

## **We are one and I like it: The impact of ingroup entitativity on ingroup identification**

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### *Abstract*

*It is argued that the entitativity of the ingroup moderates the level of identification with the ingroup. Specifically, that high levels of entitativity are conducive to strong identification, whereas low levels of entitativity reduce identification with the ingroup. These hypotheses were tested across four studies using the European Union (EU) as the reference group. The four studies manipulated four different factors that, according to Campbell (1958), impact on group entitativity: common fate (Study 1), similarity (Study 2), salience (Study 3), and boundedness (Study 4). Across the four studies, we found evidence for the impact of these factors on the level of identification with the EU among European citizens holding moderate attitudes toward the EU but not (or much less) for citizens holding more extreme attitudes towards the EU. Mediation analyses further confirmed the viability of an entitativity-based interpretation of the impact of the manipulations on the level of identification. The findings are discussed in light of the current debate on the concept of entitativity, the motives for social identification, and the reduction of ingroup bias. Copyright © 2003 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

The term *entitativity* was first introduced by Campbell (1958) to refer to ‘the degree of having the nature of an entity, of having real existence’ (Campbell, 1958, p. 17). Building on gestalt principles, he suggested that factors like common fate, similarity, salience, and boundedness increase the degree of perceived entitativity of a group. Over the last decade, the concept of entitativity has been used as a theoretical umbrella for understanding a series of otherwise disparate phenomena in stereotyping, impression formation, and intergroup relations literature. Contemporary research on entitativity has focused on both the antecedents and consequences of group entitativity (for a collection, see Yzerbyt, Judd, & Corneille, in press).

As far as the antecedents are concerned, McGarty, Haslam, Hutchinson, and Grace (1995) predicted and found a negative relation between group variability and perceived entitativity, but not the expected negative relation between group size and entitativity (cf. Mullen, 1991; Simon & Brown, 1987; Simon

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& Hamilton, 1994). In a series of correlational studies, Lickel et al., (2000) also found that the degree of interaction among group members, the presence of common goals among and common outcomes for group members, the similarity of group members, as well as the importance of the group for its members, were all related to the perception of entitativity—operationalized as the extent to which a group was ‘not at all’ versus ‘very much’ a group.

Theoretical work and empirical evidence have also accumulated with respect to the consequences of group entitativity. Hamilton and Sherman (1996) argued that individuals shift from memory-based to on-line impression-formation processing when the entitativity of the target group increases (for empirical evidence, see McConnell, Sherman, & Hamilton, 1994, 1997; Welbourne, 1999). Brewer, Weber, and Carini (1995; Exp. 3) found that perceivers made a greater number of recognition errors among members of minority than majority group members and proposed that the amount of intra-category confusion should be considered a consequence of the perceiver’s tendency to build a more entitative representation of the minority than of the majority (for a review, see Brewer & Harasty, 1996).

Abelson, Dasgupta, Park, and Banaji (1998) reported on yet another consequence of group entitativity. According to these authors, members of entitative groups will not only be perceived as psychologically homogeneous—i.e. as an entity—but they will also be perceived more negatively than members of non-entitative groups (see also Dasgupta, Banaji, & Abelson, 1999; Exp. 2). Recently, Castano, Sacchi, and Gries (2003) also found that entitative outgroups are likely to be perceived as more threatening, but only when they are initially perceived as enemies. In two studies that used different manipulations of entitativity, American participants who varied in their perception of the European Union (EU) as an ally or an enemy were asked to convey their impression about the EU. In line with predictions, an increase of the entitativity of the EU led to an increase in the perceived harmfulness of the EU, but only among participants who initially perceived the EU as an enemy. Given that the reverse was true for participants who perceived the EU as an ally of the United States, the authors concluded that entitativity might have a polarizing effect on group perception.

To the extent that an ally could be seen as part of the ingroup, these results are consistent with the idea that ingroup entitativity might come across as a valuable characteristic of the ingroup. The very reasons for which outgroup entitativity is likely to be bad news (Abelson et al., 1998) may well be exactly the same for which ingroup entitativity is valued. Sherman, Hamilton, and Lewis (1999) proposed that ‘highly entitative groups can involve commitment, permanence, and investment, and these are features that lead us to see the value of our membership in those groups’ (p. 105). Similarly, Yzerbyt, Castano, Leyens, and Paladino (2000) indicated that ‘an entitative ingroup may also be attractive because it gives its members the feeling that whatever goal is pursued it is more likely to be attained’ (p. 286). The value of ingroup entitativity may also derive from the fact that entitative ingroups come across as more real entities than less entitative ones (Campbell, 1958). Some correlational data suggest that entitativity and identification might indeed go hand in hand. Lickel et al. (2000) found a positive correlation between their measure of entitativity and the level of identification with the ingroup. Similar evidence was obtained by Castano, Yzerbyt, Paladino, and Sacchi (2002). These authors merged insights from terror management theory (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and argued that ingroup members would perceive the ingroup as more entitative and identify more with it when they were reminded of the inevitability of their own death. Results from their study yielded support for this conjecture, and evidence for the hypothesis that entitativity and identification are distinct though related concepts.

But does entitativity exert an influence on identification with one’s ingroup? The present contribution aims precisely to provide an empirical test for this hypothesis. Specifically, we argue that an increase in ingroup entitativity should lead to an increase in ingroup identification. Conversely,

a decrease in ingroup entitativity should lead to a decrease in ingroup identification. These hypotheses were tested across four studies in which four different factors assumed to impact on perceived group entitativity were manipulated.

## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES

The concrete group we selected for our studies was the EU. Indeed, being a 'common-identity' group (Prentice, Miller, & Lightdale, 1994; see also Brewer & Gardner, 1996), the EU seemed ideally suited to test our hypothesis. Even a quick inspection of the political situation in Europe reveals that the coherence and the meaningfulness of the EU is continuously being questioned. This question can be said to occupy a central position in the ongoing debate on the development of a European identity (Castano, 2003, in press b; Castano & Tousignant, 1999; Hayward, 1995; Herrmann, Brewer, & Risse, in press; Laffan, 1996; Sindic, Castano, & Reicher, 2001). Last but not least, the selection of this particular group was particularly relevant given the political and social importance of the European integration process.

The main hypothesis, which was tested across a series of four studies, was that identification with the EU would be strengthened under conditions in which the entitativity of the EU is emphasized. In contrast, we expected that the identification with the EU would be weakened when group members were led to think of the EU as being low in entitativity.

Although our manipulations of entitativity were intended to alter people's level of identification with the EU, we did not expect being able to influence all participants unconditionally. Indeed, those individuals holding extreme attitudes toward the EU are likely to have a clearer image of the EU and would therefore be less sensitive to our experimental manipulation. As a result, we expected to change only the views of those participants holding moderate attitudes towards the EU.

It is, in fact, reasonable to assume that for people holding strongly negative or strongly positive attitudes towards the EU, a message presenting the EU as high and low in entitativity, respectively, is likely to fall in the zone of rejection (cf. Sherif & Hovland, 1961).<sup>1</sup> Therefore, no change in their views about the EU should occur. As a result, we should observe virtually no modification in their level of identification. For the opposite reasons, hardly any change in their level of identification is to be expected when the message is pro-attitudinal. In fact, when negative-attitude and positive-attitude groups are presented with a low and high entitative EU, respectively, their views about the EU are simply confirmed. Even in the event that these participants' perception of the EU's entitativity was affected by the experimental manipulation, this would hardly translated into changes in levels of identification, which are likely to be more strongly rooted than for moderate-attitudes participants.

In contrast, people holding moderate attitudes towards the EU should be much more sensitive to our manipulation. Specifically, it should be possible to increase and decrease the level of identification with the EU by respectively increasing and decreasing the perceived entitativity of the EU. Rather than to discard the individuals holding polarized attitudes toward the EU from our analyses, however, we decided to keep the entire sample of participants and categorize them in three different groups on the basis of their attitudes towards the EU.

<sup>1</sup>This rationale is based on the idea that people holding strongly positive and strongly negative attitudes toward the EU perceive the EU as high and low in entitativity, respectively. It is certainly true that in many contexts people holding negative attitudes towards an outgroup may see it as very homogeneous. Holding negative attitudes towards the EU (an ingroup for our participants) is, however, very likely to be associated with a perception of it as a disparate ensemble of nation-state/people. By and large, being against the EU goes hand in hand with the belief that it is not a real entity, whereas being pro-European goes hand in hand with the opposite belief, that the EU has a real existence (Castano & Tousignant, 1999).

In *Study 1*, we confronted participants with an existing video created by the EU. Because the video stressed the common fate of the countries comprising the EU, we expected that it would increase the level of identification with the EU. In *Study 2*, we presented participants with various pieces of information about EU member states and asked them to concentrate either on the similarities or on the difference between the states. Because the former and latter instructions were expected to increase and decrease, respectively, the perception of entitativity of the EU, we hoped to find a corresponding increase or decrease in identification with the EU. *Study 3* varied the context of judgment. Participants learned that the study was carried out either by a European or a non-European university before they reported their level of identification with the EU. Our hypothesis was that, compared with an intragroup context of judgment (i.e. the default context), an intergroup context would increase the salience of the ingroup, leading to an increase of participants' level of identification with the ingroup. Finally, in *Study 4*, we informed participants that the eastern borders of the EU were either established or still undergoing debate in the EU Parliament. We predicted that, compared to a condition in which the group was well-bounded (i.e. the default condition), an ill-bounded group would decrease the degree of identification with the ingroup.

## STUDY 1

Study 1 had two specific goals. The first goal was to investigate the impact of common fate, i.e. a factor leading to the perception of group entitativity (Campbell, 1958), on the level of identification with the group. The second was to examine the differential impact of the entitativity manipulation upon individuals holding different attitudes. We hypothesized that an increase of the perceived entitativity of the group would strengthen the level of identification especially, if not only, among those members holding moderate attitudes toward the group.

### Method

#### *Participants*

Sixty undergraduates at the Catholic University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, volunteered to participate in the study in exchange for experimental credits.

#### *Procedure*

We ran several groups sessions in which participants were first asked to complete a questionnaire that included a measure of their attitudes toward the EU, as well as a three-item scale measuring their identification with the EU. To secure information about our participants' attitudes toward the EU, we provided them with a list of nine words. Three words corresponded to negative feelings (uneasiness, irritation, distrust), three to moderate feelings (disinterest, indifference, detachment), and three to positive feelings (enthusiasm, satisfaction, trust). The instructions requested participants to indicate which three words in the list best represented their feelings toward the EU. They were also asked to rank order the three selected words.

Participants were then asked to answer the first of two three-item identification scales obtained by splitting a six-item identification scale used in a previous study (Castano & Yzerbyt, 1998) (split-half

reliability = 0.85). The first sub-scale consisted of the items: 'I identify with other European Citizens'; 'It is important for me to be a citizen of the European Union'; 'Being a citizen of the European Union is not part of my identity.' Participants answered these items on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). They then watched a 16-min videotape excerpt manufactured by the EU, which claimed that the people living in Europe all strive for the common value of freedom, that their attitudes are the result of a common past, and that they were now facing a common future. The video provided a long series of examples to support its claims ranging from the Greek myths to the more recent policies of the European institutions concerning financial, economic, and civil liberties. After the presentation of the video, participants responded to a second three-item sub-scale measuring their identification with the EU. Specifically, they responded to the items: 'I perceive myself as a citizen of the European Union'; 'I feel strong ties with other citizens of the European Union'; 'Being a citizen of the European Union does not mean a lot to me.' Upon completion of this questionnaire participants were debriefed, thanked, and released.

## Results

First, we needed to distinguish participants according to their attitudes towards the EU. To this end, we computed a global attitudinal score using two different sub-scores: one taking into account the rank and one not taking into account the rank given to the three selected words. We averaged the two scores, which were highly correlated ( $r = 0.94$ ) to form a composite standardized score. On the basis of this score, we divided participants into three groups ( $N = 20$  in each group). To check whether the groups differed in their attitudes, we performed a one-way ANOVA on the global attitudinal score, using group as the between-participants factor. The main effect came out significant,  $F(2, 59) = 147.17$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ,  $M_s = -1.11, -0.07, \text{ and } 1.17$ , for the negative, moderate, and positive-attitude group, respectively. All three groups differed from each other,  $p_s < 0.0001$ .

We averaged the three items comprising the first sub-scale tapping the level of identification before the exposure to the video ( $\alpha = 0.69$ ) and the second sub-scale measuring the level of identification after the exposure to the video ( $\alpha = 0.58$ ). We then computed the difference between the two sub-scales. This difference index ( $M = 0.46$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) constituted our dependent measure. Means are reported in Table 1.

The contrast codes technique was used for data analysis. This consisted in computing two single degree of freedom orthogonal contrasts.<sup>2</sup> The first contrast tested our specific hypothesis by comparing the moderate-attitude group ( $M = 0.83$ ) to the positive-attitude ( $M = 0.46$ ) and the negative-attitude ( $M = 0.10$ ) groups collapsed. This contrast was significant,  $t(57) = 1.96$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , providing support

Table 1. Absolute and difference identification scores between pre and post video exposure (Study 1)

	Identification		
	Pre	Post	Diff.
Negative	3.48	3.58	0.10
Moderate	3.57	4.40	0.83**
Positive	4.54	5.00	0.46*

\*Different from zero at  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*at  $p < 0.001$ .

<sup>2</sup>It should be noted that the two single degree of freedom contrasts correspond exactly to computing the main effect with two degrees of freedom. The method used here, however, is preferable inasmuch as it allows for a direct test of the researchers' hypotheses (Judd, 2000).

for our hypothesis that exposure to the video would increase the identification with the EU more for those participants holding moderate attitudes toward the EU than for participants in the two other groups. The second, orthogonal contrasts in which the two extreme groups were contrasted, was not significant,  $t(57) = 1.13$ ,  $p < .26$ . Further inspection of the data indicated that only those individuals holding negative attitudes toward the EU remained unaffected by the video,  $t(18) < 1$ , *ns*. In contrast, both moderate-attitude participants and positive-attitude participants increased their level of identification after the exposure to the video,  $t(18) = 3.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and  $t(18) = 2.08$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , respectively. The difference between moderate and positive-attitude participants was only marginally significant,  $t(57) = 1.13$ ,  $p < 0.13$ .

## Discussion

The results from Study 1 offer encouraging evidence for our hypothesis. As expected, the impact of the video on the identification level was not the same for all participants. We found that group members holding moderate attitudes toward the group were more sensitive to this manipulation of the entitativity of the ingroup than the other participants, although the effect of the manipulation proved to be significant among individuals holding positive attitudes as well.

Clearly, the major interest of Study 1 is that it relies on real propaganda material that is expected to circulate outside of the laboratory, among European citizens. It is relatively unknown, however, whether our participants responded to other aspects of the video's message. After all, the video was produced by the European Commission and its purposes was not to test the effect of group entitativity. Furthermore, although the results yielded preliminary support to our hypothesis, Study 1 provides no direct evidence that the increase in the level of identification was due to an increase in perceived entitativity. This led us to consider the use of a more controlled experimental material to investigate the effects of other dimensions of ingroup entitativity on ingroup identification. In the second experiment, a measure of entitativity, the assumed mediator, was also secured.

## STUDY 2

In Study 2, we investigated whether increasing and decreasing perceived group entitativity had an impact on the level of group identification. We did this by presenting identical information about the target group to all participants but giving them one of two sets of instructions. Specifically, depending on conditions, we had our participants look for similarities or differences among the EU states on a number of features. It was anticipated that the different instructions would lead to a representation of the EU as highly versus hardly entitative, respectively. In order to further ascertain the mediating role of entitativity in the causal path going from instructions to identification level, we also requested that participants wrote down a few lines conveying their impression of the EU. In so doing, we not only wanted to be sure that perceived group entitativity was indeed affected by the specific steps taken by the participants to process the information presented to them, rather than a consequence of some unwanted characteristic of the materials, but also that the differential degree of entitativity influenced in turn the level of identification of our participants.

As in Study 1, we expected the manipulation of group entitativity to influence the identification with the ingroup more for individuals holding moderate attitudes toward the group than for individuals holding negative or positive attitudes toward the group. More specifically, we predicted that these moderate individuals would distance themselves from their ingroup in the low entitativity condition, but that they would identify more with their ingroup in the high entitativity condition. In contrast, we

expected no lesser or no differences in identification due to the manipulation of the instructions for either the negative-attitude and positive-attitude groups.

## Method

### *Participants*

A total of 146 undergraduates at the Catholic University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve volunteered to participate to the study in exchange for experimental credits. The study relied on a 2 (high entitativity vs low entitativity)  $\times$  3 (negative vs moderate vs positive attitudes) factorial design.

### *Procedure*

We conducted several experimental sessions in which participants were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions ( $N=73$  in each condition). As in Study 1, participants were first asked to complete a questionnaire that included measures of attitudes towards the EU as well as a first three-item sub-scale measuring their identification with the EU (the same scale as in Study 1). The only difference with respect to Study 1 concerned the measures of attitudes towards the EU, which also included a general attitude question to which participants responded whether they were against ( $= 1$ ) or in favour of ( $= 7$ ) the EU. Participants were instructed not to return to this page of the booklet once they had completed it.

On the following page, a table showing several characteristics (in columns) of the political system of the 15 EU countries (in rows) was shown. The table, which summarized real characteristics, such as type of political regime (monarchy, parliamentary republic, presidential republic, etc.), was exactly the same for all participants. However, participants in the high entitativity condition were instructed to concentrate on the similarities between the EU countries, while those in the low entitativity condition were instructed to concentrate on the differences between the EU countries. All participants were advised that they would have to write a half-page paragraph communicating their views about the various EU states in light of the various characteristics mentioned in the table. The task was included to ensure that participants would process the information in line with the specific instructions, and hopefully build up an entitative *versus* a non-entitative image of the EU. It also constituted our measure of entitativity (see Results). Once participants had finished writing their paragraphs, they were asked to fill in a second three-item identification sub-scale (as in Study 1). They were then debriefed, thanked, and dismissed.

## Results

We first computed the attitude score using the same procedure utilized in Study 1, and averaged this score with the general attitude question after standardization ( $r=0.52$ ). Participants were divided into three groups on the basis of their attitude score ( $M=-1.03, 0.06, 0.96$ , respectively; all pairwise comparisons were significant at  $p < 0.001$ ). Due to participants holding identical scores, the three groups were not identical in size ( $Ns=47, 52$  and  $47$ ) but a chi-square confirmed that they were not statistically different,  $\chi^2(2)=0.34, ns$ . Chi-square analysis crossing the attitude factor (negative vs neutral vs positive) with instructions (similarity vs difference) produced a fairly even distribution of participants in the resulting  $3 \times 2$  table,  $\chi^2(2)=2.56, ns$ .

Two independent judges, who were unaware of the hypotheses of the study, were explained the concept of entitativity and instructed to read the paragraphs written by the participants and rate on a

7-point scale the extent to which the description of the EU was low (= 1) versus high (= 7) in entitativity. The ratings of the two judges ( $r=0.53$ ) were then averaged into an entitativity index ( $M=4.69$ ,  $SD=1.2$ ). Finally, we averaged the three items comprising each one of the two identification sub-scales, thereby tapping the level of identification before ( $\alpha=0.64$ ) and after ( $\alpha=0.64$ ) the participants read the table and wrote their paragraph. The difference between these two identification scores was our main dependent variable ( $M=0.04$ ;  $SD=0.94$ ).

Coded contrasts were then computed to analyse the effects of attitude and instructions on both the entitativity score and the identification score.<sup>3</sup> For the entitativity score, the contrast corresponding to the main effect of instructions was significant,  $t(140)=8.54$ ,  $p<0.001$ , showing that the manipulation had been successful ( $M_s=3.98$  and  $5.39$ , for the difference and similarity instructions, respectively). Interestingly, however, the contrast which tested whether instructions had a different impact on the moderate-attitude group than on the two other groups collapsed was close to significance,  $t(140)=1.71$ ,  $p<0.09$ . Although the level of significance does not allow for any strong conclusions, such a pattern suggests that our manipulation did enhance the entitativity of the EU among individuals holding moderate attitudes differently than it did for the other two groups.

We tested the same five single degree of freedom contrasts using difference in identification as our dependent variable (means are shown in Table 2). The only contrast that came out as significant was the one comparing the effect of the entitativity manipulation among individuals holding moderate attitudes to the other two groups collapsed,  $t(140)=2.12$ ,  $p<0.03$ . The pattern of means indicates that our manipulation of entitativity had a significant impact only on the moderate-attitude individuals.

Further analyses contrasting the cell mean to zero showed that participants in the moderate-attitude group significantly decreased their level of identification in the difference condition ( $M=-0.33$ ). The expected increase in the level of identification in the similarity condition among participants holding neutral attitudes, although in the right direction ( $M=0.21$ ), did not reach a conventional level of significance,  $p<0.19$  (see Table 2).

We hypothesized that the modification in the level of identification with the EU would be mediated by the degree of entitativity of the representation of the EU. Given that, as expected, differences in identification were observed exclusively among moderate-attitude individuals, mediational analyses were conducted exclusively for this group. We regressed entitativity and the difference in identification on the instructions factor (recoded 0 for the difference and 1 for the similarity instructions). Instructions was a reliable predictor of both entitativity,  $\beta=0.69$ ,  $t(50)=6.78$ ,  $p<0.001$ , and the difference in identification,  $\beta=0.32$ ,  $t(50)=2.44$ ,  $p<0.01$ . Also, the entitativity score significantly predicted the difference in identification,  $\beta=0.41$ ,  $t(50)=3.22$ ,  $p<0.002$ . Finally, when both

Table 2. Absolute and difference identification scores as a function of attitude and instructions (Study 2)

Attitudes	Instructions					
	Similarity			Difference		
	Identification					
	Pre	Post	Diff.	Pre	Post	Diff.
Negative	3.28	3.39	0.11	3.38	3.47	0.09
Moderate	3.84	4.05	0.21	4.54	4.21	-0.33*
Positive	5.00	5.00	0.00	4.35	4.66	0.31

\*Different from zero at  $p<0.05$ .

<sup>3</sup>The model with five single degree of freedom contrasts is equivalent to the classic model involving two main effects and the omnibus interaction. The exact same model was used in Study 3 and Study 4.



instructions and entitativity were entered simultaneously in the model, instructions no longer predicted the difference in identification,  $\beta = 0.07$ ,  $t < 1$ , whereas entitativity continued to do so,  $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $t(49) = 2.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . A Sobel test,  $z = 2.01$ ,  $p < 0.04$ , confirmed that the inclusion of entitativity in the model significantly reduced the predictive power of instructions, thus confirming the mediational role of entitativity.

## Discussion

Results from Study 2 showed that asking people to concentrate upon the differences or the similarities among the several countries comprising the EU impacted on the level of identification with the EU, but only among individuals holding moderate attitudes towards the EU. Importantly, the perception of entitativity of the EU mediated this effect, yielding support to our hypothesis regarding the role of entitativity. As expected, no reliable effects were observed among individuals holding negative or positive attitudes towards the EU. This could be due to the fact that the manipulation was less effective among them, or that they simply did not change their level of identification despite seeing the EU as more (similarity-condition) or less (difference-condition) entitative. We will return to this point in the general discussion.

Although the global pattern of results supported our hypothesis concerning the role of perceived entitativity, the data obtained in the two entitativity conditions point to a couple of interesting issues. First, whereas inducing people holding moderate attitudes toward the ingroup to look for differences among EU states (and thereby to see little entitativity in their group) had a strong influence on their level of identification, making them believe that the ingroup was highly entitative had somewhat less of an impact. This suggests that, by default, our participants may hold implicit beliefs that the states of the EU share some similarities. To the extent that this is true, the manipulation of entitativity by means of the specific instructions given to the participants would be more likely to affect their beliefs in the difference, than in the similarity, condition. Second, there was an apparent increase of identification among positive attitudes participants who were asked to address the differences among the EU states. Although this particular mean was not significantly different from zero, the data suggest that difference instructions may lead to some sort of reactance effect among participants with a positive vested interest in the EU. Inasmuch as this is indeed a reliable phenomenon, it may prove to be an interesting issue for future research.

Finally, as a note of caution, it should be noted that we did not include a condition in which our participants were encouraged to think about the EU without further instructions regarding the search for similarities or differences. This prevents us from knowing for sure if only one or both our sets of instructions influenced the level of identification of our participants relative to a control level. However, the fact that we found a significant impact of the difference instructions only among participants holding moderate attitudes strongly suggests that these people were likely diverted from their normal representation of the EU and led to adopt a less entitative representation of the EU, thereby decreasing their level of identification with the group.

## STUDY 3

Building upon self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Whetherel, 1987), Haslam, Oakes, Turner, and McGarty (1995) argued that people generally tend to evaluate their ingroup from an intragroup perspective. In contrast, they spontaneously adopt an intergroup perspective when they judge an outgroup. When the ingroup is judged in a context in which the

outgroup is psychologically present, however, the ingroup comes across as a coherent whole that contrasts with the outgroup. Evidence for this phenomenon had been reported in several studies showing the emergence of a more homogeneous perception of the ingroup in an intergroup than in an intragroup context (Castano & Yzerbyt, 1998; Haslam et al., 1995; Wilder, 1984). In other words, an intergroup context is likely to increase the salience of the ingroup, and thus, as suggested by Campbell (1958), its entitativity. As a consequence, we expected higher levels of identification in the intergroup, compared to the intragroup, context. Again, we expected the manipulation to affect mostly or exclusively the moderate-attitude group.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

One hundred and eighteen undergraduates enrolled at the Catholic University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve agreed to participate to the study, which relied on a 2 (comparative context: intragroup vs intergroup)  $\times$  3 (attitude: negative vs moderate vs positive) factorial design.

### *Procedure*

Participants were approached in various university libraries, and asked to complete a questionnaire. The first page of the questionnaire measured participants' attitude towards the EU, following the same procedure used in Study 2. The next page of the booklet presented participants with the cover page of a survey study concerning the EU. This was the only page of the booklet that varied across conditions. Participant learned that the questionnaire was part of a survey allegedly carried out by the Department of Political Sciences of the Catholic University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve (intragroup condition) or the Department of Political Sciences of the University of Montreal. Given that Canada is a non-EU country, this would cause the perception of the context as an intergroup one. On the following page of the booklet, participants were asked factual questions concerning the EU and were then given a six-item scale designed to measure their identification with the EU. This scale combined the two subscales used in Studies 1 and 2. Finally, participants were asked if they had experienced any difficulty in filling out the questionnaire, debriefed, thanked for their collaboration, and dismissed.

## **Results**

We first computed the attitude score using the same procedure as in Study 2, averaged this score with the general attitude question after standardization ( $r = 0.64$ ), and divided participants into three groups according to this global score ( $Ns = 40, 39,$  and  $39$ , for the negative, moderate, and positive attitudes group, respectively). An ANOVA on this score using attitude group (negative vs moderate vs positive) as a between-participants factor came out highly significant,  $F(2, 115) = 337.36, p < 0.0001$ , confirming that the three groups indeed differed from each other, with all pairwise comparisons significant at  $p < 0.0001$  ( $Ms = -1.12, 0.18,$  and  $0.97$ , for the negative, moderate, and positive attitudes group, respectively). Chi-square analysis crossing this attitude grouping variable with comparative context (intragroup vs intergroup) produced a fairly even distribution of participants in the resulting  $3 \times 2$  table,  $\chi^2(2) = 1.36, ns$ .

We averaged the six items measuring group identification into a composite score (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.84$ ). This score was used as dependent variable in the 2 (comparative context)  $\times$  3 (attitude

Table 3. Identification scores as a function of attitude and comparative context (Study 3)

Attitude	Comparative context	
	Intragroup	Intergroup
Negative	3.68 <sup>a</sup>	3.24 <sup>a</sup>
Moderate	4.29 <sup>b</sup>	5.03 <sup>c</sup>
Positive	5.12 <sup>c</sup>	5.14 <sup>c</sup>

Means with different superscript differ at  $p < 0.05$  or less, with the exception of the difference between the means 3.68 and 4.29, which differ at  $p < 0.06$ .

group) factorial design, which we analysed using the same contrast codes as in Study 2. Means for the six conditions appear in Table 3.

Two of five single degree of freedom contrasts were significant. The first significant contrast yielded evidence that participants' level of identification with the EU was a linear function of their attitudes,  $t(112) = 6.90$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ . The other significant contrast tested for difference in the impact of the manipulation among moderate-attitude individuals versus the two extreme groups collapsed,  $t(112) = 2.27$ ,  $p < 0.02$ . This last contrast yields direct support for our hypothesis, showing that the manipulation of the comparative context had a different effect among moderate-attitude individuals than among those individuals holding extreme attitudes. The comparison of the means revealed that participants holding moderate attitudes identified more strongly with the EU in an intergroup ( $M = 5.03$ ) than in an intragroup context ( $M = 4.29$ ),  $t(112) = 2.17$ ,  $p < 0.03$ . The same comparison was not significant for either the positive-attitude group,  $t(112) < 1$ , *ns*, or the negative group,  $t(112) = 1.28$ , *ns*. Table 3 further indicates that the means for the three attitude groups differed significantly in the intragroup context of judgment. In contrast, the difference between the moderate-attitude and positive-attitude groups was no longer significant in the intergroup context,  $t < 1$ . Taken together, these results suggest that an increase in the level of identification with the EU took place in the intergroup context, but only among individuals holding moderate attitudes.

## Discussion

The findings of Study 3 confirmed our prediction that an intergroup context would lead to an increase in the level of identification with the ingroup. As expected, however, the comparative context of judgment had an influence only for the moderate-attitude participants. The impact of an intergroup context was strong enough to bring the moderate-attitude participants to the very same level of identification as that of the positive-attitude participants. Although no direct measure of entitativity was secured in this study, the extensive theoretical work (Campbell, 1958; Turner et al., 1987) and empirical evidence on the role of the context of comparison (Castano & Yzerbyt, 1998; Haslam et al., 1995; Wilder, 1984) suggests that the increased salience of the ingroup in an intergroup context did indeed induce participants to perceive the ingroup as more entitative than in the intragroup context.

## STUDY 4

In Study 4, we set out to test the influence on identification of yet another aspect of group entitativity: the clarity of the boundaries of the ingroup. Ill-bounded ingroups should lead to low levels of

identification. In contrast, well-bounded ingroups should lead to high levels of identification. As before, the manipulation of boundedness was expected to interact with participants' attitudes toward the EU, so that its effect on the level of identification with the EU would be observed only among those who held moderate attitudes towards it. Given that groups are usually perceived as having relatively clear boundaries, we expected that well-bounded boundaries would lead moderate-attitude individuals to display higher levels of identification than those holding negative attitudes, but lower levels than those holding positive attitudes. This pattern is the same as the one observed in the intragroup condition of Study 3. Conversely, we expected moderate-attitude individuals to decrease their level of identification in the ill-bounded condition. As a consequence, these participants' level of identification would resemble more the level of identification displayed by negative-attitudes participants. In this study as well, a lesser or no impact of the manipulation was expected among the negative-attitude and positive-attitude groups.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

One hundred and four undergraduates enrolled at the Catholic University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve agreed to participate in the experiment.

### *Procedure*

Students were approached in various university libraries and invited to take part in a survey. Those who accepted were asked to fill out a questionnaire booklet. The first page of the booklet aimed at measuring participants' attitudes towards the EU using the same choice-task and attitude item as in Studies 2 and 3. In the next part of the booklet, participants were requested to read a fictitious article on the enlargement of the EU. Specifically, the text concerned the inclusion of several other (mostly eastern European) countries in the EU. Participants were also provided with two maps of the EU. The article and the map had been printed, scanned, and reprinted so that the final product looked like a copy of a real newspaper article. In order to reinforce the cover story, the instructions apologized for the bad quality of the copy and asked participants to make a special effort to read the text.

In the ill-bounded group condition, the title of the article was 'Europe in Search of its Borders'. The journalist explained that the EU was uncertain as to exactly where the eastern border of the EU should be established. He quoted an alleged member of the European Parliament (MEP) who supported the view that 'it has been difficult to define what the EU borders were . . . during parliamentary debates it was not clear who was IN and who was OUT' and 'we continue to be unable to define who we, the EU, are.'

In the well-bounded group condition, the title of the article was 'Europe Finds its Borders'. The journalist explained that the EU had firmly established its eastern borders. Quoting an alleged MEP, the journalist added that 'there had been little difficulty in defining what the EU borderlines were . . . during parliamentary discussions it was clear who was IN and who was OUT', and, 'that there is a strong desire to define who we, the EU, are.'

Two maps of Europe were presented as part of the newspaper article. The first map was the same in both conditions and represented the current geopolitical status of the EU. The second map differed depending on the condition. In the ill-bounded group condition, various eastern borders were presented as different possible scenarios for the EU in the year 2005. In the well-bounded condition,

the eastern border represented on the map was the border currently determined for the year 2005. All participants learned that they would have to write a half-page paragraph about their views regarding the EU. This also secured materials for our measure of entitativity (see Procedure). Once participants had finished writing their paragraph, they were asked several questions concerning the EU. They then filled out the six-item EU identification scale. Finally, participants were asked if they had had any difficulty in filling out the questionnaire, debriefed, thanked for their collaboration, and dismissed.

## Results

As for previous studies, we computed an attitude score by averaging the two indexes ( $r = 0.70$ ). We then divided participants into one of three groups according to this score. Due to participants holding identical scores, the three groups were not identical in size ( $N_s = 29, 38, \text{ and } 37$ ) but a chi-square confirmed that they were not statistically different,  $\chi^2(2) = 1.40, ns$ . An ANOVA on this score using participants' attitude group (negative vs moderate vs positive) as a between-participants factor was highly significant,  $F(2, 101) = 260.76, p < 0.0001$ . The three groups differed significantly from each other,  $M_s = -1.08, -0.18, \text{ and } 1.01$ , respectively (all pairwise comparisons significant at  $p < 0.0001$ ). As in Study 3, attitudes were measured before participants were made aware of the boundedness of the EU. Chi-square analysis on the  $3 \times 2$  table crossing this attitude grouping variable with boundedness produced a fairly even distribution of participants in the resulting  $3 \times 2$  table,  $\chi^2(2) = 3.95, p > ns$ . Following the procedure used in Study 2, two independent judges rated to what extent the EU was depicted as entitative in the paragraph written by the participants. The ratings of the two judges ( $r = 0.57$ ) were averaged into an entitativity score ( $M = 3.61, SD = 1.31$ ). Finally, the six identification items (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83) were averaged into an identification score ( $M = 3.94, SD = 1.22$ ).

Coded contrasts were then computed to analyse the effects of attitude-group and boundedness on both the entitativity score and the identification score. For the entitativity score, the contrast corresponding to the main effect of boundedness was significant,  $t(98) = 7.66, p < 0.001$ , showing that the manipulation had been successful ( $M_s = 2.77 \text{ and } 4.42$ , for the ill-bounded and well-bounded condition, respectively).

Interestingly, however, the contrast which collapsed the two extreme attitude groups and compared them to the moderate-attitude group came out close to significance,  $t(98) = 1.73, p < 0.08$ , as did the contrast which tested whether boundedness had a different impact on the moderate-attitude group than on the two other groups collapsed,  $t(98) = 1.48, p < 0.14$ . Although the levels of significance do not allow for any strong conclusions, such a pattern suggests that our manipulation enhanced the entitativity of the EU among individuals holding moderate attitudes differently than among the other two groups. Means for the identification scores are given in Table 4.

We tested the same model comprising the five single degree of freedom contrasts using identification as the dependent variable (means are shown in Table 4). One of these contrasts yielded evidence that the level of identification with the EU was a linear function of the attitudes held by

Table 4. Identification scores as a function of attitude and boundedness (Study 4)

Attitude	Boundedness	
	Ill-bounded	Well-bounded
Negative	3.61 <sup>a</sup>	3.02 <sup>a</sup>
Moderate	3.25 <sup>a</sup>	4.02 <sup>b</sup>
Positive	4.66 <sup>d</sup>	4.57 <sup>bd</sup>

Means with different superscript differ at  $p < 0.05$ .

participants,  $t(98) = 4.76$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ . The other significant contrast revealed the presence of a difference in the impact of the manipulation among moderate-attitude individuals versus the two extreme groups collapsed,  $t(98) = 2.42$ ,  $p < 0.02$ . This last contrast supports our hypothesis, showing that the manipulation had a different influence on moderate-attitude individuals than on those individuals holding extreme attitudes.

Clearly, the pattern of means yields support for our claim that the impact of the manipulation was significant only among the moderate attitude group, and that this impact is due to the decrease in identification in the ill-bounded condition rather than to an increase in identification in the well-bounded condition.

To test the mediational role of perceived entitativity in the link between boundedness and level of identification, we computed a series of regressions (Baron & Kenny, 1986). This was done exclusively for the moderate attitude group, because of the lack of effect of boundedness in the two other groups. After assigning value 0 to the ill-bounded condition, and 1 to the well-bounded condition, we regressed entitativity (i.e. the entitativity scores obtained by the judges) and identification on boundedness. Confirming the ANOVA findings, boundedness was a reliable predictor of both entitativity,  $\beta = 0.70$ ,  $t(36) = 5.92$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and identification,  $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $t(36) = 2.32$ ,  $p < 0.03$ . Also, the level of entitativity significantly predicted identification,  $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $t(36) = 3.25$ ,  $p < 0.002$ . Finally, boundedness and entitativity were entered simultaneously in a regression model to predict identification. As expected, although boundedness no longer predicted the identification scores,  $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $t < 1$ , entitativity continued to be a significant predictor,  $\beta = 0.44$ ,  $t(35) = 2.11$ ,  $p < 0.04$ . A Sobel test,  $z = 2.09$ ,  $p < 0.04$ , confirmed the statistical significance of the reduction in the impact of boundedness on identification when it was entered along with entitativity in the regression model.

## Discussion

Study 4 aimed at examining the impact of group boundedness on members' level of identification with the EU. As in the previous studies, we expected the manipulation to have an impact exclusively on those participants holding moderate attitudes towards the EU. Results provided clear support for this hypothesis, showing that only moderate-attitude participants were affected by the manipulation of the clarity of the boundaries. We hoped to provide evidence that it is specifically the condition in which the group is ill-bounded that a decrease in the level of identification occurs. Indeed, we speculated that group members tend to have a rather coherent image of their ingroup, and therefore the well-bounded description should not have the same effect on them as the ill-bounded description. Support for this hypothesis should come from the observation of a linear trend in the level of identification in the well-bounded condition going from negative to moderate to positive attitudes groups similar to that observed in the intragroup condition of Study 3, which we considered as a sort of baseline. The data for Study 4 provided some support for this rationale, although the contrast between moderate-attitude and positive-attitude groups did not reach conventional levels of significance ( $p < 0.12$ ). Importantly, mirroring the findings of Study 2, mediational analyses confirmed that entitativity mediated the impact of the manipulation on identification.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present paper tested the hypothesis that the entitativity of the ingroup influences the level of identification with the ingroup. To this end, we conducted four studies in which we manipulated the level of entitativity of the ingroup by varying the common fate associated with the various components

of the group (Study 1), the degree of similarity within the ingroup (Study 2), the contextual salience of the ingroup (Study 3), and the clarity of its boundaries (Study 4). The choice of the four dimensions examined across the four studies was dictated by the fact that these dimensions have been considered among the most important determinants of perceived entitativity (Campbell, 1958). Clearly, the findings of the four experiments provide convergent support for our hypothesis. Moreover, in two studies, we directly assessed the mediating role of perceived entitativity. The mediator that we used was the degree of entitativity as evidenced by the description of the EU reported by participants. The fact that differences in the descriptions of the EU were visible to blind judges, and that the judgment of this product accounted for the impact of the manipulation on our dependent variable, makes the message arising from these mediational analyses all the more compelling. Different aspects of the results emerging from the present set of studies and their implications for the study of entitativity and intergroup relations should be considered.

To our knowledge, the present contribution constitutes the first empirical attempt to address the impact of a variety of antecedents of group entitativity on the same group phenomenon, namely identification with the ingroup. Indeed, prior work manipulating entitativity has mostly done so by manipulating one dimension of entitativity at a time to examine a given issue. Similarity (or homogeneity) among group members is the aspect *par excellence* that has captured researchers' attention, and has been used in most of the empirical work on the concept of entitativity (cf. Dasgupta et al., 1999; McConnell et al., 1994, 1997; Rogier & Yzerbyt, 1999; Welbourne, 1999; Yzerbyt, Rogier, & Fiske, 1998). In an experiment in which the impact of entitativity on ingroup bias was investigated, L. Gaertner and Schopler (1998) used the degree of interaction between members of a small group as a means to manipulate entitativity, but this was the only way in which entitativity was manipulated within the study.

Although our data suggest that each one of the factors we utilized plays a role, they say little about their relation with one another. For instance, perceived similarity among group members or, in our case, sub-groups, may increase as a consequence of the presentation of clear boundaries (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963). Clearly, further research is needed to better understand the dynamic between these different factors in producing a perception of entitativity. As a tentative conclusion, we would like to suggest that the four factors are sufficiently distinct that it is meaningful to manipulate one without necessarily assuming that all the others are being affected. This position is compatible with work by Lickel and colleagues (2000) and others showing that groups could be entitative yet be diverse in terms of a series of perceptual features.

That there is discrimination between the factors used in the present study should not prevent us from using entitativity as a unitary concept in order to interpret our findings. To be sure, some might argue that the effects on identification observed in the four studies depend on four different variables, and that there is no need to invoke the concept of entitativity in order to account for the findings. We see two objections to such a view. *First*, to rely on four different factors to account for the same effect contradicts a fundamental principle of scientific inquiry, namely parsimony. The value of an entitativity-based interpretation resides exactly in providing a theoretical umbrella for the interpretation of otherwise quite disparate phenomena (cf. Brewer & Harasty, 1996; Hamilton & Sherman, 1996).

A second objection comes from the results of the mediational analyses. Studies 2 and 4 demonstrated that the similarity (Study 2) and boundedness (Study 4) manipulation led participants to build an image of the EU that varied in its degree of entitativity. In both cases, the observed effect of the manipulation on identification (among moderate-attitude individuals) was fully mediated by the entitativity score. In other words, it was the extent to which they saw the EU as an entity that impacted on participants' levels of identification. The indirect measure of entitativity we used here constitutes, in our view, an original approach to the measurement of a concept that has proven difficult to grasp empirically (cf. Castano, in press a; L. Gaertner & Schopler, 1998; Lickel et al., 2000).

The findings obtained in the present studies raise the issue of the motives for social identification. As it happens, a series of recent theoretical and empirical developments addressed precisely this question (for a review, see Stevens & Fiske, 1995). Hogg and Abrams (1993) have, for instance, suggested that people may be motivated to join groups to reduce uncertainty. More entitative groups may elicit stronger identification because they better serve the need to reduce uncertainty (Hogg, 2000). According to Brewer (1991) and her optimal distinctiveness theory, because individuals are in constant search for an equilibrium between two contrasting needs, assimilation and differentiation, entitative ingroups may better satisfy the two needs. Not only do such groups provide their members with a bounded unit within which they can feel assimilated but they are defined enough to be clearly differentiated from other groups (Brewer & Roccas, 2001; Castano, 1999). Yet another motive for group identification was proposed by Yzerbyt, Castano, Leyens, and Paladino (2000). These authors argued that entitativity might come across as a valued ingroup characteristic because people experience a more entitative ingroup as being in a better position to act upon its agenda than a less entitative ingroup. In other words, one could say that entitative ingroups are attractive because they satisfy people's need for effectiveness and offer more guarantees in terms of group locomotion (Schachter, 1959).

Finally, building on the idea that the ingroup becomes part of the self-definition (Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Castano (1999) proposed that the identification with one's ingroup may validate one's sense of existence and that a more entitative ingroup is likely to better serve this function. Further, Castano et al. (2002) have argued that individuals may well rely on social groups, and particularly national groups, in order to extend themselves in space and time, beyond their own physical death. Indeed the authors found an increase in ingroup entitativity and ingroup identification in the mortality salience condition as compared to the control condition (for a review, see Castano, Yzerbyt, & Paladino, *in press*). Although the above perspectives suggest a variety of reasons for which ingroup entitativity may be desirable, further research is clearly needed on this front. Progress regarding these issues is likely to be dependent on the findings from studies which focus on outgroup entitativity (Abelson et al., 1998; Castano, Sacchi, & Gries, *in press*; Dasgupta et al., 1999) as well as on ingroup entitativity (for a review, see Yzerbyt, Corneille, & Estrada, 2001). As it turns out, we may indeed learn that what is threatening in the outgroup is exactly what we wish was characteristic of our own group.

In the present paper we argue that increasing entitativity leads to an increase in the level of identification. However, one could argue that too much entitativity may provoke the opposite effect (cf. Insko, Schopler, & Sedikides, 1998). In other words, instead of being linear, the relation between ingroup entitativity and ingroup identification could well be curvilinear. At this stage, we cannot exclude this possibility (for a similar view, see Brewer, 1991). Indeed, it is quite possible that exceedingly entitative ingroups 'suffocate' individuals and, as a result, lead group members to distance themselves psychologically from the group and de-identify. This is a reasonable hypothesis both for small interacting groups and for broad social categories—though the exact psychological mechanisms might vary in each case. Also, the extent to which this boomerang effect might occur is likely to depend on the specific context. For instance, we would argue that the threshold for entitativity to become 'undesirable' would be higher in a competitive intergroup context than in a cooperative one. Further research is needed in this regard (see Yzerbyt et al., 2001).

Our studies investigated the moderating role of entitativity of a super-ordinate entity, on the level of identification with it of individuals belonging to sub-groups of such an entity. The findings are thus relevant for the literature on intergroup conflict, and directly speak to the result that the formation of a common ingroup identity may help reducing intergroup conflict as suggested in the common ingroup identity model (S. Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989; for a recent review, see S. Gaertner et al., 1999). Increasing entitativity may be of particular importance in the early phases of group formation,



the stage in which the EU now finds itself. Indeed, in this phase a strict definition of boundaries contributes to group-definition. Consistent with this rationale, research on the formation of groups suggests that most social groups tend to place high value on the entitative nature of the group in the early stages of their existence (Brown & Wootton-Millward, 1993; Worchel, Coutant-Sassic, & Grossman, 1991).

Another distinctive feature of our experiments lies in the different predictions we made for individuals holding negative, moderate, and positive attitudes towards the ingroup. The present findings provide interesting insights into the specific context of group formation by suggesting, for instance, that persuasive messages promoting attachment to the group will mainly affect those people holding moderate attitudes. Our data do not provide a clear answer with respect to the processes at work for the extreme attitude groups. Whether the absence of effect on identification among participants holding extreme attitudes was due to the fact that they did not buy into our manipulation or that, despite being sensitive to the manipulation, did not change their more strongly rooted level of identification, remains to be investigated. This finding is only tangential to our argument, but the issues hold a clear applied interest and deserve further investigation.

Complementing the growing body of theoretical and empirical work that has addressed the issue of group entitativity by concentrating on outgroups or on groups 'out there,' the present contribution focused instead on the other side of the equation, by looking at the entitativity of the ingroup. Quite clearly, the empirical evidence showed that the entitativity of the ingroup plays a crucial role in the phenomenology of being a group member. Further work on these issues is likely to help us better understand the respective roles of entitativity and identification in the realm of intergroup relations.

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