

The Perception of the Other in International Relations: Evidence for the Polarizing Effect of Entitativity

Emanuele Castano

Graduate Faculty, New School University

Simona Sacchi

Università di Milano-Bicocca

Peter Hays Gries

University of Colorado at Boulder

In an international relations context, the mutual images held by actors affect their mutual expectations about the Other's behavior and guide the interpretation of the Other's actions. Here it is argued that the effect of these images is moderated by the degree of entitativity of the Other—that is, the extent to which it is perceived as a real entity. Two studies tested this hypothesis by manipulating the entitativity of the European Union (EU) among U.S. citizens whose images of the EU varied along the enemy/ally dimension. Results of these studies yielded converging evidence in support of the hypothesized moderating effect of entitativity. Specifically, entitativity showed a polarizing effect on the relationship between the image of the EU and judgments of harmfulness of actions carried out by the EU.

KEY WORDS: entitativity, agency, polarization, image, intergroup relations, international relations

The news media routinely inform us about foreign countries testing new ballistic missiles, developing new air defense systems, renovating their submarine fleets, or, more recently, developing biological weapons. Is this good or bad news? The answer to this question depends, of course, on the perceived quality of the relations between our own country and the foreign country in question. In other words, it depends on whether the other country is an ally or an enemy. If it is an enemy, chances are that one would feel threatened; if it is an ally, one would, on the contrary, feel safeguarded. To the extent that countries can be ordered along

a continuum from absolute ally to absolute enemy, it seems reasonable to argue that a linear relationship might exist between one's perception of a foreign country's position on this continuum and the perceived harmfulness to one's country of an action undertaken by that country: The more it is an enemy, the more its action is likely to be perceived as harmful.

The other important feature in the perception of a foreign country's actions is its strength. Clearly, a strong enemy is more threatening than a weak enemy. Friendliness/hostility and strength/weakness constitute, according to Boulding (1969), the building blocks of the image of the Other. Boulding is also credited with having used the term *image*—"the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behavior unit, or its internal view of itself and its universe" (p. 423)—to analyze international systems.

Building on the psychological concept of schema (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), Herrmann, Voss, Schooler, and Ciarrochi (1997) have proposed that images of the Other are not a collection of unrelated traits, but rather a constellation of features that cluster together in meaningful ways. The possible ways in which they cohere, according to Herrmann and his colleagues, are dictated by the interaction of three factors: the perceived relative capability of the actor, the perceived threat and/or opportunity represented by that actor, and the perceived culture of that actor (Herrmann et al., 1997, p. 408; see also Herrmann, 1985). The way in which people react to an action carried out by an actor, say a foreign country, will then depend on which particular image is activated. Needless to say, the image provides the key to interpreting the action. The same action can be interpreted as harmful to the perceiver's country if the actor is perceived as an "enemy," not very much so if it is perceived as a "colony," and possibly welcome if it is perceived as an "ally."

The work of Herrmann and his colleagues enhances our understanding of how actors in international relations are perceived by looking at how the perceiver apprehends the content of these actors' images. This work is also original in its suggestion that clusters of content form such images (see also Alexander, Brewer, & Herrmann, 1999). Our aim in this paper is to investigate the impact of another factor that could affect the interpretation of actions carried out by the Other. Rather than focusing on the characteristics of the *content*, we look at what we believe to be an important *structural* component, namely the perceived entitativity of the actor.

Entitativity: Origins and Current Research

The concept of entitativity, developed by social psychologist Donald Campbell (1958), refers to "the degree of having the nature of an entity, of having real existence" (p. 17). Building on Gestalt principles, Campbell suggested that similarity, proximity, common fate, and boundedness could turn a mere aggregate of individuals into a coherent group and make it a real entity, at least in the eye of the perceiver.

The multiple routes to gauging the entitativity of a group are reflected in the research that has been inspired by Campbell's original insights. Following a Lewinian tradition, some authors have shown continuity with earlier research on the concepts of interdependence, cohesiveness, and internal organization, and have emphasized the idea that entitativity leads to unity (e.g., Gaertner & Schopler, 1998; Hamilton, Sherman, & Lickel, 1998; Insko, Schopler, & Sedikides, 1998; Lickel et al., 2000). This perspective has furthered our understanding of differences in the perceptions of groups and individuals. Hamilton and Sherman (1996) proposed that entitativity is the mediator responsible for these differences. According to these authors, groups are perceived as less entitative than individuals. Consequently, less integrative effort would be put into solving inconsistencies for groups than for individuals, and less coherent impressions would be formed for the former than for the latter. In support of this rationale, research manipulating group entitativity has shown that when the entitativity of the group-target is increased, the perceiver processes the information about the group in a way similar to that used for the individual-target (McConnell, Sherman, & Hamilton, 1994, 1997; Welbourne, 1999). Also, Pickett (2001) showed that, relative to members of non-entitative groups, members of highly entitative groups are subject to greater intragroup comparison. Other authors have focused on the perceived similarity between exemplars of the group (Brewer, Weber, & Carini, 1995) or on the group prototype (Brewer & Harasty, 1996), and have interpreted entitativity as a measure of the psychological existence of the group (Castano, *in press*).

Focusing on ingroup entitativity, Castano, Yzerbyt, and Bourguignon (*in press*) manipulated common fate, similarity, boundedness, and salience of the European Union, and found that all these components of entitativity moderate the level of identification with the EU among European citizens (see also Lickel et al., 2000). Merging insights from terror management theory (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Castano, Yzerbyt, Paladino, and Sacchi (2002) found that the perceived entitativity of one's nation and identification with it increased when participants' need for symbolic immortality was raised by making salient the inevitability of their own death. The entitativity of one's nation also seems to fulfill more immediate and pragmatic needs. Using a role-play situation in the context of a fictitious international scenario, Sacchi and Castano (2002, study 2) found that participants whose hypothetical country was presented as being high in entitativity perceived it as having more intentionality, they felt more secure, and they experienced less threat from other countries (for reviews, see Castano, *in press*; see also Yzerbyt, Castano, Leyens, & Paladino, 2000).

Finally, Yzerbyt and his colleagues investigated the interplay between entitativity and essentialism (Yzerbyt, Corneille, & Estrada, 2001; see also Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000) and found that the behavior of individuals belonging to highly entitative groups is more likely to be attributed to enduring group dis-

positions, as compared to the same behavior displayed by members of less entitative groups (Yzerbyt, Rogier, & Fiske, 1998).

The message emerging from research on entitativity is that groups vary in the extent to which they are perceived as real entities. The perceived psychological existence of a group, therefore, seems not to be an issue of either/or, but rather a question of degree; and entitativity is its measure.

The Entitativity of the Other in International Relations

Image theory is concerned with the content of schemas about others. The specific characteristics of images of the Other have been shown to hold predictive power with respect to the *nature* of its perception, and to the interpretation of its behavior. The entitativity of the Other is a measure of the extent to which it is perceived as a real entity. Our contention is that the perception of the “existence” of the Other should not be taken for granted or perceived as an issue of either/or. If so, non-existence is unproblematic. Existence, on the other hand, would simply be a necessary condition for any expectations to emerge, and the quality of the image of the Other held by the perceiver would suffice to make predictions about the Other’s behavior. If, by contrast, varying degrees of existence can be ascribed to the Other, existence becomes an important factor to consider—especially if, as we argue, it helps in predicting the *degree* of these expectations.

Using a vector analogy for, say, the perceived harmfulness of a foreign country, we could say that images predict the direction, whereas entitativity might be a measure of its strength. We therefore argue that entitativity might act as a moderator of the relationship between the image of the Other and the perception and interpretation of its behavior. Our specific contention is that the moderating role of entitativity takes the form of a *polarizing effect*.

To show polarization, one needs to show that the impact of x on y is strengthened at higher values of the polarizing variable z , and that the same is reduced at lower values of z . Furthermore, when the predictor variable x is bipolar, entitativity should be positively related to y at one pole of x and negatively related to it at the opposite pole of x .

To illustrate our rationale, let’s consider one of the simplest predictions of image theory—that the actions of a foreign country will be perceived as more harmful by someone who holds an enemy image of it than by someone who holds an ally image. To the extent that the enemy/ally dimension can be conceived as a continuum, we can think of the relationship between it and perceived harmfulness as a linear one. If entitativity, as we suggest, has a polarizing effect, this relationship should be stronger when the entitativity of the foreign country is high, and weaker when its entitativity is low. Furthermore, because expectations about the behavior of an enemy country are likely to be negative, increasing its entitativity should lead to a perception of increased harmfulness. When one holds an ally image of a country, however, expectations about the behavior of that country

tend to be positive. Therefore, increasing the entitativity of an ally country should lead to the perception of more friendliness. These hypotheses were investigated in two studies.

Overview of the Studies

Participants in both studies were American students; the outgroup was the European Union (EU).¹ In both studies, the entitativity of the EU was manipulated and the image of the EU held by participants was assessed, either before (Study 1) or after (Study 2) the entitativity manipulation. The perceived harmfulness of EU actions constituted the main dependent variable.

Because of the multiple roots of entitativity, we tested our hypotheses using two different manipulations of entitativity to be sure that entitativity, and not one of its components only, was responsible for the effects observed. Entitativity was manipulated by using perceptual cues in Study 1 and similarity in Study 2. As a measure of entitativity, we used shorter versions of an entitativity scale developed by Castano, Yzerbyt, and Bourguignon (1999), which includes items tapping common fate, similarity, and distinctiveness (see also Castano et al., 2002).

Our main prediction centered on an interaction between the image of the EU held by participants and the manipulation of entitativity. Specifically, we expected only those participants who viewed the EU as an enemy of the United States to judge the actions of the EU as more harmful to the United States in the high-entitativity condition than in the low-entitativity condition. For those participants who viewed the EU as an ally, its higher entitativity should have led to the perception of the EU as less harmful. Also, we expected to observe a stronger relationship between the image of the EU and the perceived harmfulness of the actions of the EU among participants in the high-entitativity condition compared to those in the low-entitativity condition.

Study 1

Method

Participants. Fifty-seven students enrolled in an introductory psychology course took part in the experiment in exchange for course credit.

Procedure and materials. Participants arrived at the lab in groups of four and were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions (high vs. low entitativity). Participants sat in separate cubicles and were unable to communi-

¹ Because the EU is becoming an important actor in the international arena, investigation of the relations between the United States and the EU has an applied interest, not only a theoretical one. Also, the EU is a group about which our participants had little knowledge, making the entitativity manipulation relatively easy to implement.

cate with each other. They were given a booklet and were asked to read the instructions carefully before answering various questions. On the first page of the booklet (a constant in the two conditions), participants responded to four statements aimed at assessing the image of the EU. The statements were “The European Union values cooperative solutions to problems and tries to avoid conflict,” “The European Union will not exploit our trust in them but instead reciprocate and contribute their fair share,” “The European Union’s objectives are self-centered and harmful to us (i.e., the United States),” and “The European Union would take advantage of any efforts on our part to cooperate and they would even try to exploit us (i.e., the United States).” The first two items were used to assess the “ally” image and the others to assess the “enemy” image (see Alexander et al., 1999).

On the second page, a manipulation of EU entitativity was introduced. This consisted solely of a map of the EU (Figure 1). In the high-entitativity condition, the map did not show the internal borders of the 15 EU countries. All of the countries were depicted in the same color (blue) and 12 yellow stars were superimposed on them (the EU flag is blue with 12 yellow stars). In the low-entitativity condition, the same 15 countries were depicted using borders and different colors.

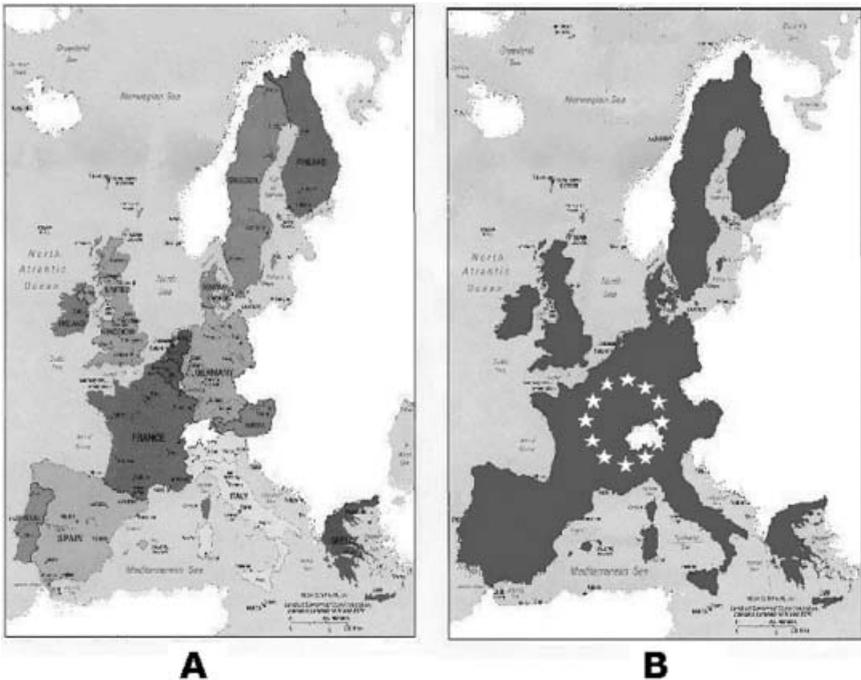


Figure 1. Entitativity manipulation: (A) low entitativity, (B) high entitativity.

Participants then responded to three statements measuring the perceived entitativity of the EU (see the Appendix) and to two statements measuring the harmfulness of the EU to the United States (“The European Union may put in jeopardy the world commercial supremacy of the United States” and “The commercial supremacy of the United States may be threatened by the European Union”). Participants answered all questions using a 7-point scale (1, not at all/I disagree; 7, very much/I agree). After completion of the questionnaire, they were debriefed, thanked, and released.

Results

To assess the effectiveness of the entitativity manipulation, we created a composite score ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.21$) by averaging the three items measuring entitativity (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .77$). A t test performed on this score showed that in the high-entitativity condition, the EU was perceived to be more entitative ($M = 4.21$) than in the low-entitativity condition ($M = 3.71$) [$t(55) = 1.58$, $p < .05$].² Similarly, after appropriate reversal of the two negative items, the four items assessing the image of the EU were averaged (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .75$) to create a score representing the image of the EU ($M = 4.77$, $SD = 1.01$). We refer to this factor as IEU (Image of the European Union). Higher IEU values mean perception of the EU as an ally; conversely, lower scores mean perception of the EU as an enemy. Finally, the two items measuring perceived harmfulness were averaged together ($r = .91$, $p < .001$) into a composite harmfulness score ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.64$). Higher values on this score mean higher perceived harmfulness.

The impact of entitativity (high vs. low; recoded 1 and 0, respectively), IEU, and their interaction on perceived harmfulness was tested via a hierarchical multiple regression, entering the two main effects in the first step and the interaction terms in the second step. Previous to these analyses, IEU was centered (i.e., the mean of the variable was subtracted by each score; see Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Perceived Harmfulness (Study 1, $N = 57$)

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β
Step 1			
Entitativity	.38	.41	.11
IEU	-.55	.21	-.34*
Step 2			
Entitativity \times IEU	-1.43	.38	-.68**

Note. $R^2 = .12$ for step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .19$ for step 2 ($ps < .001$).

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$.

² For manipulation check only, one-tailed tests were used.

As expected, whereas IEU was a reliable predictor of harmfulness, entitativity was not. The more the EU was perceived as an ally, the less it was perceived as harmful to the United States. More important, the interaction between these two variables was significant. The interaction was then decomposed in two ways. First, simple slopes were computed for single values of IEU. Following Cohen and Cohen (1983), the values of one standard deviation above (ally) and one standard deviation below the mean (enemy) were selected. Results of these simple slopes indicated that for an ally image, high entitativity triggered the perception of less harmfulness [$\beta = -.34$, $t(53) = -2.02$, $p < .05$]. By contrast, for an enemy image, high entitativity triggered the perception of greater harmfulness [$\beta = .55$, $t(53) = 3.38$, $p < .005$].

We also looked at the effect of IEU for the two entitativity conditions. Given that the low-entitativity condition was given the value 0, the main effect of IEU for this condition was given by the IEU coefficient in the model with the interaction term (see Aiken & West, 1991). This was not significant [$\beta = .19$, $t(53) = 1.04$, $p < .30$]. The effect for the high-entitativity condition was obtained by recomputing the interaction after switching the coding so that high entitativity = 0 and low entitativity = 1. This revealed a significant effect for IEU [$\beta = -.69$, $t(53) = -4.68$, $p < .001$]; hence, at high levels of entitativity, the more the EU was perceived as an ally, the less harmfulness was perceived in its actions.³

The findings of Study 1 showed the expected impact of IEU on harmfulness and, more important, the predicted moderating effect of EU entitativity on this relation. The shape of the observed interaction implies that the relation between the image and the perceived harmfulness was strong when entitativity was high, but was non-significant when entitativity was low.⁴ This pattern of results seems to support our conjecture that entitativity polarizes the relationship between the image of the Other and the expectations about it.

Study 2

Study 2 was designed to replicate and expand the results of Study 1. In addition to a low- and high-entitativity condition, a third condition was included in which the entitativity of the outgroup (i.e., the EU) was not manipulated. A different manipulation of entitativity was used. This consisted of two versions of a fictional article on the EU. The first version highlighted similarities and the common fate of EU countries (i.e., two factors leading to perceptions of group entitativity); the second version highlighted differences and the disparate fates of

³ An alternative analytical strategy would consist of computing simple regressions with harmfulness as criterion and IEU as predictor, for the two conditions separately. These revealed the same pattern as the analyses described, and are not reported here.

⁴ The standard deviations of IEU and harmfulness were comparable: .92 and 1.54 in the low-entitativity condition, and 1.10 and 1.75 in the high-entitativity condition.

EU member countries. A longer version of the entitativity scale was used, as well as a longer scale assessing the image of the EU. The dependent variables of Study 2 were also slightly modified. Whereas in Study 1 the impact of entitativity was assessed exclusively on the perceived harmfulness of the outgroup with respect to commercial issues, Study 2 looked at this dimension plus another dimension relevant in an international relations setting, namely the military. The use of two topics supports generalizing these findings.

As in Study 1, we expected an interaction effect between entitativity and the image of the EU on the dependent variable, perceived harmfulness. The only difference in our predictions concerned the presence of a control condition, in which entitativity was not manipulated at all. To corroborate our claim concerning the polarizing effect of entitativity, the slope for the control condition should be midway between that for the low- and high-entitativity conditions.

Method

Participants. One hundred and seventeen students enrolled in an introductory psychology course took part in the experiment in exchange for course credit.

Procedure and materials. Upon arrival at the lab, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions (high entitativity vs. control vs. low entitativity). They were given a booklet and asked to read the instructions carefully. The first task consisted of reading and understanding international news: "We ask you to carefully read the brief article that follows, to retain the most important points, and especially to form an impression about the European Union. Do not hesitate to underline the points that seem important to you. You will be asked your impression of the European Union." Participants were then asked to proceed to the next page to read the article. The article introduced the EU countries and specified that "the now 15 and in the near future 19 members of the European Union share [vs. do not share] a common past." The opinion of a European leader was also reported suggesting that "we [Europeans] are so similar to [vs. so different from] each other." The article did not mention the United States, nor did it speak about the issues on which the dependent variables focused.

Participants then responded to the entitativity scale for the EU, followed by a scale assessing their image of the EU (both scales are in the Appendix). Finally, participants were told that the members of the EU were going to meet in 2 months to make decisions concerning a commercial treaty with the United States and the creation of a European army. The dependent variables comprised two questions: "To what extent do you think this European commercial treaty is likely to be harmful for the U.S. economy?" and "To what extent do you think this European army is to be perceived a threat?" Participants responded to all questions on 7-point scales. After completion of the questionnaire, they were debriefed, thanked, and released.

Results

An entitativity index was created by averaging the 10 items of the EU entitativity scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) on this score, using entitativity (High vs. Control vs. Low) as the between-participants factor, was significant [$F(2, 114) = 10.45, p < .001$]. As expected, in the high-entitativity condition ($M = 4.94, SD = .67, N = 39$), participants judged the EU as more entitative than in the control condition ($M = 4.66, SD = .65, N = 40$), which, in turn, scored higher than the low-entitativity condition ($M = 4.24, SD = .69, N = 38$) (all pairwise comparisons significant at $p < .03$ or less, one-tailed).

After appropriate reversal of the negative items, the items assessing the image of the EU were averaged into a composite score ($\alpha = .82, M = 4.63, SD = .82$). We again refer to this score as IEU (Image of the European Union). Higher values on this score mean perception of the EU as an ally; conversely, lower scores mean perception of the EU as an enemy. An ANOVA indicated that IEU was not influenced by the manipulation of entitativity [$F(2, 114) = 2.10, n.s.$].

Participants' answers to the perceived harmfulness items for the commercial treaty and army issues ($r = .56, p < .001$) were averaged into a single perceived-harmfulness index ($M = 3.66, SD = 1.28$). Higher values on this score mean higher perceived harmfulness.

This index was used as a criterion variable in a hierarchical multiple regression. Given that entitativity had three levels, we recoded it into two variables: X1 (control = 0, high entitativity = 1, low entitativity = -1) and X2 (control = -2, high entitativity = 1, low entitativity = 1) (see West, Aiken, & Krull, 1996). We then created two additional variables by multiplying each of them by the variable IEU. The predictors were used in the hierarchical multiple regression analysis, with X1, X2, and IEU entered in step 1 and $X1 \times IEU$ and $X2 \times IEU$ in step 2. Previous to computing the multiple regression, IEU was centered. Results are shown in Table 2.⁵

As expected, although neither of the two contrast variables representing the effect of entitativity was a reliable predictor of harmfulness, IEU was. The more the EU was perceived as an ally, the less it was perceived as harmful to the United States. More important, although X2 did not interact significantly with IEU, X1 did, suggesting the presence of a linear effect of entitativity. The effect of X1 on harmfulness was then computed for two single values of IEU: one standard deviation above the mean (ally) and one standard deviation below the mean (enemy). When the image of the EU was that of an ally, higher levels of entitativity led to the perception of less harmfulness [$\beta = -.32, t(113) = -2.91, p < .005$]. This effect

⁵ The change in R^2 obtained in step 2 was due exclusively to the significant interaction of $X1 \times IEU$. Alternative models in which the term $X2 \times IEU$ was entered separately confirmed that it did not contribute to explaining any noticeable amount of variance.

Table 2. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Perceived Harmfulness (Study 2, $N = 117$)

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β
Step 1			
X1	-.09	.14	-.06
X2	-.04	.08	-.04
IEU	-.51	.14	-.32*
Step 2			
X1 \times IEU	-.57	.16	-.31*
X2 \times IEU	-.03	.09	-.02

Note. $R^2 = .11$ for step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .10$ for step 2 ($ps < .001$).
 * $p < .001$.

was reversed when the image of the EU was that of an enemy, with high entitativity leading to the perception of more harmfulness [$\beta = .28, t(113) = 2.27, p < .02$].

Simple slopes in which IEU predicted harmfulness were obtained for the three levels of entitativity. Given that entitativity is an ordinal variable, the values corresponding to high, control, and low entitativity were chosen (1, 0, and -1, respectively) as single values.⁶ When entitativity was high, IEU reliably predicted perceived harmfulness: The more the EU was perceived as an ally, the less its actions were perceived as harmful [$\beta = -.67, t(113) = -5.40, p < .001$]. This was also the case at medium levels of entitativity [$\beta = -.31, t(113) = -3.67, p < .001$], but not at low levels of entitativity ($\beta = .06, t < 1$). The results are shown in Figure 2, which illustrates the polarizing effect of entitativity.

Discussion

Classic work on image theory (Boulding, 1956, 1969) as well as more recent research (e.g., Herrmann et al., 1997), has produced an excellent account of the way perceivers apprehend the Other in international relations. Specifically, images of the Other such as *enemy*, *ally*, *colony*, and *degenerate* not only have been found to operate as schemata, thus influencing the interpretation of events concerning the Other, but have also proven effective in predicting policy choices (Herrmann et al., 1997).

The implicit assumption of the work on image theory has been that the Other exists. What we propose here is that the Other can exist, in the eye of the perceiver, *more* or *less*. Specifically, building on the social-psychological literature, we argued that countries can vary in the extent to which they are seen as real entities. We called the measure of this variation entitativity (Campbell, 1958). The

⁶ As in Study 1 (see note 3), we computed simple regressions for the three conditions separately. These revealed the same pattern as the analyses we describe, and are not reported here.

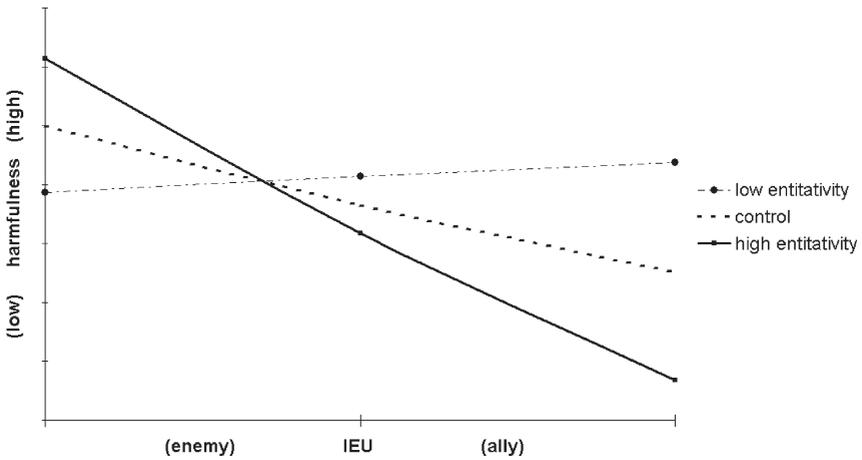


Figure 2. Relationship between Image of the European Union (IEU) and perceived harmfulness of its actions to the United States as a function of the three experimental conditions.

reason for taking into consideration this “structural” dimension, in addition to dimensions related to “content,” is that the expectations that one derives from image theory might be moderated by this structural dimension. We thus put forward a polarization hypothesis.

As a preliminary test of this hypothesis, we concentrated on the relationship between the perception of the Other along the enemy/ally continuum and the perception of harmfulness of its actions to the ingroup. This relationship is fairly straightforward, *all else being equal*: The more hostile the Other is thought to be to one’s own country, the more harmful the actions of the Other will be perceived to be. Conversely, the more friendly the Other is thought to be, the more beneficial the actions of the Other will be perceived to be.

We then carried out two experiments in which *all else was not equal*. Namely, we varied the entitativity of the Other through experimental manipulation. As predicted by our polarization hypothesis, entitativity moderated the relationship described above. When the EU was made highly entitative in the eyes of American students, the image of the EU was a very strong predictor of perceived harmfulness. When the entitativity of the EU was reduced, the image no longer predicted the perceived harmfulness. Moreover, when the entitativity of the EU was moderate, the slope representing the impact of image on perceived harmfulness landed precisely between the two other conditions (Study 2).

Among participants who held an image of the EU as an ally, high entitativity led to the perception of its actions as less harmful to the United States. Among participants who held an image of the EU as an enemy, the opposite was true.

This pattern of findings makes a convincing case for the moderating effect of entitativity, and also for the more specific hypothesis that it polarizes judgments about the Other. Also, across our studies we did not find any main effect of entitativity, leading us to conclude that entitativity is neither good nor bad per se.

This conclusion is at odds with what has been suggested by Abelson, Dasgupta, Park, and Banaji (1998). Describing the result of an experimental study in which the entitativity of fictional creatures was manipulated and the harmfulness of their behavior toward another group of fictional creatures assessed, these authors concluded that “the outgroup is seen as relatively homogeneous (i.e., entitative) and *therefore* judged more negatively” (p. 247; italics added).

To clarify the inconsistency between our conclusion and that of Abelson et al., it is necessary to look into the details of the data on which the latter was based. These data were presented by Dasgupta, Banaji, and Abelson (1999, experiment 2). Participants in this study were presented with a cover story describing computer-generated humanoid creatures, called Gs, allegedly created for a new science fiction movie. The participants were advised that although the impression formation task would focus on the Gs exclusively, two kinds of creatures—the Gs and the Hs—would appear in the film. Participants were then presented with an entitative group of Gs, a non-entitative group of Gs, or single exemplars of Gs. Group entitativity was manipulated by varying the physical similarity (i.e., color) of the Gs. Results showed that when the Gs were depicted as a highly entitative group, they were expected to be less likely to engage in positive behavior (and more likely to engage in negative behavior) than when they were depicted as a less entitative group. This led Dasgupta and her colleagues to conclude that entitative groups are perceived as “active agents ready to engage in harmful actions against outsiders” (p. 1001).

This conclusion is based on the assumption that diagnostic information about the Gs was absent from the context of the experiment. In other words, Gs were not presented as hostile or friendly to Hs. However, two features of the experiments raise questions as to whether the increased negativity was elicited by entitativity alone. First, a feature that might have contributed to the results obtained by Dasgupta et al. is the specific manipulation of entitativity. Physical similarity, especially of skin color, might have activated some specific schema related to racial antagonism, as noted in Abelson et al. (1998, p. 247). More important, the very nature of the cover story may have implied that the two groups were indeed in conflict. Most science fiction TV and movie plots are based on conflict rather than cooperation between groups (for instance, the Borg and the humans in *Star Trek*).

The idea that greater entitativity elicits negative perceptions of the Other is also challenged by the results of a study by Susskind, Maurer, Thakkar, Hamilton, and Sherman (1999, experiment 1). Participants in this study were presented with sentences describing behaviors performed by an individual, a tightly knit group of friends, or an aggregate of individuals (different persons randomly

selected from a large state university). They were asked to form an impression of the target and to rate the target on a series of positive traits (intelligence, sociability, political activism, and athletics). Results showed that the individual target was rated more highly (positively) than both the group and the aggregate; more important for our purposes, the group was rated more highly (positively) than the aggregate. To the extent that the group target can be considered as more entitative than the aggregate of individuals, this result is not consistent with the claim that entitativity leads the target group to be perceived more negatively. However, it is consistent with our polarization hypothesis.

The two studies we presented focused on negative expectations about the Other's behavior. Such expectations are the most problematic to international relations and to intergroup relations in general. Our data show that reifying the Other when it is perceived as an enemy clearly enhances negative expectations, which can in turn promote a spiral of conflict (see Brubaker, 2002).

Our data also show that among individuals who think of the Other as an ally, enhancing its entitativity led to perceiving its actions as less harmful to the ingroup—a result that is consistent with our polarization hypothesis and with the results obtained by Susskind and his colleagues (1999). Future research on this topic should focus on both positive and negative expectations. We would expect high levels of entitativity to increase the degree of positive expectations as well. However, if specific attribution processes trigger the polarizing effect of entitativity, an asymmetry between positive and negative expectations might emerge, because the latter are known to elicit more causal attribution (Wong & Weiner, 1981).

The Relationship Between the Entitativity and the Image of the Other

Our two studies used minimal manipulations of perceptual features and similarity of the exemplars constituting the Other that made no reference to the content of the image of the Other (goals, intents, cultural characteristics, etc.). Yet changes in the perceived harmfulness of the Other occurred as a consequence of (interaction involving) these factors. This finding is consistent with our claim that entitativity moderates—that is, interacts with—images of the Other in producing expectations about its behavior. One could argue, however, that entitativity is actually a part of the image of the Other. This is an important theoretical issue.

Whether or not entitativity is part of the image of the Other depends on the way we define the concept of image. Boulding's definition of image reported above is not particularly informative in this respect. More useful for our purposes is an examination of the three factors, mentioned earlier, that bring about the more recent taxonomy of images proposed by Herrmann and his colleagues (1997, pp. 407–408): the perceived relative capability of the actor, the perceived threat and/or opportunity represented by that actor, and the perceived culture of that actor. Still, none of these factors seem to us to correspond to the degree of

entitativity of the Other. Therefore, according to this definition, entitativity should not be treated as a component of image.

This is not to say that entitativity is orthogonal to these three factors. Indeed, certain images are likely to go hand in hand with the perception of the Other as strongly entitative, and some evidence suggests that this is the case. For instance, in two original experiments, Corneille, Yzerbyt, Rogier, and Buidin (2001) manipulated the proportion of the electorate supporting an extreme right-wing political party so as to make the party appear as highly threatening (40% of support) or non-threatening (4% of support). What they observed was that a highly threatening right-wing party was perceived as enjoying greater levels of consensus within the party as well as being more homogeneous—the latter being an indicator of entitativity (see also Brewer et al., 1995; Judd & Park, 1988).

One may question whether the extent of the support in Corneille et al.'s study could be considered a manipulation of entitativity itself. Although minority groups are considered more homogeneous than majority groups (e.g., Simon & Brown, 1987), one may argue that a group with 4% of support does not really exist, whereas one with 40% of support does. This, rather than threat, may have caused the increase in perceived homogeneity. Although our data clearly show that entitativity polarizes the link between the image of the Other and the perceived harmfulness of its actions (say, threat) to the ingroup, we believe that increasing perceived threat may also increase perceived entitativity. Increased friendliness, however, may produce the same effects. The relationship among perceived threat/friendliness, image, and the entitativity of the Other deserves further investigation.

Possible Mediators of the Effects of Entitativity

Entitativity may cause the observed polarization by moderating the extent to which the Other is perceived as having a distinct set of intentions. Some evidence exists that supports this conjecture. Working in an international relations scenario, Sacchi and Castano (2002) showed that the higher the entitativity of the ingroup, the stronger the attribution of intentionality (for a review, see Castano, in press). Therefore, the pattern of findings we observed in the low-entitativity condition might be due to less perceived intentionality.

An alternative explanation focuses on the extent to which the perceiver makes an “agent’s reasons” explanation (as opposed to a “causal histories of reasons” explanation) to account for the behavior of a target. Agent’s reasons explanations are considered the initiating cause in a causal chain involving intentions and actions (reasons → intention → action; Malle, 1999). When an individual provides an agent’s reasons explanation, he or she is assuming that while performing the behavior the agent is aware of the reasons for doing so, and that these provide a rational ground for forming the intention to act (O’Laughlin & Malle, 2002). Such an explanation presupposes the perception of agency in the actor,

and seems to be used more for behaviors performed by entitative than by non-entitative groups (O'Laughlin & Malle, 2002). Hence, the participants in our studies who were presented with a non-entitative EU may not have engaged in such explanation, and this in turn may have resulted in a less extreme judgment of the target.

The process implied by such an account does not need to be mediated by perceived intentionality; rather, it is the nature of this intentionality that may vary. Abelson and his colleagues' (1998) definition of "activity" is enlightening in this respect. According to these authors, activity "elicits an inference that the actor is engaged in active pursuit of goal satisfaction" (p. 248). It may well be that it is precisely the "active pursuit" of goal satisfaction that is undermined when the actor lacks entitativity. In other words, the group may be perceived as lacking the awareness and deliberation that, according to O'Laughlin and Malle (2002), characterize agent's reasons explanations and differentiate them from causal histories of reasons explanations. Those American participants who saw the EU as an enemy of the United States might not have perceived great harmfulness in its commercial treaty if they had thought this behavior was not motivated by a specific reason, but rather was the outcome of a series of circumstances.

Thus, O'Laughlin and Malle's (2002) work seems to suggest that individuals provide explanations of a different nature for entitative versus non-entitative groups. Our own research shows that polarized judgments of a group's actions emerge when the group is perceived as high in entitativity. Future research should investigate the interplay between these phenomena, focusing on the concept of agency. Such an inquiry would benefit from the insights provided by cross-cultural research on the perception of agency and the attribution of causality at the collective level (e.g., Menon, Morris, Chiu, & Hong, 1999), which can help us better assess the perspectives of culturally different actors in international scenarios. For instance, Gries and Peng (2002) have suggested that differences in Chinese and American approaches to causal attribution exacerbated the resolution of an already difficult situation following the Hainan Island spy plane collision of April 2001.

Conclusions

We have provided some evidence that the social-psychological concept of entitativity has the potential to enhance the study of international relations. Moreover, we believe that a further potential for cross-fertilization between these two fields of research exists (see Alexander et al., 1999). Our findings should contribute to social-psychological theory on intergroup relations by improving our understanding of the relationship among perceived entitativity, activity, intentionality, and agency at the collective level. Our hope is that such interdisciplinary research will also be able to inform practice and influence policymaking.

Silverstein (1989) invited psychologists to take on the challenge of helping to change dangerous images of the Other that guided, and misled, Cold War

actors' mutual perceptions, taking the world close to nuclear war. We need to acknowledge that, in addition to these images, more subtle factors may influence our interpretation of the Other's action. This may also help to hinder spirals of conflict in international relations. For instance, when reporting about the Other, the choice of nouns may be important. It is one thing to state that "The Russian Foreign Ministry decided . . .," but another altogether to assert that "Russia feels . . ." or "Moscow is angry." The routine anthropomorphization of nations lends them greater entitativity. If these nations are seen as enemies, such language can increase threat perception, paving the way for misperception and conflict.

APPENDIX

Entitativity Scale

- *Europeans have many characteristics in common.
- *Europeans share a common past experience.
- *Europeans have a sense of common fate.
- There are strong ties among Europeans.
- The European Union has real existence as a group.
- The European Union is just an abstraction.
- Europeans have a characteristic nature.
- There are strong similarities between Europeans.
- There is no doubt about the existence of the European Union.
- Europeans have specific characteristics.
- *Items used in Study 1.

Items Used to Assess the Image of the EU in Study 2

- The European Union has goals that are incompatible with those of the US.
- The European Union is an ally of the US.
- The European Union cooperates with the US.
- In the next decades, the European Union may become an antagonist of the US.
- The European Union is friendly towards the US.
- The European Union is trustworthy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Ned Lebow and Richard Herrmann for their support during our stay at the Mershon Center at Ohio State University, where this research originated; Marilynn Brewer for her insightful remarks about our research paradigm; Mary Hoeverler and Caren Rabbino for editing suggestions; and Rupert Brown and Dominic Abrams, the editors, and three anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to

Emanuele Castano, Graduate Faculty, New School University, 65 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10003, USA. E-mail: castano@newschool.edu.

REFERENCES

- Abelson, R. P., Dasgupta, N., Park, J., & Banaji, M. R. (1998). Perceptions of the collective other. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 2, 243–250.
- Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and probing interactions*. London: Sage.
- Alexander, M. G., Brewer, M. B., & Herrmann, R. K. (1999). Images and affect: A functional analysis of out-group stereotype. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77, 78–93.
- Boulding, K. (1956). *The image*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Boulding, K. (1969). National images and international systems. In J. N. Rosenau (Ed.), *International politics and foreign policy* (pp. 422–431). New York: Free Press.
- Brewer, M. B., & Harasty, A. S. (1996). Seeing groups as entities: The role of perceiver motivation. In E. M. Sorrentino & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition* (vol. 3, pp. 347–370). New York: Guilford.
- Brewer, M. B., Weber, J. G., & Carini, B. (1995). Person memory in intergroup contexts: Categorization versus individuation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 29–40.
- Brubaker, R. (2002). Ethnicity without groups. *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, XLIII, 163–189.
- Campbell, D. T. (1958). Common fate, similarity, and other indices of the status of aggregates of person as social entities. *Behavioral Science*, 3, 14–25.
- Castano, E. (in press). Ingroup entitativity and ingroup identification: On the value of reification. In V. Y. Yzerbyt, M. C. Judd, & O. Corneille (Eds.), *The psychology of group perception: Contributions to the study of homogeneity, entitativity, and essentialism*. London: Psychology Press.
- Castano, E., Yzerbyt, V. Y., & Bourguignon, D. (1999). *Measuring entitativity*. Unpublished manuscript, Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium.
- Castano, E., Yzerbyt, V. Y., & Bourguignon, D. (in press). We are one and I like it: The impact of ingroup entitativity on ingroup identification. *European Journal of Social Psychology*.
- Castano, E., Yzerbyt, V. Y., Paladino, M.-P., & Sacchi, S. (2002). I belong, therefore I exist: Ingroup identification, ingroup entitativity, and ingroup bias. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28, 135–143.
- Cohen, J., & Cohen, P. (1983). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Corneille, O., Yzerbyt, V. Y., Rogier, A., & Buidin, G. (2001). Threat and the group attribution error: When threat elicits judgments of extremity and homogeneity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27, 437–446.
- Dasgupta, N., Banaji, M. R., & Abelson, R. P. (1999). Group entitativity and group perception: Associations between physical features and psychological judgment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77, 991–1003.
- Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. (1991). *Social cognition*. New York: Random House.
- Gaertner, L., & Schopler, H. (1998). Perceived ingroup entitativity and intergroup bias: An interconnection of self and others. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 28, 963–980.
- Greenberg, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Solomon, S. (1986). The causes and consequences of the need for self-esteem: A terror management theory. In R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), *Public self and private self* (pp. 189–212). New York: Springer-Verlag.

- Gries, P. H., & Peng, K. (2002). Culture clash? Apologies east and west. *Journal of Contemporary China, 11*, 173–178.
- Hamilton, D. L., & Sherman, S. J. (1996). Perceiving persons and groups. *Psychological Review, 103*, 336–355.
- Hamilton, D. L., Sherman, S. J., & Lickel, B. (1998). Perceiving social groups: The importance of the entitativity continuum. In C. Sedikides, J. Schopler, & C. A. Insko (Eds.), *Intergroup cognition and intergroup behavior* (pp. 47–74). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Haslam, N., Rothschild, L., & Ernst, D. (2000). Essentialist beliefs about social categories. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 39*, 113–127.
- Herrmann, R. K. (1985). *Perceptions and behavior in Soviet foreign policy*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Herrmann, R. K., Voss, J. F., Schooler, T. Y. E., & Ciarrochi, J. (1997). Images in international relations: An experimental test of cognitive schemata. *International Studies Quarterly, 41*, 403–433.
- Insko, C. A., Schopler, J., & Sedikides, C. (1998). Differential distrust of groups and individuals. In C. Sedikides, J. Schopler, & C. A. Insko (Eds.), *Intergroup cognition and intergroup behavior* (pp. 75–107). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Judd, C. M., & Park, B. (1988). Out-group homogeneity: Judgments of variability at the individual and group levels. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*, 778–788.
- Lickel, B., Hamilton, D. L., Wierzchowska, G., Lewis, A., Sherman, S. J., & Uhles, A. N. (2000). Varieties of groups and the perception of group entitativity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*, 223–246.
- Malle, B. M. (1999). How people explain behavior: A new theoretical framework. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 3*, 23–48.
- McConnell, A. R., Sherman, S. J., & Hamilton, D. L. (1994). On-line and memory-based aspects of individual and group target judgments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*, 173–185.
- McConnell, A. R., Sherman, S. J., & Hamilton, D. L. (1997). Target cohesiveness: Implications for information processing about individual and group targets. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*, 750–762.
- Menon, T., Morris, M. W., Chiu, C., & Hong, Y. (1999). Culture and the construal of agency: Attribution to individual versus group dispositions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 701–717.
- O’Laughlin, M. J., & Malle, B. M. (2002). How people explain actions performed by groups and individuals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*, 33–48.
- Pickett, C. L. (2001). The effects of entitativity beliefs on implicit comparisons between group members. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27*, 515–525.
- Sacchi, S., & Castano, E. (2002, June). *Entitative is beautiful. The importance of perceiving the ingroup as a real entity*. Paper presented at the general meeting of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology, San Sebastian, Spain.
- Silverstein, B. (1989). Enemy images: The psychology of U.S. attitudes and cognition regarding the Soviet Union. *American Psychologist, 44*, 903–913.
- Simon, B., & Brown, R. J. (1987). Perceived intragroup homogeneity in minority-majority contexts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53*, 703–711.
- Susskind, J., Maurer, K., Thakkar, V., Hamilton, D. L., & Sherman, J. W. (1999). Perceiving individuals and groups: Expectancies, dispositional inferences, and causal attributions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 181–191.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup relations. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

- Welbourne, J. L. (1999). The impact of perceived entitativity on inconsistency resolution for groups and individuals. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 35*, 481–508.
- West, S. G., Aiken, L. S., & Krull, J. L. (1996). Experimental personality designs: Analyzing categorical by continuous variable interactions. *Journal of Personality, 64*, 1–48.
- Wong, P. T., & Weiner, B. (1981). When people ask “why” questions, and the heuristics of attributional search. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 40*, 650–663.
- Yzerbyt, V. Y., Castano, E., Leyens, J.-P., & Paladino, M.-P. (2000). The primacy of the ingroup: The interplay of entitativity and identification. *European Review of Social Psychology, 11*, 257–295.
- Yzerbyt, V. Y., Corneille, O., & Estrada, C. (2001). The interplay of subjective essentialism and entitativity in the formation of stereotypes. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 5*, 141–155.
- Yzerbyt, V. Y., Rogier, A., & Fiske, S. T. (1998). Group entitativity and social attribution: On translating situational constraints into stereotypes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 24*, 1090–1104.