

The Effect of Outgroup Trust on Cross Ethnic Voting: Evidence from an Imagined Intergroup Contact Experiment

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of outgroup trust on an individual's likelihood to engage in cross ethnic voting or voting for a non-co-ethnic candidate in contexts where ethnicity is politically salient. To test this, I conducted an experiment manipulating the level of outgroup trust on two different population samples: U.S. undergraduate students in a mid-western university and Myanmar migrants living the United States. I find that in both population samples, outgroup trust was positively correlated with the likelihood of voting for a non-co-ethnic candidate. The intended effect of the imagined intergroup contact treatment, however, was only present among the U.S. student sample, but not among the Myanmar migrant sample. Contrary to my expectation, the imagined intergroup contact had a negative effect on voting for a non-co-ethnic candidate. Yet, this effect was only statistically significant among the Myanmar migrant sample, but not the U.S. student sample.

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1 Introduction

Voting, a key feature of democracy, can impede democratic consolidation when citizens vote along ethnic lines. According to Houle (2018), ethnic voting is harmful to democracy as it has the potential to 1) reduce ex ante uncertainty of voting, 2) encourages patronage politics, and 3) pushes candidates to take extreme policy stances leading to polarization. As a result, these country at a glance may appear to be moving towards democracy, as voting is deemed the essence of democracy, but in actuality, these political patterns resulted by ethnic voting are preventing the country from democratic consolidation.

Examples of countries experiencing such phenomenon are the United States and Myanmar. The United States, in the recent decade, has been witnessing a growing political polarization along racial and ethnic lines. In the recent 2020 presidential election, Biden's electoral coalition consisted of Black, Hispanic, and Asian voters, while Trump gained most of his votes from the non-Hispanic White Americans (Igielnik et al., 2021). Myanmar is another example of a country where its politics is divided along ethnic lines. The country's population is made up of 135 ethnic groups with the Bamar ethnicity as the majority group making up more than 68 percent of the population. During Myanmar's brief period of democracy, the country's elections was also colored by ethnic issues where groups representing or made up of Bamar members won in regions dominated by Bamar majorities while ethnic minority groups found success in areas with a larger minority population (Stokke, 2019). As Houle predicted, negative consequences from ethnic voting can be found in both contexts. In both contexts, election outcomes for some states and regions are becoming more predictable and polarization based on racial, ethnic and party lines have been growing worse over time (Mounk, 2022; International Crisis Group, 2017). Furthermore, political parties and companies that continue to support the Bamar dominant military or the *Tatmadaw*, who prior to the 2021 coup always occupied at least a quarter of parliamentary seats, continue to benefit at the cost of minority groups' resources (Gravers, 1999).

So, given ethnic voting's negative consequences on democracy, how can it be overcome to encourage individuals to vote across ethnic lines? The social capital literature argues social trust, a type of social capital, has the potential to increase one's willing to cooperate with others at the individual level and improve collective action, economic growth, and institutions at the national

level (Uslaner, 2002; Bigelow and Tocqueville, 1899; Inglehart, 1999; Putnam, 1993). Associations stemmed from high levels of social trust facilitates the building of more robust democracies. Given social trust's known ability to bridge individuals and groups, and thus promote democracy brings me to my research question; can an increase in trust across ethnic groups affect individuals' voting behaviors where ethnicity is a salient political identity?

I argue that individuals with high levels of outgroup trust or trust extended to non-co-ethnic members will be *more* likely to vote for a non-co-ethnic candidate than individuals with low levels of outgroup trust. I propose three mechanisms through which the level of of outgroup trust impacts one's likelihood of voting for a non-co-ethnic candidate. The mechanisms through which the level of outgroup determines the extent of cross ethnic voting or voting across ethnic lines are based on 1) a voter's exposure to information about both co- and non-co-ethnic candidates via social networks (network mechanism), 2) a voter's propensity to credit or discredit positive and/or negative information on both co- and non-co-ethnic candidates (information receptivity mechanism), and 3) a voter's expectation of both co- and non-co-ethnic voter's voting behavior (collective action mechanism).

In this paper, I test the *effect* of outgroup trust on cross ethnic voting or voting for a non-co-ethnic candidate. To examine whether the increase in outgroup trust can impact the likelihood of voting across ethnic lines, I manipulate the level of outgroup trust using the imagined intergroup contact method. Through a survey experiment, I manipulate the level of outgroup trust via imagined intergroup contact where participants in the treatment group are provided an imagery task, which asks them to imagine interacting with an outgroup candidate at a local cafe or restaurant discussing their favorite TV show followed by a serious discussion on personal difficulties they have faced due to cultural differences. Those in the control group are provided a neutral scenario where they are asked to imagined thinking about their favorite TV show at a local cafe or restaurant. The survey experiment takes place in the United States and is tested on two population samples; a U.S. student sample in a mid-western university and a Myanmar migrant sample living in the United States. In the two case studies, race and ethnicity will be the social groups in which ingroup is distinguished from the outgroup. Although the theory lays out three mechanisms through which outgroup trust can affect voting behavior, the study does not test for these hypotheses. The study will focus on testing for the *effect* of outgroup trust on cross ethnic voting via the imagined intergroup contact method.

This study on the role of outgroup trust on cross ethnic voting in contexts where ethnicity is a salient political identity speaks to a number of literatures. First, this study can contribute to the ethnic voting literature, particularly to the discussion on conditions under which ethnicity becomes a significant predictor of vote choice (Chandra, 2004; Conroy-Krutz, 2013; Posner, 2004; Dunning and Harrison, 2010). Second, it can add to the on-going debate in the social capital literature on whether and how outgroup trust contributes to democratic consolidation (Almond and Verba, 1989; Inglehart, 1988; Muller and Seligson, 1994; Inglehart and Welzel, 2003; Rafael La Porta et al., 1997; Putnam, 1993; Rice, 2001; Knack, 2002; Uslaner, 2002; Bäck and Christensen, 2016; Crepaz et al., 2017). By considering outgroup trust in the relationship between ethnic identity and voting behavior, we can not only learn about the extent to which ethnicity becomes a prime heuristic for people's choice of candidate or party, but also whether outgroup trust is a significant predictor of vote choice in contexts where ethnicity is an important political identity. Lastly, manipulation of outgroup trust via imagined intergroup contact can contribute to the imagined intergroup contact literature as the test could examine its effectiveness in a political context and how it can eventually lead to a change in one's potential political behavior (Crisp and Turner, 2009, 2012; Turner et al., 2016; Stathi et al., 2011; Crisp and Husnu, 2011; Pagotto et al., 2012; Vezzali et al., 2012a; Meleady and Seger, 2016).

The paper will proceed as follows. First, I discuss why ethnic voting is a detrimental phenomenon for democratic consolidation. This is followed by a brief literature review on outgroup trust as a possible solution to overcome the negative effects of ethnic voting. Then I provide a discussion of the imagined intergroup contact as a method to manipulate the level of outgroup trust. Next, I introduce and justify the two case studies, which will be used to examine the effect of outgroup trust and cross ethnic voting via the imagined intergroup contact method, which are a U.S. undergraduate student sample in a mid-western university and a Myanmar migrant sample living in the United States. The following section lays out the theory behind outgroup trust and cross ethnic voting, and how outgroup trust can be manipulated via the imagined intergroup contact method. This is then followed by data and methods, results, and a concluding section.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Ethnic Voting and its Effect on Democracy

Competitive elections guarantee a continuation of democracy because the contestation between candidates or parties prevents a single authority from staying in power indefinitely (Przeworski, 2000). Ethnic voting or voting using ethnic cues to decide who to vote for, on the other hand, can be detrimental for democratic consolidation as it can undermine the competitive electoral process. According to Houle (2018), ethnic voting poses a danger to democratic consolidation for three reasons: ethnic voting 1) reduces ex ante uncertainty of voting, which is a fundamental characteristic of democracy (Przeworski, 2000), 2) encourages patronage politics (Chandra, 2004), and 3) pushes candidates to take extreme policy stances leading to polarization (Horowitz, 1985; Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972; Chandra, 2004; Houle, 2018).

First, for elections to be considered legitimate, they must fulfill three criterion: 1) ex-ante uncertainty (anyone can win), ex-post irreversibility (losers do not try to reverse results), and repeatability (Przeworski, 2000)(16). Ethnic voting makes it highly likely that the first criteria, ex ante uncertainty, will be violated. When politics are divided along ethnic lines, politicians are likely to appeal to their co-ethnic voters and those voters are more likely to vote for them. Since ethnicity is a sticky trait, voting along ethnic lines make the electoral outcomes more predictable. As ethnicity becomes more important to the voters, the demographics of the country will pre-determine who the winner and loser will be. Decreased unpredictability of electoral outcomes is bad for democracy as it undermines the legitimacy of the institution, which then discourages electoral losers from participating in future elections and having trust in their outcomes.

Second, ethnic voting can erode democracy is by encouraging patronage politics. Patronage politics refers to a spoils system in which electoral winners exchange favors for votes. In places where votes are based on the candidate's ethnicity, incumbents are less interested in the well-being of their citizens as a whole and more focused on pleasing their co-ethnic constituents. As a result, the incumbent is less likely to distribute public goods that benefit the country as a whole and more likely to give up patronage goods (e.g., provide public sector jobs) to their supporters. On the other hand, countries that do not vote along ethnic lines are more likely to eschew patronage politics and

instead incumbents are likelier to appeal to all voters by providing public goods to the whole population (Chandra, 2004).

Lastly, ethnic voting can harm democracy via ethnic out-bidding and resulting polarization. Ethnic out-bidding refers to the process where elites within the same group compete for votes by taking on a more extreme position than the other. When voting is primarily based on ethnicity, appealing to non-co-ethnic voters becomes unnecessary. As a result, candidates become more and more polarized in their stance as they try to outbid their competing co-ethnic candidate. The radicalized policies and rhetoric drive ethnic and co-ethnic groups further apart from one another, which can then lead to an emergence of “pernicious polarization”, a phenomenon where a society splits into mutually distrustful “Us” versus “Them” camps (McCoy et al., 2018). In an extremely polarized environment, politicians are motivated to appeal to voters by proposing extreme policies, which favor co-ethnics and discriminate against non-co-ethnics. Voters, on the other hand, are influenced to loath, fear and distrust non-co-ethnics, which can in worst case scenarios lead to civil unrest and conflict (Bhavnani and Miodownik, 2009; Devotta, 2005).

Empirical studies support the theorized detrimental effects of ethnic voting on democracy. Results from Houle’s 2018 study on ethnic voting and democracy across 58 democracies reveal a negative relationship between ethnic voting and democracy. He finds that an increase in ethnic voting is significantly correlated with a reduction in the quality of democracy.

2.2 Outgroup Trust and Political Participation

So given ethnic voting’s pernicious effects on democracy, how can we discourage voting along ethnic lines? In contexts where ethnicity is an important identity in navigating political and socio-economic spaces, trust towards non-co-ethnics or outgroups matters. When social, political, and economic aspects of life are divided along ethnic lines, non-co-ethnic individuals or groups become potential competitors for resources. Since these non-co-ethnic members or groups are viewed as potential competitors, it is likely that the ability to trust these members and groups would also be low. When trust for non-co-ethnic or outgroup members is low, cooperation across groups will be difficult, which then could have a detrimental effect on social and political stability. Studies examining the relationship between outgroup trust and democracy find that countries with higher levels of outgroup trust are more

likely to score higher on the democratic scale. Delhey and co-authors (2012) test the correlation between the radius of trust towards outgroup members and democratic awareness and level of democracy across 51 countries using the World Values Survey data. They find a significant and positive association between trust and the two measures of democracy.

At the individual-level, Crepaz and co-authors (2014), also using the World Values Survey data, find that outgroup trust is negatively correlated with nativism, which include measures of attitudes towards immigration and ethnic diversity. Individuals with higher levels of outgroup trust were more likely to be welcoming on immigration policy, hiring immigrants, having immigrant neighbors and thinking ethnicity diversity to be a good trait in society. In another study, Crepaz and co-authors (2017) use the same data set to find that individuals with high levels of outgroup trust participate more actively in nonconventional political activity, such as participating in demonstrations, boycotts, and signing a petition. They explain that outgroup trusters are more likely to engage in unconventional political behavior than conventional ones because they are “other regarding,” altruistic, and extroverted (Stolle et al., 2005). Because of their “other regarding” characteristic, outgroup trusters may be more prone to invest their resources in unconventional political activities that contributes to the common good rather than engaging in voting behavior, which they may see as insufficient to solve the collective problems at hand. Such positive correlation between outgroup trust and democracy at the individual-level is also found in an experimental study carried out by Hu and Lee (2018). Their experimental study in Taiwan examine the effect of democratic systems on tolerance toward outgroups (i.e., attitudes toward mental patients) via two potential mediators (opinion sharing and voting). They find that when individuals are allowed to share opinions *and* vote, they have a higher level of positive other-oriented emotions toward mental patients and in turn greater tolerance toward outgroups compared to those who are not able to share opinions or vote.

While there is sufficient evidence of a positive correlation between outgroup trust and political participation in democracies, research examining the causal direction between the two variables still needs further investigation. Hu and Lee (2018) employ an experimental study, but they manipulate levels of political participation and examine its effect on outgroup attitudes, which is the reverse of what I am interested in. Without manipulating the level of outgroup trust experimentally, there remains concerns of confounders and social desirability bias. As a result, for a deeper understanding of the

impact of outgroup trust on voting across ethnic lines, I propose a study that examines the relationship between the two variables by manipulating the level of outgroup trust via the imagined contact method.

2.3 Imagined Contact as a Method of Manipulating Outgroup Trust

Imagined intergroup contact refers to “the mental simulation of a social interaction with a member or members of an outgroup category” and has been known to improve intergroup relations (Crisp et al., 2009). The concept stems from the Allport’s (1954) idea of “fantasy level” contact mentioned in his book *The Nature of Prejudice*, where he discusses indirect approaches to prejudice-reduction, including the ‘informational approach’, where individuals learn about the outgroup either through lessons, or the ‘vicarious experience approach’, which involves fictional scenarios such as films, novels, and dramas about the outgroup. Crisp and Turner (2012), pioneers who developed the imagined contact method with contact theory in mind, argue that while the imagined contact method cannot be used as a perfect substitute for actual contact, it can be used as a way of “preparing people for future contact” (15). Imagined contact, like actual contact, has the potential of reaping similar benefits such as reducing prejudice and improve attitudes towards outgroup members. This method, however, is inexpensive and can be used in places where there is less opportunity for contact. Furthermore, it does not have the same set of constraints as actual contact, which works best when individuals interacting are of equal status, have common goals, engaged in intergroup cooperation, and supported by social and institutional authorities. Imagined contact, according to Crisp and Turner (2009), has been found to be ineffective when ingroup identification is high and prior contact with outgroup members is low. Since imagined contact requires fewer conditions than actual contact, the method can be utilized in a number of scenarios where actual contact is difficult and be used as a pre-contact tool that prepares people for future contact.

Imagined intergroup contact can take the form of imagining contact with the outgroup after hearing or reading about a real-life intergroup contact from an acquaintance, the newspaper, or the social media. This technique has been shown to influence various outcomes including explicit (Turner et al., 2016) and implicit (Turner and Crisp, 2010) outgroup attitudes, projection of positive self-traits to outgroup member (Stathi et al., 2011), enhanced future contact intentions (Crisp and Husnu, 2011), more positive nonverbal

behavior (Turner and West, 2011), reduced levels of hostility (Wojcieszak and Warner, 2020), re-evaluations of stereotypes (Brambilla et al., 2011), and reduced negative affect towards a political outgroup (Warner and Villamil, 2017). Pagotto, Visintin, Iorio, Voci (2012) adapt the imagined intergroup contact method and find that it promotes cooperation through outgroup trust. Several studies prior to theirs also find imagined intergroup contact increases outgroup trust, which then leads to increased positive behavioral intentions and attributions of uniquely human (secondary) emotions to the outgroup (Vezzali et al., 2012b; Meleady and Seger, 2016) and approach and avoidance tendencies toward outgroup members (Turner et al., 2013). The imagined intergroup contact method, compared to other known methods of increasing outgroup trust (e.g., initiating actual contact), is low-cost way to manipulate the level of outgroup trust in a controlled environment and can prove to be useful in context where direct contact between groups is difficult.

3 Theory on Outgroup Trust and Cross Ethnic Voting

In this section of the paper, I lay out the theory behind outgroup trust and cross ethnic voting in contexts where ethnicity is a salient political identity. In particular, I lay out the mechanisms that explain why an increase in outgroup trust can lead to an increase in the chances of one voting for a non-co-ethnic candidate. There are three possible mechanisms through which outgroup trust leads to an increased likelihood of voting for outgroup candidate: the network mechanism, the information receptivity mechanism, and the collective action mechanism.

3.1 Mechanism 1: The Network Mechanism

First, the network mechanism focuses on the *quantity and quality of information voters can access via their social networks*. Individuals with a higher level of outgroup trust are more likely to interact with non-co-ethnic members (Kasara, 2013; Gundelach, 2014). This mechanism requires two necessary conditions: 1) that the individuals has high level of outgroup trust and 2) that they live in a diverse neighborhood. These individuals, who are more likely to reside in ethnically diverse cities and neighborhoods, are also more likely to be employed in non-homogenous workplaces. Working and residing in these diverse environments then increases the likelihood of that individual interacting with non-co-ethnic co-workers or neighbors. This individual, compared to those living in ethnically homogenous environments, are prone

to have a wider social network consisting of both co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic members.

Engagement with members of ethnically heterogeneous social networks provides different types of information compared to those with more homogeneous networks. Individuals with a heterogeneous social network have a higher likelihood of engaging with non-co-ethnic members and are more likely to have more positive intergroup attitudes per contact theory (Allport, 1954; Brown and Hewstone, 2005). Furthermore, these individuals are more likely to be exposed to a wider range of information compared to those with homogeneous social networks (Granovetter, 1983). The exposure to a wider variety of information from their social network paints a clearer picture of who is a qualified and unqualified candidate or party. Furthermore, the high out-group trusters are more likely to find positive (negative) information about non-co-ethnic (co-ethnic) candidates or parties as trustworthy as the sources are their friends and acquaintances whom they have trusting relationships with. With the array of information, both positive and negative, the voter will then judge who is the most qualified and deserving candidate or party. Since the voting decision is likely to be based on qualifications, there is a lower likelihood the voter will vote along ethnic lines.

3.2 Mechanism 2: The Information Receptivity Mechanism

Second, the information receptivity mechanism is a cognitive explanation, which hypothesizes that *the radius of trust determines whether a voter, when receiving information about co- and non-co-ethnic candidates, credits or discredits that information*. I argue that increasing outgroup trust can dampen people's desire to engage in ethnically motivated reasoning and instead incorporate negative (positive) information on co-ethnic (non-co-ethnic) candidates or parties more seriously in their voting decisions. For individuals with higher levels of out-group trust, positive information about non-co-ethnic candidates presents useful and believable information to consider when determining who to vote for, because the individual deems the non-co-ethnic members to be trustworthy and honest. With all the information they have on co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic candidates, they will be able to vote for a more qualified candidate with higher accuracy. As a result, voters with higher levels of outgroup trust are less likely to engage in ethnic voting than the low outgroup trusting voters, who are more likely to engage in ethnically motivated reasoning.

The information receptivity mechanism is somewhat overlapping with the network mechanism, but I believe the two are conceptually distinct. For example, it may be case where one has a fairly homogenous network, but they may still be willing to accept information from a non-co-ethnic they encounter due to pre-existing levels of outgroup trust (information receptivity mechanism). Or it may be the case that one encounters more kinds of information because they have a heterogenous network and higher levels of outgroup trust (network mechanism). On the other hand, it could be the case that those with a diverse network can still be prejudiced against information coming from a non-co-ethnic due to low levels of outgroup trust.

3.3 Mechanism 3: The Collective Action Mechanism

Third, the collective action mechanism is based on a voter's *perception that both co- and non-co-ethnic voters will elect politicians that are qualified and distribute public goods*. I argue that individuals who extend trust towards non-co-ethnics are more likely to believe their outgroup counterpart will cooperate and not defect in their voting decisions. Voters, when calculating their voting strategy, consider not only the competence of the candidates or parties, but also the strategy of fellow voters. When considering the strategic characteristic of voters, how individuals view others and their intentions becomes crucial for one's vote choice. According to Keefer, Scartascini, and Vlaicu 2019, argue that if voters can trust the other to contribute to the collective good of monitoring and expelling poorly performing incumbents, there is a higher incentive for individual voters to vote for qualified candidates or parties. This complements the idea that ethnic voting tends to be prevalent in contexts where the other cannot be trusted, and thus that individuals will always vote in a way that disfavors the out-group rather than pursuing tactics that benefit the country as a whole.

Based on Keefer, Scartascini and Vlaicu (2019), individuals with higher levels of outgroup trust are more likely to be optimistic about a non-co-ethnic voter's openness to the idea of voting for a qualified candidate. Individuals with a higher level of outgroup trust will have a lower level of prejudice towards outgroup members, and thus will tend not to think about politics from an "Us vs. Them" perspective. Rather, they are more likely to focus on what benefits not only their group, but the country as whole. In this mindset, they may predict that non-co-ethnic voters will not vote along ethnic lines and instead vote for a competent candidate or party. As a result, these individual will be less prone to engage in ethnic voting than individuals with lower levels of outgroup trust.

Given the three plausible explanation of how outgroup trust can *effect* the chances of an individual voting across ethnic lines, I propose my main hypothesis: Individuals with a *higher* level of outgroup trust are *more* likely to vote for a *non-co-ethnic candidate* than those with a lower level of outgroup trust. As aforementioned, this study focuses on the *effect* outgroup trust has on cross ethnic voting by manipulating the level of outgroup trust via imagined intergroup contact. This paper does not test for three mechanisms². In the next section, I introduce two case studies used to test my hypothesis.

4 Case Selections

4.0.1 United States: undergraduate students

This group is appropriate to study the effect of imagined intergroup contact on outgroup trust for largely two reasons: first, the pool of participants include a large pool of undergraduate students from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The midwestern university from which the sample is drawn has an undergraduate population of 33,000, with a large White, Asian-American, Hispanic, and international population. As a result, the students in the subject pool I used are going to be an ethnically heterogeneous population with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds that would lead to a variation in who they view as the outgroup and how much they trust those groups.

Second, the political divide between the left and right political parties in the United States was at its height in the Fall of 2020. The first survey experiment took place two weeks after the 2020 U.S. Presidential election was held. The political climate of the United States back then was deeply divided between political and racial groups due to Donald Trump's racist rhetoric and policies throughout his presidency, and the increase of police brutality leading to an uprise of the Black Lives Matter movement. In the Spring of 2022, when the second survey experiment was taking place, the gap between Republicans and Democrats continued to be deeply divided; according to a 2022 Pew Research Center survey, about six-in-ten Republicans (62%) and more than half of Democrats (54%) had unfavorable views of the other party. The share expressing this level of antipathy was higher than it was five years ago and significantly higher than a few decades ago (Pew Research Center, 2022). Furthermore, views on immigration among a number of salient issues

²The three mechanisms explaining the relationship between outgroup trust and cross ethnic voting are tested in another chapter of my dissertation, which is still in the works

also remained highly partisan: according to a 2022 Gallup survey, 69% of Republican respondents agreed with the statement that ‘immigration to the United States should be decreased’ while only 17% of Democrat respondents agreed with this statement (Gallup, 2007). As a result, given the deeply polarized political climate where race and ethnicity are salient identities, the United States can serve as an easy test to examine how imagined intergroup contact can influence one’s attitudes and behavioral intentions towards an outgroup.

4.0.2 Myanmar: Myanmar migrants in the United States

Myanmar, despite its long history of ethnic politics, has been relatively understudied compared to its sub-Saharan and Western counterparts. Furthermore, the previous experiments testing the imagined intergroup contact method were mostly done in European and North American contexts. As a result, studying Myanmar will contribute to our understanding of individual level outgroup attitudes beyond the commonly studied cases and our understanding of under what conditions the imagined intergroup contact stimulus does and does not work.

Since its independence from foreign rule in 1948, the country has struggled to create a national identity reflective of its ethnic diversity and deliver on the demands from various ethnic groups within its borders. Myanmar is made up of 135 distinct ethnic groups that are officially recognized by the Myanmar government. These groups not only differ in their descent but also vary in their language and culture. Over 60% of the Myanmar population are from the Bamar ethnic group and the rest of the population is divided into smaller ethnic groups. After Myanmar gained independence from foreign forces, the armed forces dominated by ethnic Bamar officers, also known as the *Tatmadaw* gained political control and started its mission of ‘Burmanization’, a process of building a unified state centered around a homogenized “Burmese” national-identity. Its central goal was to unite the ethnically diverse country by assimilating the ethnic minority groups under a Bamar-centered identity. This meant ethnic minority groups were denied a separate culture and ethnicity, and were forced to be subsumed under the Bamar way of life. According to Nick Cheesman (2002), the *Tatmadaw* relied on a number of loose policy directives to bind the different ethnic groups into a union. First, the state argued that “all ‘national races’ share[d] both a common origin and sense of identity” and blamed the British colonial rule for causing a rift between different groups that “led to the subsequent outbreak of civil war.” Second, the state “constructed a ‘traditional’ public life” centered around Bamar culture

and “links other cultures together around the periphery”, which is intricately woven into the state media (18-20).

While the ‘Burmanization’ process successfully assimilated some ethnic groups with little effort, others resisted strongly by violently protesting and demanding social and political autonomy. Identity became the foundation of political rights and in reaction to ‘Burmanization’, ethnic minority groups actively engaged in *ethnicism*. which is the process of “separation or seclusion of ethnic groups from nation states in the name of ethnic freedom ... where cultural differences are classified as primordial and antagonistic” (Gravers, 1999) (145). According to the University of Massachusetts PERI Modern Conflict dataset (2007), the struggle between the *Tatmadaw* and ethnic minority groups escalated into conflict, which not only led to a large number of internally displaced peoples, but also war related death tolls totaling over 100,000 since 1948. While the military has signed ceasefire agreements with some ethnic insurgent groups, other ethnic insurgent groups continue to engage armed resistance against the *Tatmadaw*; the Chin ethnic insurgent group is one that most recently re-engaged in armed conflict (Ghoshal and Lone, 2022).

In addition to ethnicity being at the center of Myanmar history and politics, the recent genocide against the Rohingya muslims and the military coup against the democratically elected party, National League of Democracy led by Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, has made the issue of ethnicity, democracy, and elections more salient in the minds of the Myanmar people than ever. The scale of *Tatmadaw’s* violent repression against both ethnically minority groups³ and its own Bamar people⁴ has made Myanmar people question the competency of the military’s rule not only within the country but also outside of the country among its emigrant population. Given its history of ethnic conflict and recent political upheavals, Myanmar is an appropriate context to test the effect of imagined intergroup contact on outgroup attitudes and behavior.

³The persecution and killings of Rohingya Muslims, stemming from historical tension between the Buddhist nationalists, who are mostly Bamar, and Rohingya Muslims, was part of the ‘Burmanization’ efforts to create a “pure” national identity centered on Buddhism and drive out Muslims who historically have no place in the country. The military crackdown that took place in 2017 led to more than 25,000 deaths and 700,000 IDPs (?)

⁴The *Tatmadaw’s* violent crackdown of protestors resulted in more than 2,000 civilian deaths, more than 14,000 civilian arrests, and over 700,000 displaced peoples (Al Jazeera, 2022).

I chose to test my theory on the Myanmar migrant sample in the United States instead of collecting data in Myanmar because of the research limitations posed by COVID-19 and then the military coup in early 2021. Travel restrictions posed by COVID-19 and the military coup posed health and safety dangers that made field work in Myanmar to be impossible. Instead, I turned to the Myanmar migrant population in the United States to test my theories on imagined intergroup contact and outgroup trust. The Myanmar migrant sample in the United States, I argue, is a representative sample of the general Myanmar population as the two populations are similar in terms of age, ethnic, and religious makeup.

According to the CIA World Factbook (2022), an average Myanmar individual in 2014 was 29.2 years old, a Bamar (68%), and a Buddhist (87.9%). The average Myanmar migrant person among the 84 respondents⁵ was also 28.8 years old, a Bamar (66.7%), and a Buddhist (82.1%). The Myanmar migrant sample in the United States, however, had a higher percentage of males to females compared to that of the Myanmar population. In addition to age, ethnicity, and religion, the migrant sample in the US may also have directly experienced the ‘Burmanization’ process and/or recent political upheavals by living or visiting the country or may have indirectly experienced it through family or friends.

On the other hand, there is the potential that this population, due to their experiences living the United States, may have a more liberal approach to politics. Furthermore, their time away from their home country may lead to them to take less interest in Myanmar politics and in turn create different opinions compared to those held by people in Myanmar. This concern, however, is partially alleviated as more than 70% of the respondents reported to have discussed major political issues of Myanmar at least once a year⁶. Since Myanmar’s political issues are colored by ethnic politics, I believe the migrant sample were at least aware of ethnic tensions in the country. To add, this population chose to migrate abroad, which may not only signal a difference in mindset compared to those still living in Myanmar, but also indicate a difference in their economic status. The average Myanmar mi-

⁵From a total of 114 respondents, I excluded those who were born outside of Myanmar (e.g. the United States and Thailand), which left me with a total of 84 respondents born in Myanmar and who migrated to the United States.

⁶To measure respondent’s awareness of the political issues in Myanmar, respondents were asked the following question prior to administering the treatment: “In the past year, how often did you typically discuss major political issues in your home country with others? Never; Once a year; Once a month; Once a week; Almost every day.”

grant respondent reported to have earned between \$2,000 and \$2,999 per month, which is almost twice the level of the GDP per capita of Myanmar. According to the World Bank (2022), the GDP per capita of Myanmar in 2021 was \$1187, which is significantly lower than the average income level of a Myanmar migrant living in the US. Higher earning can be interpreted as the population sample being skewed in terms of class level, which in turn can have an effect on their opinions about ethnic politics and the government of Myanmar. As a result, these characteristics of Myanmar migrants in the US can cause potential biases in our results that may not be an accurate depiction of attitudes and beliefs held by the Myanmar population. Despite the possibilities of potential biases, I still believe that this sample is currently the closest representation of the Myanmar population as they pose not only demographic similarities but the majority are also aware of major political issues surrounding the country⁷.

5 Subject Pool Undergraduate Students

5.1 Data and Methods

To test the effect of imagined intergroup contact on the level of outgroup trust, I ran two survey experiments through a mid-western university's subject pool. The first survey experiment was conducted in the Fall 2020 semester and the second was administered in the Spring of 2022. Students were recruited through the a university subject pool where students were able to receive extra credit in exchange for participation in research.

5.1.1 Imagined intergroup contact survey experiment

Participants in the subject pool were randomly assigned to one of two groups: the imagined intergroup contact treatment and control group. Participants in both groups were provided a scenario containing an imagery task where those assigned to the treatment group were asked to spend two minutes imagining interacting with an outgroup stranger at a local café and talking about their favorite TV show, followed by a discussion of personal challenges in dealing with situations where their traditions and norms were challenged. The outgroup stranger differed by race and gender according to the respondent's race and gender. Those who identified as White/Caucasian were presented with a scenario where the outgroup was a Muslim stranger of the same gender.

⁷To validate the findings among Myanmar migrants in the United States, I plan to test the same theories among the Myanmar migrant population in Thailand.

Those who identified as other than White/Caucasian were assigned a scenario where the outgroup was an Italian American stranger of the same gender. The scenario for the treatment group in the Spring 2022 round was simplified to exclude the portion where respondents were asked to discuss personal challenges in which their traditions and norms were challenged. Those in the control group were asked to imagine sitting at a local café and thinking about their favorite TV show. The imagery task lasted on average about 150.31 seconds (2m 30s)⁸. Once the task was over, participants were asked some questions for a manipulation check and to measure outcomes such as outgroup attitudes (including out-group trust) and behavior. Imagery task scenarios can be found in the section 8.

5.1.2 Outcome variables

The main outcome variable of interest is outgroup trust or trust extended to those beyond your ingroup member. This is measured by asking respondents the following question, “On a scale of 1 (Extremely untrustworthy) to 7 (Extremely trustworthy), please rate how trustworthy (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) members are in general.” Here, the ethnic outgroup referred to the group mentioned in the scenario: Italians for the non-White/non-Caucasian participants and Muslims for the White/Caucasian participants.

In the Spring 2022 or second round of the subject pool, outgroup trust was measured in both the pre- and post-treatment surveys. In the pre-treatment survey, which was measured as part of the background survey conducted two weeks prior to the treatment taking place, outgroup trust was measured through the following question, “Please read each of the items carefully, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give each item the rating that best reflects how trustworthy members of each group are in general, with 1 being “extremely untrustworthy” and 9 being “extremely trustworthy”. The list of groups included Whites, Blacks, Latinos/Latinas, Asians, Men, Women, Christians, and Muslim. In the post-treatment survey, the same question on outgroup trust was asked about the same groups.

Respondents were also asked to evaluate the outgroup by asking the following question, “On a scale of 1 (Extremely negative) to 7 (Extremely positive), please rate how positively you evaluate the (ETHNIC OUTGROUP).” In the

⁸In Pagotto et al. (2012), they asked participants to read and think about the prompt for 4 minutes. I, however, allowed participants to move on to the next page starting from 120 seconds, due to worries of students dropping out or getting distracted.

Spring 2022 round, I also measured the respondent’s affect towards the outgroup with the following feeling thermometer question, “We’d like to get your feelings toward a number of groups in the United States on a “feeling thermometer.” A rating of 0 degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100 degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the group at 50 degrees if you don’t feel particularly positive or negative toward the group. How do you feel toward...” The question asked respondents to evaluate the following groups, Whites, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Arabs, and it was asked pre- and post-treatment.

5.1.3 Descriptive statistics

The first round was conducted in the Fall of 2020 and a total of 366 undergraduate students participated in the survey experiment. In the second round, which took place in the Spring of 2022, 334 students participated in the survey experiment. Participants were randomly allocated to one of two conditions: imagined intergroup contact scenario (treatment) and no contact scenario (control). In the first round, 185 respondents were assigned to the control group and 181 to the treatment group. An F-test to compare the balance of the two groups indicates the control and treatment groups in the first round were well balanced in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity. An average respondent was a 20-year old, female, and White undergraduate student.

The second round had a smaller number of respondents with 160 respondents in the control group and 148 in the treatment group. For the second round, the F-test results indicate the two groups were well-balanced on age, gender, ethnicity, pre-treatment outgroup trust, and pre-treatment ingroup identity. An average respondent for the second round was also a 20-year old, female, and White undergraduate student with a high sense of ingroup identity and fairly neutral level of outgroup trust. The results we present in the next section must be interpreted with caution as it is not representative of the general US population. Among the 334 respondents in the second round, more than 70 percent of the respondents said they were either “Somewhat left of the center”, “Liberal”, or “Very Liberal”. On the other hand, only 5 percent of the respondents placed themselves as “Somewhat right of the center”, “Conservative”, or “Very Conservative” in the political scale. As a result, the survey participants were more politically left leaning compared to the general U.S. population⁹. The two groups were also well balanced in

⁹According to Gallup (2007), as of July 2022, 28% U.S. respondents identified as Republicans, 41% as Independents, and 29% as Democrats.

terms of pre-treatment variables including levels of outgroup trust and affect towards the outgroup.

Variable	n	mean	sd	median	min	max
Control Group						
Outgroup trust (1=ex. untrustworthy;7=ex. trustworthy)	185	4.95	1.40	4	1	7
Age	178	20.46	4.30	20	17	55
Male (0=F,1=M)	185	0.41	0.49	0	0	1
White (0=non-white; 1=white)	179	0.64	0.48	1	0	1
Treatment Group						
Outgroup trust (1=ex. untrustworthy;7=ex. trustworthy)	181	5.22	1.41	5	1	7
Age	179	20.09	2.09	20	17	37
Male (0=F,1=M)	181	0.43	0.50	0	0	1
White (0=non-white; 1=white)	174	0.65	0.48	1	0	1

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (Fall 2020)

Variable	n	mean	sd	median	min	max
Control Group						
Pre-treat outgroup trust (1=ex. untrustworthy;9=ex. trustworthy)	160	5.50	2.06	5	1	9
Post-treat outgroup trust (1=ex. untrustworthy;9=ex. trustworthy)	160	5.36	1.73	5	1	9
Pre-post treat trust (Diff. pre & post-treatment)	160	-0.14	1.83	0	-5	7
Age	160	19.74	2.20	19	17	38
Male (0=F,1=M)	160	0.42	0.50	0	0	1
White (0=non-white; 1=white)	160	0.54	0.50	1	0	1
Pre-treat ingroup identity (1=not imp.; 9=ex. imp.)	138	5.93	2.62	6	1	9
Treatment Group						
Pre-treat outgroup trust (1=ex. untrustworthy;9=ex. trustworthy)	148	5.31	1.80	5	1	9
Post-treat outgroup trust (1=ex. untrustworthy;9=ex. trustworthy)	148	5.54	1.82	5	1	9
Pre-post treat trust (Diff. pre & post-treatment)	148	0.23	1.70	0	-4	5
Age	148	20.11	3.15	20	17	44
Male (0=F,1=M)	148	0.39	0.49	0	0	1
White (0=non-white; 1=white)	148	0.58	0.50	1	0	1
Pre-treat ingroup identity (1=not imp.; 9=ex. imp.)	128	5.75	2.59	6	1	9

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics (Spring 2022)

5.2 Results

Among the U.S. undergraduate respondents from Fall 2020 and Spring 2022 waves, I find that imagined intergroup contact treatment successfully manipulated their level of outgroup trust. Those randomly assigned to the treatment group were, on average, had a higher level of outgroup trust than those assigned to the control group. Furthermore, from the Spring 2022 wave, I find that while imagined intergroup contact had an effect on increasing the level of outgroup trust, it did not have a statistically significant effect on voting for an outgroup. I did, however, find support for my main hypothesis where, on average, respondents with a higher level of outgroup were more likely to vote for an outgroup candidate than those with lower levels of outgroup trust. To explain the statistically insignificant results for the effect of imagined intergroup contact on outgroup voting, I discuss the possibility of social desirability bias playing a role. I first discuss my findings from the Fall 2020 survey and then move on to discuss results from the Spring 2022.

5.2.1 Manipulation checks

To check whether participants received the intended treatment, I did a manipulation check asking participants to write one to three things they remembered from the script. Looking over the responses, it seemed that participants in both groups were paying attention to the imagery task. In the Fall 2020 survey, those assigned to the treatment listed responses such as ‘Hababi is Muslim’, ‘Speaking on personal beliefs and opinions’, and ‘Talked about favorite TV show.’ Responses from those in the control group include, ‘At Starbucks’, ‘Characters’, and ‘It was funny and light-hearted. I remember how hard it made me laugh.’ In the Spring 2022 survey, respondents in the treatment group remembered the outgroup member’s name, ‘Someone named Sarah’ and ‘Mohammad and I met at the Champaign Starbucks for the first time.’ They also mentioned mention a discussion about their favorite TV show, ‘We talked about our favorite TV show’ and ‘That 70’s show’. Lastly, they mention the interaction was positive, pleasant, and relaxed, ‘We were at a cafe, having a pleasant conversation’, ‘positive’ and ‘relaxed’.

5.2.2 Fall 2020

To examine the effects of the imagined intergroup contact manipulation on outgroup trust, I ran an OLS regressions controlling for the respondent’s age, gender, and ethnicity as I suspect individuals who are older (Zhu et al., 2021; Stets and Fares, 2019), male (Zhu et al., 2021; Delhey and Welzel, 2012), and White/Caucasians (Stets and Fares, 2019) are more likely to trust outgroup members than those who are younger, female, and non-White/Caucasians. Table 4 show results from the analysis.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Outgroup trust		Outgroup evaluation	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Imagined contact	0.264* (0.147)	0.298** (0.150)	0.375*** (0.143)	0.388*** (0.147)
Age		-0.032 (0.022)		-0.020 (0.022)
Male		-0.260* (0.153)		-0.351** (0.150)
White		0.512*** (0.158)		0.385** (0.155)
Constant	4.951*** (0.103)	5.354*** (0.470)	4.908*** (0.100)	5.199*** (0.461)
Observations	366	345	365	344
R ²	0.009	0.050	0.019	0.050
Adjusted R ²	0.006	0.038	0.016	0.039
Residual Std. Error	1.406 (df = 364)	1.388 (df = 340)	1.365 (df = 363)	1.360 (df = 339)
F Statistic	3.230* (df = 1; 364)	4.433*** (df = 4; 340)	6.898*** (df = 1; 363)	4.471*** (df = 4; 339)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 3: Results from Fall 2020 Subject Pool

Table 3 shows the results for outgroup trust and evaluation. As hypothesized, participants in the imagined intergroup contact treatment group were significantly more likely to trust the ethnic outgroup than those in the control group. They were also significantly more likely to evaluate positively the ethnic outgroup. The effect of imagined intergroup contact was stronger for outgroup evaluation¹⁰ than on outgroup trust¹¹, where those treated with the imagined intergroup contact were 0.375 (bivariate model 3)/0.388 (covariate model 4) points more likely to positively evaluate the outgroup than those in the control group. Imagined intergroup contact on outgroup trust, on the other hand, has a slightly weaker effect where those in the imagined intergroup contact group were 0.264 (bivariate model 1)/0.298 (covariate model 2) points more likely to trust the outgroup than those in the control group. I suspect the weaker effect of imagined intergroup contact on outgroup trust

¹⁰To measure outgroup evaluation, respondents were asked, “On a scale of 1 (Extremely negative) to 7 (Extremely positive), please rate how positively you evaluate the (ETHNIC OUTGROUP).”

¹¹To measure outgroup trust, respondents were asked, “On a scale of 1 (Extremely untrustworthy) to 7 (Extremely trustworthy), please rate how trustworthy (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) members are in general.”

compared to outgroup evaluation as trust is a two way street, which requires evidence the other will reciprocate the mutual feeling and not betray them. Contrary to the literature, I found males to be *less* trusting of outgroup members, while age to have no effect in line with Delhey and Welzel’s (2012) study. On the other hand, I found white/caucasians respondents were also more trusting of the outgroup than their non-white/caucasian counterparts, which is in line with the findings of Zhu et al. 2021 and Delhey and Welzel (2012).

While I find evidence for the effectiveness of the imagined intergroup contact manipulation on the levels of outgroup trust, these results must be interpreted with a grain of salt given the possibility of social desirability bias. The concern here is that since these outgroup attitudes are self reported items, there may be a tendency to over-report them. It may be the case that in reality respondents on average have lower levels of outgroup trust towards outgroup members. Even though the randomized imagined intergroup contact manipulation does account for some this issue, the results must be understood with the caution that due to social desirability bias, it may not be an accurate depiction of reality.

5.2.3 Spring 2022

Next, I present results from the Spring 2022 subject pool. The only difference between the Fall 2020 and Spring 2022 round was the content of the imagined intergroup contact scenario. In Spring 2022, the scenario was simplified asking respondents to imagine interacting with an outgroup stranger at a local cafe and discussing their favorite TV show. This scenario no longer asked the respondents to imagine discussing the difficulties of maintaining their traditional norms and values living in Champaign.

Table 4 show the results from the OLS regression that examine the effect of imagined intergroup contact on various outcomes. First, I find that imagined intergroup contact had a positive effect on outgroup trust. Those in the treatment group were 0.37 (bivariate model 1)/0.39 (covariate model 2) points more likely to trust the outgroup than those in the control group. Second, respondents in the treatment group were less likely to positively evaluate the outgroup, however, this relationship was not significant. Third, those in the imagined contact group were more likely to have positive feelings toward the outgroup by 32 (bivariate model 5)/33 (covariate model 6) points

compared to those in the control group¹². Similar to the findings in Fall 2020, males on average were less likely and white/caucasians more likely to trust outgroup members.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Outgroup trust		Outgroup evaluation		Outgroup Feeling	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Imagined contact	0.373*	0.390*	-0.016	-0.028	32.771***	33.669***
	(0.202)	(0.201)	(0.204)	(0.199)	(3.226)	(2.790)
Age		0.016		-0.084**		0.778
		(0.038)		(0.037)		(0.522)
Male		0.072		-0.411**		2.115
		(0.207)		(0.205)		(2.868)
White		-0.516**		0.699***		-29.281***
		(0.203)		(0.201)		(2.813)
Constant	-0.144	-0.205	6.306***	7.755***	-29.663***	-30.005***
	(0.140)	(0.753)	(0.141)	(0.745)	(2.236)	(10.436)
Observations	308	308	308	308	308	308
R ²	0.011	0.032	0.00002	0.064	0.252	0.451
Adjusted R ²	0.008	0.019	-0.003	0.052	0.250	0.444
Residual Std. Error	1.767 (df = 306)	1.757 (df = 303)	1.788 (df = 306)	1.739 (df = 303)	28.285 (df = 306)	24.360 (df = 303)
F Statistic	3.433* (df = 1; 306)	2.519** (df = 4; 303)	0.006 (df = 1; 306)	5.184*** (df = 4; 303)	103.204*** (df = 1; 306)	62.166*** (df = 4; 303)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4: Results from Spring 2022 Subject Pool

Next, Table 5 below presents results from models two relationships; imagined intergroup contact and voting for an outgroup candidate, and outgroup trust and voting for an outgroup candidate. First, I find some interesting results in that while in Table 4 I find evidence for treatment's effect on outgroup trust, in Table 5 I do not find evidence for treatment's effect on outgroup voting. Not only did the treatment have a significant impact on the outcome but the direction of the effect was also the opposite of what one would expect. Imagined intergroup contact, as shown in Model 1 and 3 of Table 5, had a negative effect on voting for an outgroup candidate although this relationship was not statistically significant.

¹²Respondent's affect towards the outgroup was measured as "We'd like to get your feelings toward a number of groups in the United States on a "feeling thermometer." A rating of 0 degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100 degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the group at 50 degrees if you don't feel particularly positive or negative toward the group. How do you feel toward... Whites; Blacks; Latinos; Asians; Arabs".

Outgroup trust, on the other hand, was found to be positively and significantly correlated with voting for the an outgroup candidate. While this provides support to my main hypothesis, which states that individuals with a *higher* level of outgroup trust are *more* likely to vote for a *non-co-ethnic candidate* than those with a lower level of outgroup trust, I also worry about the possibility of social desirability bias playing a role in this outcome. The reason behind the significant effect of the treatment on outgroup trust but not outgroup voting may be due to respondent’s desire to over-report their responses for the former but not the latter question. Respondents may find that being viewed as someone who does not trust an outgroup member to be less socially acceptable than someone who does not vote for an outgroup member. As a result, the significant effect we see for outgroup trust may be a result of the social desirability bias pushing up the reported levels of outgroup trust but not for the likelihood of voting for an outgroup member. Again, the randomized treatment and the pre-treatment measure of outgroup should account for this, there still is the possibility of this bias coming into play.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Vote outgroup			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Imagined contact	-0.220 (0.207)		-0.226 (0.206)	
Outgroup trust		0.116** (0.058)		0.141** (0.058)
Age			-0.044 (0.039)	-0.050 (0.038)
Male			-0.067 (0.212)	-0.062 (0.210)
White			0.516** (0.208)	0.577*** (0.208)
Constant	5.787*** (0.143)	5.678*** (0.103)	6.400*** (0.771)	6.368*** (0.764)
Observations	308	308	308	308
R ²	0.004	0.013	0.027	0.042
Adjusted R ²	0.0004	0.010	0.014	0.029
Residual Std. Error	1.812 (df = 306)	1.804 (df = 306)	1.800 (df = 303)	1.786 (df = 303)
F Statistic	1.132 (df = 1; 306)	4.024** (df = 1; 306)	2.112* (df = 4; 303)	3.308** (df = 4; 303)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 5: Results from Spring 2022 Subject Pool

Overall, results from the Fall 2020 and Spring 2022 survey experiments show that the imagined intergroup contact treatment was able to significantly manipulate the level of outgroup trust where individuals assigned to the imagined intergroup contact scenario group (treatment) had a significantly higher level of outgroup trust than the neutral imagined scenario group (control). I also find support for my main hypothesis; individuals with a higher level of outgroup trust were more likely to vote for an outgroup candidate than those with a lower level of outgroup trust.

6 Myanmar Migrants in the United States

6.1 Data and Methods

To better understand the generalizability of the imagined intergroup contact method on outgroup attitudes, I replicated the same survey experiment done in the United States on a different population, Myanmar migrants living in the United States. Since this is a hard to reach population, they could not be recruited through major survey companies. As a result, in the summer of 2022, I recruited participants using a snow ball sampling method where I contacted Myanmar contacts and asked them to pass the survey link to any Myanmar people living in the United States. To participate, the respondent had to be a Myanmar migrant above the age of 18. While the original sample included a number of Myanmar people born outside of Myanmar (e.g. United States and Thailand), the final sample got rid of these respondents and only kept Myanmar migrants born in Myanmar and now live in the United States¹³. To increase participation, I motivated the respondents with a chance of being included in a lottery for a \$50 Amazon Gift Certificate in exchange for completing the survey. Participants were given the choice of selecting surveys translated in English and Burmese.

6.1.1 Imagined intergroup contact survey experiment

Participants were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. Like the student survey experiment, those assigned to the treatment group were tasked to imagine meeting an outgroup stranger at a local restaurant. They were asked to imagine for a minute discussing their favorite TV show, followed by a discussion of personal challenges in dealing with situations where their

¹³The original sample included 114 respondents. 84 respondents reported to have been born in Myanmar while 26 said they were born in the United States, 1 in a Thailand refugee camp, and 3 did not indicate their place of birth.

traditions and norms were challenged. Again, the scenarios were customized to match the respondent's ethnicity and gender. Respondents who identified as the ethnic majority group, Bamar, were presented with a scenario where the outgroup stranger was a Chin ethnic group member of the same gender. Those who identified as an ethnic minority were assigned to a scenario where the outgroup stranger was a Bamar of the same gender. The respondents were forced to read and think about the imagery task for at least 50 seconds before they were allowed to move on to the post-treatment questionnaire. I shortened the task from two minutes to one minute in fear of a high drop out rate. The respondents, however, seemed to have remained on the treatment and control scenario page for an average of 75 seconds. Although this is shorter than the original two minutes, I believe respondents had enough time to read and reflect on the imagery task assigned to them.

6.1.2 Outcome variables

Once respondents completed the imagery task, they were asked to answer a number of questions including the main outcome variable, outgroup trust. Questions were in the same format as the Spring 2022 survey. For the outgroup trust question, I asked the respondent to rate their level of trust towards Bamar, Chin, Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine, Shan, Men, Women, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslims, which are the major ethnic and religious groups in Myanmar. For the survey, I did not ask a pre-treatment outgroup trust question as I worried asking the same question twice in a survey would cue the respondents to think about ethnicity and religion prior to the treatment, which could in turn weaken the treatment effect. The survey also included the same measure of the respondent's intentions to vote for a candidate from the following groups, Bamar, Chin, Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine, Shan, Men, Women, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslims.

6.1.3 Descriptive statistics

A total of 84 Myanmar migrants participated in the survey experiment. Migrants here is defined as participants who were born in Myanmar and is now living in the United States. 45 respondent were randomly assigned to the control group and 39 to the treatment group. An F-test to compare the balance of the two groups indicate the two groups were well balanced in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, education, length of stay in the US, level of ingroup identity, and feeling towards the outgroup. The only significant difference between the two groups was the average level of income. The treatment group had a slightly higher average level of income compared to the

control group, but the difference was only significant at the 0.1 level. An average participant was in their late 20s/early 30s, male, Bamar, completed pre-university/vocational training, earned between \$2000-2999/month, and lived in the US between 6mos and 1 year.

Variable	n	mean	sd	median	min	max
Control Group						
Outgroup trust (1=ex. untrustworthy;9=ex. trustworthy)	43	5.65	2.39	6	1	9
Age	30	27.47	6.15	25.5	20	44
Male (0=F,1=M)	45	0.58	0.50	1	0	1
Bamar (0=non-Bamar; 1=Bamar)	45	0.67	0.48	1	0	1
Education (0=no formal ed.; 7=post-uni.)	45	4.64	1.72	5	0	7
Income (0=below \$1000; 6=\$9000+)	45	2.89	1.37	3	0	6
Lived in US (0=Less than 6 mos; 4=Five years+)	44	2.48	1.29	3	0	4
Pre-treat outgroup feeling therm. (0=ex. cold;100=ex. hot)	40	55.93	28.08	62	1	100
Pre-treat ingroup identity (1=not imp.; 9=ex. imp.)	36	7.08	1.99	8	2	9
Treatment Group						
Outgroup trust (1=ex. untrustworthy;9=ex. trustworthy)	34	6.5	1.62	6	3	9
Age	28	30.21	6.96	27	22	44
Male (0=F,1=M)	39	0.56	0.50	1	0	1
Bamar (0=non-Bamar; 1=Bamar)	39	0.67	0.48	1	0	1
Education (0=no formal ed.; 7=post-uni.)	39	4.82	1.67	5	1	7
Income (0=below \$1000; 6=\$9000+)	39	3.39	1.21	4	1	6
Lived in US (0=Less than 6 mos; 4=Five years+)	38	2.55	1.39	3	0	4
Pre-treat outgroup feeling therm. (0=ex. cold;100=ex. hot)	32	45.69	28.58	50	1	100
Pre-treat ingroup identity (1=not imp.; 9=ex. imp.)	34	7.03	1.75	7	1	9

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics (Summer 2022)

6.2 Results

Among respondents asked to think about the context of Myanmar, the imagined intergroup contact treatment was not successful in manipulating the level of outgroup trust but respondents with a higher level of outgroup trust were more likely to vote for an outgroup candidate. While imagined inter-

group contact had a positive effect on outgroup trust, this relationship was not statistically significant.

The imagined intergroup contact treatment, while having no statistically significant effect on outgroup trust, had a statistically significant negative effect on voting for outgroup candidate. Those exposed to the imagined intergroup contact scenario were less likely to say they would vote for that outgroup candidate, which goes contrary to our expectations. The negative intent-to-treat effect on outgroup voting is similar to what we see in the US undergraduate survey, although the results among the Myanmar sample is statistically significant. A possible explanation of the negative effect of the treatment on outgroup voting may be a result of respondents being reminded of their differences (e.g., name, ethnicity, and cultural differences, etc.) rather than similarities through the imagined intergroup contact experience and hence less willing to want to share power with the outgroup. In the US context, the increasing polarization between political parties and racial groups may have contributed to respondent's reluctance to vote for an outgroup candidate. In Myanmar, its history and ongoing process of Burmanization may have increased the minority respondent's unwillingness to vote for a Bamar majority candidate, while Bamar respondents not wanting to relinquish its power to the minority groups in fear of losing their dominant standing in the country.

Outgroup trust was again a significant predictor of outgroup voting. Myanmar migrants in the United State with higher levels of outgroup trust were, on average, 0.429 points more likely to vote for an outgroup candidate compared to those with lower levels of outgroup trust.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Outgroup trust (1)	Vote outgroup candidate (2) (3)	
Imagined contact	0.449 (0.484)	-1.157** (0.540)	
Outgroup trust			0.429*** (0.145)
Age	0.018 (0.037)	0.019 (0.041)	-0.011 (0.039)
Male	1.183** (0.478)	1.086** (0.531)	0.571 (0.542)
Bamar	1.880*** (0.529)	0.767 (0.586)	-0.118 (0.630)
Constant	3.484*** (1.142)	4.599*** (1.261)	3.140** (1.317)
Observations	58	57	57
R ²	0.282	0.164	0.221
Adjusted R ²	0.228	0.099	0.161
Residual Std. Error	1.798 (df = 53)	1.985 (df = 52)	1.917 (df = 52)
F Statistic	5.197*** (df = 4; 53)	2.542* (df = 4; 52)	3.679** (df = 4; 52)
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

Table 7: Results from Myanmar migrants in the United States

The reason behind imagined intergroup contact's unsuccessful manipulation of outgroup trust may have been a result of choosing an inappropriate ethnic outgroup. Given that over 60% of the respondents were Bamar, the null results could have been choosing the wrong outgroup for the Bamar respondents. Based on a survey question which asked respondents to rate groups on a feeling as shown in Figure 1, the Bamar (dark blue bars) rated their own group the highest followed by Buddhist, Christian, the Chin, and the Shan group. Since the Chin group was rated highly, there may have been a ceiling effect where Bamars were already trusting of the Chins, so there was no more space for the imagined intergroup contact to take effect. In addition to these figures, Chins are regarded as part of the Myanmar people¹⁴, so Bamars do not discriminate against them openly. On the other hand, Bamar people openly discriminate against Muslims in Myanmar. This was worsened in the recent decade when the 969 Buddhist nationalist movement

¹⁴Chins are regarded as part of the Myanmar population as they are officially recognized by the Myanmar government. Muslims in Myanmar, on the other hand, are not considered part of the Myanmar population, but still viewed as foreigners living in Myanmar.

openly campaigned against Islam’s expansion in a predominantly-Buddhist Myanmar. As a result, I might see stronger effects of the imagined intergroup contact treatment on outgroup trust if I were to re-administer this experiment using Muslims as the outgroup for the Bamar respondents.

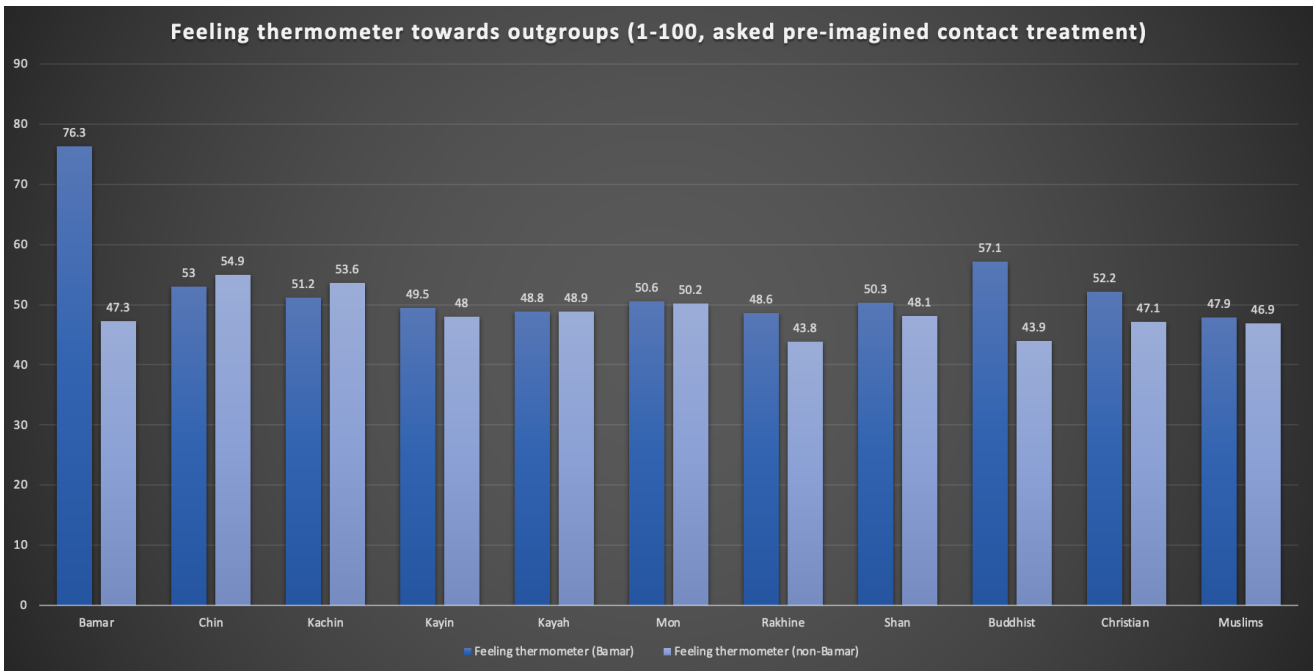


Figure 1: Distribution of Outgroup Feeling Thermometer: Bamar vs. non-Bamar

7 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the *effect* of outgroup trust on cross ethnic voting in contexts where ethnicity is a salient identity. I argued that *individuals with a higher level of outgroup trust were more inclined to vote for a non-co-ethnic candidate than those with a lower level of outgroup trust*. I presented three mechanisms through which outgroup trust could change the likelihood of voting for a non-co-ethnic candidate, which were the network mechanism, the information receptivity mechanism, and the collective action mechanism. To test outgroup trust’s *effect* on outgroup voting, I manipulated the level of outgroup trust via the imagined intergroup contact method using a survey experiment among the U.S. undergraduate student sample and Myanmar migrant sample living in the United States.

I find that the imagined intergroup contact method was successful in increasing the level of outgroup trust *only* among the U.S. undergraduate student sample, but not among the Myanmar migrant sample. While the null results for the Myanmar migrant sample may be due to the scenario describing an interaction with an already trusting ethnic outgroup member, but I think successful manipulation of outgroup trust may have been a consequence of social desirability bias. In the United States, it may be socially undesirable to show dislike towards a racial outgroup. As a result, there might be a possibility that the U.S. student respondents over-reported their level of trust for the outgroup compared to the Myanmar migrant respondents.

While the imagined intergroup contact treatment had a positive impact among the U.S. undergraduate student sample and Myanmar migrant sample, albeit statistically insignificant for the latter group, it had a negative effect on outgroup voting. This unexpected finding presents the possibility of the stimulus activation some other thought process among the respondents. Among the U.S. undergraduate student population, the negative effect of the treatment is not statistically significant. Again, a plausible explanation for these results is social desirability bias. While it is socially unacceptable to openly reveal dislike for a racial outgroup, showing preference for an in-group candidate over an outgroup candidate is an accepted norm. On the other hand, the statistically significant and negative impact imagined intergroup contact had on outgroup voting among Myanmar migrants could be interpreted as the imagined intergroup contact highlighting ethnic differences reminding the respondents of the ethnic political tensions in Myanmar. As a result, respondents who are reminded of the ethnic power struggle may be less willing to share power with the ethnic outgroup and hence less likely to vote for an outgroup candidate.

Lastly, I find support for my main hypothesis in both population samples, where individuals with higher levels of outgroup trust were more willing to vote for an outgroup candidate. Results in both population samples were statistically significant.

There are some limitations to the current analysis. First, it is not clear whether the manipulation of outgroup trust via the imagined intergroup contact is due to the treatment or a consequence of social desirability bias. To minimize the effect of social desirability bias on measuring levels of outgroup trust, I could use a number of techniques including the nominative technique (Miller, 1985), which asks respondents about the behavior of their

close friends, rather than about their own behavior, or the unmatched-count technique (Coutts and Jann, 2011), which asks respondents to indicate how many items in a list they have done or are true for them. Respondents will randomly receive one of the two lists, one that includes only non-sensitive items and the other the same list plus the sensitive item of interest. The differences in the total number of items between groups will reveal what they truly think about the sensitive item.

Additionally, not having access to data on Myanmar people's attitudes towards ethnic outgroups prior to the survey experiment made it difficult to determine the appropriate ethnic subgroup for the imagined contact scenario. Moving forward, I plan to use the data gathered in this survey to re-run the study among Myanmar migrants in Thailand. Moreover, in the next study among Myanmar migrants, I would either add a question or do a follow up interview to better understand the effect of the treatment on subgroup voting and whether the explanation I offered was correct or not. Furthermore, in the next study, I would expand the survey to include scenarios and questions to explicitly test the three mechanisms.

In conclusion, race and ethnicity is a socially constructed identity that serves as an important reference point when making social, economic, and political decisions. In places where race and ethnicity is an important identity when navigating one's daily life, people are more likely to use that identity as a point of comparison and in turn the base of one's day to day decisions. In my study, I find that when people are able to trust the subgroup, it is associated with a higher willingness to vote for that subgroup candidate. The comparative study between a U.S. undergraduate student and a Myanmar migrant sample living in the United States reveals differences in people's reactions to the imagined intergroup contact scenario. Although imaginary, the former population responded positively while the latter negatively. The difference may be a result of differing social norms and histories of racial and ethnic violence. This is an area which should be further investigated and can have important implications for theories of (imagined) contact across contexts.

8 Appendix

8.1 Imagined Intergroup Contact: UIUC Subject Pool

8.1.1 Imagery Task: Treatment Group

The purpose of this experiment is to understand how you perceive social groups. The following task will ask you to imagine a social scenario.

Fall 2020 “We would like you to spend the next 2 minutes imagining yourself meeting a female/male stranger named (Mohammad/Habiba or John/Sarah)¹⁵ at the Champaign Starbucks for the first time. Imagine that during the encounter, the two of you discuss your favorite TV shows, including the general story line, the characters involved, and the network the show is on.”¹⁶ “Now imagine that you go on talking and that you and (Mohammad/Habiba or John/Sarah) express your opinion about maintaining your own values, and religious and cultural traditions, and about the importance that these issues have in your lives. He/she explains that he/she has (Muslim/English)¹⁷ origins and how it is difficult to maintain his/her traditions and norms living in a diverse campus town like Champaign/Urbana. You ask questions to each other about the experience and the meaning it has for you.”

Spring 2022 “We would like you to take a minute imagining yourself meeting a stranger named (Mohammad/Habiba or John/Sarah) at the Champaign Starbucks for the first time. Imagine that during the encounter, the two of you discuss your favorite TV shows, including the general story line, the characters involved, and the network the show is on. Imagine that the interaction is positive, relaxed, and comfortable.”

8.1.2 Imagery Task: Control Group

Fall 2020/Spring 2022 “We would like you to spend the next 2 minutes imagining yourself sitting at the Champaign Starbucks thinking about your favorite TV show and how intriguing the story line was/is.”

¹⁵If students identify themselves as Caucasian/White, name indicated in the imagery task will be Mohammad (for male participants) and Habiba (for female participants) and if students identify themselves as non-Caucasian/White, name indicated will be John (for male) and Sarah (for female).

¹⁶The scenario has been adopted from Turner and Crisp’s (2010) Turner and Crisp (2010) study on intergroup contact and implicit prejudice.

¹⁷If students identify themselves as Caucasian/White, ethnic group indicated in the imagery task will be Muslim and if students identify themselves as non-Caucasian/non-White, ethnic group indicated will be Caucasian/White.

8.1.3 Survey Questionnaire: Fall 2020

Demographic Questions

1. How old were you on your last birthday?
2. What is your gender identity? Male; Female; Another identification (please specify)
3. Are you a U.S. citizen? Yes; No
4. What racial or ethnic group(s) best describes you? African American/Black; Asian; Native American/Alaska Native; Caucasian/White; Multiple/Mixed; Other (please specify); Don't know
5. Are you Hispanic or Latino? Yes; No
6. What is your religious preference? Christian; Jewish; Muslim; Hindu; Buddhist; Something else (please specify); No religion, not a believer, atheist, agnostic; Don't know/refused
7. Do you speak any language other than English? Yes; No

Manipulation Check

1. Upon reflecting on your imagined scenario, please write one to three things you remember from the script.

Intermediate Questions: Treatment Group Only

1. Thinking about (Mohammad/Habiba or John/Sarah), what do you think you remember the most about him/her? His personal characteristics or ethnic membership? To what extent did you link (Mohammad/Habiba or John/Sarah) with his/her specific personal characteristics (e.g. favorite TV show, personality traits, appearance, etc.) and not his/her ethnic membership? Please rate on a scale of 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Extremely).
2. On a scale of 1 (Extremely negative) to 7 (Extremely positive), please rate how positive the imagined interaction was.

Outcomes of Interest: Outgroup Attitude and Behavior

1. On a scale of 1 (Extremely negative) to 7 (Extremely positive), please rate how positively you evaluate the (ETHNIC OUTGROUP).
2. On a scale of 1 (Strongly agree) to 7 (Strongly disagree), please rate the following statement: “The (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) people have some very bad characteristics.”
3. On a scale of 1 (Strongly agree) to 7 (Strongly disagree), please rate the following statement: “The (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) people have done a great deal to make this country successful.”
4. On a scale of 1 (Strongly agree) to 7 (Strongly disagree), please rate the following statement: “Sometimes I think this country would be better off without so many (ETHNIC GROUP) people.”
5. On a scale of 1 (Extremely untrustworthy) to 7 (Extremely trustworthy), please rate how trustworthy (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) members are in general.
6. On a scale of 1 (Definitely try to take advantage) to 7 (Definitely try to be fair), do you think most members of the (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair?
7. Imagine a scenario where you were the only member of your ethnic group and you were interacting with people from the (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) (e.g. talking with them, working on a project with them), how would you feel compared to occasions when you are interacting with people from your own ethnic group? A. On a scale of 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Extremely), how awkward would you feel?
8. Imagine a scenario where you were the only member of your ethnic group and you were interacting with people from the (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) (e.g. talking with them, working on a project with them), how would you feel compared to occasions when you are interacting with people from your own ethnic group? B. On a scale of 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Extremely), how confident would you feel?
9. On a scale of 1 (Extremely unwilling) to 7 (Extremely willing), please indicate how willing you are giving an (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) stranger a tour of the UIUC campus.

10. On a scale of 1 (Extremely unwilling) to 7 (Extremely willing), please indicate how willing you are to lend small sums of money (\$20) to an (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) member.
11. On a scale of 1 (Extremely unwilling) to 7 (Extremely willing), please indicate how willing you are to lend large sums of money (\$500) to an (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) member.
12. On a scale of 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree), please rate the following statement: “I would establish a long-term relationship (including marriage) with an (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) member.”
13. On a scale of 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree), please rate this statement: “I would have (ETHNIC OUTGROUP) families living in my neighborhood.”

8.1.4 Survey Questionnaire: Spring 2022

Pre-Treatment Questions

1. How old were you on your last birthday?
2. What is your gender identity? Male; Female; Another identification (please specify)
3. What racial or ethnic group(s) best describes you? African American/Black; Asian; Native American/Alaska Native; Caucasian/White; Multiple/Mixed; Other (please specify); Don't know
4. Are you Hispanic or Latino? Yes; No
5. We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven point scales on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from very liberal to very conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale? Very liberal; Liberal; Centrist, middle of the road; Somewhat right of center; Conservative; Very Conservative
6. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a... Strong Democrat; Democrat; Independent Leaning Democrat; Independent; Independent Leaning Republican; Republican; Strong Republican
7. What religion (if any) do you consider yourself part of? Christian; Jewish; Muslim; Hindu; Buddhist; Something else (please specify); No religion, not a believer, atheist, agnostic; Don't know/refused

8. Please read each of the items carefully, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give each item the rating that best reflects how central or important that group membership is to your sense of who you are, with 1 being “not at all important to who I am” and 9 being “extremely important to who I am”. Whites; Blacks; Latinos/Latinas; Asians; Men; Women; Christians; Muslims

9. Now we would like you to think about who you are in terms of politics. Please give each item the rating that best reflects how central or important that group membership is to your sense of who you are politically, with 1 being “not at all important to who I am” and 9 being “extremely important to who I am”. Whites; Blacks; Latinos/Latinas; Asians; Men; Women; Christians; Muslims

10. We’d like to get your feelings toward a number of groups in the United States on a “feeling thermometer.” A rating of 0 degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100 degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the group at 50 degrees if you don’t feel particularly positive or negative toward the group. How do you feel toward... Whites; Blacks; Latinos; Asians; Arabs

11. Please read each of the items carefully, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give each item the rating that best reflects how trustworthy members of each group are in general, with 1 being “extremely untrustworthy” and 9 being “extremely trustworthy”. Whites; Blacks; Latinos/Latinas; Asians; Men; Women; Christians; Muslims

Manipulation Check

1. Upon reflecting on your imagined scenario, please write one to three things you remember from the script.

Intermediate Questions: Treatment Group Only

1. Thinking about (Mohammad/Habiba or John/Sarah), what do you think you remember the most about him/her? His personal characteristics or ethnic membership? To what extent did you link (Mohammad/Habiba or John/Sarah) with his/her specific personal characteristics (e.g. favorite TV show, personality traits, appearance, etc.) and not his/her ethnic membership? Please rate on a scale of 1 (Not at all) to 9 (Extremely).

2. On a scale of 1 (Extremely negative) to 9 (Extremely positive), please rate how positive the imagined interaction was.

Outcomes of Interest: Outgroup Attitude and Behavior

1. On a scale of 1 (Extremely negative) to 9 (Extremely positive), please rate the following: Evaluation of (Italians/Muslims).
2. Please read each of the items carefully, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give each item the rating that best reflects how central or important that group membership is to your sense of who you are, with 1 being “not at all important to who I am” and 9 being “extremely important to who I am”. Whites; Blacks; Latinos/Latinas; Asians; Men; Women; Christians; Muslims
3. Please read each of the items carefully, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give each item the rating that best reflects how trustworthy members of each group are in general, with 1 being “extremely untrustworthy” and 9 being “extremely trustworthy”. Whites; Blacks; Latinos/Latinas; Asians; Men; Women; Christians; Muslims
4. We’d like to get your feelings toward a number of groups in the United States on a “feeling thermometer.” A rating of 0 degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100 degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the group at 50 degrees if you don’t feel particularly positive or negative toward the group. How do you feel toward... Whites; Blacks; Latinos; Asians; Arabs
5. Please read each of the items carefully, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give each item the rating that best reflects the following statement: “Sometimes I think this country would be better off without so many (GROUP) people” with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 9 being “strongly agree”. Whites; Blacks; Latinos/Latinas; Asians; Men; Women; Christians; Muslims
6. Please read each of the items carefully, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give each item the rating for the following statement “I would NOT want to have (GROUP) families living in my neighborhood.”, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 9 being “strongly agree”. Whites; Blacks; Latinos/Latinas; Asians; Men; Women; Christians; Muslims

7. Please read each of the items carefully, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give each item the rating that best reflects how likely you are to vote for a candidate from the following group, with 1 being “extremely unlikely” and 9 being “extremely likely”. Whites; Blacks; Latinos/Latinas; Asians; Men; Women; Christians; Muslims
8. Thinking about the past Subject Pool assignments you have participated in, have you participated in a similar experiment as this one? Yes, once before; Yes, twice before; No, I never participated in a study like this one.

8.2 Imagined Intergroup Contact: Myanmar Migrants in the US

8.2.1 Imagery Task: Treatment Group

In this section of the survey, you will be asked to read a scenario. Please read the scenario carefully.

“We would like you to take a minute imagining yourself meeting a stranger named (Ko Aung Kyaw/Ma Than Than Aye or Salai Htet Ni/Mai Yadanar Aung) at your local restaurant for the first time. Imagine that during the encounter, the two of you discuss your favorite TV shows, including the general story line, the characters involved, and the network the show is on. Imagine that the interaction is positive, relaxed, and comfortable.” “Now imagine that you go on talking and that you and (Ko Aung Kyaw/Ma Than Than Aye or Salai Htet Ni/Mai Yadanar Aung) express your opinion about maintaining your own values, and religious and cultural traditions, and about the importance that these issues have in your lives. He/she explains that he/she has Burmese/Chin origins and how it is difficult to maintain his traditions and norms living in an ethnically diverse country like United States. You ask questions to each other about the experience and the meaning it has for you.”

8.2.2 Imagery Task: Control Group

“We would like you to take a minute imagining yourself sitting at your local restaurant thinking about your favorite TV show and how intriguing the story line was/is.”

8.2.3 Survey Questionnaire

Pre-Treatment Questions

1. Can you tell me the name of the country in which you were born? Myanmar; United States; Other (please specify)
2. Of which country are you a citizen? Myanmar; United States; Other (please specify)
3. For how long have you continuously lived in United States– that is, for how long have you been living in United States without spending more than one month away? Less than six months; Between six months and one year; More than one year but less than two years; More than two years but less than five years; Five years or more.
4. When was the last time you lived in Myanmar? (Indicate the year you left Myanmar)
5. What were the main reasons that prompted you to leave your home country? Check all that apply. Earn more income; Better quality of life for me and/or my family; For marriage or to reunite with family; To study or go to school; War/civil conflict; Environmental disaster; Persecutions/restrictions on freedom for racial/ethnic, religious, ideological reasons; Persecutions/restrictions on freedom for political reasons; Persecutions/restrictions on freedom due to sexual orientation; Creating new experiences/getting to know another country/sense of adventure; I did not come by choice; Other (please specify)
6. What were the main reasons that prompted you to come to United States? Check all that apply. Earn more income; Better quality of life for me and/or my family; For marriage or to reunite with family; To study or go to school; War/civil conflict; Environmental disaster; Persecutions/restrictions on freedom for racial/ethnic, religious, ideological reasons; Persecutions/restrictions on freedom for political reasons; Persecutions/restrictions on freedom due to sexual orientation; Creating new experiences/getting to know another country/sense of adventure; I did not come by choice; Other (please specify)
7. Thinking about your social network of Burmese friends and family in United States, how many of them are of the same ethnicity? 1-5; 6-10; 11-15; 16-20; 21 or more

8. Thinking about your social network of Burmese friends and family in United States, how many of them are of the different ethnicity? 1-5; 6-10; 11-15; 16-20; 21 or more
9. In the past year, how often did you typically discuss major political issues in your home country with others? Never; Once a year; Once a month; Once a week; Almost every day
10. What ethnic group(s) best describe you? Bamar; Chin; Kachin; Kayin; Kayah; Mon; Rakhine; Shan; Mixed (please specify); Other (please specify)
11. Please read each of the items carefully, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give each item the rating that best reflects how central or important that group membership is to your sense of who you are, with 1 being “not at all important to who I am” and 9 being “extremely important to who I am”. Bamar; Chin; Kachin; Kayin; Kayah; Mon; Rakhine; Shan; Men; Women; Buddhist; Christian; Muslims
12. We’d like to get your feelings toward a number of groups in Myanmar on a “feeling thermometer.” A rating of 0 degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100 degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the group at 50 degrees if you don’t feel particularly positive or negative toward the group. How do you feel toward... Bamar; Chin; Kachin; Kayin; Kayah; Mon; Rakhine; Shan; Men; Women; Buddhist; Christian; Muslims
13. With which gender do you identify? Female; Male
14. In what year were you born?
15. What is the highest education level you have completed? No formal education; some primary school; completed primary school; completed secondary school; pre-university /vocational training; some university; completed university; post-university
16. What is your income level (per month)? Below \$1000; Between \$1000-1999; Between \$2000-2999; Between \$3000-4999; Between \$5000-6999; Between \$7000-8999; \$9000 and more

Manipulation Check

1. Upon reflecting on your imagined scenario, please write one to three things you remember from the script.

Intermediate Questions: Treatment Group Only

1. On a scale of 1 (Extremely negative) to 9 (Extremely positive), please rate how positive the imagined interaction was.

Outcomes of Interest: Outgroup Attitude and Behavior

1. On a scale of 1 (Extremely negative) to 9 (Extremely positive), please rate how positive the imagined interaction with (Ko Aung Kyaw/Ma Than Than Aye or Salai Htet Ni/Mai Yadanar Aung) was.
2. Please read each of the items carefully, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give each item the rating that best reflects how trustworthy members of each group are in general, with 1 being “extremely untrustworthy” and 9 being “extremely trustworthy”. Bamar; Chin; Kachin; Kayin; Kayah; Mon; Rakhine; Shan; Men; Women; Buddhist; Christian; Muslims
3. Please read each of the items carefully, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give each item the rating that best reflects how likely you are to vote for a candidate from the following group, with 1 being “extremely unlikely” and 9 being “extremely likely”. Bamar; Chin; Kachin; Kayin; Kayah; Mon; Rakhine; Shan; Men; Women; Buddhist; Christian; Muslims

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