



The role of immigrant acculturation preferences and generational status in determining majority intergroup attitudes

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ABSTRACT

Two experiments ($N_s = 220, 135$) investigated the role of first and second generation immigrants' desire for Culture Maintenance and Intercultural Contact in affecting majority members' intergroup attitudes ($2 \times 2 \times 2$ design). Participants were presented with fictitious interviews through which immigrants' acculturation preferences and generational status were manipulated. Immigrants' desire for contact strongly affected host members' attitudes: those who were perceived to want contact elicited more favourable intergroup attitudes than those who did not. Desire for contact also moderated the relationship between immigrants' desire for culture maintenance and attitudes towards them: culture maintenance only stimulated favourable attitudes if the immigrant also expressed desire for contact. Immigrants' generational status and their desire for Culture Maintenance were found to interact, such that less favourable attitudes were shown towards second generation immigrants refusing their heritage culture. Psychological processes mediating these effects were investigated, finding evidence for symbolic threat, appreciation for multiculturalism and metastereotypes. Overall, the results suggest that both immigrants' generational status and acculturation attitudes should be taken into account when studying intergroup attitudes of dominant groups and in planning interventions for the improvement of intercultural relations.

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Introduction

We now live, it could be said, in a nomadic world. Every year millions of people migrate within or across national boundaries, fleeing famine, war or persecution or seeking material or cultural enrichment. According to 2005 United Nations (UN) figures, over 195 million people now live in a country other than that of their birth and, of these, there were nearly 14 million refugees (United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs, 2008; <http://esa.un.org/migration/>). In Europe alone, it is estimated that there are over 64 million migrants and Italy, the site of the present research, had over 3 million migrants living inside its borders in 2005 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs; <http://esa.un.org/migration/>). Such mass migration poses social psychological challenges for immigrants and members of receiving societies alike. Immigrants may need to reconstruct anew their social identities and sometimes have to face a less than warm, not to say downright hostile, welcome from their new country of settlement. Members of the host society will often be confronted with ethnic groups with quite different cultural traditions whom they may perceive to represent a threat to their material well-being, to their traditional way of life, or both. It is not uncommon for those majority members to react to

such perceived threats by expressing negative sentiments to immigrants (McLaren & Johnson, 2007; Quillian, 1995; Semyonov, Raijman, & Gorodzeisky, 2006). In this paper we investigate two little studied sources of such anti-immigrant sentiment – namely, the acculturation attitudes that the immigrants themselves endorse, together with the assumed generational status of those immigrants. It is our contention that if immigrants are seen as holding acculturation attitudes that do not chime well with what the host majority expects of them, then this will instigate anti-immigrant prejudice. In certain respects, this may be especially visible in reactions to *second generation* immigrants.

Acculturation attitudes

Social psychological research on acculturation has been dominated by Berry's two dimensional framework (Berry, 1980, 1997). As is well known, Berry has proposed that immigrants can have a preference to maintain (or relinquish) their heritage culture (the so-called Culture Maintenance dimension), and can wish to have much (or little) contact with the host society (the Intercultural Contact dimension). The combination of these two dimensions results in four potential acculturation strategies: *integration*, when immigrants want both to maintain their culture and have contact with the host majority; *assimilation*, when they are favourable to contact but not to culture maintenance; *separation*, when immigrants desire to conserve their heritage culture without being in contact with host members; and

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marginalisation when they refuse both culture maintenance and intercultural contact.

Perhaps not surprisingly, research on acculturation has focussed mainly on the immigrants' perspective, chronicling various psychosocial outcomes that are associated with the different acculturation strategies (for reviews see, Berry, 1997; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Liebkind, 2001). In recent years, however, there has been a growing realisation that members of the host society also will have preferences for which acculturation strategy they would like immigrants to adopt and, moreover, that these preferences, and especially the concordance between them and the immigrants' preferences, could be an important determinant of the nature of the subsequent intergroup relationship between the two groups (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Sénécal, 1997; Piontkowski, Rohmann, & Florack, 2002; Roccas, Horenczyk, & Schwartz, 2000; Van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998; Zagefka & Brown, 2002). Moreover, some studies showed that the way in which host members perceive immigrants' preferences can influence intergroup attitudes. For example, Zagefka and Brown (2002) found that German majority group preferences for integration were associated with more favourable attitudes, as was the degree of fit between those preferences and the perceived preferences of Turkish immigrants (see also, Pfafferott & Brown, 2006). In two subsequent studies, perceived immigrant preferences for intercultural contact were negatively correlated with majority group prejudice towards those immigrants; perceived immigrant preferences for cultural maintenance were not (Zagefka, Brown, Broquard, & Leventoglu Martin, 2007).

In this paper we want to investigate experimentally the role of immigrants' acculturation preferences in affecting the host majority's intergroup attitudes. More specifically, we are interested in analysing the different contribution to the outcome of interest of the two dimensions underlying immigrants' acculturation strategies in Berry's framework. The four acculturation strategies have been typically studied as discrete constructs in this field. It is our aim to provide experimental evidence on the role of the two underlying dimensions, perceived Intercultural Contact and perceived Cultural Maintenance, both as orthogonal predictors of intergroup attitudes in their own right, but also in interaction. Moreover, we are interested in investigating the psychological processes which may affect the relationship between immigrants' acculturation preferences and host members' attitudes towards them, in order to better understand which mechanisms are responsible for unfavourable attitudes held by dominant groups.

Experimental studies in this field have been rare. However, noteworthy is some experimental research showing that perceptions of immigrants' acculturation strategies can affect host majority members' attitudes. Van Oudenhoven et al. (1998) manipulated whether a particular immigrant appeared to endorse one of Berry's (1997) four strategies and then elicited native Dutch respondents' reactions to this person. They found the most favourable evaluations of the person when s/he appeared to endorse assimilation, closely followed by those in the integration condition. The immigrant endorsing separation or marginalisation was viewed less favourably. The fact that perceived assimilation and integration elicited the most favourable responses seems to suggest that it was a perception of a desire for contact by the immigrant protagonist that was the primary determinant of her/his subsequent positive evaluation. Similar findings emerged from a study carried out in Italy by Kosic, Mannetti, and Sam (2005). The authors manipulated immigrants' acculturation preferences in order to analyse majority members' evaluation and normative reactions to different acculturation strategies perceived to be held by Moroccan immigrants. They found that Italians had more negative attitudes towards the strategies of separation and marginalisation, whilst both assimilation and integration were positively evaluated.

This research provides preliminary evidence about the influence of acculturation strategies on attitudes. However, several questions remain: the potentially different determining roles of the two

underlying acculturation dimensions are not clear, and the psychological processes mediating the observed effects have yet to be identified. In this paper we address these issues in two experiments.

The results of the studies reported above, in which perceived assimilation and integration were more positively reacted to, together with those previously cited (Zagefka et al., 2007), suggest that the Contact dimension can be identified as the primary determinant of host members' attitudes towards immigrants. We believe it is likely that immigrants who are seen to desire intergroup contact will be perceived by host society members as less threatening to their common values and traditional way of life, which will result in them being more appreciated. This is because most majority members will regard it as normative and desirable that immigrants should seek contact with host members and with aspects of the host culture. A perception that immigrants actively reject the host culture and its members may be regarded as somewhat 'disrespectful' of the host society, and its values and customs could be felt to be in danger. The result could be a heightened feeling of threat in the minds of the majority group. Host members perceiving that opportunities for future interaction with immigrants do not exist, or think that an initial rejection could be irreversible, may be characterised by an aggressive reaction (Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerssen, 2008) and could consequently show more negative attitudes towards those immigrants.

Moreover, host members might think that immigrants' desire for contact could be regarded by outside observers as a response to – almost an index of – the majority's attitudes towards multiculturalism and immigration. Thus, choices which seem to indicate that the immigrant group is excluded from the larger society could generate negative attributions about the prevailing intergroup climate in the host country. Put differently, the immigrant group's perceived desire for contact could influence host members' metastereotypes, the beliefs about the stereotypes that an outgroup holds about the ingroup (Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998).

We develop these hypotheses further in Study 2, after first establishing that immigrants' perceived desire for contact (or not) is, indeed, the most potent determinant of intergroup attitudes.

Perceived culture maintenance is also likely to have a role in influencing host members' attitudes, even if it is one that is subordinate to the contact dimension. Specifically, it is our contention that culture maintenance might be appreciated by host members, but *only* when contact is also sought. If immigrants seem to respect the host culture and its members by seeking intercultural contact, then host members may favour culture maintenance on the part of those immigrants. In other words, immigrants who are perceived to favour an integrationist strategy may well be appreciated, perhaps in a form of reciprocal multiculturalism. Such an outcome is more likely to occur in cultural contexts (like Italy, see Matera & Stefanile, 2008; Pintus & Giovannini, 2006) where a multiculturalist ideology is normatively endorsed (Bourhis et al., 1997; Piontkowski et al., 2002). A further implication is that, if immigrants are seen as rejecting contact, whether they wish to maintain their culture or not will be a matter of indifference to majority members.

Immigrants' generational status

Typically, in research investigating attitudes towards immigrants, the latter are considered as an undifferentiated category; the only feature used in order to differentiate amongst immigrants is typically their ethnic or national origin (Bourhis & Bougie, 1998; Bourhis & Dayan, 2004; Montreuil & Bourhis, 2001). No research has previously analysed the role of immigrants' generational status in affecting host members' intergroup attitudes, even though such second generation immigrants are more and more visible in many societies (Algan, Dustmann, Glitz, & Manning, 2010; Caritas/Migrantes, 2009). Yet, it is well known that generational status (first vs. second or later generation) is associated with different acculturation preferences and psychosocial outcomes in

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