

Similarity and dissimilarity in intergroup relations: Different dimensions, different processes

*Similitude et différence dans les relations intergroupes :
différentes dimensions, différents processus*

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Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est de proposer une révision critique de la recherche conduite sur les relations entre similitude et différence entre groupes et les attitudes intergroupes, et de présenter une explication intégrative des propositions théoriques et des résultats empiriques opposés dans ce domaine de recherche. Jetten, Spears et Postmes (2004) ont argué que l'identification avec l'endogroupe était le modérateur qui permettait de résoudre les prédictions contradictoires inférées de la théorie de l'identité sociale et de la théorie de l'auto-catégorisation concernant l'impact de la similitude/différence sur les attitudes intergroupes. Nous questionnons le caractère universel de ce mécanisme en proposant qu'il s'applique seulement aux aspects symboliques de la similitude/différence entre groupes. En ce qui concerne les aspects instrumentaux, ils seraient modérés par l'interdépendance entre groupes. En conclusion, cet article propose

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to critically review the research conducted on the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes and present an integrative explanation for competing theoretical approaches and empirical results. Jetten, Spears and Postmes (2004) found ingroup identification to be the moderator solving the contradicting predictions derived from Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory. However, we challenge the universal scope of this mechanism proposing that it only applies for symbolic aspects of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity. For instrumental aspects of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity, another crucial factor in group dynamics emerges as the moderator: goal interdependence. Thus, this paper aims to advance an integrative approach, by considering how the dimension (symbolic *vs.* instrumental) to which intergroup similarity/dissim-

Mots-clés

Similitude, relations intergroupes, dimension symbolique ou instrumentale

Key-words

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une vision intégrative du problème en offrant une nouvelle approche des impacts de la similitude/différence sur les attitudes intergroupes axée sur le rôle clé joué par la dimension (symbolique ou instrumentale) en jeu et par les différents modérateurs qu'elle mobilise (identification endogroupe ou interdépendance intergroupe). Des hypothèses découlant de cette approche sont aussi proposées.

Perceived intergroup similarity/dissimilarity is a crucial factor determining attitudes towards other groups. We define it as the extent to which individuals perceive the outgroup as similar or dissimilar to their own group. The goal of this paper is to critically review the literature on the relationship between intergroup similarity and intergroup attitudes and then to propose a new integrative perspective under which we propose hypotheses to be tested in future research on this topic.

Focusing on the intergroup level, we start by showing that within the *Social Identity Approach* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), there are two opposite predictions that can be drawn. On the one hand, we show how, according to *Social Identity Theory (SIT)*, one should expect intergroup *similarity* to lead to negative intergroup attitudes. We present other theories, models and studies in support of this prediction. On the other hand, we show how, according to *Self-Categorization Theory (SCT)*, conversely, one should expect intergroup *dissimilarity* to be associated with negative intergroup attitudes. And once again theories, models and studies are presented in support of this opposite prediction.

We then describe how the authors who work on this topic have proposed moderators for the relationship in order to solve the contradicting predictions. Within several factors, we give special attention to ingroup identification and show how the consideration of this factor has successfully solved the apparent

ilarity refers to may serve to reconcile the competing approaches, defining the conditions in which each moderator (ingroup identification or goal interdependence) comes into play. Hypotheses within this new approach are developed.

contradiction between the predictions emerging from SIT and SCT. We then present a different line of studies that, in some way, builds on ideas proposed within the *Goal Interdependence Approach* (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961/1988). By presenting these studies, we show how strong support has also emerged in support of the idea of goal interdependence as a moderator of the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes.

At this point, we acknowledge the existence of support for two moderators of the relationship. Each moderator comes from a different theoretical approach. Studies influenced by the Social Identity Approach suggest that the relationship is moderated by ingroup identification. Studies influenced by the Goal Interdependence Approach suggest that goal interdependence takes on that moderating role.

To reconcile these two perspectives, we introduce in the discussion a new factor: the distinction between fundamental dimensions of social judgment (Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005). Here, we present the way we construe this distinction as an opposition between symbolic vs. instrumental dimensions and propose that this factor may serve as the meta-moderator that permits the conciliation of the approaches. Specifically, we propose that both approaches are acceptable and that each approach is more suitable in one situation than the other. The hypothesis advanced here is that when intergroup similarity/dissimilarity is defined along *symbolic* dimensions, then the prediction of *ingroup identification* as a moderator (emerging from the Social Identity Approach) is more suitable to understand intergroup attitudes; when intergroup similarity/dissimilarity is defined along *instrumental* dimensions, then the prediction of *goal interdependence* as a moderator (emerging from the Goal Interdependence Approach) is the one that better frames the situation. The paper concludes with a re-analysis of the studies presented along the literature review to ponder on the plausibility of the formulated hypotheses.

Similarity and dissimilarity in social relations

Social relations – whether between individuals or between groups - have always depended, to some extent, on the level of similarity or dissimilarity of the individuals or the groups. Accordingly, similarity and dissimilarity and their consequences have emerged as central in theories on social relations.

At the interpersonal level, notwithstanding some caveats, there seems to be a consensus regarding the effects of similarity/dissimilarity: to a certain extent, all theories agree that interpersonal similarity¹ generally leads to positive attitudes (e.g. Byrne, 1961; Festinger, 1954; Heider, 1958; Rokeach, 1960²). The question then emerges of whether one can simply extrapolate those predictions to the intergroup level. Several authors have warned on the danger of making a simple extrapolation from the interpersonal to the intergroup levels (Brown & Turner, 1981; Diehl, 1988; Roccas & Schwartz, 1993; Tajfel, 1978) building on both theoretical (Brown & Turner, 1981; Tajfel, 1978) and empirical arguments (Diehl, 1988; Roccas & Schwartz, 1993). Theoretically, this extrapolation may ignore central distinctions between interpersonal and intergroup behavior (Tajfel, 1978) and empirically, interpersonal and intergroup similarity have, in fact, yielded different outcomes (Diehl, 1988). For this reason, we focus on theoretical points of view that have considered similarity/dissimilarity at the intergroup level.

At the intergroup level, there is contradictory evidence concerning the effects of similarity/dissimilarity on intergroup attitudes. Data from survey studies have shown, on the one hand, that ethnic minorities that assimilate (i.e., strive to nullify group differences) are targeted with less prejudiced attitudes (e.g. Van Oudenhoven & Eisses, 1998) but, on the other hand, that the majority, frequently, prefers minorities to remain different (e.g. Thalhammer, Zucha, Enzenhofer, Salfinger, & Ogris, 2001; see also Lima & Vala, 2002). Equivocal results are also present in a wide array of experimental studies (Brown, 1984a). In fact, exper-

1. Interpersonal similarity is understood here as the level of similarity between the self and another person or persons.

2. But see Brewer (1991).

imental research yields results in opposite directions – there seems to be support for both the prediction that intergroup similarity is associated with negative attitudes and dissimilarity with more positive ones (e.g. Diehl, 1988) as well as the opposite prediction stating that similarity is associated with more positive attitudes and dissimilarity with more negative ones (e.g. Grant, 1993). Most of the research on the relationship stems from Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) which has generally made the first prediction.

Intergroup similarity leading to negative intergroup attitudes

According to SIT, an important source of people's identity derives from their membership in social groups. This social identity is achieved by means of comparisons with other relevant groups, in a way that permits (positive) distinctiveness. Given this emphasis on seeking distinctiveness, it is directly deduced that any threat to group distinctiveness may generate negative attitudes towards the source of that threat. Therefore, intergroup similarity can lead to negative intergroup attitudes in the sense that it may constitute a threat to the desired ingroup distinctiveness. This same reasoning is also present in the Uniqueness Theory of Snyder and Fromkin (1980) who argue that similarity may compromise people's need to preserve unique aspects of their identity and they extend this argument to the group level³.

Literature reveals the existence of several experimental studies supporting this hypothesis (Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004). One of the first studies where the researchers explicitly manipulated (attitudinal) similarity was the one conducted by Allen and Wilder (1975) where they varied the similarity between the beliefs of ingroup members or outgroup members and the beliefs of the participant. No overall effect of outgroup similarity was found, but as Brown (1984a) notices, "where the subjects' beliefs were similar to the ingroup's (...) there were clear trends that the

3. In a somewhat different perspective, Mummendey and Wenzel (1999) also state, in their Ingroup Projection Model, that when two groups are not seen as similar at all, plurality and tolerance ensue in a climate of « unrelated coexistence » (p. 169).

discrimination against the similar outgroup was greater than that against the dissimilar outgroup" (p.613). However, the manipulation of similarity was accomplished through attitudinal similarity between the self and the ingroup and the self and the outgroup and therefore it seems to confound interpersonal and intergroup effects (Diehl, 1988). In fact, Brown (1984a) also posited that the fact that the manipulation of similarity was at the level of the individual participant may have decreased group salience.

In another study, Turner (1978) manipulated intergroup similarity, asking students in two groups to compete in a verbal intelligence task, either in two groups from the same faculty or different faculties (Arts *vs.* Sciences). The manipulation of similarity was made by telling the participants that they attribute similar or different value on the verbal abilities necessary for the task. Another variable manipulated was the stability of the status difference between faculties: in the unstable condition, subjects were not told explicitly that arts subjects would be naturally better at the ability, but in the stable condition the arts students were told of their definite superiority. The results revealed that similar groups showed more ingroup bias than different groups, when the Arts-Sciences difference was stable. Considering that the Arts groups probably deemed the task as more important and more suitable to them – as it was intended in the instructions –, there was a clear confound of value and status similarity. It was with this in mind that Mummendey and Schreiber (1984) conducted a replication of Turner's study where they separated the variables of stability and relevance of the task. In this experiment, the unstable condition now consisted of giving information about intergroup differences concerning abilities by showing statistical tendencies that *didn't necessarily reflect* the situation of the participants in the experiment. With these modifications the authors obtained different results: in their case, similar outgroups were targeted with more bias in the unstable condition. The idea that intergroup similarity led to more negative attitudes in unstable conditions is consistent with the SIT argument that the negative effects of intergroup similarity derive from a distinctiveness threat perception.

Other arguments in favour of the intergroup similarity – negative intergroup attitudes prediction are available: In a study that examined whether the introduction of superordinate goals always constitutes an effective measure to improve intergroup relations, Deschamps and Brown (1983) found that this is only true when the two groups enjoy distinctive roles in the cooperative endeavor to achieve those goals. As the authors state, "the convergence between groups which is often implied by superordinate goal situations may represent a threat to the distinctiveness of the groups concerned." (p. 190). More recently, in a very similar vein, Hornsey and Hogg (2000a) have shown that the introduction of a superordinate category was only beneficial for intergroup relations if the subgroups' identities were, at the same time, recognized as distinct. These ideas were further developed in their Assimilation and Diversity Model of Subgroup Relations (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000b).

Diehl (1988) conducted two studies on the effects of interpersonal and intergroup (attitudinal) similarity. In the second study, where intergroup similarity was manipulated, this led to more discrimination (in a rewards allocation task) against a similar rather than a dissimilar outgroup. Also using a modified minimal group procedure, Moghaddam and Stringer (1988, exp. 2), found the same pattern of discrimination of members of similar groups.

In a study designed to examine the contrasting predictions from Belief Congruence Theory (Rokeach, 1960) and SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Roccas and Schwartz (1993) manipulated three degrees of intergroup (status) similarity (moderately high, high, and very high). Results showed that the greater the intergroup similarity, the larger the ingroup bias on relevant dimensions. A similar and more recent example comes from the work of Gabarrot and colleagues (Gabarrot, Falomir-Pichastor, & Mugny, 2009). When trying to analyse how ingroup norms may interact with intergroup similarity in the explanation of intergroup attitudes, these authors showed that an anti-discrimination norm paradoxically led to more negative intergroup attitudes when intergroup similarity was high. The reason for this was that the anti-discrimination norm provided an "extra degree" of intergroup similarity by emphasizing the importance of equal treatment.

In a very exceptional case where national groups were used, Henderson-King, Henderson-King, Zhermer, Posokhova and Chiker (1997) found an interaction between outgroup similarity and the perception of threat, which translated into a (non-significant) positive relationship between similarity and negative outgroup evaluations – but only for those who saw the outgroup as a threat. However, in this study, intergroup similarity was measured, not manipulated.

Finally, Jetten and colleagues conducted extensive research on this topic, also obtaining strong empirical evidence supporting the SIT hypothesis in several cases (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996, exp.2. 1997, 2001). In 1996, the authors examined the effects of manipulating group distinctiveness by providing participants with feedback about ingroup and outgroup norms, in a natural setting, and found that low group norm distinctiveness (intergroup similarity) led to more ingroup bias (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996, exp. 2). Considering that the assessment of intergroup similarity requires information not only about the central tendency of ingroup and outgroup, but also about the variability of both groups (Park, Judd & Ryan, 1991), two other studies were conducted (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997) where group distinctiveness was operationalized as overlapping group boundaries (similarity) or clear separateness of ingroup and outgroup (dissimilarity) in terms of ways in which they perceive stimuli (exp. 1) or belief in supernatural phenomena (exp. 2). The results revealed that ingroup bias was larger when the intergroup distance was smaller. And along the same lines, two other studies from the same authors (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 2001) showed the same empirical trend.

Though framed in a different way, the work of Park and Judd (2005) has also presented indirect evidence for the SIT hypothesis. The authors showed that an increase in the endorsement of Multiculturalism (ideology that assumes the importance of recognizing group differences) was the only one (comparing with the endorsement of other ideologies such as the color-blind perspective) associated with a decrease in the magnitude of bias in favour of *Whites* (see also Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000).

Although this initial review presents a consistent body of studies emerging from different theories and models in support of the idea that intergroup similarity leads to negative intergroup attitudes, another major trend supporting the opposite hypothesis can also be found in the literature. That is, one also encounters other studies, models and theories stating and showing that it is intergroup dissimilarity (and not similarity) that may stand in the way of positive intergroup relations.

Intergroup dissimilarity leading to negative intergroup attitudes

Even though this idea was considered in early writings on social categorization and social identity (Tajfel & Forgas, 1981), it was within the framework of SCT (Turner et al., 1987) that the underlying mechanisms of such prediction were theorized. Despite the fact that this theory grew from SIT, SCT distanced itself from the original theory and its motivational postulates by focusing essentially on cognitive and perceptual processes to explain intergroup behavior. SCT argues that, at different times, we perceive ourselves as unique individuals (self-concept) or as members of groups within different levels of abstraction (ingroup-outgroup; superordinate groups). It is this change in *self-categorization* that determines the individuals' perceptions, attitudes and behavior. What determines the extent to which a categorization is applied at a particular level is referred to as its salience and it depends on the interaction between the characteristics of the perceiver and the situation (Turner et al., 1987). Social categories (groups) will be perceived as separate entities insofar as the differences between groups exceed the differences within groups (high metacontrast). And if this distinction reflects reality (high comparative fit), then this intergroup salience will lead individuals to behave more as group members (Oakes, 1987). Similar reasoning is present in predictions derived from accentuation principles (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963) and from the Categorical Differentiation Model (Doise, Deschamps, & Meyer, 1978). Thus, according to SCT, it is high intergroup dissimilarity that forms the basis for subsequent discrimination.

The hypothesis that it is intergroup dissimilarity (and not similarity) that leads to negative attitudes is present in several other theories and models in social psychology. The *Integrated Threat Theory* (Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999) is one example. In their Integrated Threat Theory, Stephan et al. (1999) argue that negative intergroup attitudes (namely prejudice) derive from the perception that the other group is a source of threat. The authors distinguish between realistic and symbolic threats and whereas realistic threats consist of threats to the very existence of the ingroup or its economic and physical well-being, symbolic threats are the ones relevant to the argument here since they emerge from the perceived group differences in values, beliefs, attitudes, etc. (Stephan, Diaz-Loving, & Duran, 2000). In a very similar vein, Sears (1988) posited that modern racism is rooted in the perception of threat to the values of the ingroup – a type of racism that he termed *symbolic racism*. Along with these theoretical frameworks, also correlational (Struch & Schwartz, 1989) and experimental studies (Hensley & Duval, 1976; Grant, 1993; Jetten et al., 1996, exp.1) offer support for the prediction that intergroup dissimilarity has negative consequences on intergroup evaluations.

In a correlational study, Struch and Schwartz (1989) analysed the correlation between perceived value dissimilarity and aggression towards the outgroup. Israeli respondents who reported higher perceptions of ingroup/outgroup values dissimilarity expressed higher levels of aggression toward the ultraorthodox Jewish outgroup (e.g. supporting acts harmful to the group).

Hensley and Duval (1976) conducted an experiment on the perceptual determinants of perceived similarity and liking in which participants were informed of the opinion positions of two groups, one group being moderately similar and the other group being manipulated as different across five levels. Results showed that as dissimilarity between the opinion positions of the participant and those of the other group increased, the liking for that group decreased.

Grant (1993) manipulated intergroup similarity using false feedback given to men and women about beliefs held by men and

women who were participating in the experiment. The results supported the similarity-attraction hypothesis.

Finally, even the work of Jetten and colleagues produced some data confirming the prediction that intergroup dissimilarity leads to greater ingroup bias (e.g. Jetten et al., 1996, exp. 1). Manipulating intergroup similarity/dissimilarity by providing feedback on ingroup and outgroup norms, in a minimal group setting, produced a pattern of less ingroup bias in the conditions of similar norms.

In sum, there appears to be support for both the prediction that intergroup similarity is associated with negative attitudes (and dissimilarity with more positive ones) as well as the opposite prediction that dissimilarity is associated with more positive attitudes (and dissimilarity with more negative ones). In fact, Jetten and colleagues recognized, named, and tested these two opposing trends in a meta-analytical review of the available studies on the subject (Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004). The meta-analysis focused on the relationship between intergroup distinctiveness (what has been named here as intergroup similarity/dissimilarity) and intergroup differentiation – which is a dependent variable made up of different variables including a “broader array of differentiating responses” (p.862), but most frequently, ingroup bias. The authors identified the prediction emerging from SIT as the *Reactive Distinctiveness Hypothesis*, since the intergroup attitudes deriving from intergroup similarity were a reaction to a threatened identity, and the prediction emerging from SCT as the *Reflective Distinctiveness Hypothesis*. Considering 29 papers and the results of 79 tests on the intergroup distinctiveness- intergroup differentiation relation, the meta-analysis revealed that the overall effect size was not significantly different from zero, implying the existence of opposite trends. One can conclude - based on the mixed empirical evidence and the apparently opposing theoretical arguments - that a straightforward relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes is not to be expected (Henderson-King et al., 1997; Jetten et al., 2004; Roccas & Schwartz, 1993) and further understanding of this relationship may come from the consideration of different moderators.

Moderators of the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes

A number of factors have been proposed to moderate the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes, such as the relevance of the dimension of comparison (Moghaddam & Stringer, 1988; Roccas & Schwartz, 1993), the existence and characteristics of a superordinate categorization (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel & Weber, 2003) and the degree of identification with the ingroup (Deschamps & Brown, 1983; Jetten et al., 2001; Moghaddam & Stringer, 1988; Roccas & Schwartz, 1993).

Consistent with the argument of Mummendey and Schreiber (1983; see also Tesser, Millar & Moore, 1988) that a person only displays ingroup bias on dimensions of high importance to the ingroup, Roccas and Schwartz (1993) predicted a moderating effect of the importance of the dimension of comparison and indeed observed that only on relevant dimensions was there a positive linear relationship between intergroup similarity and ingroup bias. As for the potential moderating role of the superordinate category, Hornsey and Hogg (2000a) found that the effects of similarity between two groups depended on whether the higher-order categorization that included those two (sub)groups was accompanied (or not) with a simultaneous categorization at the subgroup level. Indeed, the positive effects derived from similarity only occurred when this categorization at the subgroup level existed, as Hewstone and Brown (1986) had already predicted when warning on the undesirability of eclipsing subgroup identities. Waldzus et al. (2003) also showed that a dissimilar outgroup was only negatively evaluated if the superordinate category was not sufficiently complex to reduce the levels of ingroup projection. However, it is the potential moderating role of ingroup identification that has received the widest attention and the most consistent support (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 2001).

The conciliatory role of ingroup identification

Originally, Deschamps and Brown (1983) considered that the effects of distinctiveness threat derived from the similarity of roles in the achievement of superordinate goals would be

stronger if the "groups concerned were psychologically meaningful for the group members" (p. 190). They tested this idea by having both natural real-life and *ad-hoc* created groups. This was accomplished by dividing individuals into groups either randomly or based on their faculty membership. And in fact, the negative effects that resulted from lack of distinctiveness were only observed with real-life groups, where the commitment with the group – and hence the degree of identification – was probably higher.

Additional support for this idea came from an experiment by Roccas and Schwartz (1993) that not only provided data on the moderation of the relevance of the dimension of comparison, but also about the influence of the degree of identification with the ingroup. The authors measured the participants' degree of identification based on responses on three items (e.g. "*How proud are you of attending this school?*") and the results showed that the positive relationship between intergroup similarity and ingroup bias on relevant dimensions only held for high identifiers.

The work of Jetten and colleagues also provides strong support for the idea that the degree of identification with the ingroup plays a role in determining the effects of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity (Jetten et al., 1996, 2001; Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004). As mentioned before, Jetten, Spears and Manstead (1996) have obtained different results, presenting support for both the reflective distinctiveness hypothesis (exp. 1) and the reactive distinctiveness hypothesis (exp. 2). The difference between the two experiments concerned the nature of groups: minimal groups (exp. 1) and real groups (exp. 2). The authors reasoned – similar to Deschamps and Brown (1983) – that the commitment to real groups was probably higher than the commitment to minimal groups and that these different degrees of identification had implications for the way the participants reacted to intergroup similarity or dissimilarity. Indeed, what the results indirectly showed was that the SIT's reactive distinctiveness was valid for high identifiers and the SCT's reflective distinctiveness hypothesis was valid for low identifiers. However, no direct measure or manipulation of the degree of identification was accomplished in

these experiments. To address this issue, another set of experiments was conducted (Jetten et al., 2001). The hypotheses to be tested were now clearly formulated since work by Spears and colleagues (Spears, Doosje & Ellemers, 1997) had meanwhile demonstrated the influence of degree of identification in a set of experiments not directly related to the effects of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity. The authors (Spears et al., 1997) presented four studies in which different (perceived) threats to group status or group distinctiveness were manipulated and ingroup identification was measured. Results revealed different responses depending on the level of identification such that high identifiers were more willing to express group-level attitudes (e.g. group solidarity) in response to group threats, namely a threat to group distinctiveness (Spears et al., 1997; exp. 4).

Considering these results and the fact that in the SIT original formulation it was stated that “[individuals] must be subjectively identified with the relevant ingroup” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; p. 41) to act in terms of their group membership, Jetten and colleagues tested hypotheses that would allow for a theoretical integration of the apparently contradictory SIT and SCT approaches. The authors argued that this apparent contradiction was simply derived from different theoretical emphases of each approach (Jetten & Spears, 2003). The hypotheses were then as follows: highly identified individuals are more likely to perceive low intergroup distinctiveness as a threat and will, therefore, be more motivated to display intergroup bias in the case of intergroup similarity and more “comfortable” with a context of intergroup dissimilarity since it allows for the clear separateness of two groups; low identifiers, on the contrary, may be insufficiently invested in their group identity and, in the case of intergroup similarity, may be more likely to think in terms of a superordinate categorization in which expressions of ingroup bias are unsuitable⁴. However, if the groups are clearly distinct (intergroup dissimilarity), the idea of two different groups becomes undeniable and the individuals will act in accordance to that

4. A similar reasoning is present in the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) to the extent that it “suggests that if group members’ mental representations of separate groups could be recategorized into a one group representation, then the fundamental biases and conflicts between groups should diminish” (p. 88).

ingroup-outgroup categorization, looking for ingroup-enhancement.

To test these hypotheses, in the first experiment, Jetten et al. (2001; exp. 1) manipulated group distinctiveness by providing graphical feedback about group distributions in their level of extroversion and identification with a real group was measured (e.g. “*I identify with students of the University of Amsterdam*”). As predicted, high identification led to more differentiation when group distinctiveness was low (similarity) and there was a (non significant) tendency for low identified individuals to display more intergroup bias when group distinctiveness was high (dissimilarity). In the second study, looking to overcome the possible weakness of measuring group identification in study 1, this variable was manipulated by means of a “bogus pipeline” procedure, and the manipulation of group distinctiveness was achieved by providing feedback on ingroup and outgroup norms (as in Jetten et al., 1996). The results showed that the similarity condition led to reliably more ingroup bias for high identifiers compared to the dissimilarity condition, but no significant pattern was observed for low identifiers. However, when comparing specific allocating strategies between groups as a behavioural measure of bias, low identifiers showed greater ingroup bias under a condition of dissimilar norms. More recently, Gabarrot et al. (2009) showed that two co-existent instances of intergroup similarity (one inadvertently provided through a norms manipulation) led to more discrimination and that this pattern was stronger for high identifiers.

More indirect support for the moderating role of identification with the group came from two experiments in which Jetten et al. (1997) showed that the negative effects of similarity only occurred for prototypical and not for peripheral group members. Though one can consider that prototypicality is different from identification in the sense that it is context-dependent, the close association between the two suggest that these studies offer further support for this moderating hypothesis.

A final confirmation of the moderating role of ingroup identification came with the above mentioned meta-analysis that Jetten et al. (2004) performed where they showed that “only group identi-

fication was a reliable moderator” (Jetten et al., 2004; p. 1) with equally strong support for reflective and reactive processes. These studies show that ingroup identification does serve as a moderator of the relationship and allow one to explain the domain of applicability of each hypothesis: the reactive distinctiveness hypothesis according to which intergroup similarity leads to negative attitudes suits high identifiers better (since they have more motivational concerns) and the reflective distinctiveness hypothesis which states that intergroup dissimilarity leads to negative attitudes is more suitable for low identifiers (for whom perceptual and cognitive processes are more dominant).

Yet another view: the influence of goal interdependence

Another set of studies, not yet discussed, has shown the importance of still another basic and crucial factor in group dynamics that can be easily linked with perceptions of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity: Goal interdependence. In these studies, Brown (Brown, 1984b; Brown & Abrams, 1986) demonstrated the influence of goal interdependence on the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes, revealing its moderating role. Even though Brown was based on the hypothesis derived from SIT that groups who become too similar may be targeted with increasing discrimination and dislike, the author delineated an approach in which the central idea was that the effects of intergroup similarity are a function of the prevailing goal orientation (Brown, 1984b) rather than ingroup identification. The idea that goal orientation or goal interdependence could play a role here came from Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT, Campbell, 1965; Sherif, 1966) which states that intergroup behavior is determined by the functional relationships that are established between groups. These interdependent relations can be of competition (negative interdependence) or of cooperation (positive interdependence). While cooperation, fuelled by the idea of a common goal, elicits positive attitudes, competition is a mechanism that generates negative attitudes and behaviors toward the other group (Sherif et al., 1961).

Brown (1984b) reported two experiments conducted with students from two different schools where status and attitudinal similarity were manipulated. In the first experiment, groups

expected to interact cooperatively with one another on a general knowledge task. The outgroup (the other school) was manipulated to be seen as having higher, lower or similar status compared to the ingroup, and similar or different attitudes. Similar outgroups (in both status and attitudes) were liked more than dissimilar outgroups. But when the groups were put in a competitive situation (i.e., using the Prisoner’s Dilemma Task), there was a tendency to discriminate against similar outgroups more. In a second experiment, the nature of the anticipated task was manipulated (cooperation *vs.* competition) but no effects of this factor were found on ingroup bias, but more competitive subjects did indeed express less liking for an attitudinally similar outgroup.

Considering the possible weakness of the result, since the predicted effect of competition only emerged in a post hoc secondary analysis, Brown undertook another experiment (Brown & Abrams, 1986) in which goal orientation was manipulated in a different manner: actual cooperation and competition was used instead of mere anticipation. The students were told that the study was designed to test a new form of evaluation to see if people were good at Math and English. The goal orientation was manipulated by saying that the researchers were interested in how working with another school affects people’s performance (cooperation – moreover it was said that half the test was completed by them, and the other part was completed by the other school, the outgroup) or by saying that they were interested in the effects of competition on performance (competition – and it was also said that the school performances would be compared). Then, participants in both conditions were told that they would receive *prize money*, whether based on the joint performance (cooperation) or on relative performances (competition). Thus, the groups were interdependent in both conditions. But, once again, the results did not reveal the expected interaction: Similar outgroups were liked more irrespective of goal orientation. However, the predicted effects did emerge when the authors introduced a subjectively perceived competitiveness against the other school as a factor in a later analysis. So, even though it is a post hoc and correlational result, it does replicate similar results of the other experiments (Brown, 1984b).

Taken together, the results seem to offer initial support to the idea that goal interdependence may also constitute a reliable moderator of the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes. Though the hypothesis that goal interdependence may serve as a moderator of the relationship is largely unexplored compared with the hypothesis of the moderating role of ingroup identification, this idea has, nonetheless, received further support from another compelling (theoretical and empirical) argument offered by the work of Esses and colleagues (Esses, Jackson & Armstrong, 1998; Esses, Dovidio, Jackson & Armstrong, 2001; Esses, Jackson, Dovidio & Hodson, 2005). Also inspired by RCT (Sherif, 1966; Levine & Campbell, 1972), the authors present a model to account for attitudes towards immigrants: the *Instrumental Model of Group Conflict* (Esses, Jackson & Armstrong, 1998). The model suggests that “the combination of resource stress and the salience of a potentially competitive outgroup leads to perceived group competition for resources. In turn, this perceived competition leads to attempts to remove the source of competition, using a variety of strategies.” (Esses, Jackson & Armstrong, 1998; p. 702). In order to remove the source of competition, one group can try to decrease the other group’s competitiveness by expressing negative attitudes and attributions in an attempt to prove the competitor’s lack of worth or by overt discrimination or it can also avoid the group by decreasing proximity, by denying “other groups access to its territories” (p.702). What is relevant for the discussion here is what it means in the model: “resource stress” and a “potentially threatening outgroup”. Resource stress concerns any belief that access to resources is limited to certain groups in a society and derives directly from the perception of scarce resources (resources such as money, jobs and power). This concept is thus closely related to that of “negative interdependence” or “competition”. And then, a potentially threatening outgroup is a group that is salient to the ingroup’s perception, because of its size, for example, but that is also similar to the ingroup in dimensions that make them likely to take resources. With this in mind, one can easily identify in this model, a reasoning that is very similar to the hypothesis of goal interdependence serving as a moderator of the effects of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity on intergroup attitudes.

In an experimental study (Esses, Jackson & Armstrong, 1998), a fictitious immigrant group (“*sandirians*”) described as hard-working and ambitious (characteristics resembling the profile of the Canadian host population), in the competition condition, tended to be targeted with more negative attitudes and support for “sandirian” immigration was significantly weaker. Thus, according to the Instrumental Model of Group Conflict, intergroup similarity can have negative effects, depending on the perception of interdependence.

According to these studies (Brown, 1984b; Brown & Abrams, 1986; Esses et al., 1998) influenced by the Goal interdependence approach, intergroup similarity leads to negative attitudes in a condition of competition but not in a condition of cooperation. Considering Brown’s work (Brown, 1984b; Brown & Abrams, 1986) and the work by Esses et al. (1998), that build on ideas emerging from the Goal Interdependence Approach, a new perspective on the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes emerges: a perspective that considers goal interdependence as the moderator of that relationship.

There is, then, support for the existence of two moderators of the relationship. Each moderator comes from a different theoretical approach. Studies influenced by the Social Identity Approach suggest that the relationship is moderated by ingroup identification. Studies influenced by the Goal Interdependence Approach suggest that goal interdependence takes on that moderating role. The question then is to know whether these two points of view, and their respective moderators, are both valid and, if so, the conditions under which each moderator is more or less important. If we can clarify this, then we will have identified a higher-order moderator (a meta-moderator), one that determines whether it is ingroup identification or goal interdependence that affects the intergroup similarity/dissimilarity – intergroup attitudes relationship.

Different dimensions, different processes

Considering the studies reviewed so far, it becomes evident that there are many different dimensions along which intergroup similarity/dissimilarity has been manipulated. Intergroup similarity/dissimilarity has been operationalized in very different ways, such as attitudes (e.g. Allen & Wilder, 1975), group roles (Deschamps & Brown, 1983), status (Brown, 1984b), group norms (Jetten et al., 1996, 2001) and others. These different manipulations may in fact yield different subjective meanings and consequences. However, little attention has been paid to this aspect. One could argue that the type of dimension used to define intergroup similarity/dissimilarity may be important. In fact, it seems likely to us that the type of dimension may well be the crucial variable that determines whether it is identification that moderates the relationship or whether it is goal interdependence that serves as the moderator.

The literature shows that the perception of groups (and persons and cultures) is structured along two fundamental dimensions (e.g. Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Rosenberg, Nelson, & Vivekananthan, 1968). Though using different labels, there seems to be one fundamental dimension that includes concepts like competence, agency, dominance and instrumentality and another fundamental dimension that includes concepts like warmth, morality, communion and expressiveness (Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005). One aspect seems to fundamentally distinguish the two dimensions: the idea that the first dimension includes aspects that are more profitable for the self or the group that possesses those traits and the second dimension pertains more for the relationship with others (Peeters, 1983).

This distinction allows suggesting yet another meaning associated to the distinction between these two dimensions. The first dimension seems to include aspects that grant those highly characterized by that dimension the tools to achieve material resources while the second dimension seems to include aspects that can be *a priori* seen as less useful from this point of view. Though we should not draw an exact connection between the competence and agentic aspects with this “instrumental” func-

tion and the warmth and communal aspects with a more simple “symbolic” dimension, we do argue that there is a tendency for this correspondence to occur. Using this axis to set apart the dimensions, we call the first dimension the *instrumental* dimension, and we label the second dimension the *symbolic* dimension. The first dimension is called instrumental because according to this perspective we see the aspects included in this dimension as potentially serving a goal or a purpose (in our view: achieving material resources). In this sense, a group that is characterized as more instrumental than another group is a group that is more prepared and better equipped to achieve material resources than the other group. On the contrary, we use the term symbolic to refer to all non-material aspects of social life, aspects that are not seen as relevant to achieve material resources⁵. This symbolic dimension includes a wide variety of aspects that in many other situations may be seen as standing at different poles. In fact, according to this “new” distinction, we unequivocally deal with only two dimensions. And even the recent discussion of whether warmth/sociability and morality should be seen as two separate dimensions has no sense here, because according to this distinction, these two aspects are both seen as symbolic *a priori*.

Thus, content-wise, two dimensions unequivocally exist: the one making reference to aspects like competence and agency, and the other one making reference to aspects like warmth, morality and communion. This distinction comprises in itself different meanings. What we argue is that when we think of intergroup relations, for example the relationship between host society members and immigrants, one specific meaning becomes more salient. That meaning is the one that distinguishes instrumental and symbolic aspects. We further argue that there is clearly a greater tendency for the first dimension (and aspects like competence and agency,

5. The « social utility » dimension identified by Beauvois (2003) is the closest term of reference for « our » instrumental dimension, since it is about the group's « market value ». Indeed, Cambon (2004) showed that personality traits most characteristic of the social utility domain are more used to describe individuals with the attributes of economic success and in a position to produce economic value. However, the symbolic dimension is further apart from the « social desirability » dimension to the extent that the impact of perceiving intergroup similarity at this symbolic level does not pertain to ascertain whether this group may « fulfil the personal needs of people in their social lives » (Dubois & Beauvois, 2005, p. 125) but it is instead appraised in terms of its impact in the definition of group boundaries and the establishment of a positive identity of the ingroup.

intelligence, etc.) to be considered instrumental, and for the second dimension (and aspects like warmth, communion, sociability, etc.) to be considered symbolic. However, this does not always have to be the case. And this points to one very important characteristic of the instrumental-symbolic distinction: its context-dependency. What defines an aspect as instrumental or symbolic is the context: If in a given context, being more sociable or more honest puts that person or that group in a better position to achieve material resources, then those aspects, on that context, should be defined as instrumental. It should be noted also that the resources considered here are the *material* resources and not those more abstractly defined, where symbolic aspects would also certainly often play a role.

With this distinction in mind, we hypothesize that these two different dimensions correspond with different processes: whether intergroup similarity/dissimilarity refers to a symbolic or an instrumental dimension may determine whether ingroup identification or goal interdependence serve as the moderator of the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes⁶. Therefore, it is assuming the meta-moderating role of the dimension to which intergroup similarity/dissimilarity refers to, that we formulate the following reasoning and hypotheses: Considering that notions of identity are typically more linked with aspects like beliefs, attitudes and values, and not as related to outcomes, we hypothesize that the social identity perspective is better framed in a symbolic perspective. Accordingly, we hypothesize that *when intergroup similarity/dissimilarity refers to a symbolic dimension, the relationship with intergroup attitudes will be moderated by ingroup identification*, in the way illustrated by Jetten et al. (2004). When intergroup similarity/dissimilarity is defined in terms of an instrumental dimension, then the Goal Interdependence Approach – that considers the scarcity of resources as one of the main determinants of intergroup relations (Sherif, 1966) – provides a more suitable understanding. Thus, we hypothesize that *when*

6. Though we argue that a certain instance of intergroup similarity may be regarded as instrumental or symbolic and that carries consequences for intergroup relations, we do acknowledge that an outgroup may convey different instances of similarity/dissimilarity which will determine different co-existent intergroup dynamics.

intergroup similarity/dissimilarity is defined in terms of an instrumental dimension, the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes will be moderated by goal interdependence.

The hypothesis that the effects of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity on intergroup attitudes are determined by this distinction between two fundamental dimensions is in fact concordant with the ideas of several other authors (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Lima & Vala, 2002; Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2010; Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2002; Zarate, Garcia, Garza, & Hitlan, 2004).

Curiously enough, it was in an attempt to reconcile the approaches derived from the Social Identity Approach (SIT/SCT) with the Goal Interdependence Approach that Scheepers et al. (2002) adopted a contextual-functional view, arguing that different contexts elicit different responses due to different motivations, and distinguished between an identity-function and an instrumental function of differentiation. The authors proposed that the Social Identity Approach provides the best explanation for the identity-function of differentiation (achieving a positive distinctiveness) and the Interdependence Approach provides the best perspective to understand the instrumental function of differentiation. However, it should be noted that what Scheepers et al. (2002) call *instrumental* does not map into our concept of *instrumental*, because even though the instrumental function of differentiation is related with achieving goals, in their case, this does not necessarily pertain to *material* resources or outcomes. In fact, in their experiments, they only used symbolic measures of differentiation. Besides, the authors made no application of this distinction to the domain of the effects of intergroup similarity.⁷

Esses et al. (2001) have suggested that relationships with immigrant groups could be differently affected by similarity and dissimilarity, depending on whether these refer to “dimensions relevant to being able to compete successfully for resources”

7. For the same reasons, our understanding of “instrumental” is also distinct from the concept of “instrumental” as understood within the context of the SIDE Model (e.g. Sindie & Reicher, 2008).

(instrumental) or “dimensions irrelevant to obtain resources” (symbolic). Vala and colleagues (Lima & Vala, 2002; Vala, Brito, & Lopes, 1999) report a series of studies showing that the perception and exaggeration of *cultural* differences elicited prejudice. However, on the other hand, when the perception was in terms of a characteristic that could cause changes in the other group’s ability to achieve material resources, then similar groups were the ones evaluated negatively (Lima & Vala, 2002).

Zárate et al. (2004) conducted an experiment that illustrated how intergroup similarity was differentially evaluated depending on whether it referred to *interpersonal* or *work-related* traits. Though named differently, this distinction perfectly exemplifies our symbolic-instrumental distinction. However, the authors did not consider any other potential moderating factors and so they did not consider that the type of intergroup similarity (interpersonal vs. work-related) could be a meta-moderator that determines which moderator comes into play⁸.

And finally, the moderating role of the type of dimension along which intergroup similarity/dissimilarity was manipulated was even tested within the meta-analysis carried out by Jetten et al. (2004). However, the coding of dimensions that they used (attitudes, group status, task roles, category) did not reflect our distinction, because even though one could *a priori* consider *task roles* and *status* as instrumental, and the others as symbolic, the context of the experiment in which those manipulations were used turned them all into symbolic dimensions (as we shall see below). The only studies included in the meta-analysis that truly had a manipulation of instrumental similarity were the two studies by Brown (1984; Brown & Abrams, 1986), which could not provide a reliable test of our hypothesis⁹.

These authors have suggested and sometimes demonstrated that the dimension on which intergroup similarity/dissimilarity is

8. In a more recent but less related vein, Oldmeadow and Fiske (2010) showed that the dimensions to which the content of group representations refer to affects intergroup attitudes. Specifically, these authors showed that high status groups pursue positive distinctiveness in domains related to competence and low status groups do it in domains related to warmth.

9. This is in fact the reason why we chose not to test our hypothesis through a new meta-analysis using Jetten et al.’s (2004) data.

manipulated may well serve as a moderator that determines the approach that is more suitable in each context. Our proposal goes further in hypothesizing that the dimension in which intergroup similarity/dissimilarity is defined (symbolic or instrumental) determines the factor (ingroup identification or goal interdependence) that moderates the effects of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity on intergroup attitudes; and, in doing so, it also determines the approach that is more suitable to help understand and predict attitudes in each situation.

One way of examining the plausibility of the general idea that we outlined above, although only indirectly, is to look back at what has been made in the domain of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity, and see if the reasoning is supported by past studies. Considering the studies in which ingroup identification played a moderating role (Roccas & Schwartz, 1993; Jetten et al., 2001) or seemed to have played a role (Deschamps & Brown, 1983; Jetten et al., 1996), the dimensions along which intergroup similarity/dissimilarity was manipulated should tend to be all symbolic. And in fact, this is the case. In none of these studies was similarity manipulated along instrumental dimensions. In Deschamps and Brown’s (1983) experiment, even though there was a prize reward for a well performed task, the cooperative nature of the task made the group roles’ similarity or dissimilarity irrelevant for whether or not the outcome was obtained. This means that the similarity or dissimilarity of group roles did not have an instrumental nature here.

In the experiment by Roccas and Schwartz (1993), the manipulation of similarity included different aspects such as success in national examinations, readiness to exert themselves during compulsory military service, etc; but the experimental setting provided no relationship whatsoever between this manipulation and obtaining an outcome, since the dependent variables were evaluation of the ingroup and the outgroup and readiness to engage in social contact. Accordingly, even if some of those characteristics (e.g. success in national examinations) could serve as instrumental in certain contexts, the context on this experiment was not one of them.

Finally, in the experiments by Jetten and colleagues (1996, 2001), the manipulation of similarity revolved around several aspects that are clearly symbolic (introversion /extroversion, belief in supernatural phenomena and group norms of fairness and discrimination) and even though a norm of (for example) discrimination could have an indirect impact in the money that could eventually be allocated to the participant, the manipulation of similarity/dissimilarity did not focus on this.

Considering the studies in which goal interdependence moderated in some way the relationship between intergroup similarity and intergroup attitudes (Brown & Abrams, 1986; Esses et al., 1998), it seems that the manipulation of similarity/dissimilarity focused nearly exclusively on dimensions relevant for maximizing outcomes or obtaining desired resources.

Even though in Brown and Abrams' (1986) experiment, the intergroup similarity that led to negative attitudes was manipulated in terms of attitudes, the authors admit: "(...) both attitude and status similarity dimensions were *experimentally defined as being relevant to task performance*" (p. 89; *our italic*) and, consequently, were relevant also to obtaining the final outcome (prize money). So, the authors turned those attitudes into something instrumental.

As for the work of Esses, even though the one study discussed previously did not manipulate similarity (since the immigrant group was always presented in the same way), the characteristics that were used intended to resemble the profile of the Canadian population (host population). Moreover, these were characteristics (e.g. hard-working, ambitious) that can undoubtedly be considered instrumental and relevant for obtaining resources in the context implied in the experimental setting: the Canadian society.

The experiments presented in the literature do seem to support the plausibility of the ideas and hypotheses advanced in this review. When identification moderates the intergroup similarity/dissimilarity – intergroup attitudes relationship, similarity/dissimilarity has been largely defined along symbolic rather than instrumental dimensions. When goal interdependence serves as

the moderator, then the manipulation of similarity/dissimilarity has focused on instrumental dimensions¹⁰.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to critically review the research conducted on the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes and present an integrative explanation for the competing theoretical approaches and empirical results present in the literature on the issue. We have shown how the apparent contradiction from Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Self-Categorization Theory (Turner et al., 1987) concerning the predictions of the effects of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity was resolved invoking the moderating role of ingroup identification (Jetten et al., 2004). We then disputed the universal scope of this mechanism and proposed that it only applies when intergroup similarity/dissimilarity refers to symbolic aspects. Based on research by Brown (Brown, 1984b; Brown & Abrams, 1986) we suggested that another crucial factor in group dynamics – goal interdependence – also served as a moderator of the referred relationship, namely when intergroup similarity/dissimilarity refers to instrumental aspects. Thus, we claimed the importance of considering the dimension (symbolic *vs.* instrumental) to which intergroup similarity/dissimilarity refers to, suggesting that this aspect may be a tool to reconcile the competing approaches, serving as a meta-moderator that defines the conditions in which each moderator (ingroup identification or goal interdependence) comes into play. In fact, though this distinction between symbolic and instrumental dimensions has been largely considered in the interpersonal domain (e.g. Asch, 1946; Rosenberg, Nelson & Vivekananthan, 1968), this is not so true for the intergroup domain (but see Fiske et al., 2002, for an exception).

10. One should bear in mind that although we are proposing ingroup identification and goal interdependence as intervening in two independent processes, we agree that these two may often be related. For example, it has been shown that identification actually increases symbolic or instrumental perceived threat. We reckon that identification may also be a factor in the case of an instrumental dimension. What we argue is that its role is different in that context. Most likely the impact of identification exists to the extent that when the situation does not personally affect the individual, a certain extension of identification is required for the impact of goal interdependence to occur (i.e. the cooperative *vs.* competitive nature of the relationship may be more relevant at high levels of ingroup identification).

The point to be made is that a clearer understanding of the effects of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity on intergroup attitudes will probably be accomplished by integrating the literature arguing for this symbolic-instrumental distinction with the classical theories on intergroup behaviour from which different approaches on the effects of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity are derived. This integration permits the conclusion that the dimension that the intergroup similarity/dissimilarity refers to constitutes a factor that has to be considered when analyzing the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes - and the factors that moderate that relationship. An approach that considers the dimension to which intergroup similarity/dissimilarity refers to is important not only because it articulates two basic factors in group dynamics (ingroup identification and goal interdependence) with the classical distinction between symbolic and instrumental aspects, but also because it uses this articulation to explain the effects of one of the most important determinants of intergroup relations: intergroup similarity/dissimilarity.

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