Blurring the Ingroup-Outgroup Distinction: The Agenda for Acceptance for All
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Abstract

This study offered participants an opportunity to alter automatic evaluations of others. Intergroup experiences that emphasize social identity complexity (SIC) and cross-cutting group membership (CCGM) awareness can supplant initial impressions, attenuate/replace prejudicial beliefs, reshape ingroup-outgroup boundaries, reduce social category distinctions, and introduce a culture of acceptance. 39 staff of a nonprofit agency participated in SD (learn about the social identities of others), DEC (cooperative task aiming to achieve a superordinate group goal), or comparison. Participation impacted participant perception of levels of acceptance of diversity and behavior as it pertains to being free of bias, prejudice, and discrimination, major social change implications.

Problem

Self-disclosure (SD) and **direct and extended contact (DEC)** can reduce prejudicial attitudes, promote cross-group friendships, and improve perceptions of outgroup members (Ensari & Miller, 2001, 2002; Turner et al., 2007; Vasquez et al., 2007). **Social identity complexity (SIC)**, one's perception of the confluence of their multiple group identities, also influences intergroup contact (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

Researchers have yet to examine the impact of SIC and **cross-cutting group membership (CCGM)** awareness on SD and DEC in improving intergroup relations by reducing bias toward, increasing acceptance of, and fostering an increased willingness to interact with diverse individuals.

Purpose

The purposes of this quantitative study were to:

- compare the effectiveness of SD and DEC in reducing prejudicial attitudes and biases and increasing acceptance of outgroup individuals

- determine if participation in the social group activities of SD and DEC was better than not participating

Relevant Literature

Theoretical Frameworks

- *contact hypothesis* (Allport, 1954/1979)

- *reformulated intergroup contact theory* (Pettigrew, 1998)

- *social identity complexity* (Roccas & Brewer, 2002)

Key Concepts

- *Self-disclosure* - the experience of sharing personal and/or emotional information with another individual; principal to building robust, valuable relationships (Consedine et al., 2007).

- *Direct and extended contact* increases intergroup attraction, communication, trust; reduces negative affect, unfamiliarity; permits for personalization, differentiation; contrasts preestablished perceptions (Ensari & Miller, 2001, 2002).

- Humans categorize individuals into social groups and evaluate in relation to social categories, yielding ingroup-outgroup distinction (Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2009; Vasquez et al., 2007).

- Humans desire affiliation (e.g., belongingness, similarity, familiarity), especially in regard to groups (Allport, 1954/1979; Pettigrew, 1998).

- Cooperative intergroup interaction experiences and emphasis on membership to multiple cross-cutting social categories can reshape ingroup-outgroup boundaries (Allport, 1954/1979) and reduce intergroup bias (Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2009).

- Subjective experience can alter antecedently structured schemas (Tormala et al., 2007), organizing novel, bias-free schemas.

Research Questions

- Are self-disclosure (SD) and direct and extended contact (DEC) effective social group activities for reducing prejudice and bias toward and increasing acceptance of outgroup members?

- Which group activity, SD or DEC, is more effective in reducing prejudice and bias toward and increasing acceptance of outgroup members (based on changes in scores of measures).

Procedures

Sampling

All staff of a non-profit mental health/social service agency were invited to participate, **39 responded.**

Instrumentation

- *Diversity Awareness Profile, 2nd edition* (DAP; Stinson, 2007)
- *Multicultural Competence Inventory* (MCI; Roysircar-Sodowsky et al., 1994)
- adapted version of the *General Social Survey* (GSS; National Opinion Research Center, 2010)

Design

Used a pretest-posttest design
- Randomly assigned participants to one of three groups (e.g., SD, DEC, or comparison).

- Complete the DAP, the MCI, and GSS pre-participation in the social group activities.

- Complete the DAP and MCI post-activity.

Data Analysis

A 3x2 MANOVA and other step-down procedures (e.g., univariate analysis, pairwise and post-hoc comparisons) to determine the effects of the difference within- and between-groups.

Findings

Scores	Group	Mean	SD	N
DAPdiff	SD	0.79	5.18	14
	DEC	3.92	6.36	13
	COMP	-1.08	2.54	12
MCIdiff	SD	8.36	12.26	14
	DEC	6.00	10.15	13
	COMP	4.75	12.33	12

- MANOVA: Wilks' Lambda=.824, $F(4,70)$=1.666, p=.168
- ANOVA: DAP ($F(2, 36)$=3.210, p =.052)
  MCI ($F(2, 36)$=.327, p =.724)

- Pairwise/Post-hoc comparisons: Mean Difference = 5.006, p = .017 / Tukey HSD = 5.006, p = .045 for DAPdiff after participation in DEC

- Mean MCI pre/post = 113.56/119.56
- Mean DAP pre/post = 83.20/84.49

Limitations

- Convenience sampling was used.

- Situation-specific social categories or multiple group memberships not salient enough to generalize.

- Treatment effects may be the result of the environment and not the interventions.

- Disconfirming evidence concentrated in a single individual or subgroup may yield disassociation from the category; this complicates generalizability.

- Ingroup-outgroup cooperation can threaten original group identity and cohesiveness.

- Validity and reliability concerns pertaining to scales designed to measure attitudes.

- Educational and professional competencies of the sample population.

Conclusions

Forced social group interaction opportunities as a potential foundation for:

- the use of alternative methods to prejudice reduction

- generating shared experiences from multiple perspectives

- obscuring salient distinctions between and blurring ingroup-outgroup distinctions that have continually propagated prejudice and bias

- fostering greater acceptance for all

Social Change Implications

Comprehending one's own and another's social identity complexity and shared affiliations/social group memberships can supplant initial impressions, attenuate and even replace ingrained prejudicial beliefs, and introduce a culture of acceptance.

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