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RUNNING HEAD: Emotional Involvement and Stereotype Content

Fantasia:

Being Emotionally Involved with a Stereotyped Target Changes Stereotype Warmth

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Abstract

Dimensions of stereotypes, warmth and competence, may respond differentially to perceivers' emotional involvement. Two studies tested the effect of being emotionally involved with a fictional immigrant target on stereotypic warmth but not competence dimension. Emotional involvement with a target affects the target's perceived trustworthiness, warmth-related attributes, but not competence. Emotional involvement was operationalized as a personal variable, fantasizing tendency (tendency to empathically engage with fictitious characters) and a situational variable (emotion-focused instructions to adopt the target's perspective). After reading an immigrant's blog, Study 1 participants with a strong tendency to become involved with characters, if also instructed to focus on targets' emotional reactions, rated an immigrant as warmer than did all other combinations, but perceived competence did not change. In Study 2, priming the perceived competitive intent of the immigrant's group (an anti-warmth predictor) impeded involvement with the target and decreased perceived warmth. Priming perceived cooperative intent (a warmth predictor) replicated Study 1's results. Together, the studies show preliminary support for a specific *emotional involvement-warmth* link.

Keywords: emotion, warmth, immigrants, stereotype content, emotional sharing, fantasy

Which way home, an Academy Award nominee for best feature documentary, showed “the personal side of immigration through the eyes of children who face harrowing dangers with enormous courage and resourcefulness as they endeavor to make it to the United States” (Cammisa, 2009). Such narratives (films, novels, blogs, TV shows, and news) show social groups’ situations (i.e., immigration to the United States) conveying information and sympathy. However, the depth of perceivers’ experience with such narratives may determine how they perceive the social group members.

The current research aims to show that becoming emotionally involved with a fictitious character belonging to a stereotyped group changes one specific and fundamental stereotype dimension, namely the target’s perceived warmth (i.e., friendliness, sincerity, and trustworthiness), leaving untouched another dimension, the target’s perceived competence (intelligence and ability). The next section describes the few extant studies of mentalizing characters in the intergroup domain and derives our specific hypothesis.

Fantasia: Emotional Involvement with Fictitious Characters

People’s experience of literary narratives enhances their social cognitive abilities (Kidd & Castano, 2013). Several constructs could account for a general tendency to be so affected by a narrative. *Transportation* or absorption into a story leads to becoming involved with its protagonist (Green & Brock, 2000). Experiencing a narrative may generate *psychological assimilation* with (becoming a part of) the collective described within the narrative (Gabriel & Young, 2011). *Experience-taking* of a target may be caused by spontaneously assuming the identity of a character, changing self-judgments, attitudes, and behavior (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Characters’ traits portrayed in narratives have even been ascribed to the self (Sestir & Green, 2010), indicating the bond built between reader and character.

Our focus here will be on the effect of becoming emotionally involved with individual characters described in a narrative. In this paper, *involvement* is defined as an emotional bond established between reader and character that results from readers focusing exclusively on characters' feelings and emotions. Whereas *transportation* is a process by which individuals' thoughts and attention focus on the situation described in a narrative and includes three components –cognitive (*I found my mind wandering while reading the narrative*), emotional (*I was emotionally involved in the narrative*), and imagery (*I had a vivid mental image of the character*), our focus here is only on the emotional bond between reader and the specific character's feelings (*I was emotionally involved with the character*). Different from *psychological assimilation* and *experience-taking*, emotional involvement with a target does not imply becoming part of target's collective or identifying with target's group.

Involvement with a character was operationalized as both a *dispositional* variable through the Fantasy subscale included in the Interaction Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980), and as a *situational* variable through emotion-focused instructions to adopt the target's perspective (Batson et al., 1997; Davis et al., 1996). The Fantasy subscale measures the tendency to empathically fantasize with fictitious characters (e.g., "*I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel*", "*When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character*"). This involvement requires considering the target's mind. To the best of our knowledge, the Fantasy scale from the IRI (Davis, 1983) is the only measure covering specifically the tendency to imagine another's emotions through narratives, novels, films, etc.

Involvement with a Stereotyped Target: Emotional Involvement-Warmth Link in Stereotype Content

The main outcomes related to reading narratives are positive judgments of characters that result from being transported into narratives (Green & Brock, 2000) and belief changes based on

information included in fictional stories (Kaufman & Libby, 2012; Prentice, Gerrig, & Bailis, 1997; Wheeler, Green, & Brock, 1999).

The effects of narratives portraying stereotyped characters have not been fully addressed. Among the exceptions (Hodson, Choma, & Costello, 2009), prejudice toward homosexuals decreased through simulation of being a member of this minority. In a related way, perspective-taking reduced expression and accessibility of general stereotypes (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000) and improved overall attitude toward the stereotyped group (Batson et al., 1997; Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002; Dovidio et al., 2004; Kaufman & Libby, 2012; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003). However, besides the decreased prejudice and accessibility of stereotypes, it is not clear whether the stereotype contents change, our goal here.

Given that stereotyped targets are perceived primarily in terms of warmth (intention) and competence (ability) dimensions, according to the stereotype content model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007), it is relevant to test whether the effects of being emotionally involved through narratives with a stereotyped target is restricted to one of these dimensions. Theoretically, being emotionally involved with characters may lead to the understanding of characters' thoughts and intentions, which should imply perceived trustworthiness and sincerity (warmth dimension) but not perceived ability (competence dimension). How can emotional involvement with a character foster just perceived warmth and not perceived competence?

Two convergent lines of research support the *emotional involvement-warmth* link: emotional expressivity and sharing. From a social-functional approach, emotions influence social interaction among individuals because they serve as a form of communication (Parkinson, 1996). Emotional expressions give individuals information about other's emotions and intentions (Ames & Johar, 2009; Darwin, 1872/2009; Ekman, 1993; Fridlund, 1992; Knutson, 1996) and

emotional expressivity –accuracy with which an individual displays emotions has been proposed as a marker for an individual’s trustworthiness and cooperation (Boone & Buck, 2003; Schug, Matsumoto, Horita, Yamagishi, & Bonnet, 2010). Thus, through emotional expressivity, individuals show their intention, and if they do so accurately, that conveys trustworthiness. As the Warmth dimension of social perception relies on judgments about other’s intentions, emotional expressions will selectively affect this dimension, whereas Competence, perceived ability, will be intact.

In addition, emotional similarity among individuals enhances mutual understanding (Preston & de Waal, 2002) and attraction (Bell, 1978; Gibbons, 1986; Sabatelli & Rubin, 1986). Individuals feeling similar emotions perceive each other’s intentions and motivations more accurately (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994; Keltner & Kring, 1999; Levenson & Rueff, 1994) and also trust each other more (Anderson, Keltner, & John, 2003). So, perceiving targets’ emotional responses and feeling similarly to them will enhance their perceived trustworthiness. That is, targets’ apparent warmth will increase.

We predict that those explicitly asked to become involved with characters’ feelings and emotions will perceive them as specifically more sincere or trustworthy, because targets express reliable signals, so target and observer share the same emotions, whereas they will not necessarily perceive them as more intelligent or capable (Competence dimension). We propose that when individuals try to infer others’ intents, becoming emotionally involved with the target facilitates trust. However, becoming emotionally involved with characters’ feelings should not have implication for those others’ perceived skills.

Overview

Study 1 presented a blog supposedly written by an 18 year-old immigrant narrating in

first-person the experience of being an immigrant minor arriving in the U.S. Participants read it focusing on immigrant's emotions or remaining neutral. We hypothesized that reading an outgroup member's (immigrant's) blog, ambiguous about the outgroup member's warmth, intentions, goals, and competence, experiencing it from the outgroup member's perspective, would be associated with greater perceived warmth but not competence. Thus, this study investigated whether the emotional involvement provided by emotion-focused instructions results in differential stereotype content associated with a specific outgroup, at least for individuals who show a tendency to get emotionally involved with fictional characters. For these individuals, instructions focusing on targets' emotions would deepen involvement with the target, which would have differential effects on the warmth dimension.

Nonetheless, involvement with a target should not be taken for granted. Individuals differ on how much they perceive targets' intentions, which may alter involvement with them. Manipulations of targets' intent (cooperative or competitive) also should affect involvement, even when perceivers are not explicitly asked to become involved with a character, because perceived cooperative intent predicts perceived warmth. In other words, a situation specifically prompting cooperation, in people dispositionally inclined to fantasize (become involved), should promote perceived warmth but not competence. Thus, dispositional fantasy should affect perceived warmth (but not competence) in a cooperative context, because SCM research shows that cooperation is the structural variable predicting perceived warmth, by specifying the target's cooperative intent. Competition, while also involving intent, should not have this effect because it undermines perceived warmth. This will be addressed in Study 2.

Stereotype Content and Immigrants

In the SCM context, the use of immigrants as target group responds to both social and

methodological issues. Socially, immigration represents a key topic in many societies. Methodologically, also, immigrant stereotypes are exceptionally convenient because immigrants in general have been characterized as low warmth (unfriendly and untrustworthy) and low competence (incompetent and unskilled) (Cuddy et al., 2009; Durante et al., 2012; Eckes, 2002). This univalent negative view of immigrants permits us to assess more clearly the separate effect of involvement on both the warmth and competence dimensions. Nevertheless, when specifying immigrant groups, the characterization is more diverse (Lee & Fiske, 2006).

Study 1

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through the online paid experiment website of the Psychology Department. As compensation, participants entered a raffle to win ten \$30 gift certificates. The sample comprised 176 U.S. participants (age $M = 27.2$ years, $SD = 10.9$; 69.9% female), of which 76.7% had a college degree or some college education. Ethnic characteristics of the sample were: 62.2% White; 16.6% Asian; 8.8% Hispanic; 7.8% African American; .5% Native American; and 4.1% not specified. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two perspective conditions: neutral ($N = 87$) or emotion-focused ($N = 89$). Those participants who did not answer correctly at least 3 out of 4 manipulation check items evaluating whether they recalled biographical information about the target ($N = 31$; 14.5%), and who spent more than 113 min. ($M = 15.3$; $SD = 10.2$) were excluded from further analysis ($N = 7$; 4.0%). Preliminary analysis showed that perspective instructions did not interact with participant gender in warmth ($F < 1$, $p = .43$) or competence ratings ($F = 2.59$, $p = .11$), so participant gender was collapsed in subsequent analysis.

Materials

A fictitious blog called *In Residence* was developed. The blog was supposedly written by an 18 year-old immigrant narrating in first-person the experience of being an immigrant minor arriving in the U.S. (see Appendix A). To increase its potentially affective quality, the narrative focused on situations implying psychosocial distress (rejection, nostalgia, difficulties associated with living in a foreign country), although no physical pain was implied. The immigrant's identity was ambiguous as to gender and country of origin. Details included in the blog were collected from actual immigrant blogs (e.g., <http://www.myimmigrationstory.com>) and educational texts (Teichmann, 2006). There was no explicit reference to the target's intellectual (e.g., intelligence) or relational abilities (e.g., friendliness). Preliminary studies piloted the blog. On a 9-point Likert scale from 1, *not much*, to 9, *very much*, the perceived warmth and competence of the immigrant from the blog were $M = 6.9$ ($SD = .74$) and $M = 6.0$ ($SD = 1.21$), respectively ($t = 2.725$; $p = .03$). These ratings may be reflecting the perception of the target as a member of the young-people group, who stereotypically are perceived as moderate in warmth and competence (Fiske et al., 2002). However, like immigrants, teenagers are seen as low/low (Kervyn, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2015). We chose a "young" immigrant for being similar to the age of participants in the sample.

Measures

The questionnaire, completed after reading the blog, included:

Involvement manipulation-check. Three items evaluated the experimental manipulation of involvement: 1) to what extent did you attempt to imagine the feelings, thoughts, and reactions of the person on the website? 2) To what extent did you feel moved by the person on the website? and 3) To what extent did you get involved with the person on the website? Items were

rated on a 9-point Likert scale from 1, *not much*, to 9, *very much*.

Fantasy subscale (F) from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980). The IRI includes four seven-item subscales: the Perspective-Taking subscale (PT), “tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others in everyday life”; the Fantasy subscale (F), “tendency to imaginatively transpose oneself into fictional situations”; the Empathic Concern subscale (EC), “tendency to experience feelings of sympathy and compassion for unfortunate other”; and the Personal Distress subscale (PD), “tendency to experience distress and discomfort in response to extreme distress in others” (Davis, 1996, p. 57). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1, *does not describe me well*, to 5, *describes me very well*. Fantasy scale is especially relevant to our hypothesis since the experimental setting is a weblog narrated in first-person.

Warmth and Competence scales. Participants rated the person on the website using the following adjectives: friendly, well-intentioned, trustworthy, warm, good-natured, and sincere, assessing the Warmth dimension; competent, confident, capable, efficient, intelligent, and skillful, assessing the Competence dimension (Fiske et al., 2002). Items were rated on a 9-point Likert scale from 1, *not at all*, to 9, *extremely*.

Manipulation check items. In four manipulation check items, participants recalled the target’s biographical information (e.g., where the immigrant lived) with the aim of assessing whether participants had read the blog carefully.

Typicality of the immigrant. Arguably, the involvement manipulation could lead to sub-categorization or personalization (Brewer, 1988), implying that the target is no longer seen as a member of a more inclusive category (e.g., immigrants). In order to rule out this possibility, we included two questions asking to what extent the person in the blog differed from other

immigrants and how typical the immigrant was (from 1, *not at all*, to 9, *extremely*).

Social desirability scale. The short form of the Marlowe-Crowne social desirability scale was used (Ballard, 1992). This form included 13 true-false items.

Procedure

As a cover story, participants were told that a student-community partnership called “Action 2.0” was initiating a project that included the development of a web-based community, including social-networking sites, video-sharing sites, and blogs. Participants also read that Action 2.0 and some faculty at University were considering a plan to edit and publish a website called “In Residence” in order to strengthen community bonds and give voice to Mercer County residents. Participants were asked to collaborate in the evaluation of the potential content of this website. “In this case specifically” (in fact there were no other possibilities), the content that participants had to evaluate were stories of immigrants in their own words. Participants were told that the main aim of this website was collecting stories of how people came to the United States. Volunteers from Action 2.0 had provided interviews carried out with immigrants living in the local county.

Before seeing the blog, participants were encouraged to maintain particular perspectives (neutral or emotion-focused) while reading the blog, allegedly trying to ensure people’s reactions based on the same context. Participants were asked to read the instruction twice. Following previous research (Batson et al., 1997; Davis et al., 1996), the *emotion-focused* instruction included:

Try to take the perspective of the person who appears on this website, imagining how he/she is feeling about what is happening. Think about the reaction of the person and visualize clearly and vividly how he/she feels. Try to imagine how the

person on the website feels. While you read the website, picture just how he/she feels. Try not to concern yourself with attending to all the information presented, just imagine how the person feels in that context.

Neutral instruction included the following paragraph:

Try to take a neutral perspective, being as objective as possible about the person who appears in the story. Look closely at the person and make careful observations. Notice exactly what the person does, whatever it is. Do not let yourself become caught up in imagining what the person has been through. Just remain neutral about the story.

Following the involvement manipulation, participants read the immigrant's blog about the difficulties of the person's life in the host country (see Appendix A). After filling out questions about the design of the website, to be consistent with the cover story, participants completed the manipulation-check items, involvement manipulation-check items, warmth and competence scales, Fantasy subscale, some questions about their perception of gender, origin country, typicality of the immigrant, social desirability scale (completed by only a portion of participants, $N = 60$), and socio-demographic questions. Finally, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Preliminary studies with an independent sample ($N = 52$) showed that the order of presenting the dispositional measure (before or after the blog) did not affect warmth ($M_{\text{before}} = 6.7$ and $M_{\text{after}} = 6.5$; $p > .700$) or competence ($M_{\text{before}} = 6.02$ and $M_{\text{after}} = 6.10$; $p > .800$) ratings. Emotion-focused manipulation check items were placed before the dispositional measure so responses are not contaminated by it.

Results

Descriptive Statistics. Cronbach alphas for Fantasy subscale and warmth and competence scales were moderately high (see Table 1). The social desirability scale did not correlate with the Fantasy subscale¹.

The outgroup member target used in the study was referred as an “immigrant,” without specifying country of origin or gender. A plurality of participants perceived the immigrant as coming from Mexico or Latin America (31.8%) that is as a low-competence, low-warmth immigrant (Lee & Fiske, 2006). Other responses were Eastern Europe (17.6%), Asia (14.2%), and with a frequency less than 5% were: “Caribbean countries,” “Russia,” “East,” “Iraq,” “India,” “Africa,” and “a Third World Country.” “Don’t know” responses were 14.8%. The perceived country of origin did not differ between conditions ($\chi^2 = 14.170, p = .362$).

Typicality of the immigrant. The immigrant was not perceived more distinctive in the perspective ($M = 3.81$) than in the neutral condition ($M = 4.20$), $p = .113$, nor were there significant differences in the perceived typicality of the immigrant between conditions. If anything, participants in the perspective-taking condition rated the target actually as higher in typicality ($M = 5.98$) than participants remaining neutral ($M = 5.57$; $p = .074$), opposite to the subtyping idea. This led us to rule out the possibility of target’s sub-categorization or personalization.

Manipulation check. In order to assess the effectiveness of the manipulation, we conducted three independent t tests between the emotion-focused and neutral instruction for each manipulation-check item. As expected, more than the neutral-instruction participants, the emotion-focused participants attempted to imagine the feelings and thoughts of the person on the website ($p < .05$), $M_{neutral} = 4.97$ (SD = 1.91) vs. $M_{emotion} = 7.19$ (SD = 1.41); felt more moved by the person ($p < .001$), $M_{neutral} = 5.18$ (SD = 1.99) vs. $M_{emotion} = 6.76$ (SD = 1.80); and got more

involved with the person ($p < .001$), $M_{neutral} = 4.37$ (SD = 1.99) vs. $M_{emotion} = 6.17$ (SD = 2.12).

Moderation regression analysis. We hypothesized that the combination of dispositional tendency toward fantasy and a situational instruction to become emotionally involved would combine to change perceived warmth of the immigrant².

A moderated regression analysis on each criterion variable—warmth and competence scales—used the procedure recommended by Aiken and West (1991) to test a continuous moderator variable effect (level of Fantasy) within levels of a categorical variable (involvement manipulation). This involved two hierarchical regressions for each criterion variable. One dummy variable was created for the involvement manipulation with the neutral condition as a reference category.

In all analyses, involvement manipulation (neutral vs. emotion-focused) and level of fantasy as the continuous moderator variable were used to predict the target's warmth and competence. A moderator effect would be obtained if the interaction regression coefficients were significant, adding to the explained variance.

Warmth scale. The upper part of Table 2 shows the moderated regression analysis for warmth ratings. The first-order effect was significant and positive for the involvement manipulation ($b = .524$; $p < .02$). Emotion-focused instructions were related to higher ratings of target warmth. The interaction between involvement manipulation and level of fantasy was significant in a positive direction ($b = .457$, $t(172) = 1.99$, $p < .05$). A simple slope analysis, in which the effect of involvement manipulation on warmth was examined as a function of the value of Fantasy (± 1 SD), revealed that participants with a high tendency to become involved in written material showed a significant increment in the target's warmth ratings from the neutral instruction ($M = 6.17$) to the emotion-focused instruction ($M = 7.06$; $t(172) = 3.41$, $p < .001$).

For participants with low tendency to fantasize there was no difference between the neutral ($M = 6.29$) and emotion-focused instructions ($M = 6.44$; $t(172) = .58, p = .563$); see Figure 1.

Competence scale. The lower part of Table 2 shows the moderated regression analysis for competence ratings. The first-order effect was significant and positive for emotion-focused instructions ($b = .513$; $p < .01$). Emotion-focused instructions were related to higher ratings of target competence. The interaction between instruction and level of fantasy was not significant ($b = .121, t(172) = .51, p = .609$), as predicted.

With the aim to control for the effect of Warmth and Competence in the analysis, we run the same hierarchical regression analysis but including in the first step warmth/competence, and in the second step the independent variables. The results show that the predicted interaction remains significant for warmth dimension: $b = .379, t(172) = 2.209, p < .05$. The first order effect of instruction is not still significant for warmth ($b = .193; p = .172$) or competence ($b = .153; p = .293$). For other approaches to control for relations among dependant variables see Binggeli, Krings and Sczesny (2014b).

Discussion

Our objective was to study the relation between emotional involvement with a stereotyped target and the warmth versus competence dimensions. We found that a combined emotional involvement orientation (situational and dispositional) sensitized perceivers selectively to the warmth dimension, improving their responses particularly on this dimension. Thus, focusing on target's emotions (involvement manipulation) and showing high levels of fantasy (dispositional involvement in narratives) together resulted in differential stereotype content associated to a specific outgroup member, in this case, an immigrant. Specifically, the immigrant target was perceived as warmer.

The effect of emotional involvement may be explained by empathic reactions—since this involvement is a prerequisite of empathy; however, our approach is limited to emotional sharing, a more nonspecific process than empathy, which implies feeling what other person actually feels. In our studies, experienced empathy was not measured (through a list of adjectives, for example; Batson et al., 1997), so we limited the scope of the results.

Consistent with our hypothesis, we did not find an interaction between dispositional fantasy and the involvement manipulation for competence ratings. However, a first-order effect did emerge. Participants focusing on target's emotions rated the target higher in competence. This result was unexpected, since competence ratings were affected by the involvement manipulations. Consequently, the hypothesis—a distinctive involvement-warmth link—is only partially supported. That is, the involvement manipulation produced a positive evaluation of the target on both dimensions, although more consistently for the warmth dimension. Perhaps the Study 1 data may have suffered methodological difficulties. The moderately high correlation between warmth and competence ratings ($r = .68, p < .001$) may be indicating the difficulty sometimes associated with an online procedure of collecting data. This procedure may have led to a superficial processing of the target's narrative. Accordingly, we could not completely rule out an instruction-driven halo effect explaining at least some of our results (i.e., the instruction main effects). Study 2 addresses this issue.

Another explanation is that the effect found on the competence dimension may be due to the specific content of the immigrant's story. The immigrant may have been perceived as successful regarding the acculturation process and typical problems that immigrants face.

Study 2 assesses the effect of framing the immigrant's narrative in cooperative or competitive terms on warmth ratings, again in interaction with dispositional fantasy. Previous

studies have found that the lack of cooperation lowers targets' perceived warmth (Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002). Our interest was to test whether dispositional fantasy moderates the relationship between a cooperative frame and warmth judgments. That is, a tendency to be emotionally involved with a character (immigrant) in a cooperative frame will amplify warmth but not competence judgments.

Cooperation and the Warmth Dimension

Emotional involvement with a target through a target's narrative is not necessarily automatic. Targets' intentions and behaviors play an important role in the emotional responses that those targets elicit. The degree of emotional involvement depends on the relationship between observer and actor. For example, Zillmann and Cantor (1977) manipulated a target to be perceived as malevolent, neutral, or benevolent. Participants showed emotional similarity between observer and benevolent or neutral targets, but not the malevolent target.

Similarly, expectations of cooperation from a target result in empathic responses, whereas expectations of competition lower empathic responses. Competitive situations are structured such that a positive outcome for an individual implies a negative outcome for the other individual. This particular structure generates the conditions for competitors to experience nonempathic responses (Lanzetta & Englis, 1989).

Because perceived cooperation is the social-structural variable underlying warmth judgments, we expect that emotional involvement will affect perceived warmth in cooperative contexts. To the best of our knowledge, no relationship has been established between social status (the social-structural variable underlying competence judgments; Fiske et al., 2002) and emotional involvement, so we do not test this possibility.

To summarize, our second study manipulated the target group's perceived cooperation

through scenarios (competitive vs. cooperative immigrants in general). We hypothesize that reading a blog about an individual outgroup member, after being primed with the outgroup as cooperative in the host society, but ambiguous about outgroup's competence, would be associated with higher scores on warmth but not competence, and only for perceivers dispositionally attuned to narrative characters.

Study 2

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through the participant pool of the Department of Psychology for course credit. The sample comprised 73 U.S. participants (age $M = 19.5$ years, $SD = 1.12$; 47.9% female). Ethnic characteristics of the sample were: 59% White; 19.3% Asian; 12% African American; 7.2% Hispanic; and 2.4% not specified. Participants' ethnicity did not affect warmth ($p = .185$) or competence ratings ($p = .642$). Specifically, on warmth ratings the highest score was showed by white participants. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: cooperative ($N = 31$) or competitive framework ($N = 42$). This sample size provided a sufficient power to conduct regression analysis with three predictors (Green, 1991). Preliminary analysis showed that manipulated framework did not interact with participant gender in warmth ($F < 1, p = .81$) or competence ratings ($F < 1, p = .69$), so participant gender was collapsed in subsequent analysis. Those participants who did not answer correctly at least 3 out of 4 check items evaluating whether they recalled biographical information about the target ($N = 4$; 5.2%) were excluded from further analysis.

Materials

The blog was the same as in Study 1. Before reading the blog, a “general framework”

about the immigrant group presented immigrants either as a group who identifies with local customs and culture, develops loyalty and commitment to the U.S., contributes to the national economy, and pays taxes (cooperative framework condition); or as a group who tries to take advantage of the U.S., promotes their own culture, takes away jobs from American citizens, opens their own business, and does not contribute to the national economy (competitive framework condition); see Appendix B.

Measures

The questionnaire, completed after reading the blog, included: warmth and competence scales, manipulation-check items, involvement check items, IRI scale, and social desirability scale.

Procedure

Participants were conducted individually to an experiment room. After signing the informed consent, participants were left alone to start the experiment. The experimenter was unaware of the randomly assigned experimental condition. The cover story was the same as Study 1. Before seeing the blog, participants read the “general framework” about immigrants, describing the group as cooperative or competitive. Following the same procedure as in Study 1, once participants read the blog and answered some questions about the design of the website (to fit the cover story), participants completed warmth and competence scales, questions about their perception of the immigrant’s gender and origin country, the manipulation-check items, IRI scale, social desirability scale, and socio-demographic questions. Finally, after participants finished the study, the experimenter returned and initiated a debriefing session. During the debrief, participants were informed about the experimental manipulation of background information regarding immigrants (competitive or cooperative).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Cronbach alphas for Fantasy subscale and warmth and competence scales were moderately high, similar to Study 1; see Table 1.

Participants perceived the immigrant as coming from Mexico or Latin America (37.5%), from Eastern Europe (38.9%), and from Europe (9.7%). Responses with a frequency less than 5% were: “Africa,” “rural place,” “Haiti,” “Russia,” “Asia,” and “Don’t know” responses. Generally, the perceived country of origin did not differ between conditions ($\chi^2 = 11.734, p = .110$). However, in cooperative condition the immigrant was more frequently perceived as coming from South America (48,4%) than in the competitive condition (28,6%).

Involvement check. Although emotional perspective of the participants was not manipulated, the same items checking involvement in Study 1 were included in order to assess the degree of involvement with the person on the website. We conducted three independent *t* tests between the cooperative and competitive condition for each involvement-check item. Trends suggested that compared with the competitive-condition participants, the cooperative participants felt more moved by the person ($M_{competitive} = 5.81$ and $M_{cooperative} = 6.39; p = .160$); and got more involved with the person ($M_{competitive} = 4.79$ and $M_{cooperative} = 5.52; p = .089$). There was not even a weak tendency for differences in attempting to imagine the feelings and thoughts of the person on the website ($M_{competitive} = 6.69$ and $M_{cooperative} = 6.97; p = .390$). So cooperation alone does not unequivocally increase involvement.

Moderation Regression Analysis

As in Study 1, framework manipulation (cooperative vs. competitive) and level of Fantasy as the continuous moderator variable were used to predict target warmth and

competence.

Warmth scale. The upper part of Table 3 shows the moderated regression analysis for warmth ratings. The first-order effect showed a tendency in the predicted direction for the framework manipulation ($b = .312; p = .136$). The interaction of manipulated framework and level of Fantasy was significant in the predicted direction ($b = .756, t(69) = 2.41, p = .019$). A simple slope analysis, in which the effect of framework on warmth was examined as a function of the value of Fantasy (± 1 SD), revealed that participants with a high tendency to fantasize (become involved in narratives; $+1$ SD) showed a significant increment in target warmth ratings from the competitive ($M = 6.49$) to the cooperative framework ($M = 7.30; t(69) = 2.79, p < .01$). Participants with a low tendency to fantasize (-1 SD) showed no difference between competitive ($M = 6.55$) and cooperative frameworks ($M = 6.37; t(69) = -.62, p > .54$); see Figure 2.

Competence scale. The lower part of Table 3 shows the moderated regression analysis for competence ratings. No effect was significant.

As in Study 1, we run the same hierarchical regression analysis but including in the first step warmth/competence, and in the second step the independent variables. The results show that the predicted interaction remains significant for warmth dimension: $b = .658, t(172) = 2.200, p < .05$. The first order effect of instruction is not still significant for warmth ($b = .172; p = .382$) or competence ($b = .134; p = .509$).

Discussion

Dispositional fantasy moderated the relationship between the cooperative framework and warmth ratings, whereas competence ratings and the cooperative framework remained unaffected. As in Study 1, participants with a high tendency to fantasize (become involved in narratives) perceived the target as warmer than participants with a low tendency to fantasize,

when they were exposed to a cooperative framework. No improvement in warmth ratings occurred for participants exposed to a competitive framework. Participants' involvement tendencies were blocked when expecting competition from immigrant group.

The Competence dimension was not affected by the type of framework or level of Fantasy. Consequently, involvement with the immigrant did not lead to a uniform positive evaluation (in both warmth and competence dimensions), so this ruled out the possibility of a halo effect.

General Discussion

In Study 1, participants' emotional involvement (dispositional fantasy) and emotion-focused instructions affected warmth-related judgments after reading about an ambiguous immigrant. Dispositional fantasy did not make any difference under a neutral goal (neutral instructions). Only participants with a tendency to fantasy (become involved) perceived the immigrant as warm, whereas participants with a low tendency to fantasy did not show any change regarding the immigrant. In Study 2, for participants with a strong tendency to fantasize, presenting the immigrant group as cooperative in society affected warmth-related judgments about a single immigrant target. No effect was found for the competence dimension.

Results from Study 1 and Study 2 suggest that dispositional emotional involvement with a stereotyped character affects selectively the warmth dimension. About situational emotional involvement, the emotion-focused instruction manipulation, results are not entirely conclusive, since competence dimension was affected in Study 1 but not in Study 2 (this point will be discussed later).

The emotional involvement-warmth link is mainly built on the similar processes entailed in emotional involvement and warmth judgments. Theoretically, judgments about others' warmth

require the same motivational processes that we engage when emotionally involved with others (What does that person want to do? What does it drive this person?). Because emotional expressions give individuals information about others' emotions and intentions (Ames & Johar, 2009; Darwin, 1872/2009; Ekman, 1993; Fridlund, 1992; Knutson, 1996), a target expressing emotions is perceived as trustworthy because of giving accurate information about motivation (Boone & Buck, 2003; Schug, Matsumoto, Horita, Yamagishi, & Bonnet, 2010). This perception is reinforced by induced emotional sharing among observers and target, because individuals feeling similar emotions trust each other more (Anderson, Keltner, & John, 2003). That is, sharing emotions with an expressive target moderates judgments about the target's intent.

More generally, Warmth is considered as the primary dimension in social perception (Fiske et al., 2007), and it is more sensitive to context effects (Binggeli, Krings, & Sczesny, 2014a).

The present research contributes two key aspects. Firstly, unspecific positive outcomes or evaluations are the main findings previously related to the perception of narrative protagonists. The aim of this paper was testing whether being involved with a character by focusing on emotions and feelings leads to differential perceptions of the character's warmth but not competence. Secondly, whereas concepts such a transportation or identification has been previously proposed to account for the impact of mass media, the role of fantasy –tendency to be emotionally involved with fictional characters has not been addressed. Consequently, the moderating role of fantasy was tested. Both situational (emotion-focused instructions) and dispositional emotional involvement (fantasy tendency) were hypothesized and found to jointly modify stereotypic warmth but not competence.

In the same way that the traditional conception of prejudice as a generalized negative

affect toward social groups (Allport, 1954) neglects the different kinds of prejudice, along with specifically associated forms of discrimination (e.g., Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007), the focus on considering only general evaluations toward characters as affected by transportation, identification, and experience-taking processes prevents us from explaining special outcomes for distinct categories of characters. Generally speaking, people may improve their overall attitudes to stereotyped groups (e.g., *my general attitude toward immigrants is more positive now*), but that general improvement could be limited to a specific domain (*because I now feel that they are trustworthy*), but no other domain (*although they are unintelligent*). Nonetheless, this remains as an aspect to be shown in future research.

Implications for imagined contact

Our results are meaningful in light of imagined contact research, since Fantasy tendencies may be relevant to imagined contact strategies. Imagining positive interactions with out-group members relates to positive outcomes for intergroup relations (see Miles & Crisp, 2014's meta-analysis), such as out-group trust (Turner, West & Christie, 2013; Vezzali, Capozza, Stathi & Giovannini, 2012) or inter-group attitudes (Turner, Crisp & Lambert, 2007). Both out-group trust and intergroup attitudes (especially evaluations about target's warmth) are close to the Warmth dimension from the SCM, which was particularly affected by the manipulation used here. To be precise, our studies did not ask for imagining a positive interaction with the target (i.e., an immigrant) but a tendency to image a fictional character's emotions (Fantasy dispositional variable) was systematically an important variable for ascribing warmer but not more competent evaluations to the target.

Limitations

Further research is needed to give strong support to the specific *emotional involvement-warmth link* because a first-order effect for competence ratings emerged in Study 1.

It may be the case that situational emotional involvement (asking people to focus on the target's emotions) affects both dimensions because it implies a general positive evaluation of the target, but dispositional emotional involvement selectively affects the warmth dimension. That is, when asked to focus on immigrant's emotions, participants perceive the immigrant target positively, as higher in warmth and competence (Study 1), but only those high fantasizers, involvement-prone individuals in an involvement-demanding context (Study 1) or expecting cooperation (Study 2) responded mainly on the warmth dimension.

Other possible explanation for the first order effect on competence is that the immigrant was perceived as an ingroup member because of some similarity (i.e., age) between the immigrant and the participant. This similarity would increase the immigrant's perceived warmth and competence. Nevertheless, when controlling for the effect of competence and warmth in regression analysis predicting warmth and competence, respectively, the first-order effect found for competence in Study 1 disappeared (also for warmth) but not the predicted interaction (instruction by fantasy level) for warmth in Study 1 and 2.

The focus on fantasizing tendency in this paper could be complemented in future studies by examining other dispositional characteristics such a tendency to feel empathic concern for others or to take others' perspective. Those characteristics may be also related to getting emotionally involved.

In these studies, the target was an "immigrant" without specifying the country of origin. This *a priori* allows us to test more clearly the separate effect on both the warmth and

competence dimensions, since “immigrants” are stereotypically characterized as low competence and low warmth (Eckes, 2002; Fiske et al., 2002). However, our results are not linked to any specific immigrant group, because they are diversely perceived in terms of warmth and competence (Lee & Fiske, 2006) and that is a limitation. In the same vein, the specific target portrayed in the blog was perceived more positively than expected. The immigrant was perceived to some extent as warm and not very incompetent (see Study 1). For this reason, the target did not fully fit the immigrant stereotype of an incompetent and untrustworthy person. Nevertheless, certain immigrant groups fit the characteristics of the target used here (Binggeli, Krings, & Sczesny, 2014a; Lee & Fiske, 2006). It remains an open question whether a more negatively perceived target, closer to the immigrant stereotype, would benefit from emotional involvement interventions.

Conclusions

Recently, increasing numbers of studies have focused on the persuasive effects of narratives (Green & Brock, 2000), the psychological assimilation provided by reading fiction (Gabriel & Young, 2011; Sestir & Green, 2010), the effects of experience-taking on individuals (Kaufman & Libby, 2012), and the function of narratives in the understanding of social world (Kidd & Castano, 2013; Mar & Oatley, 2008). As the capacity to imagine oneself in a different social situation, mental simulation of a character’s situation provided by narratives may be a useful tool for developing social interventions (Crisp, Birtel, & Meleady, 2011) and especially relevant in the domain of stereotypes (Hodson, Choma, & Costello, 2009). Our results support this affirmation. On a practical side, museums and expositions are using immigrant narratives as a pedagogical and attitude-improvement tool (e.g., the Canadian Museum of Immigration; the Immigration Museum in Australia).

Given the social information conveyed through narratives, how individuals face those narratives may be broadly relevant in other ways. This paper tested the effect of becoming emotionally involved with a fictitious character through a narrative. Emotional involvement—sharing others' feelings—would imply perceiving those others as less threatening, warmer.

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Table 1

Inter-correlations, Descriptive Statistics, and Reliabilities for Study 1 (N = 176) and 2 (N = 73)

	C	F	SDC	<i>M</i>	SD	α
<i>Study 1</i>						
Warmth _a	.68***	.12	.17	6.52	1.25	.88
Competence _a		.09	.11	5.58	1.27	.87
Fantasy			-.12	3.61	.80	.83
Social Desirability _a				5.22	2.79	.68
<i>Study 2</i>						
Warmth _a	.38***	.20+	.13	6.65	.90	.82
Competence _a		.10	.06	5.30	.88	.82
Fantasy _a			.11	3.88	.65	.76
Social Desirability						.57

a Variables were normally distributed.

Note. SDC: Social Desirability Concerns

+ < .10; * < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001

Table 2

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for**Variables Predicting Warmth and Competence.**Study 1 (N = 176)*

<i>Variable entered</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	R^2	<i>Model F</i>
Warmth						
<i>Step 1</i>						
b ₀	6.257	.132		47.54***	.06	5.361**
Instructions	.524	.186	.210	2.82**		
Fantasy	.148	.115	.095	1.28		
<i>Step 2</i>						
B ₀	6.231	.131		47.50***	.08	4.956**
Instructions	.523	.184	.210	2.84**		
Fantasy	-.072	.159	-.046	-.45		
Instructions x Fantasy	.457	.229	.203	1.99*		
Competence						
<i>Step 1</i>						
B ₀	5.325	.134		39.60***	.05	4.422*
Instructions	.513	.190	.202	2.70**		
Fantasy	.104	.118	.066	.88		
<i>Step 2</i>						
B ₀	5.318	.135		39.26***	.05	3.023
Instructions	.513	.190	.202	2.70**		
Fantasy	.046	.164	.029	.28		
Instructions x Fantasy	.121	.236	.053	.51		

Note. Fantasy subscale's scores were centered.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .02$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for**Variables Predicting Warmth and Competence.**Study 2 (N= 73)*

<i>Variable entered</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Model F</i>
Warmth						
<i>Step 1</i>						
B ₀	6.521	.136		47.878***	.07	2.632+
Cooperative	.316	.209	.174	1.510		
Fantasy	.274	.160	.198	1.713+		
<i>Step 2</i>						
B ₀	6.520	.132		49.485***	.14	3.806**
Cooperative	.312	.202	.172	1.544		
Fantasy	-.041	.203	-.030	-.204		
Cooperative x Fantasy	.756	.314	.352	2.407**		
Competence						
<i>Step 1</i>						
B ₀	5.191	.136		38.076***	.03	1.093
Cooperative	.249	.209	.140	1.189		
Fantasy	.139	.160	.102	.868		
<i>Step 2</i>						
B ₀	5.191	.136		38.029***	.04	1.006
Cooperative	.247	.209	.139	1.181		
Fantasy	.015	.210	.011	.071		
Cooperative x Fantasy	.298	.325	.141	.914		

+*p* < .10; ***p* < .02; ****p* < .001

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Mean Score of Warmth (Upper) and Competence (Lower) Ratings for Level of Fantasy (Low and High) and Perspective Instructions (Neutral and Perspective-taking)

Figure 1

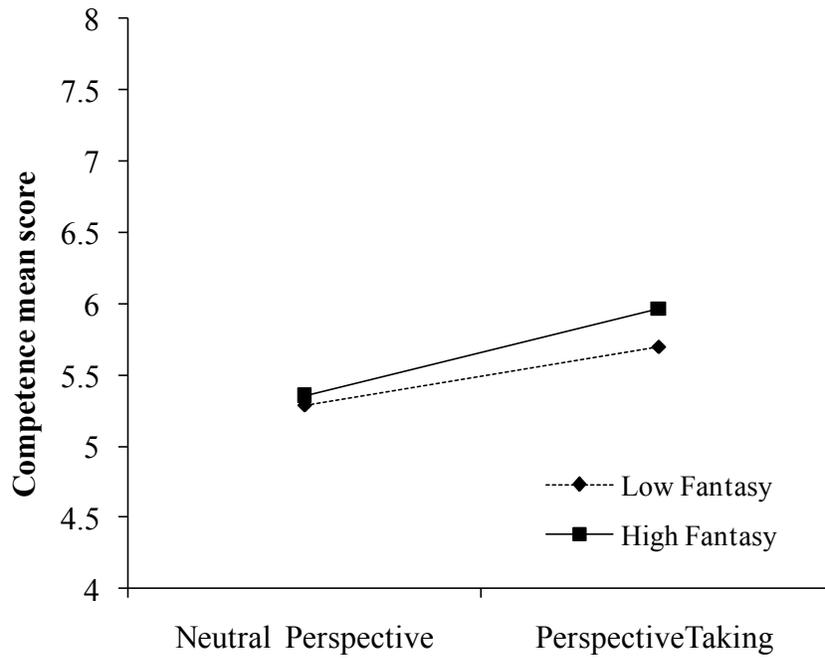
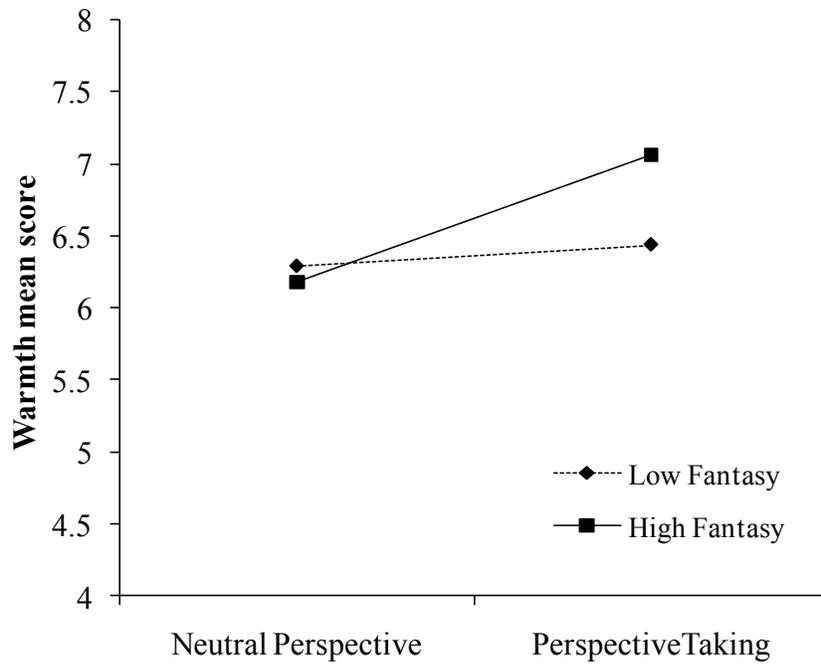
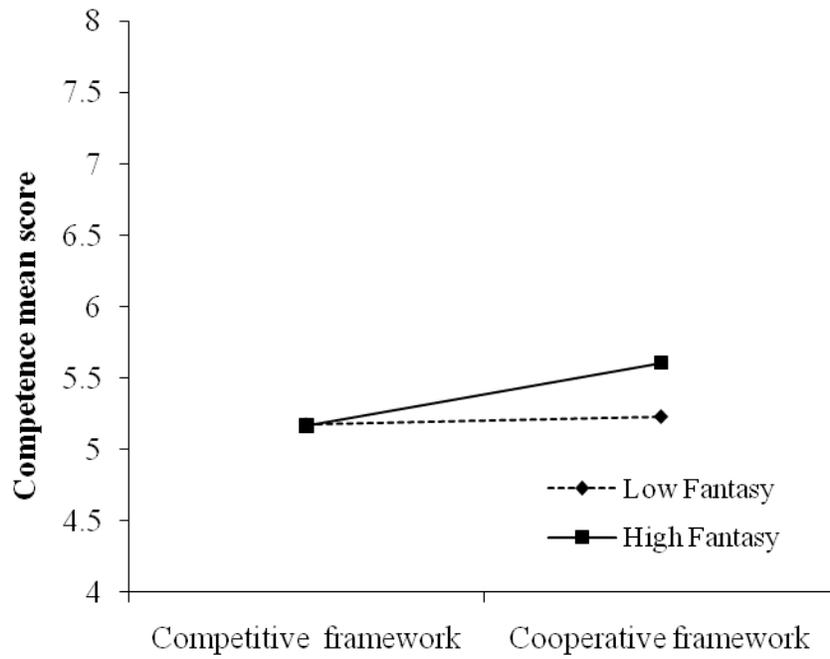
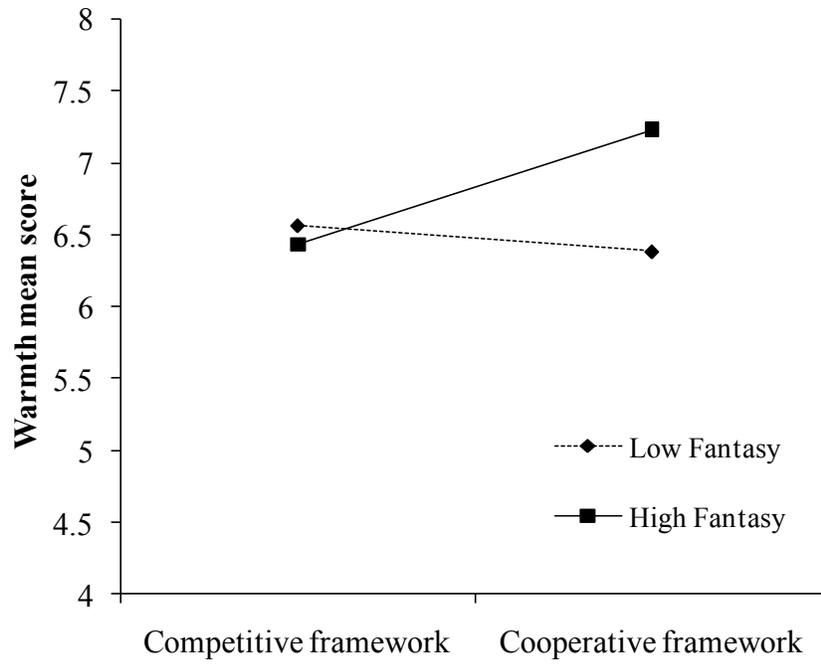


Figure Caption

Figure 2. Mean Score of Warmth (Upper) and Competence (Lower) Ratings for Level of Fantasy (Low and High) and Type of Scenario (Competitive and Cooperative)

Figure 2



Appendix A

Immigrant's blog: Stimulus for Study 1 and 2 (words: 520)

Immigration is a run. No one in his or her right mind would want to leave their native country for good especially if there is a big chance to never come back. People run away. The experience of running away from your own kind is devastating forever.

When my parents said to me that we were leaving to a foreign country, maybe for ever, I felt very scared. To get things prepared for travelling were very painful. My parents gave our humble possessions to friends and relatives. I have to say goodbye to everybody and the town that so loved. My grandparents gave me a pocket watch to don't forget them. I was going to leave my country: the place where I was grew up. I had to get ready for a new place and I was only 13 years old. My parents and I arrived to United States looking for a better life. My parents decided to come to NJ so they found out about some jobs here. I remember clearly my first day in Trenton, my new town: I felt a great affliction to realized that I was in a completely unknown place. I didn't know anyone. We have moved several times. At the beginning, we shared the house with three more families and only one bathroom. So space and privacy were very limited. We had turns for meals. Now we live in other house sharing only with one more family. Now I am 18 years old. I study at night and I've got a part-time job. Most of the time I feel scared because I don't know too much people in my class. Anyone talk to me or look at me. I remember my teacher saying, "You're never going to amount to anything. You're just a little immigrant". And I thought that was very harsh, because you didn't even know me in the first place, and that just upset me.

I don't have a car and for going to study or work, I walk 2 miles. That is really hard on winter. In addition, to reach some shopping centers or cinemas is very difficult without a car. I use to go to the library close to my workplace in a different town from I live. If you don't live in the town, you have to pay for having a library card so I lied saying that I live there. Although I am currently studying, my English is not so good and daily things become complicated: just to get the bus, understand rules, or buy some coffee. In general people speak very fast and sometimes I miss some important details about something happened. American customs are different from my original ones and getting used to things is not easy. The right and the wrong thing to do in an especific situation is not very clear for me. And about American people... sometimes I resent Americans because they are not always nice to me. I hope someday to back to see my grandparents and show them that I still keep their pocket watch.

Appendix B

Cooperative and Competitive Framework Conditions: Study 2

Cooperative

As we told you, you are going to read a website about immigrants. Below there is some information about this group in order to give you our general framework: As you know, immigrants are people who have settled in another country. They have shaped societies all over the world by bringing new customs, ideas, and paying taxes to their new country. Most immigrants prefer to identify more fully with local customs and culture, and develop loyalty and commitment to the United States. The first priority for any immigrant when arriving in a new country is to find work. They try to take advantage of jobs that are not well considered or jobs that are poorly paid; local industries struggle to find enough local people to fill all their jobs, so immigrants typically take jobs no one else wants. They put up with long working hours and harsh living conditions, so they contribute to our economy. Immigrants' contributions to national economies are significant. Also, although most immigrants of working age pay more taxes than citizens of their new countries, they use fewer services. Many of their children work hard to attend University, and their parents pay tuition because they are not eligible for scholarships or other kinds of financial support. Leading universities seek diversity of many kinds, including deserving and qualified immigrants.

Competitive

As we told you, you are going to read a website about immigrants. Below there is some information about this group in order to give you our general framework: As you know, immigrants are people who have settled in another country. They have shaped societies all over the world by bringing new customs, and making money for themselves. Most immigrants prefer not to identify with local customs and culture, and promote their own culture. The first priority for any immigrant when arriving in a new country is to find work. They try to take advantage of all kinds of jobs that take away jobs from American citizens; local industries struggle to hire enough local people to fill all their jobs, because immigrants typically take jobs other people want. They put up with long working hours and harsh living conditions to make as much as money as they can. Immigrants' contributions to national economies are trivial. They open their own business, and they are often successful for themselves. They use our services, and they send money home. Many of their children try to attend University holding some kind of scholarship or other kinds of financial support. Leading universities have specific budgets for minority groups, including some kinds of immigrants.

Endnotes

¹ We used the complete IRI in Study 1 & 2, as is common practice. However, Perspective-taking, Empathic concern, and Personal distress subscales were correlated with social desirability scores, which indicated that responses to these subscales were contaminated by self-presentation concerns.

² Although Fantasy did not reach significant correlation with either the warmth (.12, $p = .106$) or the competence scales (.09, $p = .226$) collapsed across conditions, our hypothesis concerns the interaction of this scale with involvement condition, so an overall correlation is not necessary. Nevertheless, pilot studies systematically had found correlations between Fantasy and the warmth scale.