

## Perceptions of the Collective Other

**Robert P. Abelson**

*Department of Psychology  
Yale University*

**Nilanjana Dasgupta**

*Department of Psychology  
University of Washington*

**Jaihyun Park and Mahzarin R. Banaji**

*Department of Psychology  
Yale University*

*It is contended that perceptions of groups are affected by particular variables that do not apply to individuals (e.g., intragroup similarity and proximity). Importantly, the perception of outgroup threat has incomplete analogs at the individual level. Results from 3 studies support predictable distinctions between representations of individuals and of groups. Study 1 showed that priming of the word they produces more extreme negative judgments of the protagonist(s) in a story about 4 individuals acting jointly than in the same story with a single person acting alone. The opposite result holds for priming with the word he. Study 2, with Korean participants, demonstrates that actions by individuals or groups elicit differing preferences for redress. Individual responses (e.g., getting mad) to an individual racial insult (e.g., a snub by a waitress) are preferred to collective responses (e.g., circulating a petition), whereas the reverse preferences hold for a group insult (e.g., taunts from a gang of White youths). In Study 3, cues to the entitivity of a group are introduced. This concept, introduced by Donald Campbell (1958), distinguishes different degrees of "groupness." Visual depictions of collections of unfamiliar humanoid creatures (greebles) were used to convey that they were either similar or dissimilar and either proximate or scattered. Results confirm the expectation that similarity and proximity—two entitive conditions—elicit more negative judgments of the group. Attention to other cues for entitivity may enrich social psychological views of stereotyping and prejudice by focusing on perceptions of groups as coordinated actors with the potential to bring about negative consequences. Such experiments point to the need for greater research focus on the vastly understudied but fundamental problem of the social cognition of group behavior.*

Social psychology's original and central mission has been to offer a view of how individuals are shaped and even created by the social world they inhabit. In keeping with this objective, early social psychologists documented with zest the many ways in

which the actions or even the mere presence of others shaped social behavior. A major focus of early research was the power of social groups on beliefs, attitudes, and behavior, with special attention to the differential feelings evoked by ingroups ("us") relative to outgroups ("them"). In the past 50 years social psychologists have examined intergroup relationships and its accompanying processes (e.g., prejudice, stereotyping, compliance, conformity, etc.), thereby making notable contributions to our understanding of intragroup and intergroup behavior. Surprisingly, however, this area of research has paid little attention to the cognitive processes that underlie beliefs and at-

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Requests for reprints should be sent to Robert P. Abelson, Department of Psychology, Yale University, P.O. Box 208205, New Haven, CT 06520-8205. E-mail: robert.abelson@yale.edu.

titudes toward groups. In fact, research on groups has remained curiously impervious to recent methodological advances in the study of cognitive processes, thereby excluding important questions concerning the mental representations of groups.

At the same time, the area within social psychology most engaged in a cognitive analysis of social behavior (social cognition) has come to focus almost exclusively on individuals as units of analysis. Scores of studies have examined perceptions of individuals but relatively few have analyzed mental representations of social groups to which those individuals belong. Questions of great import lie at the intersection of intergroup relationships and social cognition, and it appears that we are not alone in thinking that the time is right to forge links between these areas (Brewer & Harasty, 1996; Hamilton & Sherman, 1996; Insko, Hoyle, Pinkley, & Hong, 1988; McConnell, Sherman, & Hamilton, 1997; Sedikides, Schopler, & Insko, 1997). To earlier psychologists like Lewin, Asch, Campbell, and Tajfel, a schism such as this would have seemed irrational at best, and we offer this analysis to reaffirm the belief that a cognitive analysis of group perception is neither oppositional nor irrelevant. It is imperative that we consider questions such as: Do perceivers hold distinct cognitive representations of groups versus individuals such that the same actions evoke different responses as a function of the type of actor? Are changes in group cohesiveness likely to influence perceivers' inferences about a group's motives, intentions, and behavior? In this article we focus on social groups as our unit of analysis and examine how cognitive processes such as beliefs, evaluations, and attributions unfold when applied to collective social actors.

#### **Activating Representations of Social Groups: Antecedents and Consequences**

Our goal was to examine the conditions under which groups evoke beliefs, feelings, and behavioral responses that differ sharply from those evoked by individuals. Some existing research is consistent with our expectations (Oakes & Turner, 1986; Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991; Wilder, 1977, 1978). These studies demonstrated that when situational cues lead perceivers to believe that individuals seen in an experimental context are part of a cohesive group as opposed to an aggregate of unrelated individuals, they are more likely to (a) express stereotypic judgments about those individuals and (b) infer that target members' behavior was shaped by the presence of others.

Although the research described previously has contributed to an understanding of the conditions un-

der which judgments of individuals are influenced by the salience of group membership, it does not address questions related to perceptions of groups as entities. To address this gap in the literature, we conducted three empirical projects that tackled issues related to group perception. The first project examined conditions that elicit differential judgments of group versus individual actors. The second project investigated the extent to which actions by collectives versus individuals toward oneself evoke sharply different behavioral responses. Finally, a third project examined the extent to which perceptual cues connoting group cohesiveness activate both trait inferences as well as active behavioral inferences about the intention and influence of those groups on others. Using very different methodologies, these three projects provide converging evidence for the idea that mental representations of cohesive groups versus individuals are cognitively distinct and have different consequences for social judgments of, and behavioral responses to, collective and individual others. The next three sections describe each study in some detail.

#### **Implicit Activation of Group Versus Individual Representations: Consequences for Social Judgment**

Our purpose in this study was to examine the conditions under which groups and individuals performing the same behavior evoke differing judgments. We predicted that to the extent that representations of groups and individuals are cognitively distinct, exposure to information that activates one of these representations (group vs. individual actor) ought to selectively influence judgments of similar targets. To test this hypothesis we employed an implicit priming procedure that allowed us to selectively activate (or prime) cognitive representations of groups or individuals and examine their differential influence on social judgments without perceivers' conscious awareness (Dasgupta, Abelson, & Banaji, 1995). The activated representations are entirely abstract and not directly related to any particular type of individuals or groups.

Participants took part in two ostensibly unrelated experiments. In the "first" experiment, they were exposed to information about actions performed by cohesive groups acting together or by individuals acting alone. Participants' task involved the selection and rearrangement of words in jumbled orders, so as to form meaningful sentences. For half of the participants, the only available answers for each of a large set of examples were sentences of the form "*They* [verb object]." For example, given the jumble, "Street but the cross they," the sentence is: "They cross the street." The other group of participants got the same scrambled sentences, with *they* replaced by

he and the syntax modified where necessary. The second task, presented as a separate and unrelated experiment, was for participants to read and then judge the traits and motives of the characters in a rather ambiguous, slightly ominous story. (We made the story ambiguous, but sprinkled it with miscellaneous intimations of hostile intent to allow specific attributions to be made about the protagonists' behaviors.) For half of the participants, the story was about four men in a Buick (the group story) who intently followed another car through heavy traffic and finally caught up with its driver inside a public building. The remaining participants got the same story, except that the four men in the Buick were replaced by a single man (the individual story). All participants were then asked, appropriately to their story, to rate how threatening and hostile were (was) the men (man) in the Buick.

For this paradigm, we hypothesized that activation of a particular type of actor (*he/they*) via the scrambled sentences task would serve to increase the cognitive accessibility of the appropriate type of actor (individual vs. group). In the subsequent judgment task, the activated construct would selectively influence the interpretation of behaviors performed by similar actors (*he/they*) in the later story. Table 1 gives the data.

The anticipated matching interaction (with  $p < .01$  and effect size  $d = .87$ ) is manifested here by the greater perceived hostility and aggressiveness of the group character than the individual character for participants who had been given *they* sentences and the reverse difference for those who had been given *he* sentences in the previous session. It is likely that rendering a particular social actor cognitively accessible will bias later interpretations of a similar actor's behaviors and motives due to selective attention to certain behaviors that were perceived to typify groups versus individuals. Our story contained several veiled hints that the pursuer(s) was (were) threatening the man being followed, and we expected this attribution to be more readily made in the matching cells. Ratings on story-irrelevant traits should not produce matching effects, and in our data they did not. These data suggest that groups and individuals create distinct cognitive representations. Furthermore, they suggest that activation of a particular type of repre-

sentation has an implicit carry-over effect to later judgments of similar, but not dissimilar, targets (individual vs. group).

### Responses to Threats From Collective Versus Individual Others

Just as judgments of collective versus individual actions are distinctly divergent under certain conditions, so also reactions to collective versus individual behavior targeted at the self ought to differ. In a study of minority response to incidents of bias, J. Park (1994) elicited reports from Korean graduate students and Korean American undergraduates of actual experiences in which they were the targets of explicit or implicit racial insults in the United States. These reported incidents were classified by a similarity scaling operation (Kruskal & Wish, 1970) into five subclusters. Simplifying, there were two main clusters: *individual insults*, such as a particular waitress or passerby being inappropriately rude; and *collective insults*, such as a gang of drunken youths shouting racial insults. Meanwhile, sets of possible reactions to insults were elicited, and similarity scaling (by other participants) yielded four subclusters. The major two were *individual reactions*, such as expressing anger at the perpetrator; and *collective reactions*, such as ingroup discussion of the incident. For the final step of the study, the investigator selected six common insulting incidents (two individual and four collective) and six responses (two individual and four collective). Each incident was paired with each response, and these 36 pairs, along with other pairs not relevant to this discussion, were presented in counterbalanced orders to fresh samples of Korean and Korean American participants, with the following rating instruction: "If Incident X happened to you, how likely would you be to give Response Y?" Although one or two of the incidents and responses may have been experienced directly by a given subject, it is extremely unlikely that all six provocations had occurred (much less all 36 Incident  $\times$  Response combinations); thus we assume that participants answered in terms of hypothetical constructions rather than remembered experiences.

For Korean graduate students and Korean American undergraduates, the mean response likelihoods are shown in Table 2, categorized along each margin as Individual or Collective. For both groups, a matching pattern is clearly observed. The individual-individual and collective-collective cells dominate their rows and columns. In other words, threats from individual perpetrators evoked more individualistic than collectivistic responses. Likewise, threats from group perpetrators were judged to elicit coordinated ingroup responses, rather than individual responses from the

**Table 1.** Ratings of the Story Character(s) as Hostile and Threatening (Two 7-point Scales Averaged)

Story	Priming Condition	
	Individual ( <i>He</i> )	Collective ( <i>They</i> )
Individual (1 man)	<b>3.15</b>	2.85
Collective (4 men)	2.65	<b>3.45</b>

Note:  $n = 35$  per story condition. Boldface indicates 'matching' cells.

**Table 2.** Mean Likelihoods of Types of Response to Types of Insult

Reactions	Insults		<i>M</i>
	Individual	Collective	
Koreans <sup>a</sup>			
Individual	<b>7.22</b>	6.01	6.62
Collective	5.48	<b>6.77</b>	6.12
Korean-Americans <sup>b</sup>			
Individual	<b>7.65</b>	6.86	7.26
Collective	7.34	<b>8.66</b>	8.00

Note: Likelihood scale runs from 0 to 10. Boldface indicates 'matching' cells.

<sup>a</sup>*n* = 25. <sup>b</sup>*n* = 25.

insulted member. Analyses of variance on each 2 × 2, and on a pooled table over the two groups, yield extremely solid significance levels for the interaction of type of reaction with type of insult. The estimated effect size for the matching effect on the pooled table is 1.02, quite a strong effect.<sup>1</sup>

There is one other noteworthy feature of these data. There is a significant interaction of Group × Level of Reaction, averaging over types of insult. The Korean graduate students rate individual responses as somewhat more likely than collective responses, whereas the Korean Americans (against a background of generally higher ratings) rate collective reactions more likely than individual ones. Our speculative interpretation of this difference is that typical graduate students from Korea see themselves as transient, here mainly for higher education. Thus, such peer support as they may have is oriented toward academic matters much more than toward coping with incidents of intolerance. Their consciousness has not been raised, so to speak, as much as their counterparts, the Korean American undergraduates, who are in the minority role for life.

Overall, these data suggest that reactions to threats depend on the type of perpetrator engaging in the threatening behavior. Insults and threats from collectives evoke qualitatively different responses compared to analogous treatment from individuals. Taken together, this study and the previous one suggest that distinct cognitive representations of groups versus individuals not only lead to different interpretations of the same actions (when directed at the self or at others), but also evoke differential behavioral responses from the perceiver.

<sup>1</sup>There are statistical complications if we assume three random factors: Participants within Groups, Stimulus Items within Insult Categories, and Reaction Items within Response Categories. For significance tests it was necessary to develop a formula for a quasi-*F* that combined seven different mean squares in the error term. This unusual procedure is statistically conservative: the matching results are more highly significant by less conservative methods. The effect size was estimated using Participants as the only random effect.

## Trait and Behavioral Inferences About Perceptually Cohesive Groups

In this section we analyze the conception of the cohesive group both as a passive repository of categorical attributes and as an active, often threatening, agent capable of organized actions toward others.

The perceived collective other, we have asserted, is a qualitatively different kind of actor than a perceived individual other. An alternative is to view the actual effect of a group of size *N* as some physical and psychological multiple of the effect of a single other person (cf. Latané, 1981). Seventy-six trombones are louder than 1 trombone by some factor dependent on 76. A group of confederates in Asch's (1956) conformity experiment is more influential than one confederate, by some orderly function of the number of confederates. However, to say that group influence merely multiplies individual influence misses a crucial ecological point: namely, the expectation that different activities will be performed by groups than by individuals, especially by united, well-organized groups.

This last point merits amplification. Hamilton and Sherman (1996), Brewer and Harasty (1996), and this article's authors, among others, have independently re-discovered an important property of groups that was long ago analyzed by Campbell (1958). He postulated that perceptions of groups will be clear and well organized to the extent that they possess *entitativity*.<sup>2</sup> The concept is Gestaltist, referring to the perceived unity or "thingness" of a group, and Campbell discusses classical perceptual properties as its major antecedents: similarity, proximity, formation of a symmetrical pattern, and "common fate." Thus, to the extent that group members look alike, share spatial proximity, and move through time and space together, the group will have some degree of entitativity. The greater the exposure to these factors, the higher the perceived entitativity. It will seem like a kind of person, in the sense that it will have the same sorts of features that a person has: a unitary identity and personality, and in the real world, a web of past, present, and future relationships with other groups. It will have a set of goals and characteristic behaviors in the service of those goals. The particulars of these features will depend on the group and the situation. Hamilton and Sherman (1996) and Brewer and Harasty (1996) analyzed consequences of group entitativity in the target, such as the enhanced influence of stereotypy, increased weight of first impressions, and greater difficulty in processing exemplars not fitting the group prototype.

There is a further consequence of group entitativity that has emerged in our own research. In a series of experiments, we have created unfamiliar groups and var-

<sup>2</sup>We subsequently shorten the term to *entitativity*, condensing the *titati* to *titi*.

ied simple features relevant to the perception of entitivity (Dasgupta, Banaji, & Abelson, 1997). We have found that increasing the perceptual similarity and spatial proximity of members of a social group substantially increases the perceived likelihood that the group will perform a variety of negative group behaviors and slightly decreases the perceived likelihood of positive group behaviors. In other words, participants see groups as more combative and dangerous when they are more entitive.

The procedures were these: Participants saw images of novel humanoid creatures standing in groups of five. The group images were varied by depicting the creatures standing either in close proximity to each other, or scattered apart randomly. Similarity constituted a second factor: the creatures were of a single color or five different colors. Participants were shown many such displays. They had been told that they would see groups of Gs and that the task for each display was to judge the likelihood that the Gs would behave in a specified way toward Hs (another type of creature, not seen by the participants). The set of behaviors to be judged included both positive and negative actions that groups might perform—such as collaborate or threaten.

Our results showed that perceptual entitivity exacerbated negative attributions about group behavior. Similarity in the form of homogeneous coloration and the physical arrangement of standing in close proximity both contributed to the negativity bias toward groups. (The main effects of these two factors were roughly equal, and there was no interaction between them.) As for the potential for positive group behavior, greater similarity had a reliable but small effect in the direction of attenuating positive judgments of target groups. Physical proximity did not have a statistically reliable effect on positive judgments, although they were in the predicted direction.

Note that the two factors used in this study, though manifestly perceptual, could be interpreted in terms of belief propositions. Thus Gs of homogeneous color might evoke ideations about racial antagonism, and proximity could conjure up images of preparation for action—as in gathering together in a huddle or a conference.

It seems likely that complex cues to entitivity, such as universal participation in rituals of the group or the development of an ideology glorifying group membership, are primarily cognitive, whereas simpler cues such as proximity invoke rapid, automatic perceptual processes. This intuition takes advantage of the seeming difficulty of conveying complex concepts such as conformity, leadership, and so on with the aid of simple perceptual cues. However, the surprising richness of impressions conveyed by animated cartoon movies with geometric figures as protagonists (Heider & Simmel, 1944) suggests that perceptual representa-

tions of complex cues might be achieved after all. At any rate, this study's absence of evidence bearing on the two alternative interpretations disposes us to entertain both automatic activation and mediated inference as routes to judgments of entitivity.

## Broader Implications

### Propagandistic Use of Attributions of Entitivity

There has been much attention in the recent literature to the hypothesis that ingroups are perceived, relatively speaking, as heterogeneous and outgroups as homogeneous (for a summary, see B. Park, Judd, & Ryan, 1991). Our finding of a negativity bias associated with entitive groups is consistent with such an ingroup-outgroup difference. The outgroup is seen as relatively homogeneous (i.e., entitive) and therefore judged more negatively. A partisan propagandist aware (at some level) of the associations between perceived homogeneity, entitivity, and negative attributions could try to use them to his or her advantage by direct and indirect attempts to persuade the audience that a particular group is homogeneous. Folk "wisdom" in the form of visual or metaphoric images of homogeneity is helpful to this hypothetical propagandist; for example: "Birds of a feather flock together" evokes an image that relies not only on similarity (being feathered in a characteristic way), but also to the Gestaltist property of proximity and common fate (flocking together).<sup>3</sup> The expression "fellow traveler," used copiously in the McCarthy era to erase differences between Communists and various sorts of liberals, also employed a common fate cue (traveling together).

We see that linguistic tricks are available to try and shift perceptions of within-group similarity toward homogeneity, thereby presumably increasing the perceived threat attributed to the outgroup. The relative absence of colloquial expressions framing outgroupers as heterogeneous, and therefore less negative, is striking. (One has to invent new expressions, such as "The Rainbow Coalition" and "multiculturalism.") However, it has been shown experimentally that if the heterogeneity of the outgroup is made salient, impressions of the group become less negative (Denhaerinc, Leyens, & Yzerbyt, 1989; Maurer, Park, & Rothbart, 1995; Weber & Crocker, 1983). We would hypothesize in addition that if group members are credibly

<sup>3</sup> Strikingly, the use of bird images to induce perceived entitivity is consistent with the presumptively low variability in the properties of species of birds, as noted by the first and third authors of a book on the nature of induction (Holland, Holyoak, Nisbett, & Thagard, 1986; after you've seen one blue shreeble on a desert island, you are willing to assume that all shreebles are blue.)

shown to lack proximity to each other (i.e., to be dispersed, with little chance of communicating), the negativity of impressions would decrease.<sup>4</sup>

### Group Activity Implies and Is Implied by Group Entitivity

We have explored some consequences of perceived entitivity induced by information about similarity and proximity of outgroup members. Of special interest is the greater negativity associated with the more entitive group, even when the entitivity is in a relatively passive (trait-like) form. When group activity increases, entitivity is stronger. Activity, whether individual or group, elicits an inference that the actor is engaged in active pursuit of goal satisfaction (Schank & Abelson, 1977). For instance, in political discussions ethnic groups and nations are treated as if they are active organisms with hopes, plans, intentions, grievances, moods, and the like: The Palestinians yearn for a homeland, the Serbs have a deep-seated historical animus against the Muslims, the Christian fundamentalists are expanding their power base in the Republican Party, and so forth. Such concepts convey a level of entitivity that goes beyond the static, categorical construct of a metaphorical log, with chips as members. The outgroup is thus seen as not merely cohesive but as actually carrying out plans to achieve its objectives.<sup>5</sup>

What cues lead to the perception of an outgroup as active, that is, as capable and motivated to act as a purposeful unit? In contrast to simple entitivity, which is a matter of perceived togetherness and similarity, unity of purpose is (debatably) a mediated concept based on information about the intentionality of the group's action. Synchronized action implies centralized organization and planning. The simplest and probably the most powerful type of synchronous activity is identical behavior by a mass of people. Non-identical behaviors might still be synchronous if they are well-coordinated. In either case, synchronicity is a cue, perhaps largely perceptual, that suggests the conception of conformity imposed by a strong leader,

especially if the activity is unusual and uniquely identified with the group. Another perceptual cue to entitivity is the display of symbols of group identity, such as flags, logos, hairstyles, tattoos, bumper stickers, and so forth. Other cues are more clearly mediated conceptions rather than direct visual impressions. We have in mind such cues as: statements of intended action by leaders or salient members of the group, for example, announcement of plans to demonstrate, to strike, and so forth; mass participation in events, most notably the events specified in prior statements of intention, but also including spontaneous and dramatic mass actions, such as urban riots or crowd massacres; group political achievements widely celebrated by ingroup members, implying the intention to continue political action; and unanimity of justification for mass actions, whereby a variety of group members give the same rationale for their behaviors, for example, a formulaic excuse for crimes in the service of a cause. Such cues to purposiveness apply not only to social groups but also on the international scene to the actions of nations.<sup>6</sup>

There is thus a spectrum of cues likely to induce or confirm the attribution that another group is unified. In the Gestalt analysis this unity is presumably a direct perception (of similarity, proximity, and common fate). We have speculated that in addition, there is a more active, dynamic type of unity (the last four cues) that may perhaps be of greater interest, in part because its consequences are societally more dire.

An outgroup seen as highly entitive, that is, greatly disposed toward unified mass action, could be a matter of great concern to members of the ingroup. The realism of the concern would depend upon the realism of the perception of negative intent directed toward the ingroup and the perception of the unity of the outgroup. Even if the perception were distorted, ingroup members would feel threatened, a condition that would drive them to seek mutual support and homogenize their perception of the outgroup. Also likely would be collective behavioral responses (similar to Korean participants' responses in the study reported here) that would convey to the outgroup the ingroup's entitivity, potentially generating the kind of escalatory spiral so often discussed in the literature on group conflict (e.g., Deutsch, 1973). Abelson (1995, in press) discussed the psychological mechanisms involved in the emergence of caricatured (or

<sup>4</sup>Note, however, that "conspiracy theories" of malevolent enemies are insulated against any apparent lack of internal proximity: The essence of imagined conspiracy is that invisible communication goes on all the time, no matter how physically dispersed the members.

<sup>5</sup>Sears, Hensler, and Speer's (1979) distinction between two kinds of prejudice, labeled *old-fashioned racism* and *symbolic racism*, appears to be interpretable as trait-based versus activity-based views of Blacks by Whites. Indicators of the former are responses to survey questions such as "Blacks are inherently inferior to Whites," and of the latter by "Blacks are moving too far too fast." The downward trend since 1950 of endorsement of old-fashioned items and the increased agreement with symbolic ones, therefore suggests that prejudice persists, but that the target has been transformed from static to dynamic entitivity.

<sup>6</sup>Jervis (1972) reviewed documentary evidence of government policy makers' interpretations of the actions of adversary nations during periods of tension. He found a consistent bias toward the imputation of unified planning by the adversary, often misperceiving unrelated events as being coordinated. Soviet naval maneuvers were typically seen by the United States as expressions of strategic Politburo plans, when in fact the Soviet navy was marching to the beat of its own oil drummer.

demonized) portrayals by two antagonistic groups of each other and the normalization of extreme, hostile behaviors toward each other.

An interesting aspect of entitivity concerns the perception of a given individual from a highly entitive outgroup. Instead of being an exemplar of a stereotype, he or she is likely to be seen as a potential carrier or agent of the purposes of the outgroup. If African Americans are viewed as an anonymous mass of people intending to move into all-White suburban neighborhoods, then a single African American family buying into such a neighborhood will, we hypothesize, be perceived as an advance manifestation of an incoming tidal wave. One of us (Abelson) had the experience of conversing with a taxi driver on upper Connecticut Avenue, in Northwest Washington, DC, a stately neighborhood. The driver pointed to an African American woman on the street. "You see those [—]? They even want to move in up here." This incident suggests the possibility that scenarios such as neighborhood "tipping" are general schemata that apply beyond one's own neighborhood.

This situation was in fact investigated some years ago in an unusual empirical study of prejudice reduction, a study that is regrettably underpublicized. Hamilton and Bishop (discussed in Hamilton, Carpenter, & Bishop, 1984) conducted surveys of White families whose houses were very close to the house of an incoming Black family, the first of its kind in each of several neighborhoods. Questions about this event and about general attitudes toward African Americans were included in initial surveys and in re-interviews extending up to 1 year later. The most interesting result was that reported attitudes toward African Americans substantially improved after a year of having one Black family in the neighborhood. This sounds like a success for the group contact hypothesis (see Amir, 1969, 1976), but it was not. There was virtually no contact during the year with the newly arrived Black family in any of the test neighborhoods. The critical factor was that the White neighbors had been preoccupied with anxiety that a mass Black influx would cause a disastrous drop in property values. When this didn't happen—when "they" didn't move in—the White families expressed relief to one another and to the interviewers and exhibited more positive attitudes toward African Americans as a group.

Our interpretation is that the failed forecast of negative collective action by the outgroup weakened the perception of its entitivity, which diminished negative attitudes toward collective Blacks. However, if an expectation of collective outgroup threat were confirmed, that could strengthen a perception of entitivity and increase negative attitudes. On balance, overexaggeration of evil intent by an outgroup seems the more common case.

## Conclusion

As social psychologists and idealists, we have tended to believe that problems of intergroup conflict could be solved eventually by teaching individuals to welcome friendship with outgroup individuals, the implicit presumption being that groupiness would somehow wither away and disappear. However, we know that group influence is very strong, in both transient and steady situations. Groups anchor social identities, and social identities are psychologically crucial, as has been emphasized by social identity theorists (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). If we do not recognize this, we scientists are committing our own fundamental attribution error by locating too much causation in the individual, too little in the group.

We face a research opportunity of devising new strategies, or modifying old strategies, for weakening prejudice, based on ways to challenge or debunk exaggerated perceptions of outgroups as monolithic organisms with evil intent. We should strive to promote perceptions of heterogeneity and dispersion within groups (where it exists). To elucidate how this might be done, note that there are at least two different kinds of within-group heterogeneity—variability of properties of individuals, and variability of intentions of subgroups. When new information successfully conveys either kind of variability, this should generally serve to decrease attributions of entitivity, either passive or active. Exposure to individual trait differences among outgroupers has been the dominant conception of the cure for intergroup antagonism, but here we are suggesting a second method: exposure to a mixed bag of social and political purposes within the outgroup. Some outgroupers may be antagonistic toward your own group, but others urge tolerance and still others are indifferent. Emphasis on the outgroup's variability of attitudes, or perhaps their internal disagreements, should discourage perceptions of entitivity.

The group contact hypothesis need not be abandoned as a possible approach, but it requires refocusing on the contact of group with group (Hewstone & Brown, 1986), rather than as the mutual contact of individuals from two groups. This is not a new idea, of course. In the classic Sherif and Sherif (1953) Robbers' Cave study, conflict was resolved by devices that brought two entire groups of boy campers into contact. That kind of example, however, was unusual in that the environment was under experimental control, and the purposes of the outgroup were engineered to be uniformly cooperative when the climactic group contacts occurred. In the real world we would usually have to be content with occasions of active cooperation between subgroups, framing such events so as to encourage collective perceptions. In any case, research on perceived group entitivity looks to be a promising route for test-

ing new approaches to reduction of prejudice and intergroup antagonism.

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