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They're all the same, sometimes: Prejudicial attitudes toward Muslims influence motivated judgments of entitativity and collective responsibility for an individual's actions[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Are groups responsible for the actions of individual members? Previous research suggests that people use judgments about the entitativity of an outgroup when judging its collective responsibility for the actions of its members. But do these judgments of outgroup entitativity change when outgroup individuals engage in positive vs. negative deeds? We argue that people make motivated judgments of outgroup entitativity based on their pre-existing attitudes toward the outgroup and the valence of outgroup members' actions. In both a first study and a pre-registered replication, we find that when people have positive attitudes toward Muslims, they judge Muslims to be *lower* in entitativity following a Muslim's negative action and *higher* in entitativity following a Muslim individuals' positive action, thus holding Muslims responsible for positive, but not negative individual actions. We also find a weaker mirror pattern of effects for those who have negative attitudes toward Muslims.

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been much public discourse about whether groups should be held responsible for the actions of their members. For example, Donald Trump called for a “*total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering into the United States*” (Trump, 2015) after terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino implying that the Muslim community at large was responsible for these atrocities. On other occasions, positive deeds of specific individuals have been construed as reflecting the larger community. For example, stories of Muslims crowdfunding to restore desecrated Jewish cemeteries (Larkin and Karimi, 2017) or helping in emergencies were argued by some to reflect true Muslim values (Zatav, 2017). Such reactions illustrate the tendency to assign

collective responsibility toward entire groups based on the actions of a few individuals.

While there are many examples of situations where people hold groups collectively responsible for both positive and negative actions of individual members, it's less clear what motivates such judgments. Do the same people perceive a group to be more or less collectively responsible for individual actions based on the valence of those actions? If so, what psychological process may drive changes in judgments of collective responsibility? In the present research, we argue that people alter the structural representation of an outgroup (i.e., entitativity) depending on the situation in ways that align with their pre-existing attitudes toward the outgroup. Such changing representations then influence how collectively responsible they hold the group for positive or

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negative actions of specific individuals. In the sections that follow, we unpack previous work that relates to these goals.

1.1. Collective responsibility

When assigning blame for a misdeed, people usually draw on evidence that a person intended to cause harm (e.g., Alicke, 2000; Fincham and Shultz, 1981). While much early social psychological research and theorizing had focused on how perceivers assign blame to individuals (e.g., Darley and Pittman, 2003; Feather, 1999; Heider, 1958), more recent research has investigated the situations where responsibility moves beyond the individual and spills onto members of the same group (e.g., Lickel et al., 2006a; Sjöström and Gollwitzer, 2015). These tendencies toward collective blame can be so strong that people experience the satisfaction of revenge when punishing members of a perpetrator's group (Sjöström and Gollwitzer, 2015).

Traditionally, philosophical discussions about responsibility focused on the features of the individual and their circumstances that justify holding them responsible for their immoral actions (Hume, 1777/1960; Kant, 1793/1960). The idea that individuals can be held collectively responsible for the actions of others was generally considered problematic because only individuals are truly capable of intentionality and agency (Lewis, 1948; Sverdlik, 1987). However, some philosophers argue that under the right circumstances, responsibility for an individual's immoral actions can be attributed to groups (Feinberg, 1970; May, 1987). For example, May (1987) argued that beyond an individual's responsibility for their own actions, the broader group may also be collectively responsible either through commission (active contributions) or omission (inaction to prevent) that allows immoral acts to occur. Similarly, Feinberg (1970) argued that collective responsibility exists, but it is predicated upon certain shared characteristics of the group, such as shared interests, emotional connections, and shared outcomes that draw groups together and make them collectively responsible for an individual's actions.

These philosophical perspectives about whether a group can be considered collectively responsible align with people's lay beliefs about collective responsibility. Psychological research shows that people draw on information about the perceived closeness and connectedness of groups and use that information to develop different standards for which types of groups should be held collectively responsible for the actions of their members (Denson et al., 2006; see also Lickel et al., 2000; Lickel et al., 2001; Lickel and Onuki, 2015).

1.2. Entitativity

People can perceive group members as so similar and closely linked that the group is to some degree seen as a perceptual entity (i.e., entitativity; Campbell, 1958). High entitativity groups are often perceived to have shared goals, interaction, and mutual social influence (Lickel et al., 2000). Perceiving groups as entitative allows people to generalize information about individuals to group members (Crawford et al., 2002; see also Yzerbyt et al., 2001). Denson et al. (2006) found that perceptions of entitativity predicted judgments of collective responsibility for the acts of individual members. Similarly, Sjöström and Gollwitzer (2015) found that the extent to which blame can be extrapolated from an individual to the group changes based on perceived similarity of group members. This connection has been demonstrated in multiple studies investigating the underlying reasons why some groups are more likely to be held collectively responsible for the actions of individuals (e.g., Lickel et al., 2003; Lickel et al., 2006b).

Just as stereotypes predict people's behavior toward members of a group (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2007; Dijksterhuis and Van Knippenberg, 1998), perceptions of entitativity have also been shown to predict willingness to extend responsibility and punishment beyond individual group members to the entire group (Newheiser et al., 2012). Specifically, people will punish a perpetrator's group when that group is

perceived to be highly entitative (Denson et al., 2006; Lickel et al., 2006a, b; see also Sjöström and Gollwitzer, 2015). Entitativity can therefore serve as a consistent way to determine when groups of people bear collective responsibility for the actions of their members.

However, while judgments of entitativity are useful in determining when to assign collective responsibility and punishment, entitativity may be biased by pre-existing attitudes toward the outgroup. Research reveals that outgroup prejudice predicts perceptions of higher entitativity (e.g., Newheiser et al., 2009; but see also research suggesting a bidirectional relationship where entitativity also predicts attitudes and prejudice, e.g., Bastian and Haslam, 2006; Dang et al., 2018; Roets and Van Hiel, 2011). However, it is unclear how pre-existing attitudes might alter judgments of entitativity depending on the context of the event. While research on entitativity and collective responsibility has focused on how people are more likely to assign collective responsibility to groups high in entitativity, Stenstrom et al. (2008) provided indirect evidence that entitativity may not always reflect a consistent perception that people hold about groups, but may sometimes constitute a malleable belief that can be used to validate inferential goals through motivated reasoning (Stenstrom et al., 2008). Research on motivated reasoning suggests that people employ reasoning strategies that help them arrive at a favored conclusion (Kunda, 1990). In the context of collective responsibility, people may use motivated reasoning to strategically alter their judgments of group entitativity to legitimize assigning (or absolving) collective responsibility to those groups. However, Stenstrom et al. (2008) did not *manipulate* the valence to events (including non-negative events) to test whether *pre-existing outgroup attitudes* systematically alter perceptions of entitativity through contextually-driven motivated reasoning. Our work, therefore, differs from prior work in that it both *measures* outgroup attitudes and *manipulates* event valence to test whether pre-existing outgroup attitudes alter perceptions of entitativity and judgments of collective responsibility depending on the valence of an event.

1.3. Present research

In the present research, we argue that although people use their judgments of entitativity to determine when responsibility should be expanded beyond the individual to the group, these judgments can be influenced by motivated reasoning and shift as a function of one's pre-existing attitudes toward the group and the valence of the individual's behavior. If an outgroup member commits a negative action, people who hold positive attitudes toward that group may be motivated to judge the outgroup to be less entitative and thereby not hold the group collectively responsible. In contrast, someone possessing negative attitudes may be motivated to judge the group to be more entitative to justify holding the group collectively responsible. If the action is positive, however, we would expect the reverse. The present research thereby answers two major questions: (a) do people's attitudes toward an outgroup influence how they much they hold the group collectively responsible for an individual's actions? Does this depend on the valence of the action? (b) Do judgments of entitativity shift to be in line with the collective responsibility judgments?

Across two studies, we examine these questions focusing on non-Muslim Americans' judgments of Muslims in the USA. We specifically chose Muslims as the target group of interest since represent one of the least liked groups in America with large variability in people's attitudes toward the group (Pew Research Center, 2017). Additionally, Muslims also represent an important socially and politically relevant group in the USA with attitudes and beliefs about the group becoming a centerpiece of national discourse during the 2016 US Presidential Election (Lichtblau, 2016).

2. Study 1

Study 1 sought to answer two primary questions. First, do people's

pre-existing attitudes toward an outgroup affect their judgments of collective responsibility for the actions of individual members? Second, will people strategically shift their judgments of the outgroup's entitativity (an important predictor of collective responsibility) in a way that is consistent with attitudes? We hypothesize that when people perceive an event, they spontaneously shift their conceptions of outgroup entitativity (tight-knit versus loosely-associated) in ways that justify their pre-existing views. People with positive outgroup attitudes may shift their outgroup perceptions to be lower in entitativity (loosely associated) when an outgroup member commits a negative deed, but higher in entitativity (tight-knit) when the outgroup member commits a positive deed, as such perceptions validate judgments of collective responsibility that are consistent with their outgroup attitudes. By contrast, prejudiced individuals may shift their perceptions of the group to be higher in entitativity when an outgroup member engages in a negative deed, but lower in entitativity when an outgroup member engages in a positive deed. In addition to these question about entitativity and collective responsibility, we sought to examine the extent to which changes in perceived entitativity of the outgroup predict not only judgments of collective responsibility, but also support for punitive public policies against the group.

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants

A total of 354 adults were recruited via Crowdfunder (Peer et al., 2017) from the USA. Of these participants, 27 were dropped from analyses after failing basic manipulation checks,¹ 11 were removed after identifying as non-American, 6 were removed from analyses after identifying as Muslim, and 6 were removed for not completing the study. The remaining sample comprised 152 males, 151 females, and 1 identified as 'other'. A majority of the sample was White-American ($N = 243$), while the remaining sample comprised Black/African-American ($N = 26$), Hispanic-American ($N = 13$), Asian-American ($N = 11$), Native-American ($N = 2$), Multi-racial ($N = 4$), Arab-American ($N = 1$), and 'Other' ($N = 4$). These participants ranged in age from 18 to 73 years ($M = 33.24$; $SD = 10.90$). Participants were paid \$2.00 for 15 min of their time.

2.1.2. Manipulation and measures

All manipulations and measures included in the experiment are reported below.²

2.1.2.1. Manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of three news stories about a Muslim engaging in a positive, negative, or neutral deed. All stories were based on real-life events taken from the news to ensure ecological validity. The positive condition described a Muslim man who raised \$100,000 using a crowd funding campaign to support disaster victims in America such as those affected by the Flint, Michigan water crisis; the negative condition described a Muslim man who was arrested for masterminding a terrorist attack in a shopping mall; and the neutral condition described a Muslim woman who started a garden in the busy city open to everyone in the community. All three articles explicitly stated that the target individual was a practicing Muslim in the USA.

¹ All exclusions are reported. While we did not calculate a priori power, we collected at least 100 participants per condition without stopping. Post-hoc power analyses estimate achieved power of at least 0.98 in Experiments 1 and 2. Sensitivity power analyses suggest that this sample size should be able to detect effects of at least $\eta^2 = 0.031$ at conventional alpha levels of 0.05 and at power of 0.80.

² Complete data and materials can be found on the Open Science Framework at osf.io/vcqmnd. Non-central variables are noted here briefly, and full reports of effects can be found in the supplemental materials due to space constraints.

2.1.2.2. Manipulation check. All participants were asked to read the story carefully and then complete two basic multiple-choice questions assessing whether they had paid attention to the manipulation. These questions asked participants (a) what the story was about, and (b) the religion of the individual in the story.

2.1.2.3. Outgroup feelings. A measure of outgroup liking was created by adapting a semantic-differential measure (Osgood et al., 1957) to gauge participants' level of general liking for Muslims. Participants were asked to indicate their feelings about Muslims using a 7-point scale on 3 dimensions: liking, pleasantness, positivity ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.49$, $\alpha = 0.97$).

2.1.2.4. Entitativity. To assess perceived entitativity of Muslims, we utilized a 10-item measure ($M = 6.29$, $SD = 1.25$, $\alpha = 0.92$) adapted from previous work (Rydell and McConnell, 2005). These items assessed the extent to which participants perceived Muslims as entitative on a 9-point scale (1 = Not at all and 9 = Very much). Sample items included "How important do you think Islam is to its followers?", "How similar are Muslims to each other?", "How cohesive do you think Muslims are as a group?", and "To what extent do you believe that Muslims share common goals?"

2.1.2.5. Collective responsibility. Collective responsibility was measured using a 5-item scale ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.63$, $\alpha = 0.95$) adapted from Pereira et al. (2015). Using a 7-point Likert scale with anchors ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (absolutely), participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they endorsed a series of statements specific to the incident they had read about such as "To what extent do you think that many people within the Muslim community at large supported the actions you read about earlier?" and "To what extent do you think that the Muslim community at large collaborated in some way on the action described earlier?"

2.1.2.6. Support for punitive national policies. A series of policy proposals targeting the Muslim community were put forward using real-life news stories and participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they supported or opposed these policies using a 10-point scale ($M = 5.61$, $SD = 1.87$, $\alpha = 0.86$), where 1 = Extremely Oppose and 10 = Extremely Favor. Policy items included (a) increasing police presence in predominantly Muslim communities, (b) increasing monitoring of activities within Muslim communities, (c) decreasing Muslim immigration to the USA, (d) increasing the number of Syrian refugees into the USA (reverse-coded), and (e) increasing undercover agents in predominantly Muslim communities.

2.1.2.7. Additional measures. Participants were also asked incident-specific questions of responsibility. Additionally, following the collective responsibility measure reported above, we included a measure of general responsibility that was not specific to the manipulation, but instead were about hypothetical negative and positive events. Finally, we also measured participants' social dominance orientation, political orientation, and measures of national, ethnic, and religious group identity. However, we did not have a priori predictions about these variables.

2.1.3. Procedure

Participants first completed a series of demographic questions (gender, nationality, age, and religion) and measures of outgroup feelings. They were then randomly assigned to one of the three manipulation conditions described earlier. All participants then answered a series of questions measuring the extent to which they felt Muslims were entitative and collectively responsible for the actions described before being debriefed and paid.

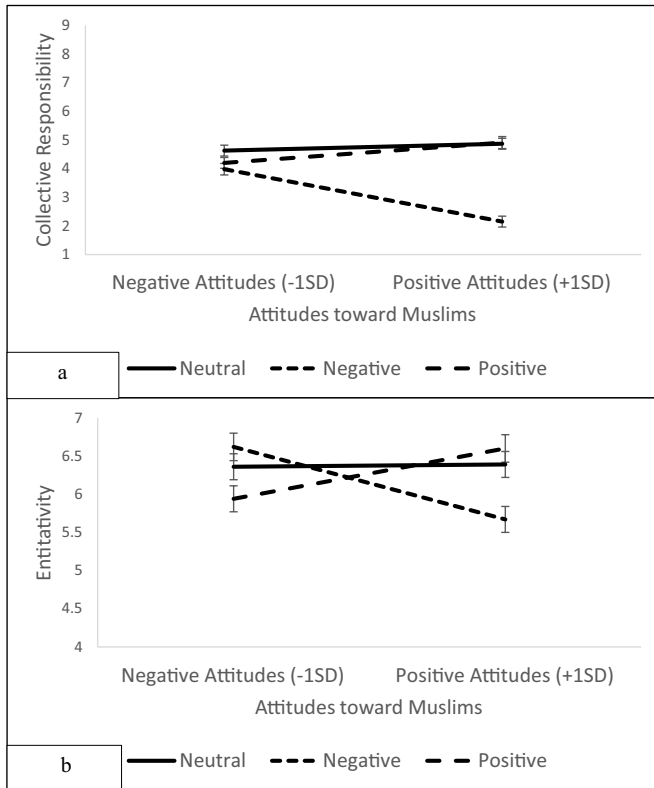


Fig. 1. a and b. Preexisting attitudes toward Muslims (continuous measure) predict collective responsibility (Panel a) and perceived entitativity (Panel b) as a function of whether participants read about an incident that was neutral, negative, or positive.

2.2. Results

2.2.1. Collective responsibility

Multiple regression analyses revealed a significant interaction between participants' pre-existing attitudes toward Muslims and incident valence on collective responsibility, $F(2, 298) = 22.83, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.133$ (see Fig. 1a). Simple slope analyses revealed that, in the positive condition, more positive attitudes toward Muslims predicted higher judgments of collectively responsibility for the individual's action, $b = 0.358, SE = 0.137, t(298) = 2.62, p = .009$, but the opposite was true in the negative condition, $b = -0.911, SE = 0.144, t(298) = -6.31, p < .001$, and the relationship was nonsignificant in the neutral condition, $b = 0.121, SE = 0.129, t(298) = 0.94, p = .35$. Regression analyses comparing the relationship between outgroup attitudes and perceived collective responsibility across the three conditions revealed a non-significant difference between the positive and neutral conditions, $b = 0.212, SE = 0.181, t(298) = 1.26, p = .208$, but a significant difference between the positive and negative, $b = -1.270, SE = 0.199, t(298) = -6.08, p < .001$, and between the negative and neutral conditions, $b = -1.032, SE = 0.194, t(298) = 5.33, p < .001$.

2.2.2. Entitativity

Multiple regression analyses also examined the interaction between participants' pre-existing attitudes toward Muslims and incident valence on perceived entitativity of Muslims, $F(2, 298) = 10.49, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.066$ (see Fig. 1b). Simple slope analyses revealed that more positive attitudes predicted greater perceptions of outgroup entitativity in the positive condition, $b = 0.332, SE = 0.122, t(298) = 2.73, p = .007$, but had the reverse effect in the negative condition, $b = -0.475, SE = 0.122, t(298) = -3.70, p < .001$, and no effect in the neutral condition, $b = -0.011, SE = 0.115, t(298) = -0.10, p = .921$. Regression analyses compared the

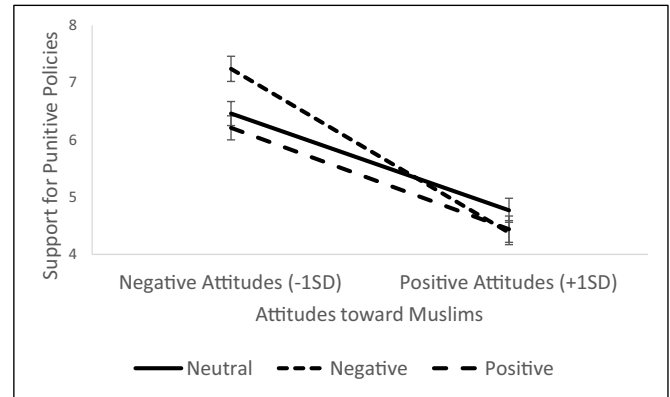


Fig. 2. Attitudes toward Muslims predict support for punitive policies targeting Muslims as a function of whether participants had read about an incident that was neutral, negative, or positive.

relationship between outgroup attitudes and perceived entitativity across the three conditions revealing a marginally significant difference between the positive and neutral conditions, $b = 0.320, SE = 0.167, t(298) = 1.92, p = .056$, but a significant difference between the positive and negative, $b = -0.806, SE = 0.177, t(298) = -4.56, p < .001$, and between the negative and neutral conditions, $b = 0.486, SE = 0.172, t(298) = 2.83, p = .005$.

2.2.3. Support for punitive national policies

Multiple regression analyses identified a significant interaction between attitudes toward Muslims and condition on support for punitive national policies, $F(2, 298) = 4.41, p = .013, \eta_p^2 = 0.029$ (see Fig. 2). Simple slope analyses revealed a significant negative relationship between people's positive feelings toward Muslims and their desire to collectively punish Muslims across the positive, $b = -0.887, SE = 0.152, t(298) = -5.83, p < .001$, negative, $b = -1.432, SE = 0.160, t(298) = -8.92, p < .001$, and neutral, $b = -0.845, SE = 0.143, t(298) = -5.89, p < .001$, conditions. Thus, in general, people with positive attitudes toward Muslims were less supportive of punitive policies. However, the strength of the negative relationships between attitudes and support for punitive policies differed by condition. Specifically, there was a difference in the strength of the relationship between the positive and negative conditions, $b = -0.545, SE = 0.221, t(298) = -2.46, p = .014$, and between the negative and neutral conditions, $b = 0.587, SE = 0.215, t(298) = 2.73, p = .007$, but not between the positive and neutral conditions, $b = 0.042, SE = 0.260, t(298) = 0.200, p = .840$.

2.2.4. Conditional process analysis

Judgments of entitativity, which are strongly linked to perceptions of collective responsibility, may be malleable and might be biased by people's motivated reasoning about a target group. To test this hypothesis, we tested whether judgments of collective responsibility varied by condition depending on shifting perceptions of Muslim entitativity using Hayes (2017) PROCESS macro v3.1 (Model 8) with 5000 bootstrapped-resamples to test for moderated mediation (see Fig. 3). Using the multicategorical feature, we conducted a mediation analysis testing the conditional indirect effects of pre-existing attitudes and incident valence on collective responsibility through entitativity. Results revealed indirect effects for the positive and negative conditions, such that more positive attitudes toward Muslims predicted judgments of Muslims as more entitative in the positive condition and less entitative in the negative condition which in turn decreased and increased collective responsibility, respectively, but not for the neutral condition (see Fig. 4, Panels A–C for statistics). The index of moderated mediation (Hayes, 2017) indicated that the indirect effect in the negative condition significantly differed from the positive and neutral conditions,

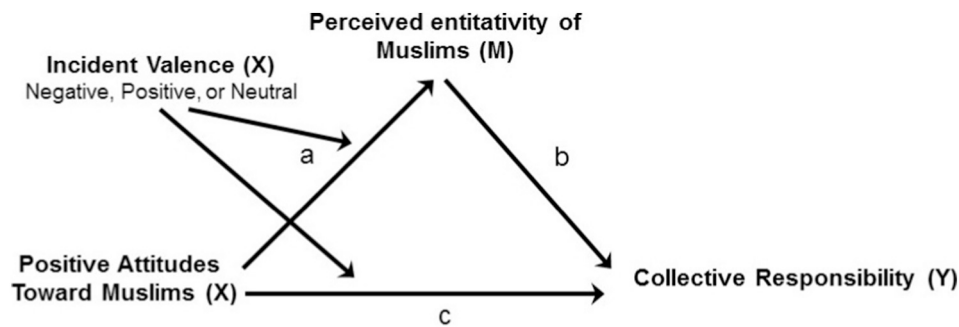


Fig. 3. Proposed conditional indirect effect model of how people's pre-existing attitudes and the valence of an incident change their judgments of collective responsibility through re-evaluations of how entitative the target group is.

$b = -0.166$, Boot $SE = 0.072$, 95% CI $[-0.311, -0.029]$, but the indirect effect in the positive condition did not differ from the neutral and positive conditions, $b = 0.109$, Boot $SE = 0.071$, 95% CI $[-0.025, 0.253]$.

2.3. Discussion

Study 1 revealed that perceivers' pre-existing levels of prejudice shaped how collectively responsible they considered all Muslims to be when a Muslim individual committed a positive, negative, or neutral

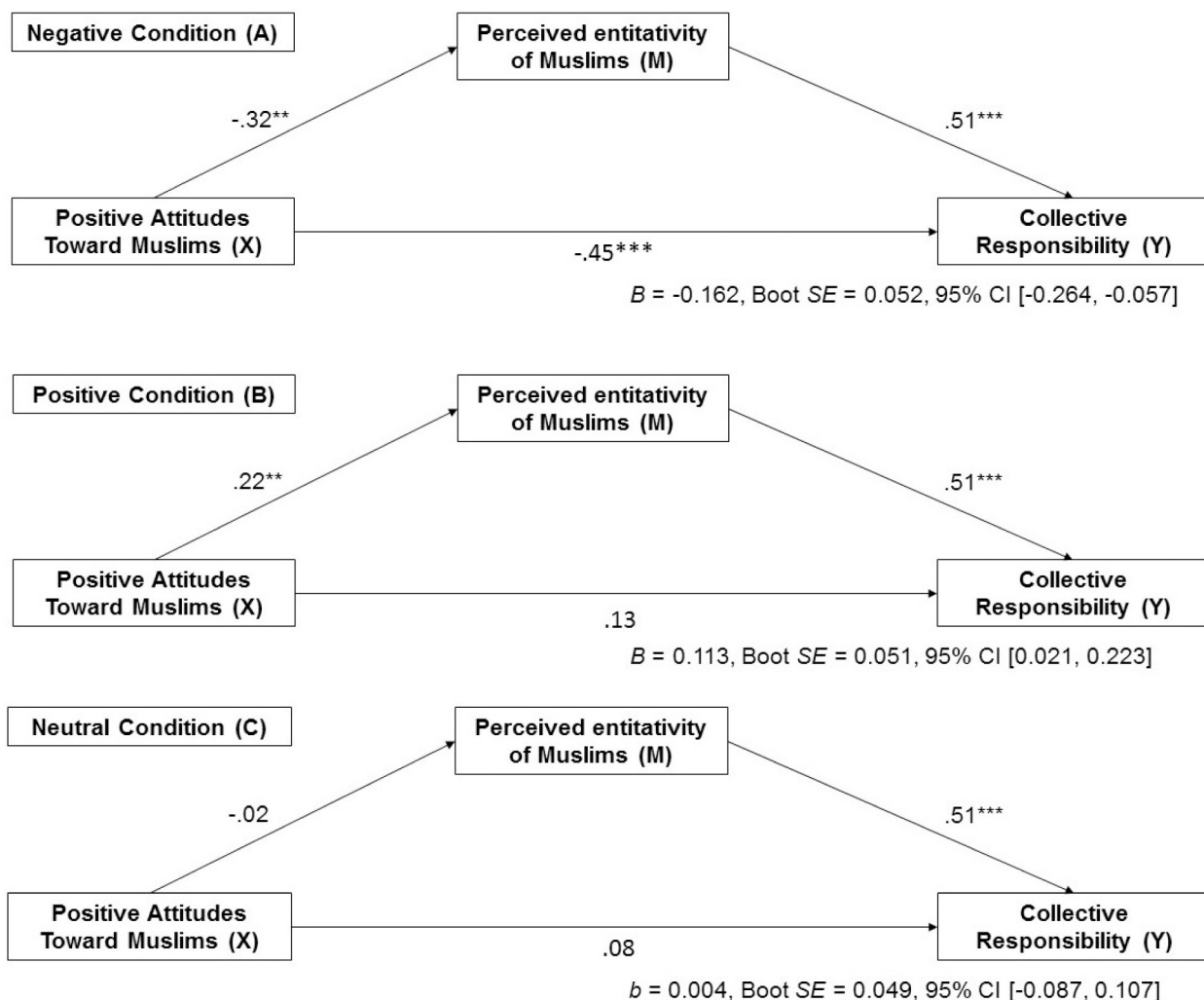


Fig. 4. Panels A, B, & C. Panels displaying how people's pre-existing attitudes toward Muslims affect their judgments of collective responsibility through their perceptions of how entitative they see Muslims to be. The statistic below each panel indicated the indirect effect (b), boot standard error of that effect (Boot SE), and the 95% confidence intervals of that effect (95% CI). The statistic linked to the path between attitudes (X) and collective responsibility (Y) represents the direct effect of attitudes on collective responsibility (Hayes, 2017). When the incident is negative (Panel A), more positive attitudes decrease perceptions of entitativity, in turn decreasing collective responsibility. When the incident is positive (Panel B), more positive attitudes increase perceived entitativity and through that collective responsibility. And when the incident is a neutral (Panel C) attitudes have no effect on judgments of entitativity.

deed. Specifically, positive attitudes toward Muslims predicted decreased collective responsibility for the negative actions of an individual Muslim, but increased collective responsibility for the positive actions of an individual Muslim. Interestingly, this effect was driven more by those with relatively positive attitudes than those with relatively negative attitudes. Furthermore, Study 1 revealed that pre-existing attitudes also differentially predicted judgments of the entitativity of target outgroup. People with positive attitudes toward the outgroup considered the outgroup less entitative after reading an experimental manipulation describing a negative act by an individual outgroup member compared to a positive or neutral act. This, in turn, predicted judgments of collective responsibility. While this mediation model supports our predicted process by which attitudes effect entitativity judgments and through that collective responsibility, it is not a test of the causal path, and the data might be consistent with different models as well including different causal orders of effects, so the mediation must be interpreted with caution. Interestingly, Study 1 also found an interaction effect of the manipulation and pre-existing attitudes on support for punitive national policies, such that people's pre-existing attitudes had a stronger association with support for punitive policies if they were in the negative condition, with those with negative attitudes toward Muslims showing stronger support for these policies than those in the positive and control conditions and those with positive attitudes being less supportive than those in the positive and control conditions.

3. Study 2

Study 2 was a pre-registered replication of Study 1 to replicate the earlier findings. All measures and manipulations were identical to those used in Study 1. The pre-registration, data, and all materials can be found at osf.io/vcqmd.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants

A total of 359 adults were recruited from the USA via Crowdfunder (Peer et al., 2017). Using the same exclusion criteria as the previous studies, 64 participants were removed from analyses: 39 for identifying as non-American, 27 for failing to complete the experiment, 18 for failing basic manipulation checks, and 7 for identifying as Muslim. The remaining sample comprised 168 males, 126 females, and 1 identified as 'other'. A majority of the sample identified as White-American ($N = 210$), with the remaining identifying as Hispanic-American ($N = 35$), Black/African-American ($N = 18$), Multi-racial ($N = 15$), Asian-American ($N = 11$), Arab-American ($N = 3$), Native-American ($N = 2$), and 'Other' ($N = 1$). These participants ranged in age from 18 to 77 years ($M = 34.77$; $SD = 12.17$). Participants were paid \$2.00 for 15 min of their time.

3.1.2. Manipulation and measures

The manipulations, checks, and measures used in Study 2 were identical to those in Study 1. These key measures showed high internal consistency (outgroup attitudes: $M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.41$, $\alpha = 0.93$; entitativity: $M = 6.27$, $SD = 1.36$, $\alpha = 0.92$; collective responsibility: $M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.56$, $\alpha = 0.91$; support for punitive national policies: $M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.84$, $\alpha = 0.83$).

3.1.3. Procedure

The procedure was identical to Study 1.

3.2. Results

3.2.1. Collective responsibility

We replicated the interaction between pre-existing attitudes and incident valence on collective responsibility, $F(2, 289) = 43.77$,

Table 1

Study 2: relationships between pre-existing positive attitudes on the outcome variables.

Condition	Outcome variables		
	Collective responsibility	Entitativity	Punitive policies
Positive	0.800 (0.133)	0.280 (0.136)	-0.920 (0.151)
Neutral	0.273 (0.134)	0.195 (0.137)	-1.025 (0.153)
Negative	-0.875 (0.127)	-0.478 (0.130)	-1.313 (0.145)

Note. The relationships in this table are represented as unstandardized coefficients.

$p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.233$ (see Table 1 for the simple slopes).

3.2.2. Entitativity

We also replicated the interaction between attitudes and entitativity, $F(2, 298) = 9.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.064$ (see Table 1).

3.2.3. Conditional process analysis

We then conducted the same indirect effects model as in Study 1, and again found indirect effects of both the negative, $b = -0.168$, Boot $SE = 0.060$, 95% CI $[-0.287, -0.055]$, and positive, $b = 0.099$, Boot $SE = 0.054$, 95% CI $[0.007, 0.222]$ conditions, such that, in the negative condition, positive attitudes predicted less entitativity and less collective responsibility, while, in the positive condition, more positive attitudes predicted more entitativity and more collective responsibility. No indirect effect emerged in the neutral condition, $b = 0.069$, Boot $SE = 0.049$, 95% CI $[-0.024, 0.170]$. Additionally, the negative condition differed significantly from the positive and neutral conditions, $b = -0.237$, Boot $SE = 0.079$, 95% CI $[-0.401, -0.089]$, while the positive condition did not differ significantly from both the negative and neutral conditions, $b = 0.030$, Boot $SE = 0.071$ 95% CI $[-0.102, 0.174]$.

3.2.4. Support for punitive national policies

Although the direction of the effects were similar to what was found in Study 1 (see Table 1), the interaction effect on support for punitive policies was non-significant, $F(2, 289) = 1.91$, $p = .151$. We discuss this finding in the discussion below.

3.3. Discussion

A pre-registered replication again found that the match between people's pre-existing attitudes and the valence of the incident led to different judgments of entitativity and collective responsibility. Specifically, when an incident was positive, more positive attitudes led to higher entitativity and more collective responsibility. When the incident was negative, however, more positive attitudes led to less entitativity and less collective responsibility. We once again found evidence for the predicted mediation model, though, as noted above, these effects must be interpreted with caution. Interestingly, inconsistent with Study 1, the results of the pre-registered replication did not find a significant interaction between the manipulations and prejudicial attitudes on support for punitive policies, although the pattern of effects is similar across both studies: The slope of the relationship between support for punitive policies and positive attitudes is most strongly negative in the negative incident condition. It may be that people's policy positions are broadly consistent with their attitudes toward the groups affected by those policies, so these may not be as susceptible to change. Indeed, correlations between positive attitudes and support for punitive policies are strong and negative in both studies 1 ($r = -0.560$) and 2 ($r = -0.600$). Therefore, the evidence of a weak interaction of the manipulation and attitudes on policy support is perhaps unsurprising.

4. General discussion

The current research demonstrates that when presented with outgroup members engaging in positive or negative actions, perceivers' pre-existing attitudes toward the outgroup leads to motivated judgments of outgroup entitativity, which in turn, alter how collectively responsible they hold the group for the positive or negative deeds. Our data reveal that people who hold positive attitudes toward an outgroup perceive the outgroup as more entitative and more collectively responsible for positive actions by individual outgroup members than after negative actions by individual members. In contrast, people who hold negative attitudes judge outgroups to be less entitative following a positive action compared to a negative action. Interestingly, they nonetheless hold the outgroup equally collectively responsible regardless of whether the action was positive or negative. Surprisingly, it was those with more positive attitudes whose perceptions of the liked outgroup's entitativity and collective responsibility changed when the action was negative compared to when it was positive or neutral. Taken together, these results suggest that judgments of collective responsibility for the actions of an outgroup member are not purely based on the evidence of the group's entitativity, but rather shift depending on whether the specific actions would reaffirm their pre-existing views of the group. These shifts in judgments of collective responsibility are accompanied by shifts in the "evidence" to justify collective blame (i.e., outgroup entitativity).

4.1. The role of entitativity in collective blame and collective responsibility

The present work adds to the literature on collective blame and responsibility by showing that pre-existing attitudes influence the amount of collective blame and responsibility assigned to the group for the actions of a single individual. Moreover, extending recent work (e.g., Newheiser et al., 2009), our data suggest that these same pre-existing attitudes may lead to motivated changes in perceptions of outgroup entitativity depending on the context, thus rationalizing holding the outgroup collectively responsible. These findings provide experimental evidence for the suggestion of Stenstrom et al. (2008) that perceptions of entitativity, which predict willingness to hold groups of people collectively responsible (e.g., Denson et al., 2006; Lickel et al., 2003, 2006a, b), may be partially determined through motivated reasoning to rationalize desired goals to hold a group collectively responsible or not. The present research extends and reinforces prior work in several ways, including directly manipulating event valence and including non-negative events, directly examining outgroup attitudes, and assessing more realistic real-world policy outcomes. Taken together, these studies clearly show that perceivers' judgments of entitativity depend on whether the action allows one to assign collective blame versus collective praise for the outgroup. This finding extends research by Piliialoha and Brewer (2006) showing that people retroactively described a Supreme Court as entitative when the court's ruling coincided with their own preferred outcome than when the ruling did not. Tests of mediation in our studies suggest that judgments of entitativity explain people's willingness to hold groups collectively responsible for the actions of individuals. Additionally, the present research also extends on the literature on collective responsibility by testing how people's attitudes affect when they are willing to grant collective responsibility for positive actions. While much of the discussion surrounding collective responsibility has focused on responsibility for negative actions (e.g. Lickel et al., 2006a, b; Sjöström and Gollwitzer, 2015), this work shows that people similarly decide when to interpret positive actions as reflecting positive attributes of a group.

4.2. Limitations, implications, and future directions

The current results meaningfully extend past findings and theory, but future research should go beyond the vignette paradigm we used.

Specifically, our vignettes depicting the actions taken by individual Muslims included activities that often require the assistance of others (such as a crowdfunding campaign and planning a terrorist attack). These actions may prompt judgments of collective responsibility more than actions that are more individual (such as giving up one's seat to an elderly individual or stealing from someone). Thus, future work should more precisely demonstrate the boundary conditions of the effects found here.

Furthermore, our research utilized a neutral vignette that is likely to be construed as slightly positive. This was done to ensure that the outcome variables were equally relevant to all three conditions while ensuring that the positive condition would indeed be seen as more positive. However, this raises the possibility that differences between the neutral condition with the others may have been influenced by the slight positive slant of the neutral condition raising the need for future work to try and establish a more authentically neutral condition that would still appear relevant to the dependent measures.

Nonetheless, our work demonstrates how motivated reasoning may not only influence when we assign collective responsibility, but also how it shapes the perception of the nature of the group in question to be consistent with the judgment of the group's collective responsibility. Much of the past research has treated these perceptions as largely based on intrinsic qualities of the group (e.g., Denson et al., 2006), but we show that perceptions of entitativity may also be influenced by motivation and are adapted in self-serving ways to create the necessary conditions for holding other groups responsible or not. Such data provides a building block for future work examining when and how people translate actions of individual outgroup members to the entire community.

Open practices

To comply with open practices policies, the researchers pre-registered the second study in this manuscript which can be found at <https://osf.io/vcqmd/>. At that link, interested readers can select the "Registrations" section where they can select the registration listed there as having been filed on 11-15-2017. In that frozen, non-editable version, they can then "View Registration Form" on the right-hand side of the page. The researchers also included the data, questionnaires, and SAS scripts for conducting the analyses in the "Files" section of the webpage (<https://osf.io/vcqmd/>), which allows independent researchers to reproduce the methodology and results.

Appendix A. Supplementary materials

Supplementary materials for this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.10.002>.

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