



Full length article

Majority members' endorsement of the acculturation integrationist orientation improves their outgroup attitudes toward ethnic minority members: An electronic-contact experiment

Hisham M. Abu-Rayya ^{a, b, *}^a Faculty of Social Welfare & Health Sciences, University of Haifa, Israel^b School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 4 March 2017

Received in revised form

7 June 2017

Accepted 9 June 2017

Available online 9 June 2017

Keywords:

Electronic-contact
Intercultural contact
Acculturation
Integration
Outgroup attitudes

ABSTRACT

An electronic intercultural contact intervention was deployed in the present study to enhance Israeli majority students' level of Integrationist endorsement toward Israeli Ethiopian minority members. The study intervention involved synchronous text-chat across three sessions administered online over three weeks, and required pairs of majority students ($n = 44$) and Ethiopian students ($n = 44$) to work collaboratively on planning a social-cultural trip and come up with a 'travel guide' that satisfies the needs of the interacting students' cultural groups (Integration). The study evaluated both short-term (one week) and long-term (six weeks) effects of the intervention on majority members' outgroup attitudes. The study findings revealed that, compared to majority controls ($n = 41$), participants in the intervention condition reported a greater decrease in intergroup bias and anxiety in the short- and long-terms. A mediation effect of intergroup anxiety was also found; the intervention reduced majority members' intergroup anxiety in the short-term which was related to reduced long-term intergroup bias. These encouraging findings highlight that carefully designed cooperative electronic-contact programs tailored to promote majority individuals' endorsement of the Integrationist orientation, can offer an efficacious route to acculturation researchers interested in promoting this strategy, improving in turn majority members' outgroup attitudes toward minorities.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

1.1. Theoretical background

According to acculturation researchers, attitudes of majority members toward ethnic minority members in a multiethnic context differ according to the acculturation orientations they endorse. Specifically, Bourhis, Moïse, Perrault, and Senécal's (1997) *Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM)*, presumes that majority members' endorsement of the Integrationist orientation— defined as majority members' acceptance of ethnic minority members maintaining their heritage culture as well as interacting with the majority culture and acquiring important features of it— has a positive effect on their outgroup attitudes toward ethnic minorities.

Empirical findings in this regard have generally been supportive.

For instance, Abu-Rayya (2017) found that Anglo-Australians' endorsement of the Integrationist orientation toward Australian Muslims was positively correlated with measures of positive emotions toward this minority, and negatively correlated with measures of negative emotions, subtle prejudice, and perceived threat. Likewise, Israeli majority members' endorsement of the Integrationist orientation toward Israeli Ethiopians was negatively connected with intergroup anxiety and positively correlated with majority members' intention to conduct social activities with Ethiopians (Abu-Rayya, 2016).

Acculturation research to date on the Integrationist orientation-outgroup attitude relationship as specified by the IAM (e.g., Abu-Rayya & White, 2010; Abu-Rayya, 2017, 2016; Bourhis & Dayan, 2004; Montreuil & Bourhis, 2004; Safdar, Dupuis, Lewis, El-Geledi, & Bourhis, 2008), however, has relied on correlational designs, yielding ambiguous cause-effect conclusions. One might argue, for instance, that majority members who hold favourable attitudes toward ethnic minorities may report having an Integrationist orientation toward these minorities, in the same way that the

* Faculty of Social Welfare & Health Sciences, University of Haifa, Israel.
E-mail addresses: haburayya@univ.haifa.ac.il, Hisham.aburayya@gmail.com.

Integrationist orientation would relate to outgroup attitudes. Only experimental research designs have the capacity of unravelling causal paths.

Moreover, the *IAM* presumes that majority members' Integrationist orientation is intertwined with, and affected by, the quality and quantity of their intercultural exposure to, and contact with, ethnic minorities (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997; Montreuil & Bourhis, 2004). In line with this, as noted by Abu-Rayya and White (2010), measures of the acculturation orientations deployed in previous research contain attitudes to social activities and contact involving outgroup members. In reality, intercultural exposure and contact between majority and minority groups may be constrained by factors like geographic dispersion or physical segregation, thus, opportunities for Integrationist endorsement may become limited. Despite advancements in virtual communication technologies that served contact research in social psychology (White, Harvey, & Abu-Rayya, 2015a), acculturation researchers working within the *IAM* tradition have not utilised these avenues to develop and test Integrationist intercultural contact strategies that 'bridge the gap' of geographic dispersion or physical segregation.

Additionally, previous research on the Integrationist orientation-outgroup attitude relationship does not unravel the mechanism by which Integrationist endorsement improves outgroup attitudes. While longitudinal research evidence that emerged in the contact literature suggests that intergroup anxiety acts as a partial mediator of the contact-prejudice relationship (e.g., Binder et al., 2009; White & Abu-Rayya, 2012; White, Abu-Rayya, & Weitzel, 2014), there is no parallel longitudinal acculturation research that tested whether intergroup anxiety mediates the Integrationist orientation-outgroup attitude relationship.

The current study directly addresses these issues, and in doing so, advances the *IAM* literature in several important ways: i) develops a computer mediated intervention that promotes endorsement of the Integrationist orientation through online cooperative intercultural contact; ii) applies an experimental longitudinal design that evaluates both short-term (one week post-intervention) and long-term (six-weeks post-intervention) effectiveness of the intervention in reducing majority members' intergroup anxiety and intergroup bias; and iii) identifies whether reduction in intergroup anxiety mediates the intervention longitudinal effect on intergroup bias reduction.

1.2. Electronic-contact and intergroup bias reduction

The notion that attitudes toward minority groups can be improved by providing individuals with a *direct* contact experience reflects one of the earliest intervention approaches that social psychologists have used to reduce intergroup bias (Allport, 1954). This intervention strategy is based on the premise that direct contact between majority group members and minority members will result in more positive attitudes toward the targeted minority, in the presence of i) a perception of equal status amongst both groups within the contact situation (e.g., university setting); ii) institutional support (e.g., university policies); and iii) working cooperatively in order to iv) achieve a common goal (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005; 2006). Finally, as illuminated by Pettigrew (1998), sufficient time is needed to create the potential for Allport's cooperative contact relationship to develop which can take the form of multiple contact sessions.

While a large corpus of empirical research has documented the efficacy of the direct contact approach (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; White et al., 2015a), direct contact may not be possible in all contexts and settings such as those characterised by geographic dispersion, physical segregation, or high intergroup tension

between majority and minority groups (Crisp & Turner, 2010; Turner, Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, & Cairns, 2013). Consequently, there has been a great focus within the contact literature on uncovering *indirect* techniques of contact in order to address this critical limitation (Dovidio, Eller, & Hewstone, 2011). In an ever-increasing technological age, *Electronic-contact* defined by White and Abu-Rayya (2012) as "... computer mediated contact involving an engagement of self in the intergroup relationship" (p.598), has emerged as an important alternative to conventional direct contact. Here ingroup and outgroup members are required to self-engage in a synchronous interaction which is mediated by online technology. Electronic-contact researchers argue that all of Allport's facilitating conditions can be integrated into the online contact situation (White et al., 2015a) similar to their integration into a conventional direct contact setting.

Research examining the efficacy of *Electronic-contact* strategies in prejudice reduction, has been supportive. For instance, the 'Dissolving Boundaries' research project linked schools within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and required groups of school students (and their teachers), to engage in a range of collaborative tasks online using videoconferencing. The outcomes of this program included greater cultural awareness, tolerance of differences, recognition of similarities, and promotion of social inclusion across mainstream and special needs schools (Austin, 2006). Likewise, Israeli Jewish and Arab Muslim students who worked together in mixed religious groups on an online collaborative project for one year showed less dislike for each other after the online contact than at pre-contact (Walther, Hoter, Ganayem, & Shonfeld, 2014).

Finally, a rigorously conducted longitudinal field experiment named the "*Dual Identity Electronic Contact (DIEC) Strategy*" required Australian Muslim and Christian high-school students to exchange, through electronic contact, in a guided cooperative way information about how their respective religious beliefs and practices could work together to develop a water-saving, energy saving, and recycling solutions to actively contribute to an 'environmentally sustainable future for Australia', their shared identity (White & Abu-Rayya, 2012). Significant short-term and long-lasting positive attitude change was witnessed among the participants including intergroup anxiety and bias reduction, increased outgroup knowledge, and progressive use of more affection and positive emotional words and less use of anger and sadness words (White & Abu-Rayya, 2012; White, Abu-Rayya, Bliuc, & Faulkner, 2015b; White et al., 2014).

These research findings show that *Electronic-contact* holds great promise as a tool to promote intergroup harmony. Cooperative *Electronic-contact* that is tailored to promote majority individuals' endorsement of the Integrationist acculturation orientation, may therefore offer an efficacious route to acculturation researchers interested in promoting this strategy, improving in turn majority members' outgroup attitudes toward minorities.

1.3. Contact-bias reduction relationship: anxiety as a mediator

Intergroup contact research has recently moved in the direction of examining *how* contact causes intergroup bias reduction. Intergroup anxiety has been found, in this regard, to be a consistent partial mediator of the contact-bias reduction relationship. Intergroup anxiety refers to negative emotions that an individual may feel when anticipating or experiencing interactions with outgroup members (e.g., Mallett, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008; Pedersen, Walker, & Wise, 2005), and it has been shown to be one of the strongest predictors of negative intergroup attitudes (Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006). Consequently, it is postulated that by facilitating positive intergroup interactions, it would be possible to reduce

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4937534>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4937534>

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