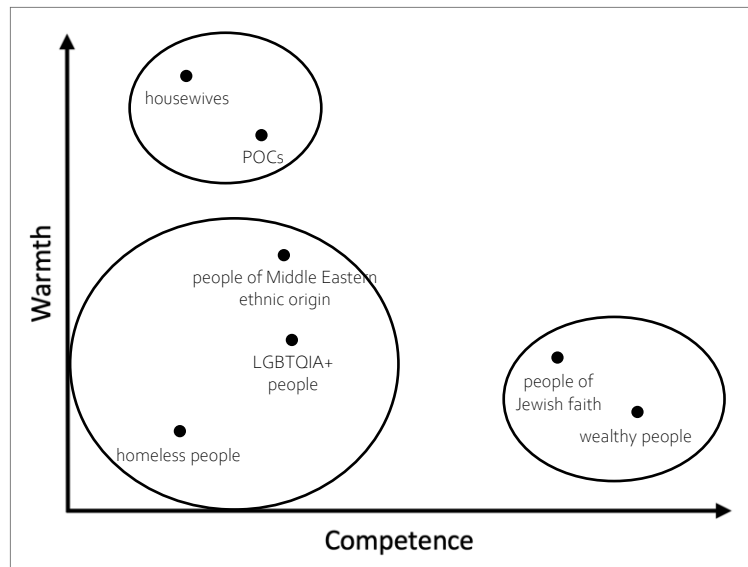


## Research Question

*How does SMIC with VIs influence intergroup relations of the German majority towards individuals with a Middle Eastern ethnic background in Germany?*

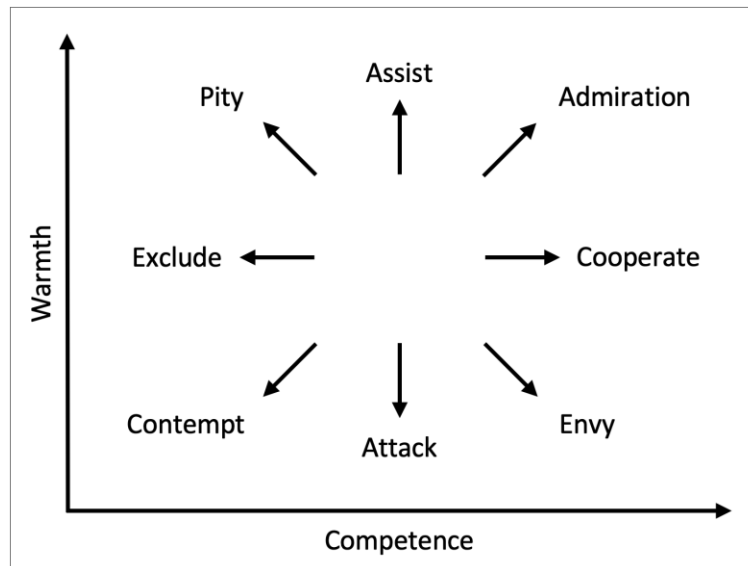
# Stereotype Content Model

(Fiske et al., 2002)



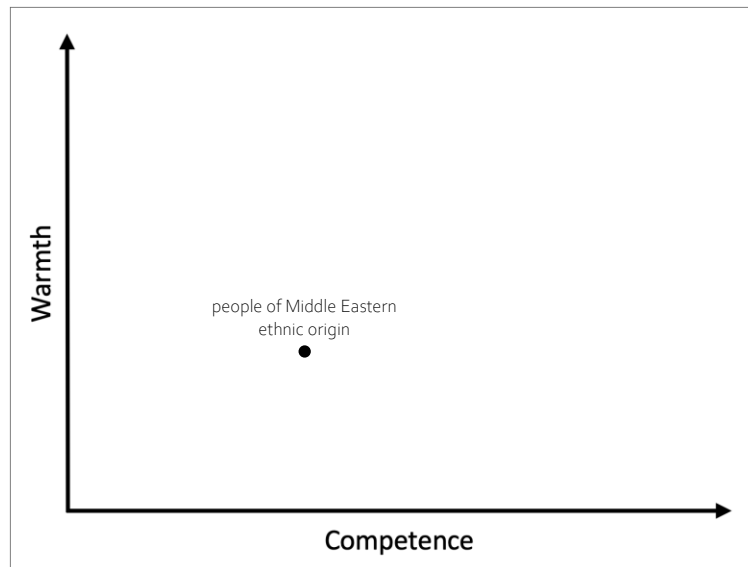
# BIAS Map

(Cuddy et al., 2007)

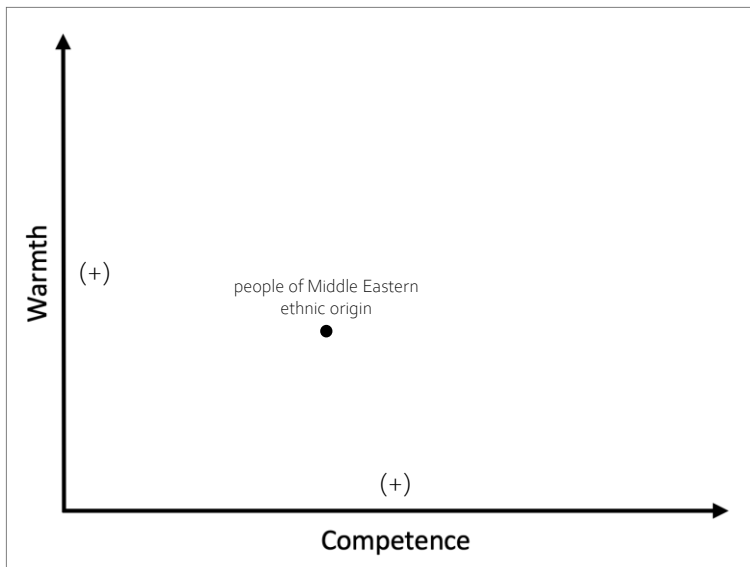


# People of Middle Eastern Ethnic Origin in Germany

(Ashbrock, 2010)

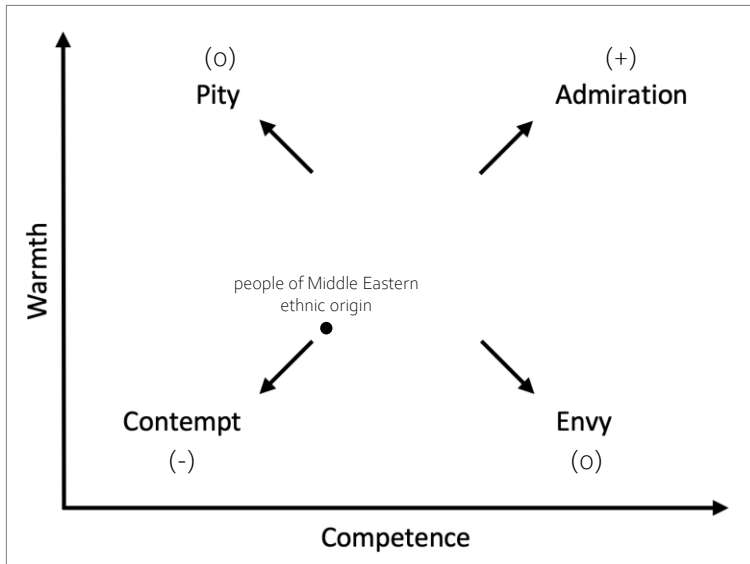


## Cognition Hypotheses



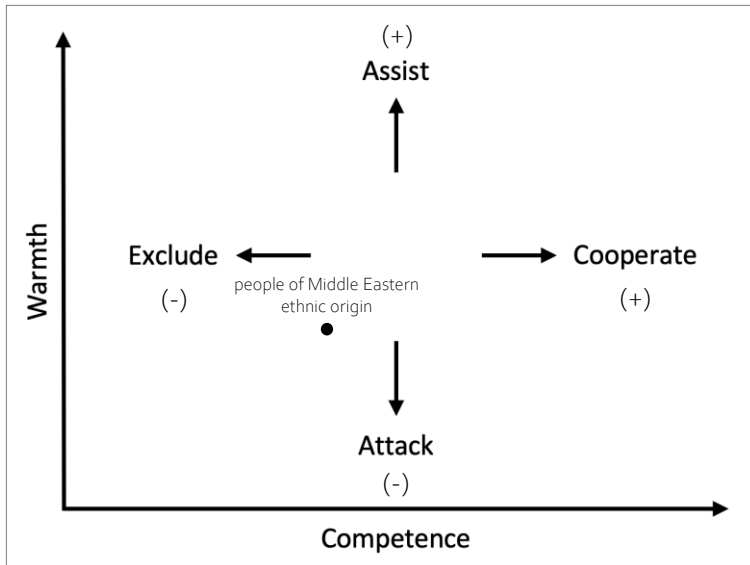
- H1a: SMIC increases perceived **warmth** of people of Middle Eastern ethnic origin in Germany.
- H1b: SMIC increases perceived **competence** of people of Middle Eastern ethnic origin in Germany.

# Attitude Hypotheses



- **H2a: SMIC increases admiration** towards people of Middle Eastern ethnic origin in Germany.
- **H2b: SMIC decreases contempt** towards people of Middle Eastern ethnic origin in Germany.
- **H2c: SMIC decreases anxiety** towards people of Middle Eastern ethnic origin in Germany.

## Behavior Tendencies Hypotheses

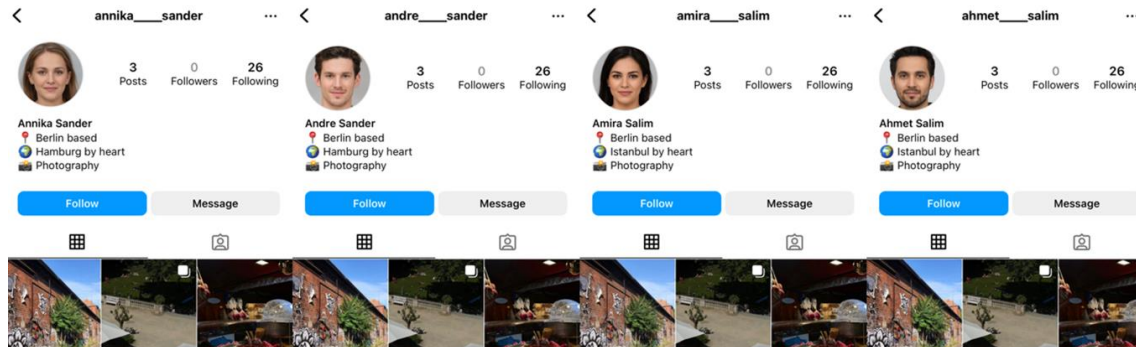


- **H3a: SMIC increases assistance** towards people of Middle Eastern ethnic origin in Germany.
- **H3b: SMIC increases cooperation** with people of Middle Eastern ethnic origin in Germany.
- **H3c: SMIC decreases attack** towards people of Middle Eastern ethnic origin in Germany.
- **H3d: SMIC decreases exclusion** of people of Middle Eastern ethnic origin in Germany.



# Method

- 226 non-migrant German Instagram users recruited through Prolific.
- In 2 (German vs. Middle Eastern) x 2 (male vs. female) between-subjects design created by conducting 5 pre-tests.



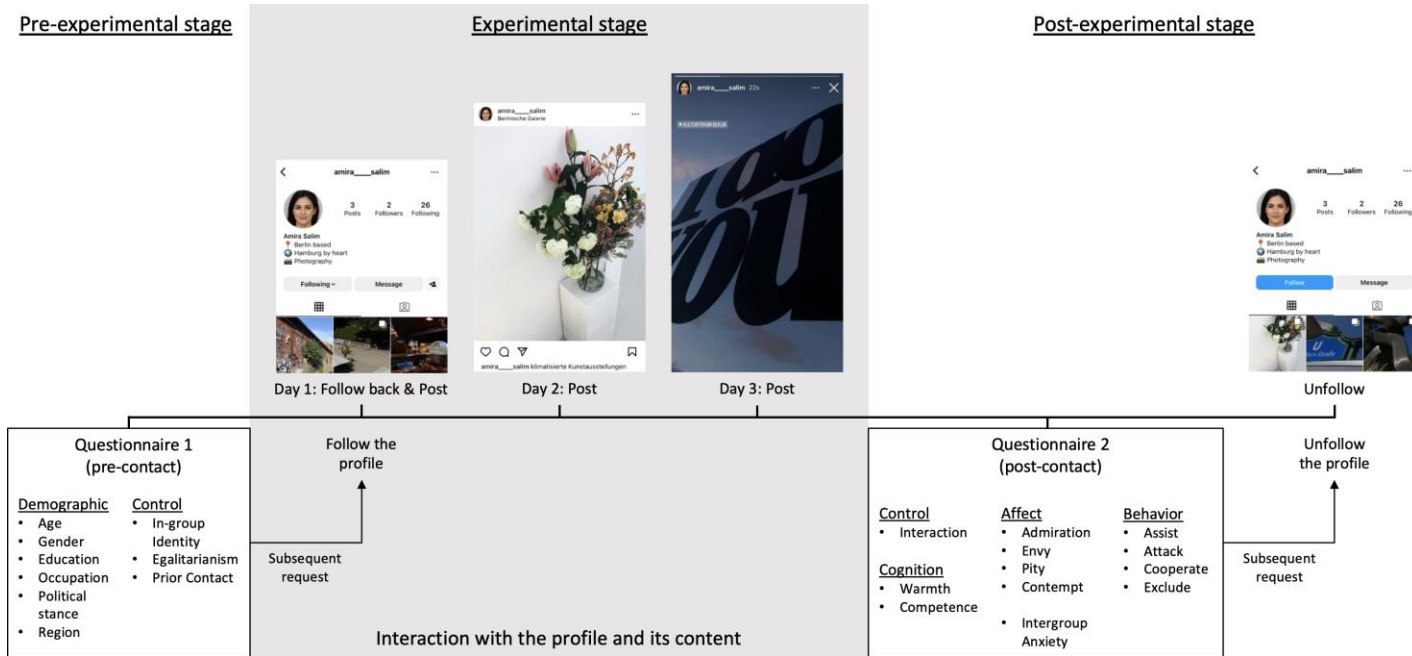


# Procedure

## Pre-experimental stage

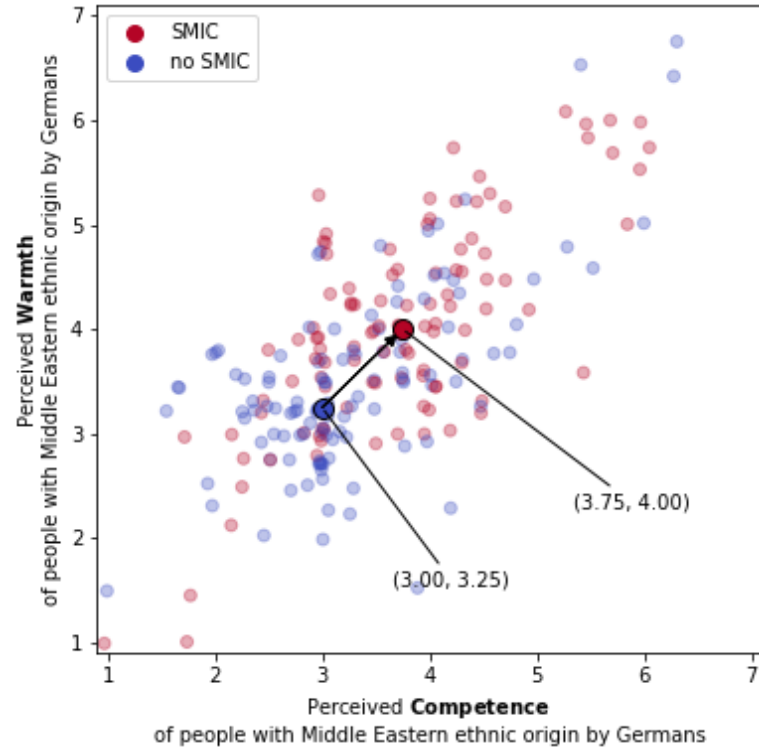
## Experimental stage

## Post-experimental stage



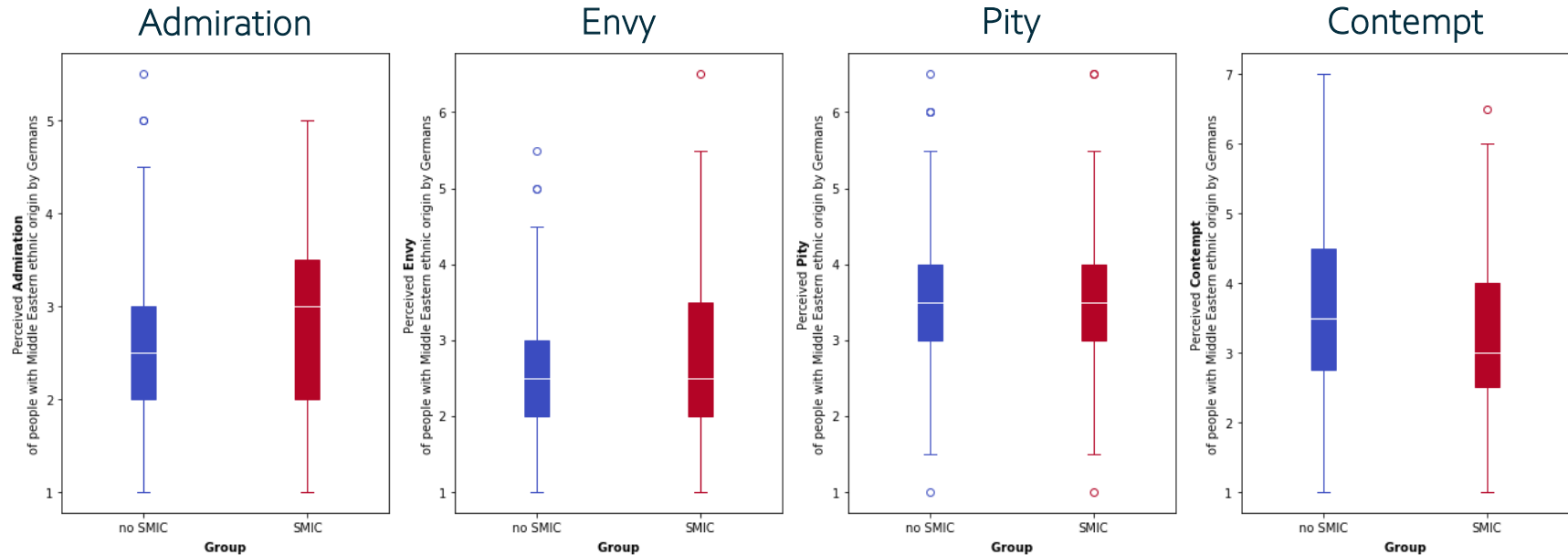


# Cognition

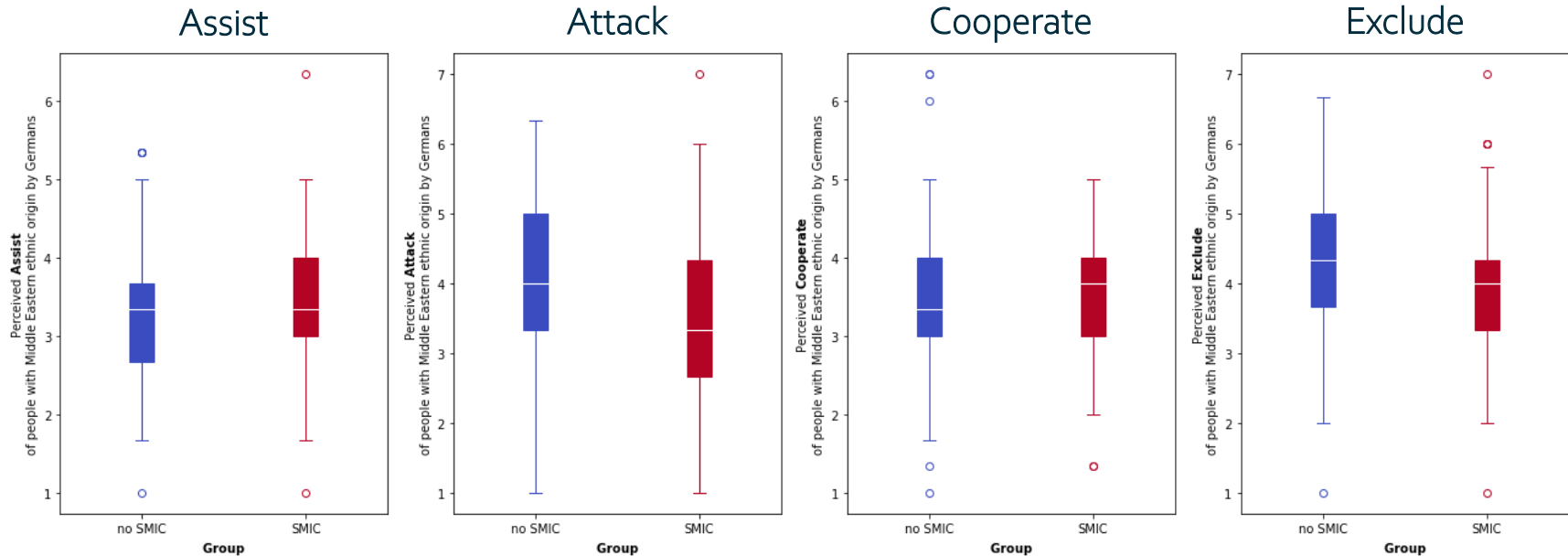




# Attitude

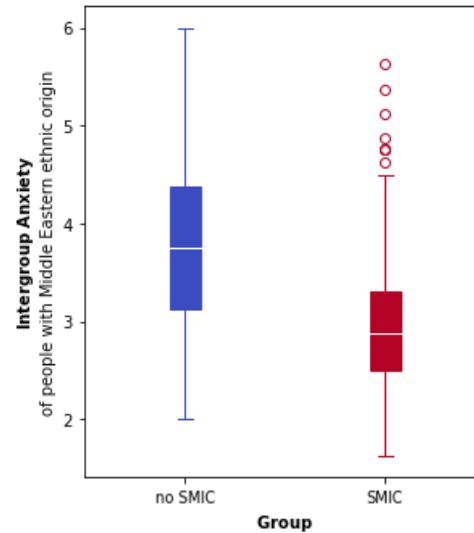


# Behavior Tendencies





# Intergroup Anxiety



# Analysis of Covariance

Dependent Variable	B	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Effect Size
Warmth	0.50	<.001***	.071 <sup>++</sup>	moderate
Competence	0.40	.002**	.045 <sup>+</sup>	small
Admiration	0.37	.005**	.036 <sup>+</sup>	small
Envy	0.28	.047**	.018 <sup>+</sup>	small
Pity	0.17	.181	.008	no effect
Contempt	-0.36	.018*	.026 <sup>+</sup>	small
Assist	0.23	.044*	.019 <sup>+</sup>	small
Attack	-0.44	.003**	.041 <sup>+</sup>	small
Cooperate	0.19	.087	.014 <sup>+</sup>	small
Exclude	-0.31	.015*	.028 <sup>+</sup>	small
Intergroup Anxiety	-0.75	<.001***	.183 <sup>+++</sup>	large

Note. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

## Hypotheses

- H1a: SMIC increases perceived warmth. ✓
- H1b: SMIC increases perceived competence. ✓
- H2a: SMIC increases admiration. ✓
- H2b: SMIC decreases contempt. ✓
- H2c: SMIC decreases anxiety. ✓
- H3a: SMIC increases assistance. ✓
- H3b: SMIC increases cooperation. ✗
- H3c: SMIC decreases attack. ✓
- H3d: SMIC decreases exclusion. ✓

## Implications

- Validates social media intergroup contact.
- Highlights potential of social media platforms in improving intergroup relations.
- Platform providers could adjust algorithms to promote diverse interactions and minimize echo chambers.
- Highlights the need of socially responsible digital platforms to policy makers.

## Limitations and Future Research

- Lacks long-term effects of SMIC and effects on minority group.
- Low interaction, so the real-world effects of SMIC may exceed the results of this study.
- Encourages future studies to examine SMIC in different regions and outgroups.
- Examine minority perceptions and extend study duration to assess long-term effects.



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