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Promoting engagement, health, and well-being within ethnically diverse societies

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1. Introduction

Current trends in immigration have led to societies becoming more ethnically diverse. In particular the globalization of job markets and changes in economies have increased the flow of migrants from developing countries to developed countries. Despite the potential for economic and cultural contributions to society, immigration continues to be perceived negatively, especially within the United Kingdom, leading to questions about (the failure of) multiculturalism and the adaptation of immigrant populations in host societies.

In light of contradictory findings suggesting that the ethnic diversity resulting from immigration is associated with both low and high social cohesion, the present research sought to investigate precisely when (and for whom) immigration promotes positive, rather than negative, outcomes. We proposed that individuals' group membership, and their perceptions of groups within society, might be two factors that influence whether immigration shapes aspects of engagement, health and well-being.

Drawing on the social identity approach, we reasoned that because group memberships are seen as an important source of identity (i.e., individuals seeing themselves as part of a larger collective, "us" and "we"), ingroup-outgroup distinctions might be important for understanding how people might respond to immigration and its resulting ethnic diversity. In particular, we contend that distinctions can be made between majority groups (i.e., Hosts; groups that have historically resided in a country) and minority groups (i.e., Immigrants; groups that have recently moved to a country), which may have implications for a range outcomes, especially if the status of the majority group involved is in flux.

We contend that the challenge within ethnically diverse societies is to (re-)frame ingroup-outgroup boundaries to promote engagement, health, and well-being for Majority (i.e., Host society members) and Minority (i.e., Immigrant) groups. The present research sought to determine which of two competing views (i.e., focusing on similarities or focusing on differences) reflects the best way to (re-)frame ingroup-outgroup boundaries to promote positive outcomes for hosts and immigrants in different contexts of immigration.

2. Research Overview and Hypotheses

According to the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Dovidio et al., 2005), creating similarities between groups can lead to more positive intergroup attitudes and promote positive outcomes. However, according to models of Intergroup Contact and Acculturation (Berry et al., 2006; Brown & Hewstone, 2005), maintaining differences is key to promoting positive outcomes. Furthermore, group membership might influence preference for a particular focus, especially when the group's status is influx (e.g., Nadler et al., 2009). As such, it is unclear whether emphasizing shared identities through similarities or emphasizing distinct identities through differences will influence how majority and minority groups evaluate immigration and each other. Moreover, it is unclear whether these emphases will affect whether majority and minority individuals feel engaged with their communities or report positive health and well-being. In three studies we considered whether group membership (Majority (*host*), Minority (*immigrant*)), perceptions of shared identity (similar, different), and their interaction influenced individuals' reported perceptions of immigration, engagement, and health and well-being under different conditions of ethnic diversity.

Studies 1A and B considered these variables in the context of countries with established versus recent histories of ethnic diversity (UK and Portugal, respectively). It was

hypothesized that for majority group members, focusing on similarities would be associated with greater engagement, and greater health and well-being whereas focusing on differences would encourage these outcomes for minority group members.

Study 2 focused on the UK to consider how perceived (in)stability in the majority group's status further influences these relationships. Here, we expected perceived similarity and perceived stability would be associated with positive outcomes for majority group members whereas perceived differences and perceived instability would be associated with engagement, health and well-being for minority group members.

3. Account of the Research and Findings

3.1. Participants and design

Study 1A
Participants were 71 Eastern European Immigrants (Romanians, Bulgarians, 'Other'; Length of time in UK: *M*=40.50m, *SD*=37.90; Range 1-240 months; Age: *M*=29.52, *SD*=7.38; Gender: 30 men, 39 women; 2 missing) and 83 Britons (born in and lives life in UK; Age: *M*=30.84, *SD*=10.65; Gender: 31 men, 50 women; 3 missing; Race: 50 White, 33 Non-white).

As data collection was quite slow at the outset, and because we had difficulties in targeting specific ethnic groups (e.g., we initially had mostly non-White Britons for the British sample), we over-sampled our participation invitations resulting in greater than the initially projected 50 Immigrants and 50 Britons.

The design of the study was 2 Ingroup (Briton, Immigrant) x 2 Outgroup Focus (Similarity, Difference) between subjects design.

Study 1B
Participants were 55 Eastern European Immigrants (Ukranians, 'Other'; Length of time in Portugal: *M*=145.41 months, *SD*=44.015; Range 4-192 months; Age: *M*=39.82m, *SD*=10.24; Gender: 26 men, 25 women; 3 missing) and 52 Portuguese (born in and lives life in Portugal; Age: *M*=34.08, *SD*=15.47; Gender: 27 men, 25 women; Race: 49 White, 3 Non-white).

The design of the study was 2 Ingroup (Portuguese, Immigrant) x 2 Outgroup Focus (Similarity, Difference) between subjects design.

Study 2
Participants were 92 were Immigrants (Length of time in UK: *M*=30.37m, *SD*=22.78; Range 1-147 months; Age: *M*=27.76, *SD*=4.83; Gender: 24 men, 67 women; 1 Missing; Race: 72 White (e.g., Australian, Russian; 20 Non-White (e.g., Chinese, Indian)) and 98 were Britons (born in and lives life in UK; Age: *M*=39.98, *SD*=14.25; Gender: 44 men, 54 women; Race: 88 White, 9 Non-white, 1 Missing).

The design of the study was 2 Ingroup (Briton, Immigrant) x 2 Outgroup Focus (Similarity, Difference) x 2 Status Stability (Unstable, Stable) between subjects design.

3.2. Materials, Measures and Procedure

Measures were sourced from the European Social Survey (ESS), existing psychological scales, or developed by the authors (*All Studies*). The article manipulation (*Study 2*) was developed by the researchers. Please refer to the Technical Report for a description of all measures and materials.

In Studies 1A and 1B, after writing about their general views on immigration,

participants were randomly assigned to think about and list up to five similarities (1A: n_{Maj}=45, n_{Min}=33; 1B: n_{Maj}=25, n_{Min}=27) or up to five differences (1A: n_{Maj}=36, n_{Min}=36; 1B: n_{Maj}=27, n_{Min}=28) between themselves and the outgroup. A single item then assessed perceived similarity/difference (bipolar item).

In Study 2, after listing up to three ethnic groups that came to mind when thinking about immigration, participants wrote about their general views on immigration before being randomly assigned to think about and list up to five similarities (n_{Maj}=49, n_{Min}=45) or up to five differences (n_{Maj}=49, n_{Min}=47) between themselves and the outgroup. A single item then assessed perceived similarity/difference (bipolar item). Participants then read an article that manipulated the status of Britons as a result of immigration by arguing either that native Britons lose out, with an economic case to be made against immigration (status unstable; n_{Maj}=47, n_{Min}=46) or native Britons benefit, with no economic case to be made against immigration (status stable; n_{Maj}=51, n_{Min}=46). A single item then assessed perceived stability.

After these manipulations, participants in all studies rated their perceptions of immigration (various measures, see Appendix), identification (Britons (Portuguese), Immigrants), self-other overlap (Britons (Portuguese), Immigrants), community engagement (e.g., sense of community, connection with the community, number of community activities currently involved in, give time/money to volunteer or charity organisations (*Studies 1A and 1B*), number of organisations donated money to (*Study 2*)), health and well-being (i.e., happiness, life satisfaction, future success, perceived control, perceived stress, perceived physical health, perceived mental health) and demographic information. Participants then received a written debriefing and were compensated 10GBP.

3.3. Data Analysis Overview

Overall, we did not find support for the manipulations of similarity (*All Studies*) and stability (*Study 2*). As such we focused on ratings of perceived similarity and perceived stability as continuous predictors in the reported analyses.

Some participants did not respond to all measures (e.g., perceived similarity, perceived stability, outcomes). As participants were not excluded due to missing data, reported analyses show fluctuations in the degrees of freedom (*df*s) for different outcomes because of these variations in response patterns.

Studies 1A and 1B

Perceptions of Immigration

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to examine whether Perceived Similarity would predict views on immigration. Data were analysed separately for Britons (Portuguese) and Immigrants given the different scales used for each group [Britons (Portuguese) responded to single items assessing their support for immigration, perceptions of immigration as a threat, and evaluations of the impact of immigration on society. Immigrants responded to the Demands of Immigration scale and the Vancouver Index of Acculturation]. For Britons (Portuguese), age and political orientation were mean centred and entered into Step 1 along with gender, which was effect coded (-1= Male, 1=Female), and race, which was effect coded (-1=Non-White, 1=White) as control variables. Perceived similarity was mean-centred and entered into Step 2 as a predictor. For Immigrants, age and political orientation were mean centred and entered into Step 1 along with gender, which was effect coded (-1= Male, 1=Female), as control variables. Perceived similarity was mean-centred and entered into Step 2 as a predictor.

Involvement in community activities

Hierarchical logistic regression was used to examine whether Participant's Ingroup and Perceived Similarity would predict the number of community activities participants were currently involved in. Mean-centred age, mean-centred political orientation, effect-coded gender (-1= Male, 1=Female) and effect-coded race (-1=Non-White, 1=White) were entered into Step 1. Effect-coded ingroup coded (-1=Immigrants, 1=Britons (Portuguese) and mean-centred perceived similarity were entered into Step 2. The ingroup by perceived similarity interaction term was entered into Step 3. Involvement in community activities was coded as 0=none and 1=at least one.

All other measures

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to examine whether Participant's Ingroup and Perceived Similarity would predict identification, community engagement, and health and well-being outcomes. Age and political orientation were mean-centred and entered into Step 1 along with gender, which was effect coded (-1= Male, 1=Female), and race, which was effect coded (-1=Non-White, 1=White) as control variables. Perceived similarity was mean-centred and entered into Step 2 along with Participant's Ingroup, which was effect-coded (-1=Immigrants, 1=Britons (Portuguese)). The two predictors were multiplied to compute the two-way interaction term that was entered into Step 3. These analyses were conducted on all other measures. Interactions were probed following Dawson (n.d.).

Study 2
All measures

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to examine whether perceived similarity and perceived stability would predict perceptions of immigration, identification, community engagement, health and well-being outcomes. Age, and political orientation were mean centred and entered into Step 1 along with gender that was effect coded (-1= Male, 1=Female) and race which was effect coded (-1=Non-white, 1=White) as control variables. Perceived similarity and perceived stability were mean-centred and entered into Step 2 along with Ingroup, which was effect-coded (-1=Immigrants, 1=Britons). The three predictors were multiplied to compute two-way interaction terms that were entered into Step 3 and a three-way interaction term that was entered into Step 4. These analyses were conducted on all measures. Interactions were probed following Dawson (n.d.).

3.4. Summary and Interpretation of Findings

3.4.1 Established versus Recent Immigration (Studies 1A and 1B)

Evaluations and Perceptions of Immigration

Across both cultures, increases in perceived similarity with the outgroup were associated with evaluations and perceptions of immigration. However these relationships appeared to be more pronounced in the United Kingdom where, for Britons, perceived similarity with Immigrants was associated with more positive perceptions of immigration and immigrants (support for immigration, immigrants good for Britain's economy, immigrants make Britain a better place to live, immigrants enrich cultural life). For Portuguese, perceived similarity with Immigrants was only associated with increases in perceptions that immigration was good for Portugal's economy. For Immigrants in both cultures, increases in perceived similarity with the outgroup were associated with increases in perceptions that integrating with the host culture was important. Additionally, for Immigrants in Portugal,

increases in perceived similarity were associated with increases in perceptions that maintaining one's cultural heritage was important.

Interpretation: When there is an established history of immigration, the host culture may be more likely to perceive the benefits of immigration as perceptions of similarity with immigrants increases. Irrespective of the history of immigration, Immigrants may be more likely to perceive integration with the host culture as important as perceptions of similarity with the host culture increases.

Identification and overlap
Across both cultures, the host culture was associated with more identification with members of the host culture. In the United Kingdom, increases in perceived similarity with the outgroup were associated with increases in identification with Immigrants and with increases in perceptions of self-Immigrant overlap. Critically, the ingroup by perceived similarity interaction indicated that for Britons only, increases in perceived similarity with Immigrants were associated with increases in identification with Immigrants. In Portugal, the ingroup by perceived similarity interaction indicated that for Immigrants specifically, increases in perceived similarity were associated with increases in identification with Portuguese

Interpretation: Irrespective of the history of immigration, host cultures were more likely to identify with their members. However, in a country with established immigration, the host culture is more likely to identify with immigrants as perceived similarity to immigrants increases. In a country with recent immigration, immigrants are more likely to identify with the host culture as perceived similarity increases.

Community Engagement
Across both cultures we also found that increases in perceived similarity were associated with evaluations of community engagement (community engagement important, sense of community, connected to community). In the UK we also found that Immigrants were more likely to be *involved in at least one community activity* as perceived similarity with Britons increased. In Portugal, Immigrants were associated with increases in the perceived importance of all residents engaging in the community as perceived similarity increased.

Interpretation: Irrespective of the history of immigration, the more the Ingroup perceived themselves as similar to the outgroup, the more likely they were to perceive community engagement as important and to feel a sense of community. In the UK, recent immigrants are more likely to be involved in at least one community activity as their perceived similarity with Britons increases.

Health and Well-being
In the United Kingdom we found that Immigrants were associated with decreases in perceived stress, increases in perceptions of future success and increases in perceptions of mental health relative to native Britons. In Portugal, for Portuguese, increases in perceived similarity with Immigrants was associated with decreases in happiness. For Immigrants increases in perceived similarity were associated with increases happiness and increases in perceived control.

Interpretation: In a country with established immigration, recent immigrants are more likely to report being well-adjusted and to perceive future success relative to the host culture. In a country with recent immigration, long-term immigrants perceive more happiness and control in their lives as perceived similarity to the host culture increases.

Caveats: The manipulation of similarity/differences did not work as anticipated; Differences in the patterns observed across cultures for Immigrants may reflect the amount of time that the Immigrant groups had been living in the host culture (under 4 years for UK immigrants (recent), over 12 years for Portuguese immigrants (long-term)) rather than histories of immigration. It may also reflect the countries of origin of Immigrants in each sample (Romanians/Bulgarians in the UK; Ukrainians in Portugal).

3.4.2 Stable versus Unstable Status

Perceptions and evaluations of immigration
Ingroup was a significant predictor of the evaluations of immigration. Britons were associated with decreased perceptions that immigration was good for the UK economy relative to Immigrants.

Perceived similarity and perceived stability were both significant predictors of perceptions and evaluations of immigration. As perceptions of similarity to the outgroup increased, support for immigration increased, perceptions that immigration was a threat decreased, and with evaluations that immigration was good for the UK economy, that immigrants have made the UK a better place to live, and that UK cultural life has been enriched by immigrants. The same pattern was found for increases in perceived stability.

There was an Ingroup by Perceived Stability interaction on the evaluation of immigration as good for the UK economy. For Britons, and for Immigrants, increases in perceptions that immigration was good for the UK were associated with increases in perceptions of stability.

There was an Ingroup by Perceived Similarity by Perceived Stability interaction on perceptions and evaluations of immigration: At low perceived stability, Immigrants were associated with increases in perceptions of immigration as a threat, and decreases in perceptions that immigration was good for the UK economy, as perceived similarity to Britons increased. This differed from Britons who, at low perceived stability, were associated with decreases in perceptions of immigration as a threat, increases in perceptions that immigration was good for the UK economy, increases in perceptions that immigrants have made the UK a better place to live, and increases in perceptions that UK cultural life has been enriched by immigrants as perceived similarity to the outgroup (i.e., Immigrants) increased.

Interpretation: Perceived stability matters. When society is seen as less stable for Britons because of immigration, perceived similarity has different implications for Britons and Immigrants. For Britons, seeing oneself as similar to immigrants is associated with more positive evaluations of immigrants and immigration. For Immigrants, seeing oneself as different Britons is associated with more positive evaluations of immigrants and immigration.

Identification and overlap
Evaluations of Britons. Ingroup was a significant predictor of identification and overlap, with Britons associated with increased identification with Britons and with increases in self-Briton overlap relative to Immigrants. There were also significant Ingroup by Perceived Stability interactions for identification and overlap. For Immigrants, increases in perceived similarity with Britons was associated with increases in identification with Britons

and perceptions of self-Briton overlap. For Britons perceived similarity did not influence identification or overlap.

Evaluations of Immigrants. Ingroup was a significant predictor of identification and overlap, with Britons associated with decreased identification with Immigrants and with decreases in perceptions of self-Immigrant overlap relative to Immigrants. Perceived similarity was also a significant predictor of identification and overlap. Increases in perceived similarity were associated with increases in identification with Immigrants and with increases in perceptions of self-Immigrant overlap. Perceived stability was also a significant predictor of identification and overlap. Increases in perceived stability were associated with increases in identification with Immigrants and with increases in perceptions of self-Immigrant overlap.

Interpretation: Britons and Immigrants were more likely to identify with their ingroup members, respectively. For Immigrants, perceiving oneself as similar to Britons was associated with more identification with Britons and more self-Briton overlap. Irrespective of Ingroup, perceiving oneself as similar to the outgroup and perceptions that life for Britons was more stable because of immigration, was associated with more identification with Immigrants.

Community Engagement

Overall perceived similarity was a significant predictor. Increases in perceived similarity were associated with increases in the perceived sense of community in one's neighbourhood and with increases in the perceived connection to the community. Perceived stability was also a significant predictor. As perceptions that immigration was associated with stability in life for Briton increased, feeling connected to the neighbourhood community increased. There was a perceived similarity by perceived stability interaction on involvement in community activities and/or organizations: At high perceived stability, increases in perceived similarity were associated with decreases in the number of activities/organizations with which one was involved.

Interpretation: Irrespective of Ingroup, perceiving oneself as similar to the outgroup, and perceptions that life for Britons was more stable because of immigration, were associated with increases in community engagement.

Health and Well-being

Perceived similarity was a significant predictor of happiness. As perceived similarity with the outgroup increased, perceptions of happiness increased. There was an Ingroup by Perceived Stability interaction on perceived control. For Britons perceived control increased as perceived stability increased. For Immigrants perceived control decreased as perceived stability increased. Ingroup was a significant predictor of future success. Immigrants were associated with increases in perceptions of future success.

Interpretation: Immigrants were more likely to perceive future success as possible relative to Britons. Irrespective of Ingroup, perceiving oneself as similar to the outgroup was associated with more happiness, and perceptions that immigration made life for Britons more stable was associated with more perceived control for Britons but less perceived control for Immigrants.

Caveats: The manipulation of similarity/differences did not work as anticipated; The manipulation of instability/stability did not work as anticipated.

4. Implications and Future Directions

4.1 Implications

In light of the current rhetoric surrounding immigration and border controls in the UK specifically, and Europe more generally, the present research can impact society in at least two ways. First, this work suggests that majorities (Hosts) in particular may respond favourably to models emphasizing similarity, supporting the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Dovidio et al., 2005). This suggests that framing discussions on immigration in terms of similarities might help members of the host society to express more support for, and feel less threatened by, immigration. It may also help hosts to see the benefits of immigration for their society and promote feelings of community for hosts and immigrants.

Second, the findings suggest that whether hosts and immigrants respond favourably to messages emphasizing similarities depends on several factors. For hosts, whether immigration is established in society, and is perceived as influencing the stability of their position in society might influence outcomes. For immigrants, the length of time lived in the host country, and whether one is White or non-White might influence outcomes. This has implications what should be considered by researchers, policy makers and governments in order to understand and manage the host society's responses to immigration as well as immigrants' integration into communities. It suggests that these individuals should take a closer look at both individual and structural factors to understand which messages might help to promote benefits for hosts and immigrants within ethnically diverse societies.

4.2 Future Directions

Given that the manipulations of similarity/difference and instability/stability did not work as anticipated, future research should focus on the development of new manipulations to examine whether shifting majorities' and minorities' focus on similarities versus differences with the outgroup influence outcomes. In particular, it could be useful to identify the aspects of similarity that matter (e.g., values), the aspects of difference that matter (e.g., appreciation of culture) and the aspects of stability that matter (e.g., economic versus social threat). Furthermore, as most of our indicators of health and well-being were not strongly associated the indicators, alternative measures warrant further scrutiny in future research (e.g., General Health Questionnaire).

The present findings will be used in the development of future research ideas. It is anticipated that these findings will inform our understanding of the ways we can design and improve initiatives and/or programmes with the aims of reducing discrimination and promoting health and well-being in ethnically diverse societies. The relationships identified in the present research can also be examined in organisational contexts. Here, perceptions of similarity and stability between native-born and migrant workers may not only impact views about one's self and others but also performance and productivity.

Key References

Berry, J. W., Phinney, J., Sam, D., & Vedder, P. (2006). Immigrant youth: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology, 55*, 303-332.

Brown, R., & Hewstone, M. (2005). An integrative theory of intergroup contact. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 37*, 255–343.

Dawson, J. F. (n.d.). Interpreting interaction effect: Excel calculation sheets. Retrieved online: www.jeremydawson.co.uk/slopes.htm.

Dovidio, J., Gaertner, S., Hodson, G., Houlette, M., & Johnson, K. (2005). Social inclusion and exclusion: Recategorization and the perception of intergroup boundaries. In *The social psychology of inclusion and exclusion* (pp. 245 – 264). Psychology Press.

5. Dissemination and Development Activities

Completed

Conference Presentation

Jones, J. M. & Ramos, M. R. (2015, June). Health, well-being and engagement within ethnically diverse societies. Poster presented at the EASP Small groups meeting on the Dynamics of intergroup relations, Budapest, Hungary.

In Progress

A. Manuscript in preparation

Jones, J. M., & Ramos, M. R. *Promoting engagement, health and well-being in the context of immigration: Hosts and immigrants perspectives in the United Kingdom.*

B. Press

Public Relations Office; Queen Mary University of London
Meeting with Neha Okhandiar, Deputy Head of Public Relations (October 2015) – Have discussed this project and was encouraged to contact the press office with details once the related article has been accepted for publication.

C. Developing impact

1. Contributing a Book Chapter based on this work for Niven, K., Lewis, S & Kagan, C. (Eds.) *Social Impact: Making a Difference with Psychology* (To be published, January 2017).

2. Meeting - Michelle Lawrence, Director, LinkUP UK (http://greatbritishcommunity.org/) (November 2015). We are discussing whether this research can be used to inform the refinement of a new community intervention (i.e., Family Trees) to promote harmony within ethnically diverse communities in the United Kingdom.

D. Developing future research

These findings have been discussed with colleagues and will inform future research on the individual and social implications of labeling of migrants (i.e., as expatriates versus immigrants).