

# Power, meta-perceptions, and belonging: How positive recognition matters for group identification, identity compatibility, and intergroup attitudes

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## Abstract

Creating a shared group identification has been theorized as one pathway for overcoming intergroup divides within larger, superordinate contexts. Although self-identification with superordinate groups has been extensively studied in political psychology, less attention has been paid to how others' recognition of our belonging shapes this process. The present paper examines the role of such perceived recognition for European identification across three countries - Romania, Serbia, and Türkiye - using data from three studies. We find support for a hierarchical framing of a superordinate group (Study 1,  $N=374$ ), where the perspective of more prototypical subgroups come to act as gatekeepers, impacting the identities of less prototypical members (Study 2,  $N=1255$ ). Through an experimental design (Study 3,  $N=573$ ), we find that exposure to more positive perspectives of prototypical subgroups can increase identification, superordinate-subordinate identity compatibility and political support for group membership. Significant differences emerge between the countries, highlighting the importance of socio-political and historical context, which we consider in the discussion.

## KEYWORDS

belonging, meta-perceptions, prototypicality, recognition, social identity

[Corrections added on 14 February after first online publication: The affiliation of the author, Reşit Kışlıoğlu has been corrected].

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### Highlights

- The paper advances theorization of identity within political psychology by testing and evidencing how power and recognition shape group identification on different levels of inclusion.
- The paper illustrates how positive recognition can be leveraged to better superordinate group belonging and commitment in Europe, a finding relevant to policymakers interested in increasing support for European-level initiatives.
- The theoretical consideration and testing of meta-perceptions as drivers of belonging is further relevant for practitioners working with communities experiencing discrimination and marginalization, to consider interventions that not only heighten community empowerment but also positive recognition by relevant others within the broader social and political context.

## INTRODUCTION

Events such as Brexit, and the war in Ukraine, have brought attention to the challenges of creating, and sustaining, a sense of belonging within a large and supranational entity like Europe. By belonging, we refer to the extent to which individuals think of themselves as part of a group, feel part of a group, and act on the basis of group membership. A key suggestion for achieving belonging is to emphasize identification with the superordinate group by recategorizing subgroups (e.g., nations) as members of the larger superordinate community (e.g., European; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). However, the success of this recategorization process has led to mixed results, with research finding that superordinate group identities can be experienced as both rewarding and threatening (e.g., Gaertner et al., 2016).

In this paper, we argue that the findings on the variable success of superordinate identities (such as “European”) can be explained by researchers limited engagement with the broader power dynamics that afford, and limit, recognition of claims to belonging Amer and Obradović (2022). Drawing on self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) and the ingroup projection model (Wenzel et al., 2008), we argue that in a superordinate context, rather than functioning as a higher order group composed of many equal subgroups, superordinate groups are often framed in hierarchical terms, leading to some subgroups having more power to define the prototype of the shared identity. Consequently, more prototypical subgroups can come to act as gatekeepers, where their positive recognition can come to matter for less prototypical members. To test this argument, we develop a mixed-methods approach to systematically assess the role of power and recognition within the context of superordinate identities. Figure 1 provides a conceptual map and overview of the studies.

We conduct three studies across three different European countries: Romania, Serbia, and Turkey. We explicitly consider “who” and “what” is the prototype of “Europe” as a social category (Study 1), before assessing whether the perceptions of the most prototypical subgroup matters for shaping belonging among less prototypical subgroups (Study 2), and lastly, we experimentally test whether manipulating the perspective of the most prototypical subgroup increases superordinate identification among less prototypical subgroups (Study 3).

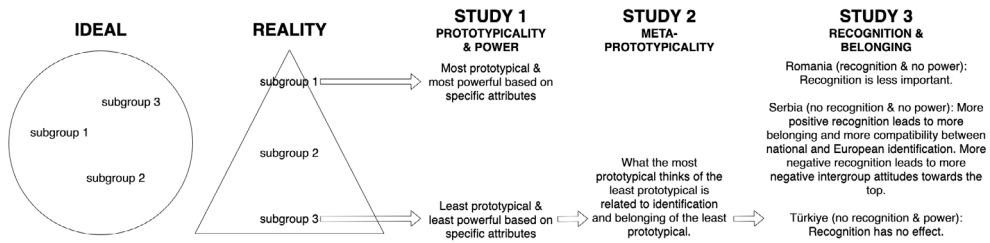


FIGURE 1 A conceptual map and overview of the studies.

## Superordinate group identification in Europe: A tale of East and West?

The project of the European Union, with the aim of “Unity in Diversity” forms an ideal case study for examining whether the goals of superordinate belonging can truly be achieved. Much of the existing research on European identification comes from countries that have long-standing histories of EU membership, such as France, Italy, and Germany (i.e., Bruter, 2005; Grosfeld et al., 2022; Herrmann et al., 2004). This literature often tells of a success story, a positive relationship between national and European identification. Yet when we expand beyond Western Europe, we find a different story. Comparative research consistently shows lower levels of European identification among recent EU member states from Central Eastern Europe (Sanders et al., 2012) and post-communist EU countries (Ceka & Sojka, 2016). Further, this impacts the relationship between national and European identity, with core (Western) countries showing a positive relationship, or compatibility, between the two identities, while pre-accession countries evidence a negative relationship between national and European identification (Obradović & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2020; Schilde, 2014). In explaining these trends, Ceka and Sojka (2016, p. 488) argue that “citizens of post-communist Europe have not yet internalized their self-perception as European due to their short socialization as members of a common European political community.” While socialization is indeed important, we argue that part of what might explain differing patterns of (cognitive) identification as European is the extent to which others acknowledge, and recognize, newer members' claims to European belonging. To test this argument, we need to engage with countries that have historically been positioned as “Other” within the broader European community (Neumann, 1999) and have differing levels of contemporary “recognition” as European. We focus on three such countries, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey. We focus on these as each country's relationship to Europe tells a similar story of “in-betweenness” (East vs. West; tradition vs. modernity) and “Othering” in Europe (i.e., Todorova, 1997). However, they differ in their contemporary political status in Europe, as only Romania is a member of the European Union (hereafter EU).

Romania and Serbia are bordering countries, majority Orthodox Christian countries, with histories of communism (ending with the Romanian Revolution in December 1989 and in January 1990 in Serbia when the League of Communists of Yugoslavia dissolved). Unlike Serbia, Romania has been a member of the EU since 2007. There is evidence of a dual identity as Romanian and European existing (Bliuc et al., 2018); yet many Romanians see themselves as “second-hand citizens” in the EU, hinting at public perceptions of the EU as a hierarchy (Dumbrava, 2014). Serbia has been a candidate for EU membership since 2009. The limited research on European identity emerging out of Serbia tells us that national and European identities are independent constructs (Jelić & Mihić, 2023), and political attitudes toward EU membership are shaped by national attachment (Mihić et al., 2021; Obradović & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2020).

Turkey has been an EU candidate for much longer, submitting its application for a formal EU membership in 1987. After Turkey's official EU candidacy was recognized in 1999, European

representations of Turkey focused on the limits of its “Europeanness” (or “un-European”ness) vis-a-vis European values, culture, and religion. Turkey, as a predominantly Muslim country, continues to face the obstacle of European public opinion, which largely opposes its membership due to cultural and religious differences (Gulmez et al., 2023). Consequently, Turkey's sense of belonging to Europe is lower than in most other European countries (Ecirli, 2011) and EU membership is perceived as threatening to cultural identity (Arkan, 2016). In contrasting Turkey with Serbia, we can see that Serbia's journey toward EU membership, while slow, has progressed significantly more than Turkey's. However, Serbia is more dependent on the EU both financially and politically, compared to Turkey, which is estimated to become the ninth largest economy in the world by 2030 (OECD, 2018). As such, while perhaps perceived as “less” European than Serbia, it is in contrast, more powerful in Europe.

Given these significant differences in sociopolitical status and power in Europe, we explore whether the prototype of, and identification with, Europe, in the three countries is differentially influenced by recognition from relevant, more prototypical, others. We would expect that EU membership, as a form of “official recognition” of a country's “Europeanness” would set Romania apart from Serbia and Turkey in terms of its sense of prototypicality and belonging.

## Explaining hierarchies of belonging: Prototypicality and group identification

In the context of a superordinate group, such as Europe, some subgroups (nations) are seen as “prototypical” members (Oakes et al., 1998; Wenzel et al., 2003). The concept of prototypicality, developed originally as part of self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner et al., 1987), refers to “the extent to which a stimulus is perceived as exemplary or representative of the category as a whole” (Turner et al., 1987, p. 47), where increased prototypicality leads to ingroup members being more positively evaluated, as they are seen as more closely representing what is normative for the group. While self-categorization theory focused primarily on the intragroup context, the Ingroup Projection Model (IPM; Wenzel et al., 2003, 2008, Waldzus et al., 2004) extended the use of prototypicality to superordinate contexts. Echoing SCT, the IPM argues that a relevant superordinate group provides a “benchmark” for comparing ingroups and outgroups, where being closer to the prototype of the superordinate group affords positive value or status. To achieve this, subgroups project their group characteristics onto the superordinate group, closely aligning their subgroup's characteristics with those seen to be representative of the superordinate category (Wenzel et al., 2008).

The IPM emphasizes that ingroup projection is affected by reality constraints, such as historical relations, status, and power which can lead to one group being regarded as more prototypical than another (Alexandre et al., 2016; Waldzus et al., 2004). This aligns with our argument that superordinate groups are organized in hierarchical ways (Figure 1). Since prototypical members are more influential than others, we argue that they also have the power to act as gatekeepers, defining who can, and cannot, be part of the group. As such, power functions through prototypicality, by legitimizing some groups to have more influence and control over the superordinate group, than others.

## Recognition and superordinate group identification

If superordinate groups are unequal hierarchies, what does this mean for subgroups who are less prototypical? Our starting point for examining superordinate belonging among less prototypical members is to consider how identification with a group is developed and maintained. We define group identification as a process shaped by thinking you are a part of the group (cognitive), feeling part of the group (affective), and acting based on group norms and values

(behavioral, i.e., Ellemers et al., 1998; Tajfel, 1978). We also conceptualize these dimensions as socially negotiated. The first “step” in this process is thinking that one is part of a group, and we argue that the concept of “recognition” matters here in acknowledging the social nature of group identities, where our belonging is informed by both how we self-identity and how we perceive we are being identified by relevant others (see also Amer & Obradović, 2022; Kende et al., 2024; Özdemir et al., 2024). In the case of “being identified,” we need to understand its intersection with power, as not everyone's recognition of “our” belonging matters. In other words, we argue that in a superordinate context, it is the prototypical subgroup (“ideal”) whose recognition matters and who serve as the gatekeepers for less prototypical or prospective members. This recognition becomes crucial within the first “step” of identification, as seeing oneself as a member of a group is dependent on the extent to which claims to belonging are acknowledged, and recognized, by relevant others within the group.

How can recognition be empirically measured? We argue that recognition (positive or negative) can be operationalized through meta-perceptions (what we think other people think). As we see ourselves through the eyes of others, we are both interested in, and affected by, how others view us (Mead, 1934) and this should be particularly salient in unequal superordinate group contexts.

Across three studies, we test our theoretical model of superordinate identification with Europe. In Study 1, we examine what the prototype of “European” is, to substantiate the conceptual links between power and prototypicality outlined above. In Study 2, we examine how recognition by prototypical subgroups shapes superordinate group identification. We do this by investigating whether identification with a superordinate group (Europe) is shaped by the meta-perceptions of the European “prototypical member” (identified through Study 1). Lastly, in Study 3, we experimentally test the effect of meta-perceptions on European identification, attitudes, and action-orientation by manipulating whether prototypical subgroups perceive the target ingroup as positive or negative.

We report how we determined our sample size, all data exclusions (if any), all manipulations, and all measures in the study. Analyses were conducted in R version 3.6.3 (R Core Team, 2021). Materials, data, and analysis codes necessary to replicate the studies are on the Open Science Framework (Obradović et al., 2024). All studies received ethical approval from the first two authors' previous institution (London School of Economics Research Ethics Committee).

## STUDY 1

Study 1 aimed to (1) determine which countries were seen as the most and least prototypical of Europe and (2) identify which attributes determine European prototypicality. We addressed these aims separately for the three countries.

## Method

### Participants

We recruited 383 participants from three different groups: Romanian, Serbian, and Turkish citizens. Nine participants ( $N_{\text{Romanian}}=5$ ,  $N_{\text{Serbian}}=1$ , and  $N_{\text{Turkish}}=3$ ) were excluded because their nationality data did not fit their respective target groups, which left 374 participants. The mean age of the Romanian sample ( $N=198$ ) was 37.98 ( $SD=13.84$ ), and majority female (56.1%). The mean age of the Serbian sample ( $N=90$ ) was 22.28 ( $SD=4.92$ ), and majority female (72.2%). The mean age of the Turkish sample ( $N=86$ ) was 22.38 ( $SD=1.68$ ), and majority female (75.6%).

## Measures and procedure

Participants were university students who were invited to take a survey in return for course credit and encouraged to share the survey with friends and family, to diversify the sample beyond student populations. The survey included close-ended questions and one open-ended question. The survey was translated from English to Romanian/Serbian/Turkish and then backtranslated to English to check for accuracy. After making the necessary corrections on the translation, the subsequent Serbian/Romanian/Turkish version was used to collect data from participants.

### *Prototypicality*

To examine prototypicality, we adapted a question from Devos and Banaji (2005), which captures representativeness of subgroups vis-à-vis superordinate groups. We included a list of all countries<sup>1</sup> within the European continent (51 countries in total) and asked participants: “Looking at the list of all countries in Europe below, think about how ‘European’ people who belong to the following countries are. That is, how strongly do you identify them with Europe and all things European? Please choose the five countries that you consider to be the MOST [LEAST] European, ranking these from 1 to 5 (with 1 being most [least] European out of the five, and 5 being less [more] European out of the five).” Participants were also asked to rank their own country: “Please give a number (between 1 and 44) indicating the position you think Romania/Serbia/Türkiye ranks in terms of Europeanness (1: most European, 44: least European).” We asked for a number between 1 and 44 as this is the official number of sovereign states within Europe among which they would be ranking their own country. For exploratory purposes, participants were asked to provide reasons for their responses to the questions (open-ended).

### *Attributes of prototypicality*

We generated a ranking list with the top three most European, least European, and own country from the prototypicality measure and asked participants to rank these countries according to how much [little] they embodied the following attributes (7-point Likert scale): mainstream religion of Europe (RELIGION), cultural influence in Europe (CULTURE), contribution to Europe's shared history (HISTORY), committed to maintaining a European community (PRESENT), committed to facing future challenges as a European community (FUTURE), economic strength in Europe (ECONOMY), contribution to scientific and technological developments in Europe (SCIENCE), how inclusive they are of diversity within their country (DIVERSITY), how much political influence they have in Europe (POLITICS), and their status in Europe (STATUS). We chose these dimensions because they differentiate and disentangle the contextual factors that shape prototypicality (Alexandre et al., 2016).

### *Demographics*

Participants were asked to report their age, gender, and country.

## Results and discussion

We first examined own-country ranking. The median ranking for all three countries was in 30th position (out of 44), meaning “less than average European.” Secondly, we examined the frequencies of the most and least prototypically perceived European countries for each sample

<sup>1</sup>We included a list of all the countries and autonomous provinces with territory on the continent of Europe to be as inclusive as possible in the first step of the study enabling participants to select their “prototypes” from as wide a range as possible.

**TABLE 1** Most prototypical European country for each sample, together with the attributes.

	Most prototypical	Attributes
Romania	Germany, 38.9%	Present, 58% Future, 54% Status, 51%
Serbia	Germany, 24.4%	Culture, 54% Present, 54% Politics, 51%
Turkey	Germany, 34.9%	Status, 58% Culture, 53% Science, 52%

(for “least” prototypicality, see [Supplemental Materials](#)).<sup>2</sup> Germany was consistently ranked as the most prototypical country in all three samples (Romania: 38.9%, Serbia: 24.4%, and Turkey: 34.9%).

Then, we examined the frequencies of the attributes for the European countries that are perceived as the most prototypical for each sample.<sup>3</sup> Overall, there were some common attributes of prototypicality across the three samples ([Table 1](#)).

For defining European prototypicality, key attributes were (1) high commitments to maintaining a European community, (2) having a high status in Europe, (3) having a cultural influence on Europe, and (4) being committed to facing future challenges as a European community. These findings support the IPM's claim that the sociopolitical and historical contexts of subgroups shape who is seen as more, or less, prototypical of the superordinate group (Waldzus et al., 2004). This however raises the question of the extent to which prototypical subgroups function as gatekeepers of superordinate belonging. In Study 2, we therefore examine the role of meta-perceptions of Germans on belonging in Europe.

## STUDY 2

Study 1 supported the arguments that the image of a European identity is shaped by the West (Neumann, 1999), with Germany emerging as the prototype of “Europe” across all three samples. Following our model, it is then perceived recognition from Germany that should matter for less prototypical members' belonging to Europe. As such, we focus on a particular type of meta-perception, namely meta-prototypicality (what we think others think the prototype of a shared group is), to gauge the extent to which citizens in our target countries think that Germans think they are prototypical of Europe. In sum, Study 2 aimed to examine (1) both self- and meta-perceptions on prototypicality, and (2) whether superordinate group identification (i.e., European) is related to one's beliefs about the perspective of the most prototypical member (Germany).

## Method

### Participants

We recruited 1257 participants from three different groups: Romanian, Serbian, and Turkish citizens. Two participants from the Serbian sample were excluded because they were below the

<sup>2</sup>The top five ranking frequencies of the most European and the least European countries were presented in [Table S1.1](#).

<sup>3</sup>The frequencies of the attributes for the most European and the least European countries were presented in [Table S1.2](#).

age of 18, which left 1255 participants in total. The mean age of the Romanian sample ( $N = 698$ ) was 37.94 ( $SD = 12.20$ ), majority female (52.1%), with an average of 5.18 ( $SD = 1.65$ ) for socioeconomic status. The mean age of the Serbian sample ( $N = 296$ ) was 30.09 ( $SD = 12.43$ ), majority female (69%), with an average of 4.85 ( $SD = 1.72$ ) for socioeconomic status. The mean age of the Turkish sample ( $N = 261$ ) was 31.29 ( $SD = 11.23$ ), majority female (54%), and with an average of 4.79 ( $SD = 1.73$ ) for socioeconomic status.

## Measures and procedure

All the data collection and survey translation processes were the same as in Study 1. Unlike Study 1, we aimed to collect data from more diverse samples by also sharing the survey on social networks outside of student samples. All items were measured on a 7-point scale (1: strongly disagree, 7: strongly agree) unless noted otherwise.

### *Direct prototypicality*

Same as Study 1. The countries listed included the top three most prototypical countries from Study 1<sup>4</sup> as well as their own country.<sup>5</sup>

### *Meta-prototypicality*

The meta-prototypicality prompt aimed at assessing how participants think Germans think about the prototype of Europe by adapting the measure by Devos and Banaji (2005): “Now think about one of these countries: Germany. Think about the perspective of a German on Europe. According to Germans, how ‘European’ are people who belong to the following countries? That is, how strongly do Germans identify them with Europe and all things European?”

### *Relative prototypicality*

Measured through participant-generated attributes (Wenzel et al., 2003, Study 3). First, participants were asked to type in up to six attributes that were characteristic of their country (i.e., Romania/Serbia/Turkey) in comparison with Germany. Then, six attributes that were characteristic of Germany in comparison with their country. Finally, participants were asked to rate the 12 self-generated attributes in terms of their applicability to Europeans. The mean applicability score of each group's attributes was the indicator of the *ingroup prototypicality* of their own country and *outgroup prototypicality* of Germany for Europe. The attributes generated by participants can be found in [Supplemental Materials \(Table S2.2\)](#).

### *National and European identifications*

Seven items (Cinnirella, 1997) were used to assess how much participants identify with their nation (e.g., “I feel strong ties with Romanian/Serbian/Turkish nation”;  $\alpha_{\text{Romanian}} = .88$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Serbian}} = .87$ , and  $\alpha_{\text{Turkish}} = .91$ ) and European community (e.g., “I feel strong ties with European community”;  $\alpha_{\text{Romanian}} = .87$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Serbian}} = .85$ , and  $\alpha_{\text{Turkish}} = .86$ ).

<sup>4</sup>The top three countries that were perceived as the most prototypical of Europe were Germany, France, and Italy for the Romanian sample; Germany, France, and United Kingdom for the Serbian sample; and Germany, France, and Italy for the Turkish sample.

<sup>5</sup>For exploratory purposes we also measured SDO and asked about the perspectives of and about the countries that were perceived as least prototypical (removing Kosovo from the Serbian sample as responses indicated it was not acknowledged as independent territory, and so not considered a valid “outgroup” comparison for this specific sample).

### Demographics

Participants were asked to report their age, gender, and to indicate their subjective socioeconomic status using the MacArthur ladder (1: highest status, 10: lowest status).

## Results and discussion

We ran correlations for each participant group (Tables 2 and S2.1). Direct prototypicality and meta-prototypicality of the ingroup were positively correlated for all groups, indicating a perceived consensus effect. For the Romanian sample, European identification was positively correlated with direct prototypicality, meta-prototypicality, relative prototypicality, and national identification whereas these relationships were not significant for the Serbian and Turkish samples—except for European identifications' negative correlation with national identification for the Turkish sample. Interestingly, relative ingroup prototypicality (i.e., how similar participants felt their ingroup is to the European superordinate group) was positively correlated with both national and European identifications for the Romanian sample while it positively correlated with only national identification for the Serbian and Turkish samples.

Additionally, we observed notable differences in the mean scores of prototypicality between the Serbian and Turkish sample. Specifically, while the mean score for prototypicality was relatively high in Serbia (higher than Romania), it was lower in Turkey. This discrepancy suggests distinct perceptions of ingroup prototypicality between Serbia and Turkey, which may reflect their differing progress toward EU membership. Importantly, it shows the need to consider each country's sociopolitical landscape when interpreting the findings.

In summary, Study 2 corroborated Study 1 findings by showing that there is agreement about who sits “on top” (i.e., prototypicality and meta-prototypicality were positively

**TABLE 2** Means, standard deviations, and correlations for each participant group.

Variables	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	2	3	4	5
<i>Participant group: Romania</i>					
1. Direct prototypicality	4.64 (.80)	.62***	.31***	.29***	.33***
2. Meta-prototypicality	3.89 (1.55)	–	.30***	.23***	.26***
3. Relative prototypicality	4.37 (.96)	–	–	.18***	.22***
4. National identification	5.13 (1.22)	–	–	–	.35***
5. European identification	4.87 (1.10)	–	–	–	–
<i>Participant group: Serbia</i>					
1. Direct prototypicality	5.73 (1.55)	.61***	–.09	.00	.07
2. Meta-prototypicality	5.92 (1.48)	–	–.12*	.02	.08
3. Relative prototypicality	4.41 (1.00)	–	–	.13*	.03
4. National identification	4.70 (1.24)	–	–	–	–.01
5. European identification	4.21 (1.09)	–	–	–	–
<i>Participant group: Turkey</i>					
1. Direct prototypicality	3.02 (1.55)	.64***	.11	.35***	.02
2. Meta-prototypicality	2.44 (1.44)	–	.14*	.26***	.09
3. Relative prototypicality	3.32 (1.33)	–	–	.21**	.07
4. National identification	4.78 (1.52)	–	–	–	–.16**
5. European identification	3.64 (1.29)	–	–	–	–

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

correlated across all three countries). However, we find differences in whether European identification is related to meta-perceptions, finding that only in Romania does meta-prototypicality matter for European identification. We argue that this difference emerges from the political status of the countries vis-à-vis the EU. Romania, as members of the EU, has the compatibility between 'being' Romanian and European recognized. Serbia and Türkiye, on the other hand, don't. In these countries, only relative ingroup prototypicality had a positive relationship with identification, but it was with national (rather than European). This indicates that there might be a need to be perceived positively as a nation *first*, to feel a compatibility with Europe. This is further supported by the seemingly negative relationship between national and European identification in both Serbia (nonsignificant) and Turkey (significant).

## STUDY 3

Study 3 builds on Studies 1 and 2 by designing context-specific experiments for each of the target countries (Romania, Serbia, and Turkey). The first aim of Study 3 was to test the effect of meta-perceptions on European identification, attitudes, and action-orientation by manipulating whether prototypical subgroups perceive the target ingroup as positive or negative.

Drawing on the attributes generated in Study 2, we created vignettes which either framed Germany's perspective toward the target group's prototypicality as positive (seeing them as very European) or negative (seeing them as not very European). We hypothesized that participants in the positive (negative) meta-perceptions condition would report significantly higher (lower) levels of prototypicality as European (H1a [H2a]), stronger (weaker) European identification (H1b & 2b), more (less) support for EU membership (H1c [H2c]) and would donate more (less) to a European (vs. national) charity (H1f<sup>6</sup> [H2f]) compared to participants in the neutral and negative (positive) conditions.

We were also interested in exploring the impact of negative meta-perceptions on intergroup attitudes. We hypothesized that participants in the negative meta-perception condition would report significantly more negative intergroup attitudes compared to participants in the positive condition (H3).

Lastly, given the importance of compatibility identified in Study 2, we hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between national identification and European identification in the positive meta-perception condition and a negative relationship in the negative condition (H4).

This study is preregistered on the Open Science Framework (<http://osf.io/u4w3z>).<sup>7</sup>

## Method

### Participants

A power analysis was used to calculate the sample sizes using G\*Power. With three conditions for each country, we would need  $252 \times 3 = 756$  participants in total. Our goal was to obtain .95 power to detect a medium effect size of .25 at the standard .05 alpha error probability.

<sup>6</sup>H1e and H2e related to attitudes toward refugees. Additionally, a fifth hypothesis about intragroup attitudes was preregistered. These are not reported here.

<sup>7</sup>See also deviation from preregistration for analyses not reported in the manuscript.

We initially recruited 1322 participants, of which 297 failed one or both manipulation checks.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, 452 participants were excluded from the final data set due to not meeting required criteria for participation (e.g., age stated <18<sup>9</sup>). Therefore, we continued our analyses with the 573 remaining participants from Romania ( $N=155$ ), Serbia ( $N=226$ ), and Turkey ( $N=192$ ). Participants were recruited via a marketing research company under their standard incentive schemes and were paid .40 Euro (RO), .40 Euro (RS), and 2.72 Turkish lira (TR) for a 10-min survey. The mean age of the Romanian sample was 37.94 ( $SD=12.20$ ), majority female (52.1%), with an average of 5.18 ( $SD=1.65$ ) for socioeconomic status. The mean age of the Serbian sample was 30.09 ( $SD=12.43$ ), majority female (69%), with an average of 4.85 ( $SD=1.72$ ) for socioeconomic status. The mean age of the Turkish sample was 31.29 ( $SD=11.23$ ), majority female (54%), with an average of 4.79 ( $SD=1.73$ ) for socioeconomic status.

## Measures and procedure

All the translation processes were the same as Study 1 and Study 2. Participants were invited to take part in an ongoing study exploring perspectives on Europeanness across Europe. All items were measured on a 7-point scale (1: strongly disagree, 7: strongly agree) unless noted otherwise.<sup>10</sup>

### Manipulation

We used the positive and negative ingroup attributes from Study 2 to create vignettes that manipulated how participants thought Germans perceive their ingroup's prototypicality as Europeans (generating a positive and [negative] condition):

This study is part of a larger and ongoing research program on perspectives on Europeanness among people in Europe. The findings so far indicate that there are differences in the extent to which different countries in Europe are seen as "European." For example, in a survey conducted in Germany, when asked how European people from Romania/Serbia/Türkiye are, the majority of participants answered either "very European" or "somewhat European" [in the positive condition] or "not at all European" or "not very European" [in the negative condition]. When asked to provide descriptions of what characterized these countries, common responses included *hospitable, friendly, and polite (for Serbia)/hospitable, hard-working, and industrious (for Romania)/friendly, helpful and hospitable (for Türkiye)* [in the positive condition] or *lazy, neglectful and corrupt (for Romania)/lazy, unorganized and stubborn (for Serbia)/lazy and undisciplined (for Türkiye)* [in the negative condition].

A neutral condition, in which we did not mention Germans or any of the positive or negative ingroup attributes, was included:

This study is part of a larger and ongoing research program on perspectives on Europeanness among people in Europe. The findings so far indicate that this

<sup>8</sup>In addition to the data file of those who passed manipulation checks, we also provided a data file with all participants (regardless of their failures in the manipulation check questions) on the Open Science Framework, which can be used to replicate the analyses.

<sup>9</sup>We note that the marketing company who helped with survey distribution have specific vetting processes for participation which include providing date of birth. Given the order of the survey where demographic data questions came at the end of the survey, it is likely that participants did not take the completion of this section seriously. Nevertheless, out of precaution, the data from these participants has been excluded.

<sup>10</sup>See deviation from preregistration for additional measures and analyses not reported on in this paper.

category is perceived as diverse and complex, informed by the many different countries that make up Europe.

All participants were randomly assigned into one of three conditions: positive, negative, or neutral.

#### *Manipulation check*

Two manipulation checks were included for the positive and negative prompts asking participants to indicate whether the following statements are true or false: “The study found that the majority of Germans held positive/negative views of Romanians/Serbians/Turks” and “The survey was conducted in Austria” (reverse-coded).

#### *Direct prototypicality*

Same as Study 2.

#### *National and European identifications*

Same as Study 2.

#### *Political support for EU membership*

Assessed by asking “Please indicate to what extent you personally think that Romania/Serbia/Türkiye should be a member of the following political union: EU.” For Romania the question asked about support for continued membership.

#### *Group attitudes*

A feelings thermometer between 0 (cold) and 100 (hot) (Abelson et al., 1982) was used to measure how participants felt about two groups: Germans and Europeans.

#### *Charitable donation*

At the end, participants were told that the research team had made a climate pledge, donating to a climate action charity for each response. Participants were asked to choose between a national and European branch of the same charity for us to donate to on their behalf (Climate Action Network Romania/Serbia/Turkey vs. Climate Action Network Europe).

#### *Demographics*

Same questions as Study 2.

## Results and discussion

Means, standard deviations, and correlations by conditions for each country are presented in Table 3. We conducted a MANOVA for each country, with the meta-perception conditions (positive, negative, neutral) as the independent variable, and direct prototypicality, European identification, EU support and group attitudes for Germans and Europeans as the dependent variables. All results with multiple pairwise comparisons are presented in Table 4. We also conducted a chi-square test to compare charitable donation preferences for each group (Table 5).

**Hypothesis 1.** In line with our expectations, Romanian participants in the positive meta-perception condition reported significantly higher levels of European identification (H1b) and EU membership support (H1c) compared to those in the neutral condition. Contrary to our expectations, no significant differences were found for Romania between the positive and neutral meta-perception conditions

**TABLE 3** Means, standard deviations, and correlations by participant groups and meta-perception conditions in Study 3.

Variables	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Participant group: Romanian—Positive condition</i>						
1. Direct prototypicality	6.04 (1.23)	.54***	.59***	.40**	.42**	.42**
2. National identification	5.73 (1.22)	–	.65***	.32*	.37*	.26*
3. European identification	5.65 (1.17)	–	–	.59***	.65***	.60***
4. EU membership support	6.28 (1.16)	–	–	–	.50**	.55***
5. Group attitudes: Germans	69.71 (29.50)	–	–	–	–	.83***
6. Group attitudes: Europeans	79.93 (23.86)	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Participant group: Romanian—Negative condition</i>						
1. Direct prototypicality	5.46 (1.34)	.39**	.43**	.31*	.27	.40**
2. National identification	5.69 (1.10)	–	.26	.21	.10	.20
3. European identification	5.11 (1.19)	–	–	.56***	.32*	.61***
4. EU membership support	5.94 (1.50)	–	–	–	.37**	.55***
5. Group attitudes: Germans	52.72 (23.81)	–	–	–	–	.51***
6. Group attitudes: Europeans	71.38 (21.79)	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Participant group: Romanian—Neutral condition</i>						
1. Direct prototypicality	5.55 (1.63)	.52***	.48***	.39***	.34**	.37***
2. National identification	5.42 (1.47)	–	.41***	.34**	.26*	.30**
3. European identification	5.02 (1.34)	–	–	.66***	.37***	.55***
4. EU membership support	5.67 (1.77)	–	–	–	.35***	.44***
5. Group attitudes: Germans	55.19 (29.52)	–	–	–	–	.72***
6. Group attitudes: Europeans	69.48 (25.99)	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Participant group: Serbian—Positive condition</i>						
1. Direct prototypicality	3.97 (1.91)	.11	.16	.27	.12	.07
2. National identification	5.18 (1.52)	–	.32*	–.02	.20	.35*
3. European identification	5.37 (1.25)	–	–	.69***	.43**	.58***
4. EU membership support	5.58 (1.92)	–	–	–	.25	.32*
5. Group attitudes: Germans	66.00 (27.72)	–	–	–	–	.61***
6. Group attitudes: Europeans	80.09 (20.91)	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Participant group: Serbian—Negative condition</i>						
1. Direct prototypicality	2.93 (1.67)	.13	.11	–.02	.26*	.09
2. National identification	5.08 (1.49)	–	–.10	–.29*	–.19	–.23
3. European identification	4.23 (1.55)	–	–	.57***	.57***	.69***
4. EU membership support	4.28 (2.31)	–	–	–	.43***	.49***
5. Group attitudes: Germans	43.84 (29.91)	–	–	–	–	.65***
6. Group attitudes: Europeans	62.96 (28.79)	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Participant group: Serbian—Neutral condition</i>						
1. Direct prototypicality	3.38 (1.94)	.05	.21*	–.01	.20*	.23*
2. National identification	5.05 (1.35)	–	.19	–.17	–.22*	–.06
3. European identification	4.58 (1.32)	–	–	.40**	.22*	.60***
4. EU membership support	4.48 (2.18)	–	–	–	.23*	.43***

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Variables	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	2	3	4	5	6
5. Group attitudes: Germans	52.70 (26.57)		–	–	–	.50***
6. Group attitudes: Europeans	69.92 (23.58)		–	–	–	–
<i>Participant group: Turkish—Positive condition</i>						
1. Direct prototypicality	4.74 (1.93)	–.03	.05	.16	.28	.29
2. National identification	5.51 (1.93)		.28	.11	–.38*	–.15
3. European identification	4.07 (1.71)		–	.54***	.03	.64***
4. EU membership support	5.13 (2.16)		–	–	.19	.54**
5. Group attitudes: Germans	68.58 (20.67)		–	–	–	.60***
6. Group attitudes: Europeans	66.87 (23.88)		–	–	–	–
<i>Participant group: Turkish—Negative condition</i>						
1. Direct prototypicality	3.60 (1.70)	.04	.13	.16	.02	.04
2. National identification	5.23 (1.42)		.17	.39*	–.16	–.19
3. European identification	4.19 (1.52)		–	.28	.06	.04
4. EU membership support	5.60 (1.72)		–	–	.05	.08
5. Group attitudes: Germans	56.71 (33.30)		–	–	–	.66***
6. Group attitudes: Europeans	63.20 (28.65)		–	–	–	–
<i>Participant group: Turkish—Neutral condition</i>						
1. Direct prototypicality	4.35 (1.93)	.34**	.27*	.35**	.08	.16
2. National identification	5.40 (1.46)		.06	.15	–.02	–.06
3. European identification	4.67 (1.44)		–	.35**	.54***	.71***
4. EU membership support	5.49 (1.69)		–	–	.23*	.43***
5. Group attitudes for Germans	58.58 (27.80)		–	–	–	.68***
6. Group attitudes for Europeans	66.53 (25.46)		–	–	–	–

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

for direct prototypicality as European (H1a) and charitable donation preference for European vs. national charity (H1f). The same results were found for the Serbian sample. Overall, the first hypothesis was partially supported for the Romanian and Serbian samples.

Unexpectedly, Turkish participants in the positive meta-perception condition did not report significantly higher levels of direct prototypicality as European (H1a), European identification (H1b), EU membership support (H1c), and did not donate more to a European (vs. national) charity (H1f), compared to participants in the neutral meta-perception conditions. The first hypothesis was not supported for the Turkish sample.

**Hypothesis 2.** Unlike what we expected, Romanian participants in the negative meta-perception condition did not report significantly lower levels of direct prototypicality as European (H2a), less European identification (H2b), less EU membership support (H2c), and did not donate more to a national (vs. European) charity (H2f), compared to participants in the neutral meta-perception condition. The same result was found in the Serbian and Turkish samples. Therefore, the second hypothesis was not supported for any of the three countries.

**TABLE 4** Mean comparisons between the meta-perception conditions for each participant group in Study 3.

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta_p^2$	<i>p</i>	Differences between meta-perception conditions
<i>Participant group: Romanian (N = 192; F(24, 346) = 1.36, Wilk's <math>\Lambda = .82, p = .060</math>)</i>					
Direct prototypicality	2, 188	2.30	.02	.103	–
European identification	2, 189	4.09	.04	.018	Positive > Neutral ( $p = .016$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = .63$ )
EU membership support	2, 189	3.34	.03	.038	Positive > Neutral ( $p = .033$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = .71$ )
Group attitudes: Germans	2, 187	5.53	.06	.005	Positive > Neutral ( $p = .011$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = 14.52$ ) Negative < Positive ( $p = .008$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = 16.99$ )
Group attitudes: Europeans	2, 186	2.85	.03	.060	Positive > Neutral ( $p = .050$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = 10.45$ )
<i>Participant group: Serbian (N = 226; F(24, 420) = 2.09, Wilk's <math>\Lambda = .79, p = .002</math>)</i>					
Direct prototypicality	2, 222	1.46	.01	.236	–
European identification	2, 223	10.62	.09	<.001	Positive > Neutral ( $p = .002$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = .80$ ) Negative < Positive ( $p < .001$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = 1.14$ )
EU membership support	2, 223	6.29	.05	.002	Positive > Neutral ( $p = .008$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = 1.10$ ) Negative < Positive ( $p = .003$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = 1.31$ )
Group attitudes: Germans	2, 223	9.48	.08	<.001	Positive > Neutral ( $p = .014$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = 13.30$ ) Negative < Positive ( $p < .001$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = 22.16$ )
Group attitudes: Europeans	2, 223	7.21	.06	.001	Positive > Neutral ( $p = .041$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = 10.17$ ) Negative < Positive ( $p = .001$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = 17.13$ )
<i>Participant group: Turkish (N = 155; F(24, 272) = 1.31, Wilk's <math>\Lambda = .80, p = .156</math>)</i>					
Direct prototypicality	2, 152	3.48	.04	.033	Negative < Positive ( $p = .029$ , $M_{\text{difference}} = 1.14$ )
European identification	2, 151	2.46	.03	.089	–
EU membership support	2, 152	.71	.01	.497	–
Group attitudes: Germans	2, 151	2.15	.03	.121	–
Group attitudes: Europeans	2, 151	.24	.00	.786	–

**Hypothesis 3.** For Romanian participants, compared to participants in the positive meta-perception condition, those in the negative condition reported significantly more negative intergroup attitudes for Germans but not for Europeans. Therefore, the third hypothesis was partially supported for the Romanian sample.

For Serbian participants, those in the negative meta-perception condition reported significantly more negative intergroup attitudes for Germans *and* Europeans, compared to those in the positive condition. Hence, the third hypothesis was supported for the Serbian sample.

TABLE 5 Frequency comparisons between the meta-perception conditions for charitable donations.

Charity preferences	Meta-perception conditions			Differences between meta-perception conditions
	Neutral	Positive	Negative	
<i>Participant group: Romanian (N = 192)</i>				
European charity	25.26%	25.53%	20%	$\chi^2(2) = .82, p = .662$
National charity	74.74%	74.47%	80%	$\chi^2(2) = .25, p = .881$
<i>Participant group: Serbian (N = 226)</i>				
European charity	23.08%	38.46%	20.29%	$\chi^2(2) = 7.02, p = .030$
National charity	76.92%	61.54%	79.71%	$\chi^2(2) = 2.63, p = .268$
<i>Participant group: Turkish (N = 155)</i>				
European charity	14.63%	13.16%	22.86%	$\chi^2(2) = 3.24, p = .198$
National charity	85.37%	86.84%	77.14%	$\chi^2(2) = .66, p = .720$

For Turkish participants, we found no difference between the negative and positive meta-perception conditions in terms of intergroup attitudes for Germans or Europeans. The third hypothesis was not supported for the Turkish sample.

**Hypothesis 4.** As expected, for Romanian participants, national identification and European identification were positively correlated in the positive meta-perception condition; however, there was no significant correlation between them in the negative meta-perception condition. The same results were found in the Serbian sample, supporting the fourth hypothesis only partially for the Romania and Serbia.

For Turkish participants, national identification and European identification were not correlated in the positive or negative meta-perception conditions, again disconfirming the hypothesis in the Turkish sample.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Study 1 supported the arguments made by previous scholars that the image of a European identity is shaped by the West (Neumann, 1999), with Germany emerging as the prototypical European. Study 2 confirmed this finding, showing consensus between direct- and meta-perceptions of Germany's prototypicality. However, Study 2 also found important variations between countries. Only in Romania were meta-perceptions important for self-perceptions as European. In Serbia and Turkey, it was relative prototypicality (attribute compatibility) that mattered for identification, but not European, national. By manipulating meta-perceptions, Study 3 showed that recognition by more prototypical others can have a positive impact on identification, intergroup attitudes, and support for superordinate membership, although only in Romania and Serbia—with no significant effects found in the Turkish sample. The role of the political context in Europe is important to discuss for a better understanding of these results and their implications.

We expected that EU membership, as a form of “official recognition” of a country's “Europeanness” would set Romania apart from Serbia and Turkey in terms of its sense of prototypicality and belonging. This expectation was confirmed by our findings. For Romania, an EU member-state, there was compatibility between national and European identification, and Germany's perspective mattered for positive self-perceptions on both a superordinate and national level. We argue that for Romania, meta-perceptions mattered for Europeanness because

participants perceived European identity as a relevant form of self-categorization *alongside* their national ingroup, echoing previous research on dual or nested identification in Europe (i.e., Herrmann et al., 2004). In Serbia and Turkey, there was an incompatible relationship between national and European identification, and instead meta-perceptions (Turkey only) and relative prototypicality (both) mattered for national identification only. For Serbia and Turkey, “European” was not necessarily a relevant social category, and so the perceptions of powerful others mattered for the identity that they *did value*, their national one. In other words, the views of the most prototypical do relate to identification and belonging, however at different levels of identity inclusion.

Study 3, to some extent, illustrated how receptive participants from the different countries were to shifting levels of inclusion, where the experimental manipulation succeeded in having a partial effect in Romania and Serbia, but not in Turkey. Our findings indicate that Serbs positioning vis-à-vis Europe, and the EU, is more malleable than Turks, not only reflecting the reality of their political journeys “towards” Europe, but also their potential independence from Europe, with Turkey's economic power making it perhaps less dependent on positive recognition from Europe's prototype. Serbs were more susceptible to shifting levels of inclusion. In the positive condition, both Serbs and Romanians achieved a “dual” identification. For Serbs, dual identification was more fragile and recognition-dependent, as evidenced by the differences in mean European identification (increasing over 1 scale point between the negative to positive condition in Serbia; in Romania, the difference was only .5 points). This is further supported by the outcome of the negative condition on group attitudes. For Romania, negative meta-perceptions isolated the negative attitudes toward Germans, while among Serbs, it extended to *also* lead to negative attitudes toward Europeans, indicating a positioning of self as outside of that group, and Germans interchangeable with Europeans.

Finally, in comparing the positive and negative conditions of Study 3, we see that positive meta-perceptions had more of an impact than negative ones, which was more similar to the “neutral” condition. To us, this indicates that the negative condition was closer to the “baseline” or reality of meta-perceptions held by our participants, echoing previous research on the internalized sense of being second-class citizens in Europe and its “Eastern Other” (i.e., Dumbrava, 2014; Neumann, 1999; Todorova, 1997). Nowhere was this clearer than in the Turkish samples, where an experimental manipulation of contemporary attitudes of Germans did little to shift perceptions of (non)belonging formed against a historical backdrop of Othering discourses (Gulmez et al., 2023).

Returning to Figure 1, we consider what this research tells us about the proposed model of superordinate belonging. The findings confirm that Europe, at least in the three countries studied, is perceived as a hierarchical superordinate group. The most prototypical subgroup has the power to define the group identity and align it in meaningful ways with its own beliefs, values, and norms (Turner et al., 1987; Wenzel et al., 2008). The practical implications of this alignment between subgroup and superordinate group are that those most prototypical in a superordinate group become gatekeepers for belonging, holding a position that can either afford, or limit, recognition of other subgroups as part of the superordinate group. Existing research confirms this, identifying lower levels of belonging in Europe among CEE states compared to their Western counterparts (Ceka & Sojka, 2016; Sanders et al., 2012). However, we also find that prototypical members are influential, able to impact identification beyond the boundaries of the superordinate group, to also shape how positively individuals feel about their distinct, subgroup, identities. Namely, in Serbia and Türkiye, where there was a seeming incompatibility between national and European identification, positive recognition mattered for feeling good about one's national ingroup, rather than for seeing oneself as European. While unexpected, this finding is important, as threats to national identity have been found to be a key barrier for positive identification with Europe, and for the perceived legitimacy of the EU (i.e., Arkan, 2016; Dumbrava, 2014; Grosfeld et al., 2022; Mihić et al., 2021; Obradović &

Sheehy-Skeffington, 2020). Where does this sense of threat come from? Our theoretical model proposes that it is through the hierarchical framing of superordinate belonging that a sense of incompatibility arises, which pits national identification as being in potential conflict with European belonging, as the latter entails conforming to a group prototype that is defined by a narrow, and exclusive, “top.”

## Theoretical and practical implications

At the outset of this paper, we argued that the findings on the variable success of superordinate identities (such as “European”) can be explained by researchers limited engagements with the broader power dynamics that shape how superordinate identities are formed and reproduced. Through identifying the group “prototype” and using it to examine the role of meta-perceptions on belonging, we have shown how superordinate identification can be shaped in significant ways by the perceptions of prototypical members. Previous research on meta-perceptions and group dynamics has mainly focused on exploring its impact on intergroup relations, especially those in contexts of conflict. However, if superordinate identities are a way to overcome differences and foster “unity in diversity” (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), then we need to also consider how these mechanisms carry over, and impact, intragroup dynamics in superordinate contexts. The findings here highlight how meta-perceptions serve as an important social mechanism through which belonging, and exclusion is negotiated, at different levels of identification. While our study focused on three countries in Europe, with differing political inclusion in the EU, and economic power in Europe, future research should investigate whether meta-perceptions influences belonging among less prototypical members in other superordinate contexts. Research has shown that overall attachment to a European community is significantly weaker than with other social groups (Bruter, 2005); therefore, testing these relationships in other contexts will enable the theoretical model of this paper to be further substantiated.

Another important theoretical implication comes from the variable findings on identity compatibility and the impact that positive recognition had on how groups feel about their own national identities. Identity compatibility seems to be achieved only *after* group membership has been awarded and “official” recognition gained, rather than as an outcome of positive recognition only. Consequently, positive recognition for lower status groups seems to matter predominantly for how they feel about their subgroup. Future research should test whether this pattern is significant only because of power-asymmetries, to substantiate the claim that it is the positive recognition of more prototypical ingroup members (compared to less prototypical members) that really matters for belonging. This would enable us to better understand not only the impact of meta-perceptions on intergroup relations, but also group self-esteem and well-being.

## Limitations

A limitation of the present study was that we did not measure perceptions of subgroup power directly, focusing instead on status. Research has shown differential effects of status and power on perspective-taking (Blader et al., 2016), consequently there would be value in future research examining not only whether positive versus negative meta-perceptions have an impact on group belonging, but also whether heightening a sense of subgroup power, might counter the need for recognition by relevant others, a pattern we would expect based on existing research (Galinsky et al., 2006). A further limitation relates to samples. In Studies 1 and 2, we employed convenience sampling due to resource constraints, which brings up considerations about the generalizability of our findings. Although the perspectives of these participants may not fully capture the diversity of the public, the samples from universities and social media provided a vital foundation for

Study 3. By integrating both convenience and non-convenience samples in our research across three studies, we provided a well-rounded view in the end, despite the limitations of our sampling strategy.

Lastly, on a practical level, this research illustrates the value of positive messaging to promote better intragroup attitudes within Europe and recognition of diverse national identities as valued within the broader European context. To promote “unity in diversity,” policymakers should consider not only how to highlight what is shared across a European community, but also how different nations' recognize and value each other's contribution to the European community. At a time of rising xenophobia, ethnonationalism and right-wing populism in Europe, it is increasingly important to consider how political communication can function to not only alleviate threats and divisions, but also promote positive inter- and intragroup perceptions.

## CONCLUSION

Our findings inform the political psychology of superordinate group belonging. Through three studies, we advance a theoretical model that captures the role of meta-perceptions for superordinate and subgroup identification. Our findings emphasize that how what we think relevant others' think about us can have fundamentally important implications for group identification at different levels, intergroup attitudes, and political attitudes toward superordinate unions like the EU. As we also show, the wider sociopolitical context plays a crucial role in shaping these dynamics and should be included in future testing of the model.

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Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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