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Impact of relative size and language on the attitudes between nations and linguistic groups:

The case of Switzerland

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of relative size on the intra- and intergroup attitudes of groups who either share a language or have a different language. For that purpose, we examined international attitudes, comparing a small nation, Switzerland, and two larger nations, Germany and France. We found support for the assumption that large neighbouring nations pose a threat to the smaller nation's identity, especially when they are linguistically similar. Consequently, in line with Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (1978), the smaller nation's inhabitants evaluate those of the larger nation less positively, liking them less and perceiving them to be more arrogant than vice versa. By investigating the special case of the French-speaking and the German-speaking Swiss as linguistic groups within their own nation we were able to demonstrate that these groups seek support with the larger - linguistically - similar nation to defend themselves against the more direct inland threat to their identity. They acknowledge the similarity with the larger nation, yet keep defending their social identity by expressing a dislike for this perceived similarity.

Impact of relative size and language on the attitudes between nations.

Introduction

This study explores the impact of relative size on the intra- and intergroup attitudes of groups who either share a language or have different languages. For that purpose we examined international attitudes, comparing a small nation, Switzerland, and two larger nations, Germany and France. Obviously, historical events such as wars or occupations shape international relations and attitudes. There are indications, however, that such events cannot offer a sufficient explanation of attitudes between nations' inhabitants, so-called international attitudes. For instance, even though France and Germany have been at war with each other several times, they form a strong coalition within Europe. Also, although both The Netherlands and France have been occupied by Germany during the Second World War, nowadays their attitudes towards Germany are slightly more positive than those of Great Britain, which was not occupied by Germany, and even those of Spain, which collaborated with Germany (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2005). Because historical explanations of international attitudes are insufficient, it is desirable to look into the influence of social psychological mechanisms on these attitudes.

Relevant theories

Two well-known social psychological theories, the *similarity-attraction hypothesis* and the *contact hypothesis*, seem relevant to explain intergroup attitudes. According to the *similarity-attraction hypothesis* (Baron & Byrne, 2000; Byrne, 1971), as its name implies, similarity leads to attraction. It states that when one perceives another to be similar to oneself, especially on relevant attitudes and values, this other will be evaluated positively. In other words, we like people and groups who we think resemble us and our own group. The *contact hypothesis* (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1997) suggests that intergroup prejudice may be reduced by contact between those groups. When two groups come into positive, personal, and cooperative contact with

each other, they will get to know each other. This will increase familiarity and make mutual attitudes and interaction more positive, for instance through a growing recognition of similarities. From this point of view, sharing a language should facilitate communication and contact, and evoke positive effects on reciprocal attitudes.

Based on both aforementioned theoretical principles one would expect that the inhabitants of different nations would especially have a positive attitude towards each other when they are fairly similar, for instance because of shared or related languages, and are physically close together (hence engaging in a fair amount of mutual contact). However, even though international attitudes are indeed often reciprocal, research has shown that inhabitants of exactly these nations may show asymmetrical attitudes towards each other. This appears to occur particularly between small and large nations. The larger nations' inhabitants evaluate the smaller ones' inhabitants more positively than vice versa. Examples are the USA versus Canada (e.g. Lalonde, 2002), or Germany versus Austria. One explanation, provided by social identity theory, is that intergroup similarity may threaten groups' distinctiveness, causing attitudes to deteriorate rather than to improve (e.g. Brown & Abrams, 1986).

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) states that people strive to attain or maintain a positive self-image. Simply put, we all want to feel good about ourselves. To achieve this, one can either look at one's own achievements and positive characteristics or at those of the groups one belongs to. The latter form our social identity, the part of our sense of identity that depends on our membership of social groups.

According to the Social Identity Theory, people spontaneously distinguish those who are members of their own group ("us") from those who belong to other groups ("them"). One compares the own social group to other groups in search for positive distinctiveness, meaning that one wishes one's own group to stand out from others in a

positive way. How one consequently feels about oneself depends on the outcome of this social comparison (Festinger, 1954; Baumeister, 1991). As Brewer (2003) says, “positive evaluation is less meaningful if it is not also distinctive” (p. 59). Sometimes attaining positive distinctiveness can prove to be difficult, particularly when by objective criteria the outgroup is clearly superior to the ingroup in a certain comparison. This is what happens when inhabitants of smaller nations face larger nations. Larger nations, in general, are politically and economically more powerful than smaller nations. They have a noticeable influence on smaller nations, which gives them a dominant position in the exchange of ideas. Lalonde (2002), for instance, describes the influence of the USA on Canada: “Canadians are given information about the USA on a daily basis (e.g. political events, weather forecasts, strength of the Canadian dollar in comparison with the US dollar), and information about the USA begins at an early age, with children in Canadian public schools often learning about American geography and history.” (p. 616). That is why, according to Lalonde, the USA is often perceived by Canadians as a threat to their national and cultural identity.

Our main argument is that the threat to the smaller nation’s identity is heightened when the inhabitants of small and large nations speak the same language or similar languages, because linguistic similarity is hard to ignore and comparison is inevitable. Language is one of the defining characteristics of a nation (Edwards, 1985). Not only does it play a big part in the categorisation of our social environment (Giles, 1978), it is also a very salient aspect of group identity (Giles & Johnson, 1987; Gudykunst, 1988). In addition, sharing a superordinate category, in this case a linguistic one, may increase the need for differentiation (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Jetten & Spears, 2003). Therefore, the threatened group will be even more motivated to search for positive distinctiveness (Brown & Abrams, 1986; Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Brown 2000).

To cope with such a threat to their identity, inhabitants of smaller nations may try to denigrate larger nations by liking them less. In addition, they may perceive the larger nations' dominance as arrogance. The dominance of a larger nation is exacerbated when the name of the language they share with the smaller group refers to the larger nation. For instance most Swiss speak a native language which they share with one of their larger neighbouring countries Germany, France and Italy. Yet, those languages are labelled German, French and Italian. This dominance of the larger nations may be perceived or interpreted as arrogance. Inhabitants of larger nations will not show such distorted perceptions because they do not feel threatened in their identity. The inhabitants of the smaller nations may also react by denying the similarity between the two nations (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). They will then perceive a larger dissimilarity between themselves and the larger nations than vice versa. This way, the threatening social comparison between the two nations can be avoided.

A previously conducted study by Van Oudenhoven, Askevis-Leherpeux, Hannover, Jaarsma & Dardenne (2002) amongst Belgians (both Flemish and Walloons), Dutch and French, with the Belgian linguistic groups as the less dominant groups in both comparisons, indeed showed that the inhabitants of the smaller nation like those of the larger nation less and perceive them as more arrogant than vice versa, especially if they share a language. They also evaluated the inhabitants of the larger nation with the same language as being less similar to themselves than vice versa. So this study confirmed that, as predicted by Social Identity Theory, the inhabitants of the smaller nations can cope with the larger nations' threat to their identity by rating them less positively and by denying the similarity between the two nations.

Present study

Our study intends to enhance understanding of international attitudes by investigating whether the size of a nation and the language of its inhabitants influence the attitudes that inhabitants of the different nations hold towards each other. New in

this study, compared to the van Oudenhoven et al. study (2002), is the inclusion of Switzerland as a purer realistic example to test the hypotheses, and the addition of some language related questions. The comparison pairs share a language and are comparable in standard of living but differ significantly in number of inhabitants. Moreover, differences in numerical size go along with differences in the Gross Domestic Product and, consequently, differences in power. Another difference with the previous study is that we additionally examine the question of whether the minority- or majority-status of language groups within a small nation influences their attitudes towards larger nations they share a language with. To answer these questions we study the special case of German-speaking and French-speaking Swiss. The case of Switzerland compared to its neighbouring nations offers a better test than the original study by Van Oudenhoven et al. (2002). Even though the Dutch and Flemish Belgians both speak Dutch, and there are more Dutch than Flemish, the Netherlands may not really be called a large nation in comparison to Belgium. However, in the Swiss case, the German-speaking and French-speaking Swiss share their language with respectively Germans and French, and Germany and France are large nations indeed.

Moreover, Switzerland is a particularly interesting case, because the linguistic groups in this nation not only form a minority group compared to surrounding nations, but also differ in size and economic power among each other. Switzerland consists of a distinct majority group (German-speaking Swiss, 63.7%) and three minority groups (French-speaking, 19.2%; Italian-speaking, 7.6%; and Romansch-speaking Swiss, 0.6%). Three of those four groups (German-speaking, French-speaking and Italian-speaking Swiss) share a language with a larger neighbouring country (respectively, Germany, France and Italy). In this study we only include the two largest language groups in Switzerland, German-speaking and French-speaking Swiss, because the Italian-speaking and Romansch-speaking groups are so small that the inhabitants of larger nations will have too little knowledge about them.

In line with social identity theory we assume that linguistic minority groups within a nation are facing a double threat to their identity, one from outside and the other from the linguistic majority within their nation. They can protect their identity by evaluating the larger group negatively, to reduce the threat by making the larger group seem less attractive or in possession of less desirable qualities (cf. Van Oudenhoven et al., 2002). They can also underestimate the similarity between the own group and the larger group, or in other words, perceptually enhance the distinctiveness of the own group (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004), thus reducing the threat by making the comparison between the two linguistic groups less compelling.

However, when a linguistic minority faces a threat to its identity both from a linguistically similar larger neighbouring nation and from a linguistically different majority within its own country, it would not be in its advantage to distance itself completely from the neighbouring nation. By making the linguistic minority feel like part of a larger linguistic group, that nation can provide support for the linguistic minority against the threat from the linguistically different majority. As a result the smaller group may show an ambivalent attitude towards the larger nation, striving for similarity and distinctiveness at the same time (Brewer, 1991).

Summarising, we formulate predictions concerning comparisons between German-speaking and French-speaking Swiss (within the Swiss nation) and comparisons between the inhabitants of Switzerland (population: 7.5 million; area: 41,290 km²) and those of larger nations they share a language with (Germany with a population of 82.4 million and an area of 357,021 km², and France with a population of 60.4 million and an area of 547,030 km²).

Assuming that French-speaking Swiss feel threatened in their identity by the inland linguistic majority group, we predict that *French-speaking Swiss like German-speaking Swiss less* (Hypothesis 1a) *and perceive them as being more arrogant than vice versa* (Hypothesis 1b).

Internationally, we expect that the German-speaking Swiss perceive Germany as a threat to their identity and consequently show a defensive reaction. Thus, *German-speaking Swiss will like Germans less (Hypothesis 2a) and perceive them as being more arrogant than vice versa (Hypothesis 2b)*. In a similar vein, *French-speaking Swiss will like French less (Hypothesis 3a) and perceive them as being more arrogant than vice versa (Hypothesis 3b)*.

Because of the perceived threat to the German-speaking Swiss' identity from Germany, *German-speaking Swiss will perceive Germans as being less similar to themselves than vice versa (Hypothesis 4)*. The French-speaking Swiss, however, have to cope with not just an international threat to their identity from France, but with an additional intranational one coming from German-speaking Swiss. As a way of coping, they may not deny similarity with the French in order to "form an alliance" with them. Thus, even if they devalue the French, we do not expect French-speaking Swiss to perceive French as being less similar to themselves than vice versa.

Method

Participants

Four groups, originating from three different nations, participated in this research project. The sample included German (109), French, (99), German-speaking Swiss (92) and French-speaking Swiss (140) social science students. Eighty-three percent of these respondents were female, 17 % were male. The average age was 22.5 years (SD = 4.42, ranging from 18 to 46 years), with the French and the French-speaking Swiss being slightly younger (20.5 and 21.7 years respectively) than the Germans and the German-speaking Swiss (23.7 and 24.5 years respectively).

The French, German-speaking Swiss and French-speaking Swiss participants were approached at two different universities each, the German sample consisted of students from one university. The questionnaire was presented to the participants in

class by a local university staff member (one of the authors) with the following introduction: *"This study is about the opinions the inhabitants of various nations have about each other, to try and help improve the mutual understanding between nations and heighten the quality of international relations."*

The French and German participants were purposely approached at locations at a considerable distance from Switzerland (Lille and Paris in France, and Berlin in Germany), to prevent that possible extra knowledge of the Swiss due to physical proximity might influence the results of this study.

Materials

The students had to fill out a questionnaire, constructed in English and subsequently translated into German and French and back-translated by native speakers of those languages. The fact that all authors participating in this study are multilingual provided an extra check for the questionnaires.

All respondents had to rate French and Germans. French and German respondents had also to rate "Swiss". German-speaking Swiss and French-speaking Swiss had to rate each other and themselves. Thus, every participant had to rate the ingroup and either two or three outgroups. In all cases, ratings concerned liking, arrogance and similarity.

Degree of liking was assessed by two ratings. Participants first had to assign a number of points according to the degree they liked or disliked the groups (1 = extreme disliking, 100 = extreme liking). In addition, they had to indicate the percentage of members of each nation and/or linguistic group that possessed the following traits: tolerant, pleasant, easy-going, friendly and having a sense of humour. The scores on the different traits were averaged to form an overall sociability score (Cronbach's alphas between .94 and .95). Both measurements of liking were fairly highly correlated, with $r(435) = .64$ for international comparisons, and $r(226) = 0.74$ for

comparisons within Switzerland. Therefore we merged them into one liking scale by averaging the scores.

Arrogance was measured by a single item. Participants were asked (in the same manner as was done with the sociability scale) to indicate the percentage of members of each nation and/or linguistic group that possessed the trait *arrogance*. Likewise, we measured *dominance* in order to check our assumptions of perceived threat.

Perceived similarity between the own nation or linguistic group and the comparison group was assessed on a 5-point scale (not at all, hardly, a little, fairly or very much). The participants were also asked how much (from 1, not at all, to 100, completely) they would like to be similar to the comparison group (*desired similarity*). While French and Germans had to assess desired similarity to the Swiss, they served as comparison groups for French-Swiss and German-Swiss, respectively. Remarkably, perceived and desired similarity were not related, $r(437) = 0.07$.

We also used ratings of *linguistic similarity*. In order to assess whether or not participants would differentiate themselves from their comparison group sharing the same language, we asked them to indicate whether their language and the language of their comparison group are two separate languages (1 = “disagree”, 2 = “hardly agree”, 3 = “neither agree nor disagree”, 4 = “agree a little”, 5 = “agree”), and how similar the languages are, ranging from 1 (“completely different”) to 100 (“completely the same”). These two questions basically concern two opposite ends of one dimension (separate versus similar), which is confirmed by their fairly high negative correlation of $r(436) = -0.65$. Therefore, after mirroring the scores on separateness and transforming the similarity scores into a 5-point scale, we combined them into a *linguistic similarity* score. Finally, some biographical data on age, gender, nationality and first language were collected.

Procedure

The data collection took place between March and October 2004 at universities in Germany, France and Switzerland. In order to prevent the students' answers from being influenced by political correctness towards a foreign researcher, the data collection was carried out by a local staff member. In each nation, the questionnaires were presented to social sciences students in their native language.

After the introduction, the questionnaire proceeded with some questions about similarity, and about similarity of languages in particular. Next came a question about the degree of liking attributed to other groups and the question concerning sociability, arrogance and dominance. It concluded with some biographical questions.

Results

Since a number of respondents did not answer every question in the questionnaires, sample sizes (and consequently the degrees of freedom) may vary across the analyses. The analyses are ANOVAs. The skewed distribution of male (17 %) and female (83 %) participants did not result in gender differences for any variable but the rating of linguistic similarity. Here a small difference was found in the comparison between the French-speaking Swiss and the French, but both genders analysed separately yielded the same pattern in their results as they did when analysed together.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that *French-speaking Swiss like German-speaking Swiss less* (Hypothesis 1a) *and perceive them as being more arrogant than vice versa* (Hypothesis 1b). The results from Table 1 partially support the hypothesis. Intranational comparisons between both Swiss linguistic groups show that the French-speaking Swiss indeed like the German-speaking Swiss less ($\underline{M} = 56.59$) than the German-speaking Swiss like the French-speaking Swiss ($\underline{M} = 71.35$), $\underline{F}(1, 224) = 33.08$, $p <$

0.001. Hence hypothesis 1a is confirmed. Nevertheless, French-speaking Swiss do not perceive German-speaking Swiss as more arrogant ($\underline{M} = 52.66$) than vice versa ($\underline{M} = 52.02$), therefore hypothesis 1b is not supported. The results do support the assumption that the French-speaking Swiss feel dominated by the German-speaking Swiss majority. As predicted, the French-speaking Swiss rate the German-speaking Swiss as more dominant ($\underline{M} = 61.06$) than vice versa ($\underline{M} = 55.48$), $\underline{F}(1, 225) = 3.28$, $\underline{p} < 0.10$. Although this difference is marginally significant, we take it seriously because the results are in the theoretically predicted direction.

Insert Table 2 about here.

We next turn to international comparisons. Hypothesis 2 predicted that *German-speaking Swiss will like Germans less* (Hypothesis 2a) *and perceive them as being more arrogant than vice versa* (Hypothesis 2b). The results from Table 2 confirm the hypothesis. The German-speaking Swiss like the Germans less ($\underline{M} = 55.72$) than the Germans like the Swiss ($\underline{M} = 63.77$), $\underline{F}(1, 195) = 13.38$, $\underline{p} < 0.001$, and the German-speaking Swiss rate the Germans higher on arrogance ($\underline{M} = 67.00$) than the Germans rate the Swiss ($\underline{M} = 46.85$), $\underline{F}(1, 196) = 50.56$, $\underline{p} < 0.001$. In addition, Germans are rated as more arrogant by the German-speaking Swiss ($\underline{M} = 67.00$) than by the French-speaking Swiss ($\underline{M} = 46.39$), $\underline{F}(1, 229) = 49.29$, $\underline{p} < 0.001$. This provides further support for hypothesis 2b, showing that larger neighbouring nations are indeed especially threatening to smaller groups' identity when they share a language. Also confirming this assumption, German-speaking Swiss perceive Germans to be significantly more dominant ($\underline{M} = 71.64$) than the Germans perceive the Swiss to be ($\underline{M} = 48.27$), $\underline{F}(1, 196) = 81.65$, $\underline{p} < 0.001$, and significantly more dominant ($\underline{M} = 71.64$) than the French-speaking Swiss perceive the Germans to be ($\underline{M} = 61.88$), $\underline{F}(1, 228) = 11.47$, $\underline{p} < 0.001$.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that *French-speaking Swiss will like French less* (Hypothesis 3a) *and perceive them as being more arrogant than vice versa* (Hypothesis 3b). The results from Table 2 confirm the hypothesis. The French-speaking Swiss like the French less ($\underline{M} = 60.65$) than the French like the Swiss ($\underline{M} = 66.46$), $\underline{F}(1, 236) = 7.03$, $p < 0.01$, and the French-speaking Swiss rate the French higher on arrogance ($\underline{M} = 68.84$) than the French rate the Swiss ($\underline{M} = 37.50$), $\underline{F}(1, 236) = 96.82$, $p < 0.001$. Providing further support for hypothesis 3b and again showing that larger neighbouring nations are especially threatening to smaller groups' identity when they share a language, the French are rated as more arrogant by the French-speaking Swiss ($\underline{M} = 68.84$) than by the German-speaking Swiss ($\underline{M} = 59.44$), $\underline{F}(1, 229) = 7.57$, $p < 0.01$. In addition, the French-speaking Swiss perceive the French to be significantly more dominant ($\underline{M} = 62.33$) than the French perceive the Swiss to be ($\underline{M} = 35.90$), $\underline{F}(1, 236) = 77.34$, $p < 0.001$, and more dominant ($\underline{M} = 62.33$) than the German-speaking Swiss do ($\underline{M} = 58.45$), though this latter difference is not significant.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that *German-speaking Swiss will perceive Germans as being less similar to themselves than vice versa*. The results from Table 2 show the opposite: the German-speaking Swiss rate the Germans to be more similar to themselves ($\underline{M} = 3.73$) than vice versa ($\underline{M} = 3.45$), $\underline{F}(1, 197) = 4.76$, $p < 0.05$. No difference was found between the desired similarity of the German-speaking Swiss and the Germans ($\underline{M} = 43.32$ vs $\underline{M} = 44.66$). However Table 2 also shows that as expected, the German-speaking Swiss do rate their language and that of the Germans to be less similar ($\underline{M} = 2.26$) than the Germans do ($\underline{M} = 3.05$), $\underline{F}(1, 197) = 33.40$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, unlike the analysis of the more general similarity ratings, the measurements of linguistic similarity do offer support for hypothesis 4.

We reasoned that French-speaking Swiss would have an ambivalent attitude concerning the similarity between themselves and the French. The results from Table 2 yield an intriguing pattern. The French-speaking Swiss perceive the French as

significantly more similar ($M = 3.59$) to themselves than vice versa ($M = 2.92$), $F(1, 236) = 29.66$, $p < 0.001$, and also rate their language to be more similar to that of the French ($M = 3.81$) than vice versa ($M = 3.35$), $F(1, 235) = 18.86$, $p < 0.001$. At the same time, however, they show a great dislike for this perceived similarity by expressing a significantly lower desire for similarity ($M = 28.18$) than the French do ($M = 41.21$), $F(1, 237) = 13.48$, $p < 0.001$. In fact, their desired similarity to the French is significantly lower ($M = 28.18$) than the desired similarity the German-speaking Swiss express with respect to the Germans ($M = 43.32$), $F(1, 230) = 18.59$, $p < 0.001$.

Discussion

This study investigated asymmetrical international attitudes. Asymmetrical attitudes are often found between smaller and larger neighbouring nations, in particular when they share a language. Typically, the smaller nation's inhabitants like those of the larger nation less than the other way around. This is surprising because on the basis of both the similarity-attraction hypothesis and the contact-hypothesis one would not expect reduced liking under these circumstances, as similarity generally leads to greater liking and a common language facilitates contact. Social identity theory, however, does offer an explanation for the phenomenon because according to that theory the combination of power differences and linguistic similarity poses a threat to the smaller nation's identity.

We presumed that the smaller group in each comparison would feel threatened in their identity by the larger group due to disparity in size, economic power, and political influence. Checks on dominance perceptions supported this assumption. The German-speaking Swiss perceived the Germans to be more dominant than the Germans perceived the Swiss to be, and the French-speaking Swiss perceived the French as more dominant than the French perceived the Swiss. Additionally, the French-speaking Swiss rated the German-speaking Swiss as more dominant than vice

versa. We also found that the German-speaking Swiss perceived the Germans to be more dominant than the French-speaking Swiss did, and the French-speaking Swiss found the French to be more dominant than the German-speaking Swiss did. These results suggest that a larger neighbouring nation may indeed pose a threat to a smaller nation's identity, especially when this nation is linguistically similar.

To cope with this identity threatening dominance-disparity, the minority group can show several defensive reactions. As expected, German-speaking Swiss liked the Germans less than the Germans liked the Swiss, and French-speaking Swiss liked the French less than French liked the Swiss. An even stronger asymmetry was found with respect to ratings of arrogance: the Germans are seen as much more arrogant by the German-speaking Swiss than the Swiss are by the Germans, and similarly, the French are seen as much more arrogant by the French-speaking Swiss than the Swiss are by the French. The fact that inhabitants of smaller nations like those of larger neighbouring ones less and find them more arrogant than vice versa is not that surprising. More interesting is that these reactions appear to apply, in particular, when the smaller and the larger groups share a language, which indicates that language is indeed a key element of one's identity. That the smaller groups' identity is threatened when they share a language with the larger nation is additionally evidenced by the fact that the German-speaking Swiss perceive the Germans as more arrogant and less likable than the French, whereas the French-speaking Swiss rate the French as more arrogant than they rate the Germans.

The similarity ratings show a more complex, but intriguing pattern. The French-speaking Swiss' perceptual reactions are quite different from their affective reactions. Even though the French-speaking Swiss perceive themselves to be quite similar to the French (perceptual), they express a great dislike for this similarity (affective), whereas the German-speaking Swiss do not show such a dislike for their perceived similarity to the Germans. This demonstrates the ambivalent attitude of the French-speaking Swiss

towards the French. On the one hand they defend themselves affectively against the threat the French pose to their identity by liking the French less and finding them more arrogant than vice versa as well as by expressing their dislike for any perceived similarity, on the other hand they seem to seek support from the French by perceptually admitting their similarity to them.

As expected, German-speaking Swiss perceive their language to be less similar to that of the Germans than the Germans do. This shows that German-speaking Swiss try to linguistically differentiate themselves from the Germans. Contrary to what was predicted, however, German-speaking Swiss perceive the linguistically similar larger nation to be more similar to themselves than vice versa, albeit to a lesser degree than the French-speaking Swiss do. This could mean that the German-speaking Swiss seek support from the Germans in a similar way to the French-speaking Swiss from the French by acknowledging similarity, but at the same time try to satisfy their need for distinctiveness by creating more distance on the linguistic level. Admittedly, an alternative explanation could be that the German spoken in Switzerland, *Schweizerdeutsch*, is in indeed different from *Hochdeutsch*, the German spoken in Germany. *Schweizerdeutsch* is a part of every day life for the German-speaking Swiss, as is evidenced by the fact that it is of high importance for instance in their media (Bonfadelli, 1999). Whereas originally 60% of their broadcastings used to be in *Hochdeutsch* and 40% in *Schweizerdeutsch*, it is estimated that in the past few decades this division has reversed in the advantage of *Schweizerdeutsch* (Siebenhaar & Wyler, 1997). However in conversations between inhabitants of the two nations, in most cases *Hochdeutsch* is spoken by both Germans and German-speaking Swiss (so called “speech accommodation”; Giles & Johnson, 1981), which may lead the Germans to underestimate the differences between the German spoken in Switzerland and Germany.

So far we discussed the identity threat imposed on the inhabitants of small nations by large nations. However, we also examined what happened with different groups within the smaller nation. We found evidence for an intergroup phenomenon that has recently been coined "horizontal hostility" by White and Langer (White & Langer, 1999; White, Schmitt & Langer, 2006). It is a pattern of asymmetrical intergroup attitudes in which members of a distinctive minority (e.g. German-speaking Swiss or French-speaking Swiss) look down on members of a larger, more mainstream dominant majority (e.g. Germans and French). When a linguistic minority group such as the French-speaking Swiss is exposed to a double identity threat, both from outside and from inside the nation, the results are even more intriguing. French-speaking Swiss like the French less and consider them to be more arrogant than vice versa, and they like the German-speaking Swiss less than vice versa. However, they did not perceive the German-speaking Swiss as more arrogant than vice versa. This pattern suggests that although the French-speaking Swiss do not like the German-speaking Swiss that much because the latter form the numerically dominant group within Switzerland, they do not feel as threatened in their identity by the German-speaking Swiss as by the French, since the German-speaking and French-speaking Swiss form clearly distinct linguistic communities. It underlines the assumption that language forms an important part of one's identity.

Results are in line with a previous study on asymmetrical attitudes (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2002). Again, larger nations are perceived as less likable and more arrogant by their neighbouring linguistically similar smaller nations. The most straightforward results were obtained with respect to the German-speaking Swiss versus the Germans, who showed almost all defence mechanisms. A single identity threat posed by a larger proximal and linguistically similar outgroup leads to decreased liking of the outgroup, an evaluation of this outgroup as more arrogant, and a linguistic differentiation from the larger group. An interesting difference between the two studies

occurred with respect to the French-speaking groups. Whereas in the previous study, French-speaking Belgians perceived a lower similarity to the French than vice versa, French-speaking Swiss did acknowledge similarity to the French. This may be explained by the different linguistic situations in Belgium and Switzerland. In Belgium, more than 40% of the population is native French-speaking, and the position of French is very dominant in the capital; in Switzerland, on the contrary, less than 20% of the population is French-speaking. Consequently, the French-speaking Swiss seem to seek support from the French by acknowledging (linguistic) similarity to them, which may help them to protect themselves against the inland threat to their identity coming from the German-speaking Swiss. However, they try to cope with the identity threat from the French by not liking the French and by not liking their acknowledged similarity to the French.

Switzerland formed an interesting nation to test our hypotheses because of its different language groups and its location between larger nations with corresponding languages. A methodological impurity of this study's design is that whereas the Swiss as respondents were divided in German-speaking and French-speaking Swiss, the French and Germans rated the Swiss as an undivided national group. We assumed, however, that because the questionnaire started with questions related to linguistic similarity, French and Germans were induced to have French-speaking and German-speaking Swiss, respectively, in mind when they were asked to give their opinion about the Swiss.

Because of the important role of identity threat as an explanation of asymmetrical attitudes, subsequent studies would benefit from more direct measurements of identity threat than a single dominance rating. Arrogance was also measured with a single rating, therefore it is desirable to use additional measurements of arrogance in future studies as well.

Future research might try to replicate our findings in other natural settings. Canada versus the USA, and Austria versus Germany would be good examples of asymmetrical linguistic situations with slightly different conditions from the current study, which could provide a better understanding of the general intergroup processes. Additionally, experimental situations may be set up in which linguistic minority and majority conditions are created.

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Table 1. Mean scores on all variables for the intranational comparisons within Switzerland.

Subject group		Variables		
about target group		Dominance	Liking	Arrogance
		M	M	M
		(SD)	(SD)	(SD)
Comparison between French Swiss' and German Swiss' opinions of each other.				
French Swiss	61.06 ⁺	56.59 ^{***}	52.66	
about German Swiss	(25.12)	(22.10)	(24.85)	
German Swiss	55.48 ⁺	71.35 ^{***}	52.02	
about French Swiss	(18.44)	(12.53)	(21.09)	

Significance (Two-tailed): ⁺ = $p < 0.10$; ^{***} = $p < 0.001$

Note: All variables rated on a scale from 1-100.

Table 2. Mean scores on all variables for the international comparisons.

Subject group	Variables					
about target group	Dominance	Liking	Arrogance	Similarity	Liking of similarity	Linguistic similarity
	M	M	M	M	M	M
	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)
Comparison between Germans' opinion of Swiss and German Swiss' opinion of Germans.						
Germans	48.27***	63.77***	46.85***	3.45*	44.66	3.05***
about Swiss	(19.38)	(13.93)	(19.97)	(.84)	(27.75)	(1.01)
German Swiss	71.64***	55.72***	67.00***	3.73*	43.32	2.26***
about Germans	(16.55)	(16.98)	(19.76)	(.92)	(23.16)	(.91)
Comparison between French' opinion of Swiss and French Swiss' opinion of French.						
French	35.90***	66.46**	37.50***	2.92***	41.21***	3.35***
about Swiss	(22.49)	(14.23)	(20.96)	(1.02)	(25.68)	(.82)
French Swiss	62.33***	60.65**	68.84***	3.59***	28.18***	3.81***
about French	(23.05)	(18.09)	(26.20)	(.88)	(27.95)	(.80)
Comparison between German Swiss' and French Swiss' opinions of Germans.						
German Swiss	71.64***		67.00***			
about Germans	(16.55)		(19.76)			
French Swiss	61.88***		46.39***			
about Germans	(23.98)		(23.02)			
Comparison between French Swiss' and German Swiss' opinions of French.						
French Swiss	62.33		68.84**			
about French	(23.05)		(26.20)			
German Swiss	58.45		59.44**			

about French (19.70) (24.06)

Significance (Two-tailed): * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$

Note: "Similarity" and "Linguistic similarity" rated on a scale from 1-5, all other variables on a scale from 1-100. All pairs of means are significantly different, except for Germans' and German Swiss' liking of similarity.