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Case Report

From self to ingroup reclaiming of homophobic epithets: A replication and extension of Galinsky et al.'s (2013) model of reappropriation[☆]Mauro Bianchi^{a,*}, Andrea Carnaghi^a, Fabio Fasoli^b, Patrice Rusconi^c, Carlo Fantoni^a^a University of Trieste, Italy^b University of Surrey, UK^c University of Messina, Italy

Reports indicate a surge in homophobic speech in Western countries, including homophobic epithets (i.e., HEs) especially concerning men (e.g., 'fag'; Council of Europe, 2021; Rehman, Lopes, & Jaspal, 2020). When used by heterosexual individuals, HEs, likewise the corresponding category labels (e.g., 'gay'), point to specific group members. Differently from category labels, HEs stigmatize gay men and signal their subordinate status (Bianchi, Carnaghi, Piccoli, Stragà, & Zotti, 2019; Carnaghi & Bianchi, 2017; Galinsky et al., 2013; Kurzban & Leary, 2001), and allow heterosexual individuals to psychologically distance themselves from the stigmatized group and reinforce their superior status (Carnaghi & Maass, 2008; Fasoli et al., 2016). According to Social Identity Theory (i.e., SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), HEs play a crucial role in the appraisal of the users' (social) identity. Indeed, SIT assumes that human interactions can vary from interpersonal interactions in which individuals are defined by individualizing attributes, to intergroup relations in which individuals perceive themselves and others as members of distinct groups (i.e., social identity; Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). When the representation of one's self-concept maps onto one's group membership, ingroup members achieve and maintain a positive self-view through positively differentiating the ingroup from the outgroup (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). Accordingly, members of the dominant group may reinforce positive distinctiveness through denigration of the outgroup, which may occur verbally, as in the case of the use of HEs (Carnaghi, Maass, & Fasoli, 2011), which likely leads gay men to internalize ingroup stigmatization (Bianchi, Piccoli, Zotti, Fasoli, & Carnaghi, 2017; Swim, Pearson, & Johnston, 2007) and impoverish their well-being (Collier, van Beusekom, Bos, & Sandfort, 2013; Swim, Johnston, & Pearson, 2009). However, gay men may rely on psychological strategies to surmount the harmful implications of stigmatization, such as those implied by HEs, for their social identity (Crocker & Major, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wang, Whitson, Anicich, Kray, &

Galinsky, 2017). *Social creativity* constitutes a group-based strategy which allows minority members (e.g., African-American individuals) to restore positive group differentiation by, for instance, comparing themselves to the dominant group (e.g., European-American individuals) on dimensions that advantage their ingroup (e.g., athletic characteristics). Social creativity might also take the form of a reappraisal of those ingroup attributes that are deemed negative by society. For instance, the dominant majority has long considered gay sexuality to be shameful (Hajek & Giles, 2002) but gay people have creatively transformed the negative view of their sexuality by proudly celebrating and reclaiming it (e.g., Pride parade). The current research elaborates on this form of the revaluing process as the key feature of gay men's reappropriation of stigmatizing HEs.

The connotative meaning of labels referring to social groups, including HEs as a specific form of derogatory labels, are contextually embedded and malleable. Thus, by stripping the use of HEs from the dominant group, the minority provokes a shift in the connotative meaning of HEs (Croom, 2014; Galinsky, Hugenberg, Groom, & Bodenhausen, 2003). By using HEs in a self-referential way, gay men deprive the dominant group of the linguistic devices that previously granted them superiority. Given that power is defined as control over valuable resources (Magee & Galinsky, 2008), *self-labeling* is "a form of power because it contests who can use the term" (Galinsky et al., 2013, p. 2021). By turning the connotative meaning of HEs, the reappropriation via *self-labeling*, as opposed to *outgroup-labeling* (i.e., outgroup members addressing ingroup individuals with HEs), entails two significant outcomes: Enhanced perceptions of self-power, that involve feelings of agency and control over the use of HEs, and reduced perceived negativity of HEs. Importantly, and as theorized by Galinsky et al. (2013), considering the close connection between power and perception of admiration and respect, inferences of individual [and also group] power

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can mitigate the negativity and stigmatization associated with the label. State differently, *self*-labeling would successfully reframe the negativity of HEs because using these labels in a self-referential [and intra-group] manner enhances the user's sense of control and agency (i.e., self-power). Empirical evidence shows that self-power effectively mediated the relationship between *self*-labeling and the reduced negativity of HEs (Galinsky et al., 2013, Experiment 7).

Although this evidence supports the idea of reappropriation as an individual process, namely *self*-labeling, reappropriation is established at the collective level only when derogatory labels in general, as well as HEs in particular, are also used by ingroup members to refer to each other (i.e., *ingroup*-labeling; Bianchi, 2014; Galinsky et al., 2003). Despite this claim, no empirical evidence has shown that compared to *outgroup*-labeling, *ingroup*-labeling, similar to *self*-labeling, leads ingroup members to feel more self-power and the labels to be reframed. We posit that to establish the reappropriation of HEs at the group level, a connotative shift of HEs should occur in *ingroup*-labeling similar to that in *self*-labeling. If this does not occur, *ingroup*-labeling could have a similar negative outcome as *outgroup*-labeling, fueling stigmatization.

The possibility that the connotative meaning related to derogatory language can be altered by contextual factors in general, and by the social identity of the user in particular, has been questioned (Dines, 2010; Hedger, 2012, 2013; Kapur, 2012). As derogatory labels (e.g., HEs) convey negative affects/attitudes toward their targets, such expressive function likely persists across contexts (Hedger, 2012, 2013). Derogatory labels (e.g., 'slut') are not only a product of the majority linguistic culture, but their discriminant meaning is also strongly entrenched with (gender) discrimination at the societal level (Dines, 2010; Kapur, 2012; Kleinman, Ezzell, & Frost, 2009). Therefore, derogatory labels are not likely to be reclaimed through *ingroup*-labeling, as their meaning is strongly encapsulated in the structural power asymmetries between groups. Language to be reclaimed needs to be preceded by a dramatic change in the intergroup context as, for example, when the intergroup hierarchy is challenged by minorities' collective actions (Gaucher, Hunt, & Sinclair, 2015).

Alternatively, the connotative meaning of HEs is highly sensitive to the context in which its use is embedded (Croom, 2014; Galinsky et al., 2003). Like *self*-labelling, *ingroup*-labeling can be an effective contextual cue to reframe the connotative meaning of HEs from stigmatizing to empowering language. Anecdotal, sexual – but also racial – minorities have used at the intra-group level previously imposed detrimental symbols (e.g., pink triangle) and language (e.g., queer) to define their community and its members (see, Galinsky et al., 2003, p. 233; for racial minorities see Rahman, 2012). By increasing the number of gay men who use HEs in an intra-group way, the collective use of such HEs not only deprives the majority group of a linguistic weapon but also lessens the opportunity for dominant members to use HEs to stigmatize the minority and reinforce their superiority. Indeed, ingroup observers judged ingroup fellows using HEs (but also sexist, racial slurs) as less offensive than outgroup members who used HEs (Croom, 2014; Fasoli, Carnaghi, & Paladino, 2015; Haslam, Loughnan, & Sun, 2011). Thus, the use of HEs at the intra-group level, at least regarding the ingroup observer, appears to be effective in changing the HEs' connotative meaning and likely to revalue HEs in a positive fashion. Such a significant outcome of the intra-group use of HEs affects the ingroup bystanders, thus opening up the possibility that even an ingroup member who is the target of HEs (i.e., *ingroup*-labeling) might feel self-power and revalue HEs positively. To our knowledge, no experiment has tested such claims thus far. However, qualitative studies (Kolker, Taylor and Galupo, 2020) suggest that sexual minorities report using the term "queer" among themselves in a reclaimed fashion to effectively communicate their identity within their ingroup. Racial minorities' reappropriation of racial jokes and slurs to humorously refer to ingroup members leads to intra-group solidarity and increases feelings of empowerment (Boskin & Dorinson, 1985; Juni & Katz, 2001; Nezlek & Derks, 2001). Hence, based on this indirect evidence, it seems plausible

that similar to *self*-labeling, *ingroup*-labeling, compared to *outgroup*-labeling, would reframe the connotative meaning of HEs by affirming self-consciously and in an assertive manner one's identity or by ironically subverting the sense of HEs. This would increase the self-power of the ingroup member who is the target of HEs, which then would account for the HEs to be reevaluated as less offensive when used in an intra-group fashion.

1. Overview

In a between- and a within-participants study, we examined the appraisal of HEs and self-power perception depending on the *self*-, *ingroup*-, and *outgroup*-labeling conditions.

First, based on Galinsky et al. (2013), we expected the negativity of the label to be lower (Hypothesis 1) and the perception of self-power to be higher (Hypothesis 2) in *self*- compared to *outgroup*-labeling. The relationship between *self*-labeling (vs. *outgroup*-labeling) and valence of the label should be mediated by self-power (Hypothesis 3).

Second, two alternative hypotheses were advanced concerning *ingroup*-labeling. If *ingroup*-labeling works as *self*-labeling, we expected the negativity of the label to be lower (Hypothesis 4a) and the self-power to be higher (Hypothesis 5a) in *ingroup*- than in *outgroup*-labeling. We would test the mediation of the relationship between *ingroup*-labeling (vs. *outgroup*-labeling) and the valence of the label through self-power perceptions (Hypothesis 6a). Alternatively, we could expect the negativity of the label to be lower (Hypothesis 4b) and self-power to be higher (Hypothesis 5b) in the *self*-labeling condition than in both *ingroup*-labeling and *outgroup*-labeling conditions, with no difference between the last two conditions. We would test the mediation of the relationship between *self*-labeling (vs. *ingroup*- & *outgroup*-labeling) and the valence of the label through self-power perceptions (Hypothesis 6b).¹

In line with the reappropriation model proposed by Galinsky et al. (2003, 2013), the current studies investigated whether perception of self-power is a possible mediator of the relationship between labeling and the valence of the label.

We report all measures, manipulations, and exclusions in both studies (see Procedure and Materials). An explanation of how sample size was determined is detailed in the Participants sections. Data analyses were performed when data collections were complete.

2. Study 1

2.1. Participants

Three hundred and eight individuals accessed the study posted on social media in Portugal and on Prolific (rewarded £1 each) in the UK. We excluded 150 participants because they did not meet the following criteria: Identifying as non-heterosexual men, having experienced an instance of *self*-, *ingroup*-, or *outgroup*-labeling or following the recall task instructions correctly (see Supplementary Materials). The final sample consisted of 158 males ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.73$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.15$; range: 18–71). See Table 1.

The sample size of this study is in line with the sample size of

¹ Strongly related to the idea that *ingroup*-labeling works as *self*-labeling, we also hypothesized that *ingroup*-labeling was an effective strategy of reclaiming but to a lesser extent than *self*-labeling, that is, compared to *outgroup*-labeling, it would lead to both a more positive evaluation of the homophobic epithets and a stronger self-power, but the pattern of results would at the same time show the negativity of the label to be the lowest in the *self*-labeling condition, the highest in the *outgroup*-labeling condition, and moderate in the *ingroup*-labeling condition, and the perception of self-power to be highest in the *self*-labeling condition, lowest in the *outgroup*-labeling, and moderate in the *ingroup*-labeling condition. Such a pattern of results was not confirmed, and is not further discussed in the text.

Table 1
Demographic data in Study 1.

	UK Sample (n = 70)	PT Sample (n = 88)
Sexual Orientation		
Gay or Exclusively Gay	70 (100%)	78 (88.6%)
Predominantly gay	–	10 (11.4%)
Nationality		
UK	30 (42.9%)	–
US	26 (37.1)	–
Canadian	7 (10%)	–
Australian	2 (2.9%)	–
Portuguese	–	83 (94.3%)
Brazilian	–	3 (3.4%)
Other	5 (7.1%)	2 (2.3)
First Language		
English	68 (97.1%)	–
Portuguese	–	85 (96.6%)
Other	2 (2.9%)	3 (3.4%)

Galinsky et al.'s studies (2013, Experiments 3 and 7) involving an average of $N = 73.5$ participants in an experimental design with two between-groups conditions. Since our study relies on three (between-groups) conditions, the achieved N is proportionate to the N achieved in Galinsky et al.' (2013) studies and with their medium effect sizes (between $d = 0.52$ and $d = 0.65$). A sensitivity power analysis ($\alpha = 0.05$, $1 - \beta = 0.80$, $N = 158$) suggested that our sample size had enough power to detect an almost medium effect size (Cohen's $f = 0.25$) in a between-groups design with 3 groups (Cohen, 1988).

2.2. Procedure

As in Galinsky et al. (2013, Experiments 3 and 7), participants were asked to “think of a social group (i.e., gay men) that you belong to, identify with, and that people have described using a negative label” and to list “all the negative labels and slurs typically used against gay men” after which they were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: *self*- vs. *ingroup*- vs. *outgroup*-labeling. Next, participants rated their own perceived power and the perceived valence of the label in the recalled situation. Finally, participants indicated their demographic data before being thanked and debriefed.²

2.3. Materials

2.3.1. Manipulation

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions in which they were asked to recall a time: a) when they referred to themselves using one of the HEs (*self*-labeling), b) when one of the HEs was directed at them by a gay man (*ingroup*-labeling), or c) when one of the HEs was directed at them by a heterosexual man (*outgroup*-labeling).³ Participants who had never experienced *self*-, *ingroup*-, or *outgroup*-labeling could choose to describe an imaginary situation (see Supplementary Materials).

² Participants in the UK also completed the outness scale (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Due to a material error, this measure was presented to participants in the UK only. Hence, it was not analyzed further.

³ We chose to keep the gender constant while varying the sexual orientation of the outgroup. Moreover, heterosexual men, compared to heterosexual women, have been found to discriminate against gay men to a greater extent (Falomir-Pichastor & Mugny, 2009; Vieira de Figueredo & Pereira, 2021), hence, we relied on this group as the most common and familiar outgroup for gay men. Still, we acknowledge that other outgroups might be relevant for gay men (e.g., heterosexual women). We thank an anonymous Reviewer for this point.

2.3.2. Measures

Three items assessed perceived self-power (How much influence/How [powerful/ in control] did you feel in the situation?”, from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*; $\alpha = 0.89$; Galinsky et al., 2013). We averaged the items of the scale so that higher scores indicated higher perceived self-power.

The perceived valence of the label was assessed by asking participants to rate both how negative and positive the label was (i.e., “How negative/positive did you feel the label was?”, from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*). Following Galinsky et al. (2013), we reversed the rating of the positive item and subsequently averaged the ratings such that higher ratings on the combined scale reflected greater negativity ($r = 0.67$; $\alpha = 0.80$). Correlations between measures by condition are presented in Table 2.

All the variables and conditions that were part of the study are described in the Procedure and Materials sections.

2.4. Results

ANOVAs, with labeling (*self* vs. *ingroup* vs. *outgroup*) as between-participants factor, were performed on each dependent variable.⁴

2.4.1. Perceived label valence

A significant effect of labeling was found, $F(2, 155) = 34.43$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.31$. Pairwise comparisons (Bonferroni correction) showed that participants perceived the label as less negative in the *self*- ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.92$) than in the *outgroup*-labeling condition ($M = 6.25$, $SD = 1.16$), $t(155) = -6.29$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.19$, and as less negative in the *ingroup*- ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.92$) than in the *outgroup*-labeling condition, $t(155) = -7.35$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.45$. No difference emerged between the *self*- and *ingroup*-labeling conditions, $t(155) = 1.17$, $p = .736$, Cohen's $d = 0.25$.

2.4.2. Perceived self-power

A significant effect of labeling was found, $F(2, 155) = 23.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.24$. Pairwise comparisons (Bonferroni correction) showed that participants perceived higher self-power in the *self*- ($M = 5.19$, SD

Table 2
Correlations between Measures as a function of Labeling Condition in Study 1.

Measures		Labeling		
		<i>Self</i>	<i>Ingroup</i>	<i>Outgroup</i>
Valence	Pearson's r	Self-Power -0.304	Self-Power -0.588	Self-Power -0.464
	p	0.042	<0.001	<0.001

⁴ Given the similarity in the method used in the responses collected in Portugal and the UK, we conducted a cross-experimental analysis on both dependent variables. This analysis allowed us to take into account the sample countries in the analysis while assessing the impact of labeling on the dependent variables (for a similar approach see Bianchi et al., 2019; Cherubini, Rusconi, Russo, & Crippa, 2013; Shamloo, Carnaghi, Piccoli, Grassi, & Bianchi, 2018). A 2 (country: Portugal vs. the UK) X 3 (labeling: *self* vs. *ingroup* vs. *outgroup*) ANOVA, with both factors as between-group factors, was performed on participants' perceived valence of the label. No significant effects of country, $F(1, 152) = 0.53$, $p = .466$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$, or the interaction between country and labeling, $F(2, 152) = 0.93$, $p = .396$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.012$, were found. Also, a 2 (country: Portugal vs. the UK) X 3 (labeling: *self* vs. *ingroup* vs. *outgroup*) ANOVA, with both factors as between-group factors, was performed on participants' perceived self-power. No significant effects of country, $F(1, 152) = 0.22$, $p = .641$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$, or the interaction between country and labeling, $F(2, 152) = 2.164$, $p = .118$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$, were found. Hence, data analysis was performed on the overall sample.

= 1.69) than in the *outgroup*-labeling condition ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.83$), $t(155) = 6.79$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.28$, and in the *ingroup*- ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.77$) than in the *outgroup*-labeling condition, $t(155) = 3.79$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.75$. Moreover, participants perceived higher self-power in the *self*- than in the *ingroup*-labeling condition, $t(155) = 2.27$, $p = .044$, Cohen's $d = 0.53$.

2.4.3. Mediation analysis

A mediation analysis was performed based on structural equation modeling without latent variables using the R package *lavaan* framework, version 0.6.15 (R Core Team, 2019; Rosseel, 2012), with Maximum Likelihood parameters' estimation and NLMINB optimizer. We included two dummy factors as the predicting variables, one referring to the effect of *self*- vs. *outgroup*-labeling ($D_{\text{outgroup-self}}$, with *outgroup* = 0 and *self* = 1), and the other the effect of *ingroup*- vs. *outgroup*-labeling ($D_{\text{outgroup-ingroup}}$, with *outgroup* = 0 and *ingroup* = 1). The outcome variable was the perceived valence of the label and the mediator variable was perceived self-power. Both $D_{\text{outgroup-self}}$ and $D_{\text{outgroup-ingroup}}$ were positively associated with perceived self-power: *Self*-labeling yielded higher perceived self-power relative to *outgroup*-labeling (a_1 path: $B = 2.25$, $SE = 0.33$, $p < .001$); *ingroup*-labeling yielded higher perceived self-power relative to *outgroup*-labeling (a_2 path: $B = 1.47$, $SE = 0.34$, $p < .001$). Moreover, perceived self-power was negatively associated with the perceived valence of the label (b path: $B = -0.39$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < .001$). The direct effect of both $D_{\text{outgroup-self}}$ and $D_{\text{outgroup-ingroup}}$ on perceived valence of the label were significant (c'_1 path: $B = -1.00$, $SE = 0.31$, $p = .001$; c'_2 path: $B = -1.89$, $SE = 0.30$, $p < .001$). Both indirect effects of $D_{\text{outgroup-self}}$ and $D_{\text{outgroup-ingroup}}$ on perceived valence of the label through perceived self-power were statistically significant (a_1b path: $B = -0.88$, $SE = 0.20$, $p < .001$; a_2b path: $B = -0.58$, $SE = 0.17$, $p < .001$). Hence, self-power significantly mediated both the effect of $D_{\text{outgroup-self}}$ (mediation prop. = 0.47, $SE = 0.11$, $Z\text{-Wald} = 4.30$, $p < .01$, relative to a total effect c_1 path: $B = -1.88$, $SE = 0.30$, $p < .001$) and that of $D_{\text{outgroup-ingroup}}$ (mediation prop. = 0.23, $SE = 0.06$, $Z\text{-Wald} = 3.72$, $p < .001$, relative to a total effect c_2 path: $B = -2.47$, $SE = 0.31$, $p < .001$) on valence.

2.5. Discussion

Study 1 fully replicated the findings reported by Galinsky et al. (2013): HEs were appraised as less negative (Hypothesis 1) and self-power was enhanced (Hypothesis 2) in the *self*- than in the *outgroup*-labeling condition. Also, the diminished negativity of HEs was mediated through enhanced self-power in the *self*- compared to the *outgroup*-labeling condition (Hypothesis 3). Results further suggest that *ingroup*-labeling successfully led to reappropriation, as it cannot be assimilated to *outgroup*-labeling. Self-power was higher and the label negative valence was lower in the *ingroup*- compared to the *outgroup*-labeling condition (Hypotheses 4a and 5a). The relationship between *ingroup*-labeling (vs. *outgroup*-labeling) and the label valence was mediated through perceptions of self-power (Hypothesis 6a), similar to *self*-labeling.

While we found no difference with the valence of the label between the *self*- and the *ingroup*-labeling conditions, a significant difference emerged in perceived self-power, showing that gay men who remembered an instance of *self*- vs. *ingroup*-labeling reported more self-power. These results are consistent with findings showing people feel and are perceived to have more power in interpersonal settings when they choose action over inaction (Magee, 2009; Smith & Magee, 2015).

This first effort had its shortcomings. The statistical power of Study 1 might be relatively low for detecting potential differences between *self*- and *ingroup*-labeling. Moreover, fewer participants reported actual experiences of *self*- or *ingroup*-labeling in comparison to *outgroup*-labeling, making the samples in the three conditions slightly unbalanced. In Study 2, we overcame these limitations by using a within-participants design and a sufficiently powered sample to detect a small effect size.

3. Study 2

3.1. Participants

Three hundred and forty individuals accessed the study on Prolific (rewarded £1.50 each). Two hundred and thirty-five participants who did not experience an instance of *self*-, *ingroup*- or *outgroup*-labeling were redirected to the end of the questionnaire, leaving a sample of 105 participants who completed the study. Of these, 6 were excluded because they did not identify as gay men (see Supplementary Materials). Hence, the final sample was composed of 99 gay men ($M_{\text{age}} = 36.78$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.58$, range: 20–80), with English as their first language. Most were British (43, 43%) or American (43, 43%).

A sensitivity power analysis ($\alpha = 0.05$, $1 - \beta = 0.80$, $N = 99$) suggested our sample size had enough power to detect a small effect size (Cohen's $f = 0.13$) in a within-participants design with 3 repeated measures (Cohen, 1988).

3.2. Procedure and materials

Study 2 used the same procedure and materials as Study 1, but all the labeling conditions were randomly presented to each participant. We averaged the items of perceived self-power ($\alpha > 0.86$) and the perceived valence of the label ($r_s \geq 0.654$; $\alpha_s > 0.77$). See Table 3 for correlations between measures.

3.3. Results

Repeated-measure ANOVAs, with labeling (*self* vs. *ingroup* vs. *outgroup*) as within-participants factor, were performed on each dependent variable.

3.3.1. Perceived label valence

A significant effect of labeling, $F(2, 196) = 91.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.48$, was found. Pairwise comparisons (Bonferroni correction) showed that the label was perceived as less negative in the *self*- ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.78$) than in the *outgroup*-labeling condition ($M = 6.30$, $SD = 1.12$), $t(98) = -11.99$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.83$, and in the *ingroup*- ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.84$) than in the *outgroup*-labeling condition, $t(98) = -10.84$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.48$. No difference emerged between the *self*- and *ingroup*-labeling conditions, $t(98) = -2.15$, $p = .101$, Cohen's $d = 0.25$.

3.3.2. Perceived self-power

A significant main effect of labeling emerged $F(2, 196) = 120.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.55$. Pairwise comparisons (Bonferroni correction) showed that participants perceived higher self-power in the *self*- ($M = 5.55$, $SD = 1.37$) than in the *outgroup*-labeling condition ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.58$), $t(98) = 15.36$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 2.09$, and in the *ingroup*- ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.76$) than in the *outgroup*-labeling condition, $t(98) = 8.94$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.07$. Participants perceived higher self-power in the *self*- than in the *ingroup*-labeling condition, $t(98) = 6.57$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.82$.

3.3.3. Mediation analysis

The same analysis was performed as in Study 1 with the exception that we treated each participant as a cluster to control for the variance of our repeated measure design. Results showed that both *self*-labeling (a_1 path: $B = 3.09$, $SE = 0.20$, $p < .001$) and *ingroup*-labeling (a_2 path: $B = 1.79$, $SE = 0.20$, $p < .001$) yielded higher perceived self-power relative to *outgroup*-labeling. Perceived self-power was negatively associated with the perceived valence of the label (b path: $B = -0.58$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .001$). The direct effect of both $D_{\text{outgroup-self}}$ and $D_{\text{outgroup-ingroup}}$ on the perceived valence of the label were significant (c'_1 path: $B = -0.94$, $SE = 0.25$, $p < .001$; c'_2 path: $B = -1.23$, $SE = 0.20$, $p < .001$). Both indirect effects of $D_{\text{outgroup-self}}$ and $D_{\text{outgroup-ingroup}}$ on the perceived valence of the

Table 3
Correlations between Repeated Measures in Study 2.

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Valence _{self-labeling}	Pearson's <i>r</i>	–					
	<i>p</i>						
2. Valence _{ingroup-labeling}	Pearson's <i>r</i>	0.329	–				
	<i>p</i>	<0.001					
3. Valence _{outgroup-labeling}	Pearson's <i>r</i>	–0.161	0.084	–			
	<i>p</i>	0.111	0.411				
4. Self-Power _{self-labeling}	Pearson's <i>r</i>	–0.538	–0.098	0.143	–		
	<i>p</i>	<0.001	0.333	0.159			
5. Self-Power _{ingroup-labeling}	Pearson's <i>r</i>	–0.184	–0.659	–0.140	0.224	–	
	<i>p</i>	0.068	<0.001	0.165	0.026		
6. Self-Power _{outgroup-labeling}	Pearson's <i>r</i>	0.083	–0.054	–0.475	0.081	0.289	–
	<i>p</i>	0.415	0.594	<0.001	0.425	0.004	

label through perceived self-power were statistically significant (a_1b path: $B = -1.78, SE = 0.22, p < .001$; a_2b path: $B = -1.03, SE = 0.16, p < .001$). These results indicated that self-power significantly mediated both the effect of $D_{outgroup-self}$ (mediation prop. = 0.66, $SE = 0.08, Z-Wald = 8.47, p < .001$, relative to a total effect c_1 path: $B = -2.72, SE = 0.23, p < .001$) and $D_{outgroup-ingroup}$ (mediation prop. = 0.46, $SE = 0.06, Z-Wald = 7.13, p < .001$, relative to a total effect c_2 path: $B = -2.26, SE = 0.21, p < .001$) on valence.

3.4. Discussion

Study 2 replicated the pattern of results of Study 1. *Self-* vs. *outgroup-* labeling lowered the negativity of the label (Hypothesis 1) and enhanced self-power (Hypothesis 2). Additionally, the enhanced self-power in the *self-* labeling (vs. *outgroup-* labeling) condition mediated the decrease in the label's negativity (Hypothesis 3). Moreover, we found that *ingroup* vs. *outgroup-* labeling lowered the negativity of the label (Hypothesis 4a) and enhanced self-power (Hypothesis 5a). The reduced negativity of the label was mediated by enhanced self-power in the *ingroup-* over *outgroup-* labeling condition (Hypothesis 6a). As in Study 1, participants reported less self-power in the *ingroup-* than the *self-* labeling condition.

4. Exploratory analysis⁵

Reclaiming language can provoke a shift in the connotative meaning of HEs. Indeed, reclaimed language can convey, among other things, humor/irony, and a self-aware sense of reappropriation. Accordingly, participants' descriptions in the two studies were coded as followed. The lead author, fluent in both English and in Portuguese, classified the descriptions along three different clusters, not mutually exclusive, indicating: a) whether or not people used the label(s) as humor/ironically/in contexts of fun or defined the labels as a joke or a synonym (category "Joke"), b) whether or not people used the label(s) consciously or explicitly as reappropriation or used them frequently to define themselves or others in their community (category "Reappropriation"), and c) whether or not people used the label(s) as an insult/ offense, a form of stigmatization/discrimination, or an attack (category "Blatant Stigmatization"). Two independent judges, both fluent in English and one familiar with Portuguese, unaware of the conditions, classified the descriptions using the three clusters. Cohen's Kappas were calculated between the classifications of the lead author and those issued by the judges for each cluster in Study 1 (Cohen's Kappas: Joke = 0.96, $p < .001$; Reappropriation = 0.91, $p < .001$; Blatant Stigmatization = 0.85, $p < .001$) and Study 2 (Cohen's Kappas: Joke = 0.66, $p < .001$; Reappropriation = 0.69, $p < .001$; Blatant Stigmatization = 0.82, $p < .001$). Discrepancies were solved through discussion.

In Study 1, Chi-square tests showed the descriptions classified as

⁵ Ancillary analysis are reported but were not preregistered as they were prompted by an anonymous Reviewer's suggestion and also applied to Study 1.

Joke ($\chi^2(2) = 22.51, p < .001$), Reappropriation ($\chi^2(2) = 89.63, p < .001$), and Blatant Stigmatization ($\chi^2(2) = 70.94, p < .001$) were unequally distributed across the three conditions. In a similar vein, in Study 2, related-sample Cochran's Q tests showed that descriptions classified as Joke ($Q(2) = 41.79, p < .001$), Reappropriation ($Q(2) = 90.17, p < .001$), and Blatant Stigmatization ($Q(2) = 119.07, p < .001$) were unequally distributed across conditions. Z-tests and pairwise comparison (Bonferroni adjusted) showed a similar pattern in both studies. Joke and Reappropriation were more frequently reported in the *self-* and *ingroup-* than in the *outgroup-* labeling condition, while Blatant stigmatization was more frequently reported in the *outgroup-* than the *self-* and the *ingroup-* labeling conditions. No differences occurred between *self-* and *ingroup-* labeling conditions (see Table 4 and Table 5).

5. General discussion

This is the first attempt to compare the effects of *self-*, *ingroup-*, and *outgroup-* labeling with HEs on perceived self-power and perceived valence of HEs in samples of gay men. Results corroborate Galinsky et al. (2013) findings concerning the early phase of reappropriation, namely, that *self-* labeling works as an individual situation-specific coping strategy that can dilute the negativity of a label via feelings of self-power.

Table 4
Study 1. Frequencies of "Joke", "Reappropriation" and "Blatant Stigmatization" by Labeling conditions (between-subject).

Categories		Labeling			Total
		Self	Ingroup	Outgroup	
Joke	Count	16 _a	10 _a	2 _b	130
	yes	% 35.6	25.0	2.7	17.7
	Count	29 _a	30 _a	71 _b	28
	no	% 64.4	75.0	97.3	82.3
Reappropriation	Count	45	40	73	158
	yes	% 100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Count	36 _a	26 _a	0 _b	62
	yes	% 80.0	65.0	0.0	39.2
Blatant Stigmatization	Count	9 _a	14 _a	73 _b	96
	no	% 20.0	35.0	100.0	60.8
	Count	45	40	73	158
	Total	% 100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Blatant Stigmatization	Count	5 _a	11 _a	62 _b	78
	yes	% 11.1	27.5	84.9	49.4
	Count	40 _a	29 _a	11 _b	80
	no	% 88.9	72.5	15.1	50.6
Total	Count	45	40	73	158
	%	100	100	100	100

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of condition categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level (Bonferroni adjusted).

Table 5
Study 2. Frequencies of “Joke”, “Reappropriation” and “Blatant Stigmatization” by Labeling conditions (within-subject).

Categories		Labeling		
		Self	Ingroup	Outgroup
<i>Joke</i>				
yes	Count	38 _a	39 _a	4 _b
	%	38.4	39.4	4.0
no	Count	61 _a	61 _a	95 _b
	%	61.6	60.4	96
Total	Count	99	99	99
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Reappropriation</i>				
yes	Count	67 _a	54 _a	0 _b
	%	67.7	54.5	0.0
no	Count	32 _a	45 _a	99 _b
	%	32.3	45.5	100.0
Total	Count	99	99	99
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Blatant Stigmatization</i>				
yes	Count	12 _a	25 _a	90 _b
	%	12.1	25.3	90.9
no	Count	87 _a	74 _a	9 _b
	%	87.9	74.7	9.1
Total	Count	99	99	99
	%	100	100	100

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of condition categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level (Bonferroni adjusted).

Importantly, our findings suggest a subsequent and significant phase of reappropriation involving a collective level: When ingroup members refer to each other using derogatory terms. Results suggest that HES reappropriation at the collective level mimics processes occurring at the individual level: Ingroup use of HES leads ingroup members to feel more self-power and reevaluate HES in a less negative fashion.

The similarity of results between *self*- and *ingroup*-labeling vs. *outgroup*-labeling might be interpreted as an act of social creativity in line with SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Indeed, the use of HES leads to dramatically different outcomes depending on their intra-group over inter-group use. When used in an intra-group fashion, that is, by a fellow gay man, *ingroup*-labeling is similar to *self*-labeling. Differently, when used in an inter-group fashion, that is, when HES are used by a heterosexual individual, these labels stress inter-group hierarchy and communicate the subordinate status of the minority group (Carnaghi et al., 2011; Cervone, Augoustinos, & Maass, 2021). Thus, the same labels are empowering tools and lead to reclaiming when used either in an intra-individual or intra-group manner, but they become disempowering and disparaging when used in an inter-group manner.

In line with the idea that in *self*- and *ingroup*-labeling a social creativity process is at work to revalue HES, we registered a shift in the connotative meaning of derogatory language when such language is reclaimed (Croom, 2014; Galinsky et al., 2003). Indeed, results of the exploratory analyses suggest a similar change in connotative meaning when HES are used self-referentially or by another gay man in comparison to when they are used by a heterosexual man. Specifically, in the *self*- and *ingroup*-labeling condition, participants reported more instances of jokes/irony and conscious reappropriation in comparison with the *outgroup*-labeling condition, in which participants reported more instances of blatant stigmatization. These results complement previous research showing that observers perceived the use of derogatory labels (i.e., racial and sexist slurs) to be less offensive in an intra-group than inter-group setting and with research that shows how racial humor used in an intra-group fashion can be an act of reappropriation and can lead to feelings of empowerment (Boskin & Dorinson, 1985; Fasoli et al., 2015; Juni & Katz, 2001; Nezelek & Derks, 2001; O’Dea et al., 2015).

Although our results pinpoint the similarity of processes between

self- vs. *outgroup*-labeling and *ingroup*- vs. *outgroup*-labeling, we acknowledge a difference between *self*- and *ingroup*-labeling that does not alter the interpretation of our results. In both studies, participants reported higher levels of perceived self-power in the *self*- vs. the *ingroup*-labeling condition. These results are in line with the idea that power is felt and perceived more when people “act” (e.g., I label myself) vs. when people do not act (e.g., I am being labeled), that is, the involvement of the self is higher in one condition than in the other (Magee, 2009).

Our studies also complement recent work exploring the idea of a collective decision to self-label by minority members (Galinsky et al., 2013; Whitson, Anicich, Wang, & Galinsky, 2017) and speak for the subsequent collective phase of reappropriation. Ingroup identification increases the likelihood of *self*-labeling and group members who use derogatory terms self-referentially feel and are perceived to be more identified with their ingroup (Whitson et al., 2017). These results suggest that *self*-labeling is not only an intra-individual process but can also be framed as an intra-group process that, together with *ingroup*-labeling, contributes to the collective reappropriation of derogatory terms. However, and particularly for self-power, we found that the effects of *ingroup*-labeling, although different from *outgroup*-labeling, fell between those of *outgroup*-labeling and *self*-labeling. We are confident in our interpretation that *ingroup*-labeling leads to more positive outcome than *outgroup*-labeling, but we maintain caution in saying that it is identical to *self*-labeling. Future studies may test whether, like *self*-labeling, *ingroup*-labeling may be moderated and specifically bolstered by ingroup identification and, in turn, increase a sense of group cohesion.

This research has limitations. First, *ingroup*-labeling is not limited to that considered in these studies. Indeed, a gay man could both be labeled by an ingroup member and also label a fellow ingroup member using the same HE. Future studies may consider both situations to provide more evidence of ingroup collective reclaiming (for a similar approach see O’Dea et al., 2015; O’Dea & Saucier, 2020).

Second, in our studies we only considered samples of gay men, thus limiting our investigation to a specific group and specific types of derogatory labels. Derogatory labels have been reclaimed by some minority groups but not by others (Coles, 2016; Croom, 2015; O’Dea & Saucier, 2020), and, within the same minorities, some labels have been reclaimed while others are still appraised as disparaging (Belleri, 2020; Coles, 2016). Addressing this variability would help us refine our understanding of the reappropriation process at the intra-group level and boost the external validity of the current results.

Also, some authors question that reappropriation can actually occur and suggest that this process might be particularly difficult depending on the cultural context (Dines, 2010; Kapur, 2012). It is worth noting that, although HES are all products of the dominant heteronormative culture, some HES have been reclaimed while others appear to be more resistant to such a process. Moreover, in particular cultural contexts, where systemic and societal oppression is high, it may be harder to reclaim any HES without first challenging the inter-group asymmetries in terms of power and status (Galinsky et al., 2013). Future studies may test this conjecture by replicating the current experiments but comparing the outcome in countries with different levels of both heteronormativity and equality (see ILGA-Europe, 2023).

Finally, based on Galinsky et al. (2013) model of reappropriation, in these studies we tested a specific mediational model, that is, self-power as a possible mediator between labeling and perception of the valence of the label. Even if this mediation model seemed theoretically plausible and is supported by our findings, other models are also possible and should be considered in future studies. Experimental research could gain a better understanding of the (bi)directional relationship between self-power and valence of HES in the reclaiming process, thus, verifying whether the reduced negativity of HES might also contribute to increased feelings of self-power.

A fully successful reappropriation occurs when the positive reevaluation of derogatory labels by minority members further extends to outgroup members whose use of those labels is no longer disparaging.

Having addressed a central component of collective intra-group reappropriation, this research paves the way for an empirical test of the inter-group level of reappropriation.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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We thank Sara Paolini for helping us in collecting the data in Portugal.

The plan for Study 2 was preregistered and is anonymously available on the OSF website: https://osf.io/mqcvp/?view_only=e32502ce09634975bbd209c465e4b181.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2023.104583>.

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