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Driving European identification through discourse: Do nationals feel more European
when told they are all similar?

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Abstract

Recent work on psychological entitativity has suggested that perceiving Europe as an homogeneous entity may increase identification with this group. We suggest that this effect might in fact be due to the positively valued political projects that these descriptions serve rather than to their intrinsic qualities. In line with this view, it was predicted that a positive relation between perception of similarity among European nations and European identification would be obtained only when similarity was presented as desirable for the accomplishment of the European integration project. Generally pro-European students in three Brussels secondary schools (N=122) read a speech stressing the efficiency of a policy - increasing similarities vs. preserving differences between countries - in the successful development of the EU, or no text in the Control condition. They then reported their level of European identification and their perception of similarity among European nations. Results show that countries were judged as less similar in the "Difference desirable" condition than in the "Similarity desirable" or control conditions (no text), while European identification remained stable. Moreover, Perception of Similarity significantly predicted European Identification only when similarity had been presented as desirable. In the two other conditions - when no text was presented and when difference was presented as desirable -, there was no significant relation between these two variables. This study shows that perceiving an in-group as a homogeneous entity does not enhance identification unless it is considered as desirable for the in-group. In the case of the European Union, it suggests that perceiving heterogeneity among countries should not impede the development of a European identity.

Introduction

        In this paper we address the question of how influential messages can condition people's tendency to tie their identification with a superordinate group to their perception of this group as homogeneous. Admittedly, focusing on identity issues will only allow us, at best, to uncover a part of the picture inasmuch as *citizenship* is at stake in this special issue of Psychologica Belgica. Hence, citizenship and identity are related but distinct concepts (see also: Sanchez-Mazas & Klein, and   Sanchez-Mazas, Van Humskerken, & Casini, this issue). Citizenship refers both to the link uniting individuals to the institutions governing the entities they are part of (i.e.: the State in Nation-States, or European institutions for the European Union), and to the link uniting all the individuals who are part of the same entity. Citizenship includes both a passive – being born with a specific nationality, membership – and an active dimension – participating in democratic processes (Marshall, 1950; Telò, 1995). Identity is certainly relevant to both dimensions as it might condition people's relationships with institutions – for example, people should confer more legitimacy to institutions that embody a group they identify with – as well as people's willingness to get involved in active citizenship – voting, being members of political parties, volunteering, etc. In the current framework of the European integration process, a new supra-ordinate group is developing (Breakwell & Lyons, 1996; Chryssochoou, 1996, 2000; Cinnirella, 1997) and the question of European identity becomes an important political issue (Licata, 2001, 2002, soumis; Stråth, 2000): It is seen as necessary for granting European institutions a sense of legitimacy and for increasing people's involvement into European affairs[1]. The European identity issue is therefore of primary importance with respect to the way European citizenship is conceived and implemented through European policies. Hence, according to Stråth (2000), since the 1973 economic crisis, "Identity" has replaced "Integration" as the "buzz" word of the European Community.

        People's propensity to identify with social groups depends on a wide variety of factors (Yzerbyt, Castano, Leyens, & Paladino, 2000). Among those, the way people perceive the in-group and its position in the social structure is probably crucial. For example, it has been shown that the perceived status of an experimental group affects identification with this group (Ellemers, 1993): people are more prone to identify with a high than with a low status group. Recently, another characteristic of in-group representations has attracted some attention: Scholars

expressed a renewed interest in Donald Campbell's concept of "group entitativity", this concept being defined as "the degree of having the nature of an entity, of having real existence" (Campbell, 1958, p. 17). In this framework, Castano and his colleagues (Castano, 1998; Yzerbyt et al., 2000) addressed the issue of the relation between people's perception of the entitativity of the EU and their level of European identification. Through a series of studies, they showed that each of the four factors affecting the perceived entitativity of the European Union – namely common fate, similarity, group salience and boundedness – also affected people's identification with it.

Among these dimensions, similarity is of foremost importance in the context of the European project. Obviously, as the cradle of nationalism, European countries have been the object of nation-building processes which have resulted in the development of strong national allegiances coupled with widespread beliefs in the specificity and inherent uniqueness of each nation (Thiesse, 1999). The success of the European project therefore demands that individuals possessing distinct national identities accept to commit to this superordinate group *in spite* of these differences.

For engineers of European identity, an intuitively appealing solution to this problem may involve minimising the differences between Europeans, and accentuating their similarities, in order to make identification with Europe easier. According to this line of reasoning, considering Europe as an acceptable self-category requires that Europe be perceived as a homogeneous entity. This could be viewed as consistent with self-categorisation theory (Turner et al., 1987), which suggests that identification is the outcome of a process of categorisation whereby similar in-groupers are differentiated from dissimilar out-groupers. According to this view, it is only to the extent that Europeans view themselves and other Europeans as similar that they will identify with Europe. In an empirical test of this hypothesis, Castano et al (2002; Castano, 1998) manipulated perceived similarity by presenting participants with the same information about the political systems of European countries, then asking them to concentrate either on the similarities or on the differences between member States. Hence, the question at stake was "Do we feel more European when we <u>perceive</u> that we are all the same?" This manipulation proved effective as it affected the degree to which participants saw the EU as an entitative whole. More importantly, the level of identification of participants holding moderate attitudes towards the EU decreased in

the "Difference" condition – when the differences between European countries' political systems were made salient - whilst it increased in the "Similarity" condition – when the similarities between European countries' political systems were made salient.

If extrapolated, this solution to the development of European identity can have detrimental consequences on the European integration process. Trying to emphasize the similarities between different European nations while downplaying their differences could lead to important political problems as conflicts are likely to arise between the EU and subordinate geopolitical entities. As Brewer emphasised (Brewer, 1991), distinctiveness is an important characteristic of social groups: they must maintain boundaries to insure differentiation from other groups. As a consequence, European integration would probably be perceived as threatening pre-established – regional or national – identities. Paradoxically, this could impede the development of a European identity as distinctiveness cannot be maximised at both subordinate and superodinate group levels (Chryssochoou, 1996; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Licata, 2001; Sanchez-Mazas, 1996). In addition, it would be at odds with the future European enlargement, as new countries are likely to be perceived as different from older member states.

In addition to its political implications, this focus on similarity as a cement of European identity may also be based on a simplistic view of the relation between group representations and identity. Indeed, it views identification with a group as an almost mechanical consequence of perception without considering the interpretive processes involved in the elaboration of this link. The chief purpose of this paper will be to question this view by relying on a strategic view of group representations[2]. Perceivers are not passive information processors. They actively act towards the achievement of their goals. As a consequence, the ideas they express and the actions they perform should not be seen as a mere translation of their internal states; they also have a strategic dimension: they are expressed in order to elicit a reaction from the audience (Hopkins, Reicher, & Kahani-Hopkins, 2003; Klein, 1999; Klein & Azzi, 2001; Klein, Licata, Durala, & Azzi, in press; Reicher, Hopkins, & Condor, 1997). In order to be effective, and elicit these reactions, these representations must be construed by the listener as consistent with the group's interest. In this respect, this strategic perspective argues that the rhetorical value of particular descriptions of an in-group (e.g., its consequences on identification and action) is not self-evident: It depends on the argumentative context in which it is inserted. Consequently, depending

on the ideological context, intra-group similarity can be regarded as a positively valued characteristic of the in-group, whereas intra-group diversity will be most valued in other contexts. For example, the concept of "rainbow nation" used to symbolise post-apartheid South-Africa is a clear example of a political attempt at combining political unity with ethnic diversity. In this context, discursively constructing a representation of South-Africa as heterogeneous has been done by prominent leaders of the ANC to promote a sense of South-African identity, as clearly appears in President Thabo Mbeki's famous speech when the new constitution was adopted: "The constitution whose adoption we celebrate constitutes an unequivocal statement that we refuse to accept that our Africanness shall be defined by our race, colour, gender or historical origins. It is a firm assertion made by ourselves that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white" (Mbeki, 1996). Of course, this particular political project did not meet a unanimous acknowledgment. Yet it is currently viewed as a key factor in the relative success of this country's passage from apartheid to a democratic society.

According to the strategic view advocated here, similarity can be considered less as a perception than as a particular rhetorical tool (Billig, 1987; Klein, Azzi, Brito, Berckmans, & . 2000; Reicher et al., 1997). How useful is this perspective for understanding the relation between similarity and identification? First, in this view, the observed relation between similarity and identification may not reveal an automatic causal link but may involve specific constructions of Europe, or social representations (Sanchez-Mazas, Van Humskerken, & Casini, 2003)endorsed by participants. The current ideological and institutional context in which people use social categories is a world structured in nations (Billig, 1995, 1996; Hobsbawm, 1990; Pérez-Agote, 1999), and this particular context may be crucial for our understanding of the relation between perception of similarity between subgroups and super-ordinate group identification. The national model[3] is so widespread in modern societies that it is often confused with a natural state: "a man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears; a deficiency in any of these particulars is not inconceivable and does from time to time occur, but only as a result of some disaster, and it is itself a disaster of a kind" (Gellner, 1983). In line with social representations theory (Moscovici, 1961/1976), it must be acknowledged that, when the social representation of the nation is at stake, the objectification process has been led to its end: people refer to it as if it were a concrete object, or even a living being[4]. One can further argue that this representation is now so widespread that it should be regarded as a hegemonic representation (Moscovici, 1988),

in that it is not only shared by some national groups; it is shared and undisputed among all of them (Billig, 1995; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b; Thiesse, 1999). The nationalist model partly rests on cultural uniformity (Gellner, 1983; Gellner, 1987), and this model is very likely to influence people's representations of other geopolitical entities (Licata, soumis). As a consequence, people are used to identify with groups that are presented as homogeneous (Billig, 1995; Smith, 1991). In that sense, this perceived in-group similarity-identification relation observed by Castano and his colleagues could be viewed as part of a widespread construction of the nature of social groups rather than as the outcome of a perceptual-cognitive process. Thus, in this view, focusing on the similarities between social groups is rhetorically effective because it is compatible with existing social representations rather than because of a "built-in" relation between perceived similarity and identification.

Second, this strategic perspective also suggests that it is the ability of the speaker to establish a consonance between specific constructions of the in-group and the groups' interest that matters rather than the actual <u>content</u> of these constructions. If this is the case, describing a group as homogeneous may not be necessary for increasing identification. Describing an in-group as heterogeneous may actually achieve the same goal as long as such heterogeneity is convincingly presented as consistent with the ingroup's interests. In this respect, it is conceivable that any *positive* representation may be used by social actors – and especially political actors - to promote a group identification that might facilitate collective mobilisation in line with their project (Hopkins et al., 2003; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a; Reicher et al., 1997). The speaker's rhetorical skill may in fact be measured by his or her ability to use, influence, and possibly counter, the constructions and social representations spontaneously used by the audience (Klein & Licata, in press). Thus, even if social representations inspired by the national model may be particularly influential, skilled speakers may overcome the impact of these representations or channel them in other directions.

Based on this analysis, the question we seek to answer becomes "Do we feel more European when *told* that we are all the same?" rather than "when we *perceive* that we are all the same". In this study, similarity - vs. difference - between European countries is presented as an argument included in a pro-EU political discourse emanating from a European Commission official. The success of the European integration program is attributed either to a policy of

convergence among member states (homogenisation) or as a policy aiming at preserving differences between European countries.

According to the above analysis, perceptions of an in-group as homogeneous or heterogeneous is not a given but depends in a large part on the extent to which such perceptions are consonant with the political project pursued by the perceiver. In social-psychological thinking, it has long been underlined that representations are not independent from attitudes: "the belief system has a way of slithering around to justify the more permanent attitude. The process is one of rationalization – of the accommodation of beliefs to attitudes" (Allport, 1954, 1979/1954). Applied to the present case, this perspective would suggest that, if people hold positive attitudes towards the European project, they should welcome the rationalisation of that attitude provided by a prominent leader of the EU. Therefore we expect individuals who are favourable to further European integration to perceive European countries as more similar to the extent that similarity, rather than difference, is presented as desirable for the pursuit of this project.

Moreover, we are interested in the relation between such a perception of similarity among European countries and European identification as a function of this communicational influence. Again, we suggest on the basis of the above analysis that such a perception can successfully contribute to European identification only to the extent that it is perceived as consonant with the perceiver's political project (European integration). Hence, we predicted that Perception of Similarity (PS) between European countries would be positively linked with European identification (EI) only when *similarity* is presented as having positive consequences on the development of the EU. Conversely, we predicted that PS would be negatively linked with EI when *difference* is presented as having positive consequences on the development of the EU.

Method

Participants were final year students ($\underline{N}$ = 142) of three Brussels secondary schools. We only considered participants originating from EU countries ($\underline{N}$ = 122, 64 men and 58 women, Mean age = 17,6). Data were collected during class sessions on a voluntary basis.

Procedure and Design

Participants had to fill in a questionnaire. In the first part, they were asked to express their attitudes towards Europe on three 9 points bipolar scales (Cronbach's alpha =.67). Then they had to complete the first half of a pre-tested European identification scale ("pre-identification"; 9 items: alpha = .73; full scale split-half alpha = .70; min. = 1; max. = 9). They were then asked to read a short text (this does not apply to participants assigned in the control condition, see below). Then they had to report their level of agreement with this text (1= not agree at all; 9 = totally agree) and to write a short summary of it.

The experimental texts (see appendix) were worded in order to be of equivalent sizes and as similar as possible: They only differed regarding the reason invoked for the success of the European integration process – a policy of convergence (Similarity Desirable) or a policy aiming at preserving differences (Difference Desirable). Both texts are clearly euro-enthusiastic: The European Union is presented as a positive common goal among all Europeans. In addition, it is stated at the end of each text that achieving similarity vs. preserving differences is the way to follow for further European development. Hence, they were designed to elicit comparable attitudes. A pre-test with 20 psychology students confirmed that both texts were generally approved. On average, the "Similarity Desirable" ($\underline{M}$ = 6.5/9; $\underline{SD}$ = 1.43) text was a little more approved than the "Difference desirable" one ($\underline{M}$ = 5.8; $\underline{SD}$ = 1.03). But this difference did not reach statistical significance ($\underline{F}$(1,20) = 1.57, $\underline{p}$ = .23; η^2 = .08).

In the second part of the questionnaire, the second half of the European identification scale ("post-identification") was administered (9 items: alpha = .79), followed by 12 items measuring their perception of similarity among European countries in different domains: political orientation, culture, way of life, religion, values, open-mindedness, economic development, attitudes towards work, attitudes towards family, attitudes towards the EU, tolerance towards foreigners, and school organisation (1 = very different; 11 = very similar; alpha = .85). Finally, demographic questions were asked (age, gender, nationality). Once the questionnaire was completed, participants were debriefed and thanked.

There were three experimental conditions in which participants were randomly assigned: in the control condition, no text was presented. In the other two conditions, participants were asked to read a text presented as part of a speech given by a member of the European Union. In the "Similarity desirable" condition, the success of the European integration process was

attributed to the effect of a policy of convergence between member States, whilst in the "Difference desirable" condition, this success was attributed to the maintenance of differences between countries (see the texts in appendix 1). These texts were worded in order to be of comparable sizes and to have as many words in common as possible while presenting either "similarity" or "difference" as a desirable feature of the European Union.

Hypotheses

1. To the extent that European countries were presented as being similar in the "Similarity desirable" condition and different in the "Difference desirable" condition, and that participants were expected to hold generally positive attitudes towards the EU[5], it was expected that Perception of similarity would be greatest in the "Similarity desirable" condition and lowest in the "Difference desirable" condition.

2. Both manipulation texts presented the EU as a positive common project among European nations; only the means to achieve this goal diverged: either promoting convergence or difference. Participants were therefore expected to comply with this positive goal. This goal being convergent with their initial attitude, no systematic change in European identification was expected following this manipulation.

3. In contrast, the relation between Perception of Similarity among European nations and pre- manipulation European identification should be affected by this manipulation: they should correlate positively only in the "Similarity desirable" condition - that is when similarity between European nations is presented as desirable by a prominent representative of the supra-ordinate group. This correlation should tend to be negative in the "Difference desirable" condition - when maintaining differences between nations is presented as desirable. There should be no correlation in the "Control" condition.

Results

Participants who recalled fewer than two key ideas in their summary of the text (N = 31) were withdrawn from analyses, as they might not have devoted sufficient attention to the text contents. Following analyses were performed on a sample of 91 observations.

The average attitude towards the EU was positive ($\underline{M}$ = 6.66 on 9-point scale). Only 5.5 % expressed negative attitudes (< 5). Interestingly, this measure only had a very moderate correlation with pre-identification, $\underline{r}$ = .26, $\underline{p}$ < .01.

The average agreement with the text was positive in both "Similarity desirable" and "Difference desirable" conditions, although, in contrast with the pre-test results, agreement appeared to be significantly stronger in the "Difference desirable" ($\underline{M}$ = 7.57, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.48) than in the "Similarity desirable" condition ($\underline{M}$ = 6.10, $\underline{SD}$ = 2.10. $\underline{T}$ (48) = 2.83; $\underline{p}$ = .007). This result could be due to the fact that the "Difference desirable" text offers better satisfaction to the need for optimal distinctiveness than the "Similarity desirable" one (Brewer, 1991). But we could also invoke the fact that the European Union is generally associated with universalistic and multicultural values (Klein et al., in press; Licata & Klein, 2002), so that the "Difference desirable" text seems more consonant with these values than the "Similarity desirable" one, therefore eliciting more approval. In any case, the fact that the pre-test and these results diverge do not allow us to draw any conclusive explanation.

In order to test hypothesis 1, the twelve items measuring perception of similarity were averaged ($\underline{M}$ = 4.99, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.28) and planned comparisons were performed using the codes displayed in Table 1 in a linear regression analysis[6]. The first code tests for a linear increase in the perception of similarity from the difference to the similarity condition. The second tests for a quadratic trend. The first, but not the second comparison, proved reliable ($\underline{t}$(88) = 2.10, $\underline{p}$ < .05 and $\underline{t}$(88) = .62, ns), which is consistent with an exclusively linear trend (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1992): Participants perceived Europeans as more similar ($\underline{M}$ = 5.48) when told that similarity was desirable than when told that difference was desirable ($\underline{M}$ = 4.73). In the control condition, the mean was at an intermediate value ($\underline{M}$ = 4.94). Note that the omnibus test did not detect these differences, $\underline{F}$(2,88) = 2.27, $\underline{p}$ = .11.

Testing Hypothesis 3 demands that we compare correlations between two continuous variables as a function of a categorical variable. The preferred method for doing so is multiple regression (Aiken et al., 1992; Cohen & Cohen, 1983). This analysis will also test Hypothesis 2. Post-identification was the criterion variable. The experimentally manipulated independent variable (similarity desirable – difference desirable - control) was coded into two sets of orthogonal contrast codes using the same values as in the previous analysis (see Table 1).

< insert Table 1 >

We proceeded in two steps. Our first model (see left columns of Table 2) tested only main effects: This linear regression model included European Identification (as measured before the manipulation), Perceived Similarity of European countries (PS) including all 12 items[7]. This model included only one significant predictor: identification. Neither the manipulation of the desirability of similarity, nor the perception of similarity per se predicted identification[8]. This result is consistent with Hypothesis 2, which stated that post-manipulation European identification would not be affected by the manipulation[9].

We then added the two interaction terms in a second model (interaction 1 = dummy variable 1 * PS ; interaction 2 = dummy variable 2 * PS. See Table 2, right columns). These interactions test respectively for linear and quadratic trends in the relation between perception of similarity and post-identification. The introduction of these terms globally resulted in an increase in the percentage of variance explained by the model, R^2_{change} = .028, $F(2, 84)$ = 2.82, p = .07. The unique contribution of the interaction between the first contrast term and perception of similarity was nearly significant (see Table 1), indicating that the relation between the perception of similarity and post-manipulation identification differed in the "similarity desirable" and the "difference desirable" conditions. Analysis of the simple slopes within each condition (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1992) revealed that the relation between these two variables was positive and higher when similarity was presented as desirable (B = .38, $t(84)$ = 2.48, p = .015) than in the control condition (B = -.05, $t(84) < 1$, ns), $t(84)$ = 2.23, p = .03. When difference was presented as desirable, the simple slope was close to zero (B = -.03, $t(84) < 1$, ns) and did not differ reliably from the control condition, $t(84) < 1$, ns.

< insert Table 2 >

Discussion

To sum up these results, the pro-difference discourse elicited a perception of European countries as less similar than the pro-similarity discourse. In the absence of discourse, perception of similarity was intermediate. European identification was not directly affected by any of the conditions. On the one hand, the pro-similarity discourse did not increase participants' tendency to identify with Europe. On the other hand, the pro-difference discourse did not lead to a decrease in identification.

More interestingly, those discourses affected the relation between perception of similarity among nations and European identification. Hence, our results show that Perception of Similarity was a good predictor of European Identification only when similarity was presented as a desirable feature of the EU. In the other two conditions - when no text was presented and when difference was presented as desirable -, there was no significant relation between these two variables. Contrary to our hypothesis, the pro-difference text did not induce a negative correlation between Perception of Similarity and European Identification.

These asymmetrical results suggest that participants were more prone to associate identification with homogeneity than with heterogeneity. At least, two explanations can be put forward to account for this phenomenon:

First, this discrepancy could be considered as revealing an influence of the national model on individual's constructions of Europe: People have learned to identify with groups described as homogeneous (Billig, 1995). It is therefore easier to instigate a correspondence between homogeneity and European identification than between heterogeneity and European identification. If this is the case, then culture and education are responsible for this relation and it cannot be seen as the product of intra-individual cognitive processes.

Second, one could argue that a perception of similarity is a precondition for identification with a group. For example, according to self-categorisation theory (Turner et al, 1987), the salience of a potential self-category, requires that this social category be composed of in-group members perceived as similar and different from out-group members. In this view, the perception

of heterogeneity would not have increased identification in the "difference desirable" condition because it undermines the very basis of identification.

Although we certainly agree that a degree of perceived similarity, or "entitativity", is a precondition for a self-category to be salient, this similarity should not be viewed as an unambiguous, "given", perception. It is conceivable that the basis of this similarity could paradoxically be found in an endorsement of diversity as a common in-group norm (cf. the South-African example cited above)[10]. However, as the focus of our manipulation was the desirability of diversity as a means of developing the EU rather than on its role as a common value of the group, it may not have allowed the emergence of a positive correlation between the perception of dissimilarity and European identification. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the pro-difference discourse elicited more agreement than the pro-similarity discourse in a population that generally identified with Europe. At the very least, this result demonstrates that a commitment to diversity and identification with Europe are not incompatible.

In any case, these results suggest that the relation between perception of similarity among subgroups and identification with a super-ordinate group, be it attributable to the ideological framework of nationalism or to categorization processes - should not be seen as an automatic causal link. The way arguments are used by influential political actors is determinant, and it must be understood in the context of the projects these actors seek to promote. In this framework, the role of social psychology needs to be questioned. Attributing the relation between perception of similarity and identification to an automatic perceptual-cognitive process amounts to naturalizing it. If natural, it is therefore unavoidable and permanent, which means that any attempt at developing a sense of collective identity is doomed to failure unless group members perceive themselves – or the constituting subgroups – as similar. In other words, it legitimates one kind of political project over the others, and in the case of the European integration project, it justifies a supra-national project as opposed to a post-national project (Ferry, 1992; Habermas, 1992). A supra-national conception of the European project consists in the transposition of the national model at the supra-ordinate level. As Gellner (1983) defined it, the nationalist ideal is a close correspondence between a nation, a culture, and a State. Applied to Europe, it implies a progressive homogenisation of the European cultural and political space (Licata, 2001). The post-national project, as advocated by Ferry (1992) and Habermas (1992) is an alternative way of

conceiving European citizenship. It rests on a dissociation between culture and citizenship: People need to share a set of common *political* principles – what Habermas refers to as "constitutional patriotism" – whilst other aspects of culture must not necessarily converge. This latter solution sounds more appropriate for the EU as it should decrease the perception of identity threat people might experience with regard to the potential disappearance of pre-existing levels of identification (nations and regions).

In addition, reproducing the national model at the European level might give rise to some of the less desirable outcomes of nationalism: out-group derogation in its diverse forms, from the more benign to the more malignant (Licata & Klein, 2002). In support of this contention, recent experimental research on the in-group projection model (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999) showed that holding a simple, and undifferentiated, representation of the super-ordinate group facilitates perception of the subordinate in-group as prototypical. In turn, such a perception increases negative attitudes towards the out-group whereas a complex, and differentiated, representation of the super-ordinate group has the opposite effect (Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Weber, in press).

In spite of being modest in their scope, the present results also support this post-nationalist stance: perceiving European countries as different led to a decrease in European identification only when similarity was presented as a desirable feature conditioning the development of the EU. When difference was presented as desirable – which led to a perception of the European countries as less similar -, or in the absence of any direct influence, identification was not related with perception of similarity. Consequently, perceiving similarity does not seem to be a necessary condition for identifying with Europe: it might not be necessary to adopt European policies promoting homogenisation in order to increase European identification. Preserving diversity among European nations could prevent negative reactions to perception of identity threat from subordinate entities (nations and regions), as well as dangers of a new form of xenophobia emerging, whilst still allowing for European identification.

Finally, as we pointed out at the outset of this paper, although identity is a relevant and important concept in relation with citizenship, these two terms are not to be confused (Sanchez-Mazas et al., 2003). In this respect, it is telling that attitude towards Europe and European identification only correlate weakly. In view of this distinction, promoting European

identification should only be done in conjunction with an encouragement to active participation, provided that involvement into European decision making is rendered possible, which is still not the case at the time being (Bertossi, 2001; Licata & Klein, 2002; Lochack, 1995; Withol de Wenden, 1998). It is only through active participation in democratic processes at the European level that inhabitants of the EU can become citizens of the Union.

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Table 1: Condition predictors as entered into the linear regression model

	Similarity	Conditions Control	Difference
Predictor 1 (linear)	1	0	-1
Predictor 2 (quadratic)	-1	2	1

Table 2: European Identification (post-manipulation) as a function of European Identification (pre-manipulation), two independent predictors, Perception of Similarity and Desirability of Similarity

	Model 1 (main effects)			Model 2 (main effects + interactions)		
	B	Beta	p.	B	Beta	p.
Constant	5.19	-	<.001	5.13	-	<.001
Pre-text Euro ID	.76	.74	< .001	.74	.72	<.001
Perception of similarity (PS)	.07	.062	.40	.10	-.05	.21
Linear Contrast (LC)	-.01	-.13	.92	-.08	-.06	.54
Quadratic Contrast (QC)	.11	.07	.87	.04	.015	.53
PS * LC	-	-		.21	.14	.05
PS * QC	-	-		-.07	-.10	.16
	$F(4,86) = 27.86$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .75$			$F(6,86) = 20.31$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .77$		

Appendix 1: Texts used to manipulate the desirability of similarity and difference between

European countries

Similarity Desirable

Since 1948, year of the creation of the European Community, it has been clear that several problems would have to be tackled for making the dream of a real federation come true: the economy, the politics and the social situation had to be reconsidered from the perspective of the whole. Economists, politicians and sociologists have much debated about the solutions that were to be adopted. After more than fifty years, the achievements of the European project look rather positive and, whatever the chosen strategies, experts generally reckon that these reassuring results have a socio-historical explanation: the fact that common features of member countries have been emphasised.

The awareness of being the crucible of ancient and modern culture makes European citizens proud of perceiving themselves as the descendents of a single people who served as a model for the entire world. The Indo-European languages we speak have offered the most eminent literary works that Man could ever enjoy.

The formation of an authentic European Union was made possible thanks to a united and stable framework; sharing similar situations, ideals and cultural references allowed member countries to converge on the same projects and to collaborate in order to achieve them. Thanks to this, the European Union became a stable and united whole in a coherent framework of harmonious growth.

Therefore, it is this route that we should follow to reinforce the European Union's concrete and positive asset: reduce inequalities, differences and unjustified constraints.

Difference Desirable

Since 1948, year of the creation of the European Community, it has been clear that several problems would have to be tackled for making the dream of a real federation come true: the economy, the politics and the social situation had to be reconsidered from the perspective of the whole. Economists, politicians and sociologists have much debated about the solutions that were to be adopted. After more than fifty years, the achievements of the European project look rather positive and, whatever the chosen strategies, experts generally reckon that these reassuring results have a socio-historical explanation: <u>the fact that exclusive features of each country have been safeguarded</u>.

The possibility, given to each member country, to display its own culture, ancient and modern, makes European citizens proud of their awareness that their country has added a unique and essential part to the European whole. The formation of an authentic European Union offered the opportunity to confront with each other, to discover one's own weaknesses and to acknowledge what's better in the other. Having preserved differences has allowed us to avoid the danger of standardisation and to keep the well-founded fear of national identity loss away: each county managed to maintain its own specificity intact. Thanks to this, the European Union became a mosaic made of a multitude of different components, but absolutely harmonious and united.

Therefore, it is this way that we should follow to reinforce the European Union's concrete and positive quality: respect differences between member countries, the traditions and models that make sense to everyone.

¹ It is clearly stated in EU's official documents that European citizenship is conceived, inter alia, as a means to develop identification to the EU: "Citizenship of the Union is both a source of legitimation of the process of European integration, by reinforcing the participation of citizens, and a fundamental factor in the creation among citizens of a sense of belonging to the European union and of having a genuine European identity" (European-Commission, 2001, p. 7).

² It must be emphasised, though, that this paper will not focus on the question of the compatibility/incompatibility between subordinate and super-ordinate levels of identification.

³ Notwithstanding the fact that the national model encompasses many different variants, for example political or ethno-cultural nationalisms.(Barbier, 2000; Dumont, 1991).

⁴ The model of the nation conceived as an organism was successful - mainly in Central Europe - during the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries. "It consists in saying that each nation, in virtue of a principle, of a force of its own (its organic strength), develops, in an autonomous manner, as a living organism" (Caussat, Adamski, & Crépon, 1996), p. 41).

⁵ In Belgium, young people are generally pro-EU, as revealed by previous research (Licata, 2001) and by large-scale surveys (Eurobarometer, 1999).

⁶ This analysis is statistically equivalent to a contrast analysis in the context of a Oneway Anova. However, we consistently report linear regression analyses given the presence of a continuous independent variable in subsequent analyses.

⁷ All predictors, with the exception of the dummy variables, were centered before being inserted in the model.

⁸ Actually this perception was not correlated either with the pre-test measure of identification, $r = .10$, $p = .32$

⁹ The means for post-identification were 5.36, 5.23 and 4.96 in the Control, Similarity desirable and Difference Desirable conditions respectively.

¹⁰ An interesting example of this endorsement of diversity in the context of the EU is the Archbishop of Canterbury's talk to the European Parliament (February 1993). Wondering what it

means "to be a European", he replied, i.a., "overcoming the vicious nationalisms, racism and religious bigotries of the past and not only tolerating diversity in peace but cherishing it".