



# Reducing prejudice and promoting positive intergroup attitudes among elementary-school children in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict

Rony Berger<sup>a</sup>, Joy Benatov<sup>b</sup>, Hisham Abu-Raiya<sup>c,\*</sup>, Carmit T. Tadmor<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Emergency Medicine and PREPARED Center for Emergency Response Research, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel

<sup>b</sup> Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel

<sup>c</sup> Bob Shapell School of Social Work, Tel Aviv University, Israel

<sup>d</sup> Recanati School of Business, Tel Aviv University, Israel

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 9 May 2015

Received in revised form 17 January 2016

Accepted 20 April 2016

Available online 6 May 2016

### Keywords:

Prejudice-reduction program

Stereotyping

Intergroup attitudes

Contact hypotheses

Elementary school children

Israeli–Palestinians

Israeli–Jews

## ABSTRACT

The current investigation tested the efficacy of the Extended Class Exchange Program (ECEP) in reducing prejudicial attitudes. Three hundred and twenty-two 3rd and 4th grade students from both Israeli–Jewish and Israeli–Palestinian schools in the ethnically mixed city of Jaffa were randomly assigned to either intervention or control classes. Members of the intervention classes engaged in ECEP's activities, whereas members of the control classes engaged in a social-emotional learning program. The program's outcomes were measured a week before, immediately after, and 15 months following termination. Results showed that the ECEP decreased stereotyping and discriminatory tendencies toward the other group and increased positive feelings and readiness for social contact with the other group upon program termination. Additionally, the effects of the ECEP were generalized to an ethnic group (i.e., Ethiopians) with whom the ECEP's participants did not have any contact. Finally, the ECEP retained its significant effect 15 months after the program's termination, despite the serious clashes between Israel and the Palestinians that occurred during that time. This empirical support for the ECEP's utility in reducing prejudice makes it potentially applicable to other areas in the world, especially those that are characterized by ethnic tension and violent conflicts.

© 2016 Society for the Study of School Psychology. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Stereotyping and prejudice are among the most prevalent and significant psychological and social problems in the world (Minority Right Group, 2010; Save the Children, 2006). Both profoundly affect the security, mental health, and well-being of people in general, and of children in particular. The adverse consequences of stereotyping and prejudice on children and youth include poor school achievement, low self-esteem, health and behavioral problems, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, social exclusion, and generally compromised social-emotional growth (Flanagan, Syvertsen, Gill, Gallay, & Cumsille, 2009; Gaylord-Harden & Cunningham, 2009; Hernandez, 2008; Inzlicht & Kang, 2010; Levy & Killen, 2008; Paradies, 2006; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). These outcomes have drawn the attention of social and educational psychologists in the last three decades, which has led to the proliferation of stereotyping and prejudice reduction programs.

\* Corresponding author at: Bob Shapell School of Social Work, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv 69978, Israel.

E-mail address: [aburaiya@gmail.com](mailto:aburaiya@gmail.com) (H. Abu-Raiya).

Action Editor: Sherrie Proctor.

Despite the demonstrated usefulness of many stereotyping and prejudice reduction programs, research regarding these programs is limited in a few key areas. Specifically, many prejudice-reduction programs were not conducted in real life settings (Paluck & Green, 2009), very few used follow-up measures (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014), some included samples that cannot be considered representative (Hewstone et al., 2014), the majority targeted only one prejudice-promoting aspect (Killen, Rutland, & Ruck, 2011), and many were less effective in changing cognitive indicators of prejudice (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Furthermore, despite growing evidence that some programs designed for prejudice reduction and positive intergroup attitudes promotion (PRIPA<sup>1</sup>) are efficacious even in the context of protracted violent conflicts, the durability of their effects has not yet been fully documented (Lemmer & Wagner, 2015).

To address some of these limitations, the Class Exchange Program (CEP) was developed (Berger, Abu-Raiya, & Gelkopf, 2015). The CEP is a comprehensive multi-theoretical model that incorporates the main elements of three of the most widely used prejudice reduction models: contact, information, and cognitive-developmental. Berger et al. (2015) provided initial support for the CEP's efficacy in reducing prejudice among a sample of ( $N = 262$ ) Israeli-Jewish and Israeli-Palestinian elementary school children. Specifically, the CEP significantly reduced all facets of prejudice: the cognitive component (i.e., stereotyping), the affective component (i.e., negative feelings) and the behavioral attitudes component (i.e., discriminatory tendencies, readiness for social contact with children from the other group).

Despite the promising initial outcomes evidenced in Berger et al. (2015), the CEP was applied for a short time, lacked elements such as perspective-taking and empathy training that proved useful in previous interventions, and produced small effects on prejudice measures. Further, the long-term impact of the CEP has not been tested. Thus, the current study addressed these shortcomings by testing the immediate and long-term efficacy of an extended version of the CEP.

In what follows, we first describe the underpinning theoretical bases of interventions designed for reducing prejudice and promoting positive intergroup attitudes. Then, we review the existing PRPIA programs applied with children living in both peaceful multicultural and conflict-laden societies. We next outline the limitations of implementing these interventions, particularly when applied in areas characterized by violent and protracted conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, we describe a comprehensive PRPIA approach, the Extended Class Exchange Program (ECEP), and evaluate its immediate and long-term efficacy in reducing negative cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attitudes among Israeli Jewish and Israeli Palestinian elementary school students.

### 1.1. Theoretical models for PRPIA interventions

PRPIA interventions are derived from three broad underlying theoretical frameworks for intergroup relationships: the contact model, the information model, and the developmental model (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). First, the contact model is based on the intergroup contact theory, which presupposes that if people have the opportunity for mutual acquaintance and communication they are more likely to understand and accept each other (Allport, 1954; Miller & Brewer, 1984). Under optimal conditions, contact between groups can be effective in reducing negative intergroup attitudes and prejudices (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Pettigrew, 1998).

These conditions include: (a) *equal status*, meaning that both groups in the contact situation are treated as equals; (b) *common goal*, where both groups share a common task; (c) *intergroup cooperation*, which involves both groups working together to achieve their common goals; and (d) *support of authorities*, meaning that there is support of the contact by authorities viewed as significant to both groups' members. Although Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis of face-to-face intergroup contact interventions showed that contact under optimal conditions have yielded results that are more efficacious than contact interventions that did not meet these conditions, they suggested that these conditions are not necessary for prejudice reduction.

More recently, some researchers have suggested that virtual contact (i.e., contact via internet), para-social contact (i.e., positive media portrayals of intergroup relationships) and extended contact (i.e., knowing an intergroup member that has positive relationships with an outgroup member) can also reduce negative attitudes toward outgroup members (Al-Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Andrighetto, Mari, Volpato, & Behluli, 2012; Eller, Abrams, & Zimmermann, 2011). Interventions based on the contact model have included dialogical groups, integrated schooling, cooperative learning, and bilingual education (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014).

Second, the information model is influenced by socialization and social learning theories. These theories presume that attitudes toward outgroup members are shaped by knowledge and information derived either from direct modeling of socializing agents (i.e., parents, relatives, teachers) or from media and educational programs (Bandura, 1986; Brand, Ruiz, & Padilla, 1974; Stephan & Stephan, 1984; Triandis, 1975). Because ignorance and lack of information facilitate stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes, this model proposes information-based interventions like intercultural training and anti-bias information.

Third, the developmental model is anchored in the social-cognitive developmental theory. The developmental model assumes that children's intergroup attitudes are also predicated on the developmental stage of their socio-cognitive skills (Aboud, 2008; Bigler & Liben, 2006). This model further supposes that as children develop more sophisticated social and cognitive skills (e.g., logical classification, an ability to weigh two or more categories simultaneously, and perspective taking), their tendency to utilize stereotyping, prejudicial attitudes, and discrimination declines. Hence, programs reflecting this perspective focus on

<sup>1</sup> In this article, programs designed for prejudice reduction and positive intergroup attitudes promotion will be referred to as PRPIA interventions.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/363457>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/363457>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)