

A way forward? The impact of interculturalism on intergroup relations in culturally diverse nations

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Abstract

Various diversity ideologies including assimilation, colorblindness, and multiculturalism have been promoted with mixed results about their costs and benefits. In the current research, we consider the impact of a new diversity ideology, interculturalism, discussed and debated by political philosophers and policy-makers as the “way forward.” Across three experiments ($N = 1230$) in two ethnically diverse nations, we examined the causal impact of promoting interculturalism on intergroup relations. Data revealed that interculturalism reduced outgroup prejudice, increased willingness to engage in intergroup contact, improved implicit attitudes, and increased behavioral trust and cooperation relative to controls. Reductions in essentialist beliefs partially mediated the impact of interculturalism, highlighting one psychological mechanism underlying the benefits of interculturalism. However, interculturalism was found to be no better than multiculturalism in its impact on intergroup relations in two of three experiments. Collectively, these studies suggest that interculturalism may be a promising new diversity strategy for improving intergroup relations.

Keywords

diversity, interculturalism, intergroup relations, intergroup trust, multiculturalism, prejudice

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During the last decades, the concept of interculturalism has increasingly been used in the philosophical, political, and public debates on diversity issues. Especially as an answer to the so-called failures of multiculturalism, it gets more and more positive attention. (Loobuyck, 2016, p. 225)

For several decades, social scientists have examined how various inter-ethnic diversity

ideologies impact on intergroup relations. For example, extant research has demonstrated that

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assimilationist ideologies promote anti-minority prejudice (for meta-analysis, see Whitley & Webster, 2019), while colorblindness has mixed effects for intergroup relations (e.g., Plaut et al., 2018; Whitley & Webster, 2019). Instead, social scientists often promote an ideology of multiculturalism which argues for the recognition and celebration of cultural differences. Empirical research demonstrates that multiculturalism can reduce both implicit and explicit outgroup prejudice (see Whitley & Webster, 2019, meta-analysis; also see Lai et al., 2014) and promote positive intergroup interactions (Vorauer et al., 2009). However, multiculturalism can also lead majority group members to feel excluded (Plaut et al., 2011) and threatened (Ginges & Cairns, 2000; Morrison et al., 2010), lead to reified and essentialized group thinking (Wilton et al., 2019; Wolsko et al., 2000), and increase prejudice when concretely construed (Mahfud et al., 2018; Rios & Wynn, 2016; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). Recently, multiculturalism was also shown to increase warmth toward a conservative politician like Donald Trump when majority group members were simultaneously reminded of upcoming changes in the demographic composition of the nation—this effect was driven by increases in perceived threats to the ingroup's status (Osborn, Sosa, & Rios, 2019). More broadly, public support for multiculturalism has generally decreased in many western nations and prominent politicians have claimed that multiculturalism has “utterly failed” and led to fragmented societies (Verkuyten, 2014).

As indicated by the quote starting this article, many policy-makers and organizations, especially in Europe, have come to the conclusion that multiculturalism is no longer suitable and needs to be replaced by a new approach called interculturalism. Governmental bodies and international organizations including UNESCO (2009), the Council of Europe (2008), and local government bodies (Cantle, 2016) have begun to promote an ideology of interculturalism as the “way forward” for culturally diverse nations to manage diversity. Interculturalism is similar to multiculturalism in that it shares the view that cultural diversity is an

asset, and they both promote fair and equitable treatment of individuals through the inclusion of cultural difference, while sharing distaste for assimilation to the dominant group (Meer et al., 2016). However, interculturalism and multiculturalism differ in the extent to which they explicitly (a) emphasize intergroup dialogue, contact, and communication, (b) take a more dynamic (rather than static) culturalist view of groups, and (c) emphasize commonalities and shared unity.

While political philosophers have discussed and debated the nature and implications of these two ideologies in much detail (for a review, see Meer et al., 2016), and empirical data from national samples in two culturally diverse nations demonstrate the distinctiveness of these two ideologies (Verkuyten et al., 2020), limited research has examined the impact of promoting interculturalism for intergroup relations. Recently, Verkuyten and Yogeeswaran (2020) examined the moderating role of political orientation in a national sample of Dutch majority group members to better understand the effects of interculturalism. Results revealed that interculturalism significantly improved political liberals' acceptance of minority groups, but not among political conservatives. In the current research, we examine the costs and benefits of promoting interculturalism for implicit and explicit attitudes, willingness to engage in intergroup contact, and behavioral trust and cooperation in the USA and New Zealand. We contrast the effects of interculturalism on the above outcomes against multiculturalism, a popular diversity ideology within the literature. Additionally, we begin to explore what psychological factors mediate the effects of interculturalism on intergroup relations by examining the roles of essentialist beliefs, distinctiveness threat, and category indispensability.

Interculturalism and its Components

Conceptually, multiculturalism and interculturalism are similar in that both emphasize the importance of recognizing cultural identities and valuing cultural diversity (Cantle, 2012; Meer et al., 2016;

Morris et al., 2015). However, they differ in that multiculturalism possesses a more static culturalist view where each ethnic community is seen as being deeply molded by their heritage culture and therefore recognition and affirmation of separate cultural traditions are important for promoting positive intergroup relations. By contrast, interculturalism promotes a more dynamic cultural view where people are believed to engage in both their heritage culture and incorporate multiple cultural influences into their sense of self (Morris et al., 2015). Interculturalism, therefore, argues that it is important to recognize cultural change, promote intergroup dialogue, and allow for the creation of new “mixed” forms of identity and “oneness” while affirming these multifaceted forms of group identity (Cantle, 2012; Powell & Sze, 2004).

The distinction between interculturalism and multiculturalism is similar to the difference between multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research. Whereas multidisciplinary research draws on insights from different disciplines and involves the examination of a problem from multiple angles using different disciplinary perspectives that remain independent, interdisciplinary research synthesizes connections between different disciplines thereby creating its own theoretical, conceptual, and methodological identity (Choi & Pak, 2006; van den Besselaar & Heimeriks, 2001). In a similar fashion, multiculturalism argues for the recognition and celebration of separate group differences, while interculturalism argues for active synthesis of multiple groups’ perspectives to assist in the creation of new hybrid identities.

The emphasis on interactions and openness to change has similarities with polyculturalism, which has been found to be associated with more positive outgroup attitudes toward different groups and in different contexts (see Rosenthal & Levy, 2013). Polyculturalism focuses on how racial and ethnic groups have influenced each other throughout history and into the present, and similar to interculturalism takes a less static view of culture that is commonly found in multicultural approaches (Morris et al., 2015). Yet polyculturalism does not contain the prescriptive normative expectations

(“ought”) involved in interculturalism. The recognition that cultures (e.g., scientific disciplines) have influenced each other in the past and continue to do so does not have to imply the aim of intercultural dialogue and synthesis (i.e., interdisciplinarity). Polyculturalism is measured in terms of the belief in the (past) reality of cultural connections and mutual cultural influences using a neutral set of items about an understanding of cultures in general (Bernardo et al., 2013; Rosenthal & Levy, 2012; Rosenthal et al., 2015), whereas interculturalism is measured in terms of the commitment to intergroup dialogue and exchange, the synthesis of multiple groups to create new “mixed” forms of doing things, and promoting national unity and commonalities against the backdrop of differences (Verkuyten et al., 2020).

Interculturalism also differs from an assimilationist ideology that argues for minority groups to shed aspects of their cultural identity to become like the majority. In fact, data from a national sample of White Americans revealed that endorsement of interculturalism is negatively correlated with endorsement of assimilation, but positively correlated with endorsement of multiculturalism. Moreover, interculturalism predicts positive intergroup outcomes including reduced outgroup prejudice, increased willingness for intergroup contact, lower social dominance orientation, reduced deprovincialization, reduced essentialism, and reduced distinctiveness threat over and above the benefits of multiculturalism (Verkuyten et al., 2020).

Social Psychological Foundations of Interculturalism

Interculturalism may have positive effects for intergroup relations because its three components correspond to several social psychological foundations known to have benefits for intergroup relations. In the sections below, we unpack these central themes.

Promotion of intergroup dialogue and mutual understanding. One key focus of interculturalism is the emphasis on promoting intergroup dialogue and

facilitating reciprocal understanding between members of different ethnic groups (Meer et al., 2016). The benefits of interculturalism are supported by extant research on intergroup contact and cooperation (Cantle, 2016; Loobuyck, 2016), which demonstrates that positive intergroup contact decreases prejudice between majority and minority groups by reducing intergroup anxiety, increasing perspective-taking, and promoting mutual understanding between groups (for reviews, see Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; for meta-analysis, see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). While interculturalism does not directly involve positive contact and active cooperation, it is based on the *belief* that dialogue and interaction between groups is essential to developing positive intergroup relations and therefore emphasizes the need for doing so in culturally diverse nations.

Acceptance of new hybrid identities. Another key component of interculturalism is its promotion of new mixed forms of cultural identity that includes elements of multiple cultures. Unlike multiculturalism that tends to maintain a more static view of cultural identity where “pure” forms of identity are protected (Cantle, 2016), interculturalism recognizes cultural identity as dynamic and embraces plural identities in the form of dual identifiers, hybrid identities, bicultural individuals, and mixed races (Booth, 2003; Powell & Sze, 2004). From a social psychological perspective, this focus may be beneficial for intergroup relations because higher levels of social identity complexity is associated with increased acceptance of outgroups and reduced intergroup bias (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Miller et al., 2009; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Schmid et al., 2009; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). In fact, low social identity complexity increases social distancing from outgroups by increasing distinctions between the ingroup and outgroup through the lack of cross-cutting categories (Crisp & Hewstone, 2006). Additionally, interculturalism with its promotion of new hybrid identities may decrease essentialist beliefs by increasing the perception that ethnic group boundaries are often blurred and identity processes are dynamic in

giving rise to new hybrid identities. In six Asian countries it was found that the endorsement of multiculturalism was associated with stronger essentialist beliefs, whereas polyculturalism was associated with lower essentialist thinking (Bernardo et al., 2016). Furthermore, whereas multiculturalism has been found to causally increase essentialist thinking (Wilton et al., 2019), interculturalism may have the opposite effect of decreasing essentialist beliefs through its emphasis on cultural fusion and the dynamic nature of cultural identity which sees the development of multiple cultural identities as critical for positive intergroup relations in culturally diverse nations.

Focus on unity and commonality. Interculturalism also emphasizes the creation of a common understanding across cultural differences (Rattansi, 2011; Taylor, 2012). As multiculturalism is argued to place much emphasis on differences between groups, it can encourage fragmentation and disunity by promoting parallel societies (Goodhart, 2013). Instead, interculturalism argues for greater emphasis on what is shared between groups and sees subgroup cultural differences within the framework of a larger superordinate national identity. Extant research on the dual-identity model (Dovidio et al., 2009) and the mutual intergroup differentiation model (Brown & Hewstone, 2005) demonstrate that a focus on subgroup differences subsumed under a shared superordinate identity can help improve intergroup relations (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; González & Brown, 2003; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). A dual-identity conception of multiculturalism (Dovidio et al., 2009) has conceptual overlap with the focus on unity and commonality in interculturalism. However, interculturalism goes beyond a passive recognition of subordinate ethnic and superordinate national identities, and instead promotes the active creation of common values, national belonging, and unity alongside valued ethnic or cultural differences (e.g., Cantle, 2016). Keeping the superordinate group focal helps reduce the risk of ingroup projection (Wenzel et al., 2007), while encouraging ethnic

groups to focus on what unites them alongside recognizing their differences allows both majority and minority groups to feel a sense of shared fate and recognize shared superordinate goals (Sherif, 1961). In doing so, interculturalism may increase category indispensability (Ng-Tseung Wong & Verkuyten, 2010; Verkuyten et al., 2014) or the extent to which cultural outgroups are seen as defining parts of the whole national identity. Interculturalism with its specific emphasis on unity against the backdrop of cultural differences would be especially capable of increasing category indispensability of ethnic outgroups by highlighting how varying ethnic groups collectively form the nation.

Current Research

In the present work, we examine the consequences of promoting interculturalism on prejudicial attitudes toward ethnic outgroups (Experiments 1–3), willingness to engage in intergroup contact (Experiments 1–3), essentialist beliefs (Experiment 2), perceived threat (Experiment 2), category indispensability (Experiment 2), and behavioral trust and cooperation (Experiment 3). We also contrast the impact of promoting multiculturalism to test whether interculturalism works equally well or even better than multiculturalism in promoting positive intergroup outcomes. The present work is conducted in two culturally diverse nations with different histories of immigration to establish whether interculturalism has uniformly positive benefits regardless of national context. To do so, we conducted our research in the USA and New Zealand since diversity ideologies can sometimes have different meanings across national contexts (e.g., colorblindness; see Guimond et al., 2014), while at other times possessing overlapping meanings (e.g., multiculturalism). Both nations have experienced an unprecedented increase in the ethnic diversity of their populace over the last few decades and there has been significant debate in both nations on how to best manage this growing diversity.

Pilot Study

In order to establish that our experimental manipulation sufficiently captured the key dimensions of interculturalism relative to multiculturalism, we conducted a pilot study to compare interculturalism and multiculturalism on several central themes. Moreover, we examined the extent to which the interculturalism and multiculturalism primes were considered appealing and persuasive.

Method

A total of 60 White American participants completed a brief pilot study on Crowdfunder (Peer et al., 2017), an online platform similar to Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Crowdfunder offers capabilities similar to MTurk, but provide access to new populations. Crowdfunder participants tend to have similar levels of education and income as those on MTurk, but its participants tend to fail checks to a greater extent than MTurk participants. However, Crowdfunder participants tend to be more naïve and have higher response rates making them a reasonable alternative for our purposes (see Peer et al., 2017). A sensitivity power analysis reveals that this sample size would detect effects of at least $f = .36$ at conventional alpha levels of .05 and at power of .80. Participants were invited to complete a 5 minute study evaluating written text and offered \$0.50 for their participation. Participants were 28 females and 32 males and had a mean age of 38.57 years ($SD = 11.26$).

Manipulation

Participants were randomly assigned to read an essay on interculturalism or multiculturalism. The multiculturalism prime was one commonly utilized in prior social psychological research (Morrison et al., 2010; Verkuyten, 2005; Vorauer et al., 2009; Wolsko et al., 2000; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). The interculturalism prime was written using the same template (e.g., the first paragraph was identical with only the words interculturalism replacing multiculturalism), but instead drew upon the writings of political

philosophers on the nature and meaning of interculturalism (see Meer et al., 2016; Meer & Modood, 2012; Taylor, 2012) and provided participants with a list of seven prescriptions made by interculturalism including the need to stimulate intercultural dialogue, develop connections between different cultures through contact and interactions, focus on developing a cohesive national identity by giving priority to what we all share alongside our cultural differences, and emphasize the importance of developing new mixed cultural forms (see Supplemental Material online for full manipulation).

Measures

Persuasiveness of essay. After reading one of the primes, participants were asked to indicate on a 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much) Likert-type scale, the extent to which they found the essay “clear,” “easy to read,” “convincing,” “made to sound important,” and “persuasive” ($\alpha = .87$).

Associated meanings. Participants were also asked to indicate on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much) the extent to which they thought the essay they just read promoted the importance of: (a) “dialogue and meaningful interactions between different ethnic communities,” (b) “openness to cultural change,” (c) “identity flexibility and being open to new and mixed ways of doing things,” (d) “creating a unified nation alongside our cultural differences,” (e) “acknowledgment of the unique contributions each group brings to the country,” (f) “respecting and supporting the maintenance of cultural differences,” (g) “practicing cultural traditions,” and (h) “valuing cultural diversity.” These items were selected as they ought to map more closely onto the interculturalism (items a–d) and multiculturalism essays (items e–g), with the last item potentially loading onto both approaches equally (item h).

Results

A maximum-likelihood exploratory factor analysis revealed a two-factor solution was most

appropriate and explained a total of 66.85% of the variance (factor 1: 38.57%; factor 2: 28.28%). All items with factor loadings $> .60$ were retained (thereby excluding only the item “valuing cultural diversity” which had factor loadings $< .52$). Factor 1 corresponded to items a, b, c, and d (all factor loadings $> .80$), while Factor 2 corresponded to items e, f, and g (all factor loadings $> .60$). These were collapsed to form two separate indexes corresponding to the interculturalism and multiculturalism components ($\alpha_s > .80$).

A one-way ANOVA revealed that participants rated the interculturalism prime ($M = 6.47$, $SD = 0.63$) as promoting the importance of dialogue, openness to change, identity flexibility, and a unified national identity (the interculturalism component) to a substantially greater extent than the multicultural prime ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.35$), $F(1, 59) = 20.14$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .26$. By contrast, participants rated the multicultural prime ($M = 6.24$, $SD = 0.83$) as promoting the practice of cultural traditions, acknowledgment of the unique contributions of each group, and supporting the maintenance of cultural differences (the multicultural component) to a substantially greater extent than the interculturalism prime ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 0.75$), $F(1, 59) = 25.89$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .31$. However, no differences were found in the extent to which multiculturalism or interculturalism promoted the importance of valuing diversity, $F < 1$, $p = .91$, $\eta^2_p < .01$. It is also worth noting that both ideologies were perceived as emphasizing pro-diversity ideals as average scores were above the mid-point across all dimensions. Similarly, no differences were found in participants’ ratings of the persuasiveness and clarity of the multiculturalism ($M = 5.63$, $SD = 1.12$) and interculturalism essays ($M = 5.76$, $SD = 0.93$), $F(1, 59) = 0.248$, $p = .62$, $\eta^2_p = .004$.

Experiment 1

Experiment 1 sought to test the causal impact of the situational salience of interculturalism on ethnic outgroup attitudes and behavioral intentions in the United States using an online sample. As one

of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world, the United States is a suitable nation to pursue this goal. Moreover, as an immigrant nation with a national motto of “*e pluribus unum*” (out of many, one), we suspected that interculturalism may have specific appeal to Americans who can often possess positive views of diversity (Drake & Poushter, 2016; Schildkraut, 2007). By contrast, multiculturalism has been shown to elicit mixed reactions with some perceiving it as threatening to their identity (e.g., Morrison et al., 2010; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014) or excluding their own group (Plaut et al., 2011). Therefore, Experiment 1 examined the causal impact of interculturalism and multiculturalism on intergroup outcomes.

Method

Participants. In order to account for potential publication bias in the literature, we wanted enough power to detect a smaller effect size. Therefore, we aimed to have approximately 150 participants per condition as this provides 80% power to detect a small to medium effect size ($f = .15$). A total of 533 White American participants (269 female, 264 male) were recruited from Crowdflower with the expectation that 10–20% would dropout or fail a basic manipulation check. However, only 21 were removed from analyses after failing a basic manipulation check (i.e., a multiple choice question asking participants about the name of the strategy they read about earlier with the options assimilation, colorblindness, multiculturalism/interculturalism to select from). This left a final sample of 512 White American participants (262 female, 250 male), all of whom were either U.S. citizens or permanent residents with a mean age of 38.11 years ($SD = 13.25$). Some of these participants failed to complete all measures, but were retained in the analyses. A sensitivity power analysis reveals that this sample size would detect effects of at least $f = .14$ at conventional alpha levels of .05 and at power of .80.

Manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to the interculturalism, multiculturalism, or control conditions. In the interculturalism and

multiculturalism conditions, participants read the essay used in the pilot about interculturalism/multiculturalism as the strategy prescribed by social scientists as the means of achieving harmonious interethnic relations in the United States, similar to most experimental work on diversity ideologies (e.g., Ng-Tseung Wong & Verkuyten, 2010; Vorauer et al., 2009; Wolsko et al., 2000; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). In the control condition, participants were provided with no information and directly completed the dependent measures.

Measures

Outgroup attitudes. Participants completed a series of feeling thermometer ranging from 0 (very cold/unfavorable) to 100 (very warm/favorable) to indicate their attitudes toward Black/African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic/Latinx Americans. These evaluations were collapsed to a single index of outgroup attitudes (3 items; $\alpha = .89$).

Willingness to engage in intergroup contact. Participants also completed a series of Likert-scale items, where 1 = Not at all willing, 7 = Extremely willing, assessing the extent to which participants were willing to have contact with Black/African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic/Latinx Americans using items adapted from previous work (Esses & Dovidio, 2002; Tropp & Bianchi, 2006; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). Specifically, participants indicated the extent to which they would be willing to have an outgroup member as a close friend, accept an outgroup member as a boss at one's work, have an outgroup member marry one's son or daughter, and have an outgroup member visit their home (4 items; all α s $> .79$). These items were collapsed into a single index of willingness to engage in intergroup contact after establishing that they had high internal consistency (12 items; $\alpha = .93$).

Demographics. Participants completed a series of demographic questions about their age, gender, race/ethnicity, nationality, and political orientation (Pratto et al., 1994).

Table 1. Mean (*SD*) scores on dependent variables in Experiments 1–3.

Experiment	Condition	Dependent measures		Negative attitudes (Implicit)	Intergroup behavioral trust and cooperation
		Positive outgroup attitudes (Explicit)	Willingness to engage in intergroup contact		
Experiment 1 (USA) (Crowdflower)	Interculturalism	72.81 (18.61)	5.93 (1.08)		
	Multiculturalism	67.87 (18.70)	5.68 (1.06)		
	Control	63.65 (16.94)	5.47 (1.09)		
Experiment 2 (USA) (Turk Prime)	Interculturalism	5.46 (1.24)	6.39 (0.97)		
	Multiculturalism	5.40 (1.23)	6.34 (1.05)		
	Control	4.98 (1.27)	6.01 (1.38)		
Experiment 3 (New Zealand) (Lab Study)	Interculturalism	5.25 (1.44)	6.24 (1.00)	0.36 (0.53)	–0.18 (0.79)
	Multiculturalism	5.31 (1.45)	6.05 (1.18)	0.39 (0.38)	–0.01 (0.73)
	Control	4.57 (1.50)	5.30 (1.58)	0.61 (0.49)	0.71 (1.14)

Additional measures. At the start of the study, we also measured participants' national, ethnic, gender, and religious group identity using single item measures of social identification (Postmes et al., 2013). However, we did not have a priori predictions about these variables. Similarly, we also measured self-reported perceptions of national inclusion of ethnic minorities at the end of the study by asking participants to indicate the extent to which they thought that members of various groups (i.e., Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanic American, White/European American, and Native American) who were born and raised in the United States were truly American (Devos & Banaji, 2005). However, these were included on an exploratory basis and are therefore reported only in the Supplemental Materials. All measures, manipulations, and participant exclusions are, therefore, reported.

Procedure. Participants were recruited online and after offering consent to participate, they completed the demographic questionnaire and measures of social identification before being randomly assigned to interculturalism, multiculturalism, or control conditions. Participants then completed the dependent measures before being fully debriefed, thanked, and paid for their participation.

Results

Outgroup attitudes. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of diversity ideology on outgroup attitudes, $F(2, 503) = 10.70, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ (see Table 1). Planned contrasts showed that participants in the interculturalism condition ($M = 72.80; SD = 18.61$) had significantly more positive attitudes toward ethnic outgroups than those in the control condition ($M = 63.65; SD = 16.94$), $t(503) = 4.62, p < .001, d = 0.51$, and also compared to participants in the multiculturalism condition ($M = 67.87; SD = 18.70$), $t(503) = 2.50, p = .01, d = 0.26$. Planned contrasts revealed that participants primed with multiculturalism ($M = 67.87; SD = 18.70$) showed significantly more positive outgroup attitudes relative to those in the control condition ($M = 63.65; SD = 16.94$), $t(503) = -2.16, p = .03, d = 0.24$.

Willingness to engage in intergroup contact. A similar one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of the diversity ideology on willingness to engage in intergroup contact, $F(2, 509) = 7.89, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ (see Table 1). Planned contrasts revealed that participants in the interculturalism condition ($M = 5.93; SD = 1.08$) showed significantly more willingness for intergroup contact with ethnic outgroups than those in the control

condition ($M = 5.47$; $SD = 1.09$), $t(509) = 3.97$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.42$, and those in the multiculturalism condition ($M = 5.68$; $SD = 1.06$), $t(509) = 2.15$, $p = .03$, $d = 0.23$. Participants primed with multiculturalism ($M = 5.68$; $SD = 1.06$) showed only marginal increases in their willingness for intergroup contact relative to those in the control condition ($M = 5.47$; $SD = 1.09$), $t(509) = -1.83$, $p = .07$, $d = 0.20$.

Collectively, Experiment 1 revealed that interculturalism significantly improved White Americans' attitudes and behavioral intentions toward ethnic outgroups in the USA relative to a no-information control, and also relative to multiculturalism.

Experiment 2

Experiment 2 sought to replicate and extend earlier findings by exploring potential mediators driving the benefits of interculturalism found in Experiment 1. Specifically, we tested the role of three psychological factors that may potentially underlie the effects of interculturalism and multiculturalism on outgroup prejudice and willingness for intergroup contact including: (a) essentialist beliefs, (b) distinctiveness threat, and (c) category indispensability. Previous research has found that multiculturalism increases essentialist beliefs (Wilton et al., 2019), while we predicted that interculturalism may decrease them by highlighting that ethnic group boundaries are often blurred and identity processes are dynamic and give rise to new hybrid identities (Bernardo et al., 2016). Additionally, we assessed the extent to which the majority group perceives cultural diversity as threatening ingroup distinctiveness. While previous research has revealed that multiculturalism can be perceived as threatening to ingroup identity under some conditions (Morrison et al., 2010; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014), interculturalism may be especially threatening to ingroup distinctiveness by permitting new border-crossing identities and dialogue across group lines. However, it is also possible that interculturalism with its emphasis on dialogue, cooperation, and unity may lead ethnic outgroups to be seen as less threatening.

And finally, we assessed category indispensability (Ng-Tseung Wong & Verkuyten, 2010; Verkuyten et al., 2014), the extent to which cultural outgroups are seen as defining parts of the whole national identity. Both multiculturalism and interculturalism have the potential for increasing perceptions of category indispensability by highlighting how varying ethnic groups together form the nation. However, we predicted that interculturalism with its specific emphasis on unity against the backdrop of cultural differences would be especially capable of increasing category indispensability of ethnic outgroups. Taken together and following recent recommendations (Yzerbyt et al., 2018), Experiment 2, tested the effects of interculturalism and multiculturalism on essentialism, distinctiveness threat, and category indispensability, before testing whether these factors mediate the impact of interculturalism on outgroup prejudice and willingness to engage in intergroup contact.

Method

Participants. A total of 445 White American adults were recruited from Turk Prime (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2017), a crowd sourcing data acquisition platform that was designed as a research platform built on Amazon's Mechanical Turk. A power analysis revealed that a sample of 432 would yield a small to medium effect size similar to Experiment 1 ($f = .15$) across 3 conditions with .80 power. As with Experiment 1, the only exclusion criteria for those who completed the study was whether participants in the two experimental conditions (Interculturalism and Multiculturalism) correctly selected the name of the diversity strategy they saw earlier in a multiple-choice question. A total of 13 participants failed to correctly indicate the name of the diversity strategy they read about earlier leaving a sample of 432 participants (230 female, 200 male, 2 gender-diverse) with a mean age of 41.96 years ($SD = 11.11$). No other exclusions applied and a registration of the data analysis is available on Open Science Framework (OSF; <https://osf.io/ye6tu>).

Manipulations. Beyond the textual prime used in Experiment 1, participants additionally watched a short video uploaded to YouTube depicting interculturalism or multiculturalism using a voice recording played over a powerpoint-style presentation of the same prime used in the earlier experiment. The video was shown to participants before the dependent measures under the guise that the study was interested in assessing the impact of various forms of media on attention and perception (i.e., providing the same content in the form of an essay versus a video with a voice-over), while the text-based manipulation used in Experiment 1 was shown to participants before the essentialism, distinctiveness threat, and category indispensability measures. Participants in the control condition simply completed all the measures of the study.

Measures

Essentialist beliefs. The 12-item essentialist-entativity scale (Roets & Van Hiel, 2011) was used to capture participants' essentialist beliefs about ethnic groups. Using 7-point Likert scales where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree, participants indicated their ratings to items such as "Membership of an ethnic group largely determines someone's identity" or "Members of an ethnic group often have much in common." These items were collapsed into a single index of essentialist beliefs after revealing high internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$).

Distinctiveness threat. A 3-item measure adapted from previous research (Schmid et al., 2009; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014) captured perceived threats to ingroup distinctiveness. Using a 7-point Likert scale, participants indicated the extent to which they (dis)agreed with statements: "I sometimes feel that my ethnic group is losing its unique identity," "Increases in ethnic diversity trouble me because they lead to the blurring of meaningful group boundaries," and "Contact with people of other ethnic groups undermines our distinctiveness" ($\alpha = .86$).

Category indispensability. Two items adapted from previous research (Verkuyten et al., 2014)

assessed the perceived category indispensability of diverse ethnic groups in the USA. These items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree and included: "Diverse ethnic groups form an indispensable part of the USA" and "The USA without diverse ethnic groups is simply not the USA anymore" ($\alpha = .84$).

Outgroup attitudes. Similar to Experiment 1, participants completed 3 self-reported items per group to indicate their feelings toward Asian Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinx Americans using 7-point Likert scales where 1 = Very Unpleasant/Negative/Cold, 7 = Very Pleasant/Positive/Warm (all α s > .93). These items were collapsed into a single index of outgroup attitudes after establishing high internal consistency (9 items; $\alpha = .96$).

Willingness to engage in intergroup contact. The same items used in Experiment 1 were utilized here to assess participants' willingness to engage in contact with Hispanic/Latinx Americans, Black/African Americans, and Asian Americans using 4 items for each group (all α s > .92). These items formed a reliable index of participant's willingness to engage in intergroup contact (9 items; $\alpha = .97$) and were therefore collapsed to form a single measure.

Additional variables. At the start of the study, we also measured participants' social identification and political orientation using the same items from Experiment 1. However, we did not have a priori predictions about any of these.

Results

Mean differences

Outgroup attitudes. Similar to Experiment 1, a one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of diversity ideology on outgroup attitudes, $F(2, 429) = 6.54, p = .002, \eta^2_p = .03$ (see Table 2). Planned contrasts showed that participants in the interculturalism condition ($M = 5.46; SD = 1.24$) had significantly more positive attitudes toward

Table 2. Mean (*SD*) scores on potential mediators in Experiment 2.

Condition	Measures		Category indispensability
	Essentialist beliefs	Perceived threat	
Interculturalism	2.84 (1.10)	2.24 (1.45)	5.33 (1.78)
Multiculturalism	3.17 (1.08)	2.40 (1.50)	5.32 (1.77)
Control	3.20 (1.30)	2.52 (1.55)	5.10 (1.74)

ethnic outgroups than those in the control condition ($M = 4.98$; $SD = 1.27$), $t(429) = 3.27$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.38$, but not compared to participants in the multiculturalism condition ($M = 5.39$; $SD = 1.23$), $t(429) < 1$, $p = .68$, $d = 0.05$. Planned contrasts also revealed that participants primed with multiculturalism ($M = 5.39$; $SD = 1.23$) showed significantly more positive outgroup attitudes relative to those in the control condition ($M = 4.98$; $SD = 1.27$), $t(429) = -2.90$, $p = .004$, $d = 0.33$.

Willingness to engage in intergroup contact. A one-way ANOVA also revealed a significant effect of diversity ideology on willingness to engage in intergroup contact, $F(2, 429) = 4.79$, $p = .009$, $\eta^2_p = .02$ (see Table 1). Planned contrasts showed that participants in the interculturalism condition ($M = 6.39$; $SD = 0.97$) had significantly more positive attitudes toward ethnic outgroups than those in the control condition ($M = 6.01$; $SD = 1.38$), $t(429) = 2.79$, $p = .005$, $d = 0.32$, but not compared to participants in the multiculturalism condition ($M = 6.34$; $SD = 1.05$), $t(429) < 1$, $p = .72$, $d = 0.05$. Planned contrasts also revealed that participants primed with multiculturalism ($M = 6.34$; $SD = 1.05$) showed significantly more positive outgroup attitudes relative to those in the control condition ($M = 6.01$; $SD = 1.38$), $t(429) = -2.48$, $p = .01$, $d = 0.27$.

Potential mediators. A series of one-way ANOVAs examined the effects of diversity ideologies on essentialist beliefs, distinctiveness threat, and category indispensability. Results revealed a significant effect of diversity ideology on essentialist beliefs, $F(2, 429) = 4.15$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2_p = .02$ (see Table 2). Planned contrasts showed that

participants in the interculturalism condition ($M = 2.83$; $SD = 1.10$) had significantly weaker essentialist beliefs about ethnic groups than those in the control condition ($M = 3.20$; $SD = 1.30$), $t(429) = -2.63$, $p = .01$, $d = 0.53$, and also relative to participants in the multiculturalism condition ($M = 3.17$; $SD = 1.08$), $t(429) = 2.40$, $p = .02$, $d = 0.31$. However, no difference was found in the level of essentialist beliefs in multiculturalism ($M = 3.17$; $SD = 1.08$) and control conditions ($M = 3.20$; $SD = 1.30$), $t(429) < 1$, $p = .86$, $d = 0.03$. In contrast to the above, a one-way ANOVA revealed a non-significant effect of diversity ideologies on distinctiveness threat, $F(2, 429) = 1.29$, $p = .28$, $\eta^2_p = .006$ (see Table 2). Similarly, a one-way ANOVA also revealed that diversity ideologies did not impact on category indispensability, $F(2, 429) = 0.85$, $p = .43$, $\eta^2_p = .004$ (see Table 2).

Mediation analyses. Following the guidelines of Yzerbyt et al. (2018), we proceeded to examine only whether changes in essentialist beliefs have a significant indirect effect on the effects of diversity ideologies on outgroup attitudes and willingness to engage in intergroup contact.¹ Using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macros (Model 4), the indirect effect was computed using bias-corrected bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

Outgroup attitudes. We first examined the indirect effect of essentialist beliefs on the effects of diversity ideologies on outgroup attitudes. These analyses revealed that essentialist beliefs significantly mediated the effects of interculturalism on outgroup attitudes relative to the control condition, *indirect coefficient* = $-.139$, $SE = .059$, 95% CI $[-0.269, -0.040]$, and relative to

multiculturalism, *indirect coefficient* = $-.130$, $SE = .052$, 95% CI $[-0.240, -0.039]$. However, there was no significant indirect effect of essentialist beliefs on the effects of multiculturalism relative to the control group on outgroup attitudes, *indirect coefficient* = $-.009$, $SE = .054$, 95% CI $[-0.111, 0.096]$.

Willingness to engage in intergroup contact. We then tested whether essentialist beliefs mediated the effects of diversity ideologies on willingness to engage in intergroup contact. These analyses revealed that essentialist beliefs significantly mediated the effects of interculturalism on outgroup attitudes relative to the control condition, *indirect coefficient* = $-.174$, $SE = .071$, 95% CI $[-0.345, -0.056]$, and relative to the multiculturalism condition, *indirect coefficient* = $-.163$, $SE = .064$, 95% CI $[-0.301, -0.036]$. However, essentialist beliefs did not mediate the effect of multiculturalism on willingness to engage in intergroup contact relative to the control, *indirect coefficient* = $-.011$, $SE = .066$, 95% CI $[-0.144, 0.116]$.

Discussion

Experiment 2 replicated the findings of Experiment 1 by showing that both interculturalism and multiculturalism significantly improved outgroup attitudes and increased willingness to engage in intergroup contact relative to a control condition. However, in Experiment 2, there was no significant difference between the impact of interculturalism and multiculturalism on these two outgroup measures. Experiment 2 further found that only essentialist beliefs mediated the effects of interculturalism on both outgroup attitudes and willingness to engage in intergroup contact, while neither diversity ideology impacted on distinctiveness threat or category indispensability.

Experiment 3

In order to expand the scope of our findings beyond self-reported indexes, Experiment 3 examined the impact of interculturalism and

multiculturalism on two additional outcomes in a carefully-controlled lab experiment. Specifically, we examined the impact of interculturalism on implicit attitudes and intergroup trust and cooperation. Previous research has demonstrated that priming multiculturalism can reduce negative implicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities (see Lai et al., 2014). Therefore, we wished to examine whether *interculturalism* could improve implicit attitudes toward ethnic minorities. Additionally, we also examined the impact of interculturalism (and multiculturalism) on intergroup trust and cooperation, a behavioural index yet to be explored in the literature. While prior research has examined the impact of multiculturalism on non-verbal behavior (Vorauer et al., 2009; Vorauer & Sasaki, 2011), prior work has not examined the impact of such ideologies on intergroup trust and cooperation in a behavioral game. In the present work, we therefore, examined the impact of both multiculturalism and interculturalism on trust and cooperation using the trust game (Berg et al., 1995).

Experiment 3 also examined the impact of interculturalism on intergroup relations in another ethnically diverse nation, New Zealand. Like the USA, New Zealand also has a predominantly European majority population (approximately two-thirds of the country), along with a sizeable population of Māori (indigenous population), Asian, and Pacific Island minority populations (Sibley & Ward, 2013). New Zealand is similar to the USA in that it has a history of European colonization, and ethnic diversity has increased significantly over the last few decades largely due to immigration from Asia (Sibley & Ward, 2013). However, New Zealand is different from the USA in that it has a stronger endorsement of multicultural ideology (Multiculturalism Policy Index, 2018) and takes proactive steps to incorporate Māori culture at varying institutional levels (Sibley & Ward, 2013).

Method

A total of 307 participants from a large public university in New Zealand were recruited for this

pre-registered lab experiment (<https://osf.io/3rv8n>). We chose a smaller sample size for this experiment because of the increased costs associated with a lab experiment that involves several different procedures. Therefore, we aimed to recruit approximately 100 participants per condition, the sample size required to detect the average effect size in the field. Sensitivity power analyses suggest that this sample size should be able to detect effects of at least $f = .18$ at conventional alpha levels of .05 and at power of .80. Of these participants, 35 participants were excluded from the analyses because they reported Asian ethnicities (the target outgroup in the study), and an additional 43 were excluded for reporting non-European ancestry (22 self-identified as Māori, 12 as Pacific Nation, and 9 “other” including South African, South American, Middle Eastern, etc.) to mirror the samples in Experiments 1–2.² An additional 3 participants were excluded for failing the manipulation check, leaving a final sample of 226 participants (73 male; 153 female) of European descent with a mean age of 20.48 years ($SD = 4.34$). Participants were New Zealand citizens or Permanent Residents. No other exclusions applied.

Manipulations. Similar to Experiment 2, participants read the textual prime used before (only adapted to the New Zealand context), and later watched a short video uploaded to YouTube depicting interculturalism or multiculturalism using a voice recording played over a powerpoint-style presentation. These videos were shown to participants before the behavioral game under the guise that the study was interested in assessing the impact of various forms of media on attention and perception (i.e., providing the same content in the form of an essay versus a video with a voice-over).

Measures

Explicit attitudes. Explicit attitudes were assessed toward several groups including Asian New Zealanders, European New Zealanders, politicians, and the elderly (the latter two as distracters) using two semantic differential items

rather than relying on a single feeling thermometer. We did not measure attitudes toward Māori and Pacific Island peoples because of sensitivity surrounding assessment of attitudes toward these groups in New Zealand. Participants indicated the extent to which they felt warmly and positively toward each of the above groups (1 = Very Cold/Negative, 7 = Very Warm/Positive). To mirror the approach used in Experiments 1–2, we only focused our analyses on ratings of Asian New Zealanders (the target outgroup). Ratings on these two items were averaged after establishing that they were strongly related (all $\alpha s > .89$).

Implicit attitudes. Participants also completed a standard IAT (Implicit Association Test; Greenwald et al., 1998) assessing the extent to which they automatically associated Asian vs. European faces with positive vs. negative words.

Intergroup trust and cooperation. Participants completed a measure of intergroup cooperation and trust using the Trust Game (Berg et al., 1995). In this game, participants engaged in a simulation with a perceived partner who they were led to believe was in a nearby room. Participants had the opportunity to win up to \$10 on the game. The simulation involved two players, termed First Mover (actual participant) and Second Mover (a computer simulation used to represent either someone of Asian or European descent via their online avatar which included a screen-name, age, gender, ethnicity, and nationality). Participants played this game on the computer and thought they were playing with real participants in neighboring rooms. The First Mover initially got to choose how much of the money they give to the corresponding “player” (Second Mover). They had the option of sending \$0.50c, \$1.00, \$1.50, or \$2.00. The amount sent to the other “player” (Second Mover) was tripled. Then, the Second Mover “decided” how much of that money to return (this “decision” was a programmed amount depending on how much

money the First Mover chose to send to the Second Mover). Participants each played 4 rounds of this game with people they believed to be of Asian or European descent (order was randomized between-subjects). This game represents a popular measure of trust and cooperation in the literature (McCabe et al., 2003).

Additional measures. At the start of the study, we also measured participants' demographic information, political orientation, and social identification with various groups similar to the previous experiments (see Supplemental Material online for more information). In addition, we assessed participants' social dominance orientation (Pratto et al., 1994) and right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1996). However, we did not have a priori predictions about these variables and did not explore these further. All measures, manipulations, and participant exclusions are, thereby, reported here.

Procedure. Participants were recruited under the guise that the study was interested in examining the impact of information in different forms of media on attention and perception. After offering consent, participants completed a series of demographic questions. Participants were then randomly assigned to the interculturalism, multiculturalism, or control conditions. In the interculturalism and multiculturalism conditions, participants read the essay similar to the earlier experiments and then completed the IAT or self-report measures in randomized order. All participants then watched the video of the same prime they read before and then completed the trust game, before being debriefed and paid for their participation in the game.

Results

Explicit attitudes. A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a significant effect of diversity ideologies on explicit attitudes toward Asian New Zealanders, $F(2, 223) = 5.57, p = .004, \eta^2_p = .05$ (see Table 1). Planned contrasts revealed that participants in the interculturalism condition ($M =$

5.25; $SD = 1.44$) showed significantly more positive attitudes toward Asian New Zealanders than those in the control condition ($M = 4.57; SD = 1.50$), $t(223) = 2.86, p = .005, d = 0.46$. Similarly, participants in the multiculturalism condition ($M = 5.31; SD = 1.45$) showed more favorable attitudes toward Asian New Zealanders than those in the control condition ($M = 4.57; SD = 1.50$), $t(223) = -2.99, p = .003, d = 0.50$. However, no differences were found in ratings of Asian New Zealanders in the interculturalism ($M = 5.25; SD = 1.44$) and multiculturalism ($M = 5.31; SD = 1.45$) conditions, $t < 1, p = .81, d = 0.04$. Similar analyses revealed that diversity ideologies had no impact on explicit attitudes toward politicians, the elderly, and European New Zealanders, suggesting that these diversity ideologies may indeed have a unique impact on attitudes toward ethnic minorities (all $ps > .14, \eta^2_p < .02$).

Willingness to engage in intergroup contact. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of diversity ideologies on willingness to engage in intergroup contact, $F(2, 223) = 11.60, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .09$ (see Table 1). Planned contrasts revealed that participants in the interculturalism condition ($M = 6.24; SD = 1.00$) were significantly more willing to engage in intergroup contact than those in the control condition ($M = 5.30; SD = 1.58$), $t(223) = 4.64, p < .001, d = 0.71$. Similarly, participants in the multiculturalism condition ($M = 6.05; SD = 1.18$) were more willing to engage in intergroup contact than those in the control condition ($M = 5.30; SD = 1.58$), $t(223) = -3.60, p < .001, d = 0.54$. However, no differences were found in willingness to engage in intergroup contact across the interculturalism ($M = 6.24; SD = 1.00$) and multiculturalism ($M = 6.05; SD = 1.18$) conditions, $t < 1, p = .35, d = 0.17$.

Implicit attitudes. Following the algorithm proposed by Greenwald et al. (2003), we calculated an IAT D score indexing participants' automatic negative attitudes toward Asian faces relative to European faces (larger scores indicate more negative attitudes toward Asian New Zealanders relative to European New Zealanders). A one-way

ANOVA revealed a significant effect of diversity ideologies on implicit attitudes, $F(2, 221) = 5.67$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2_p = .05$ (see Table 1). Planned contrasts showed that participants in the interculturalism condition ($M = 0.36$; $SD = 0.53$) had significantly more positive implicit attitudes toward Asians than those in the control condition ($M = 0.61$; $SD = 0.49$), $t(221) = -3.15$, $p = .002$, $d = 0.49$. Similarly, participants in the multiculturalism condition ($M = 0.39$; $SD = 0.38$) showed more favorable implicit attitudes toward Asians than those in the control condition ($M = 0.61$; $SD = 0.49$), $t(221) = 2.70$, $p = .007$, $d = 0.50$. No differences were found in ratings of Asians in the interculturalism ($M = 0.36$; $SD = 0.53$) and multiculturalism ($M = 0.39$; $SD = 0.38$) conditions, $t < 1$, $p = .71$, $d = 0.07$.

Intergroup trust and cooperation. Following the procedures outlined by Berg et al. (1995), we calculated the extent to which participants cooperated with players of Asian and European descent. Similar to the IAT, we calculated a difference score for the extent to which participants cooperated with the Asian New Zealander relative to the European New Zealander to provide an index of intergroup trust and cooperation (larger numbers indicate greater trust and cooperation with the European players relative to the Asian players; but see Supplemental Materials for results on Asian and European targets separately). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of diversity ideologies on intergroup trust and cooperation, $F(2, 221) = 20.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .16$ (see Table 1). Planned contrasts revealed that participants in the interculturalism condition ($M = -0.18$; $SD = 0.79$) showed significantly more trust and cooperation toward the Asian players relative to the European players than those in the control condition ($M = 0.71$; $SD = 1.14$), $t(221) = -6.07$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.91$. Similarly, participants in the multiculturalism condition ($M = -0.01$; $SD = 0.73$) showed greater trust and cooperation with the Asian players relative to European players than those in the control condition ($M = 0.71$; $SD = 1.14$), $t(221) = 4.81$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.75$. However, no

differences were found in participants' willingness to trust and cooperate with the Asian players relative to European players in the interculturalism ($M = -0.18$; $SD = 0.79$) and multiculturalism ($M = -0.01$; $SD = 0.73$) conditions, $t(221) = 1.13$, $p = .26$, $d = 0.22$.

Taken together, these results suggest that interculturalism and multiculturalism both significantly improved implicit *and* explicit outgroup attitudes, increased intergroup trust and cooperation, and increased willingness to engage in intergroup contact, relative to a no-information control condition. However, interculturalism appeared no different in its impact than multiculturalism.

General Discussion

The present research makes a novel contribution to the social psychological literature on diversity ideologies by examining the impact of interculturalism on White/European majority group members' attitudes, intentions, and behaviors toward ethnic outgroups in two culturally diverse nations. Interculturalism has been proposed as an alternative for multiculturalism in social scientific policy and public debates, and several governments and international organizations have already started to implement programs based on the ideology arguing that it is the "way forward." Yet, almost no empirical research has directly examined its costs and benefits for intergroup relations and social psychology has entirely been absent from this important discussion. In the present work, we examine the causal effects of promoting interculturalism for majority group members' reactions toward ethnic outgroups. Using experiments in the USA and New Zealand, we show that interculturalism consistently has positive consequences for outgroup attitudes, intentions, and behavior relative to controls. Preliminary evidence further suggests that these benefits of interculturalism for outgroup attitudes and intentions are driven by decreases in essentialist beliefs, and not by changes in perceived threat or category indispensability. The results of the three experiments are mixed when

comparing the costs and benefits relative to multiculturalism—in the USA, we find inconsistent results with one study suggesting interculturalism produced more positive intergroup outcomes relative to multiculturalism, while the other study revealed no differences between interculturalism and multiculturalism except that interculturalism reduced essentialist beliefs relative to multiculturalism. In New Zealand, the effects of interculturalism and multiculturalism were indistinguishable across all outcomes. Nevertheless, the current experiments present empirical evidence on the implications of promoting interculturalism as “a way forward” by demonstrating that it may indeed be at least as effective for improving intergroup relations as multiculturalism. In doing so, our research highlights the promise of a new diversity ideology that has been shown to be distinct from assimilation and multiculturalism in lay persons’ eyes (Verkuyten et al., 2020).

Limitations and Future Directions

As mentioned above, interculturalism was shown to improve intergroup relations in both diverse nations relative to controls, but its impact relative to multiculturalism is unclear. Within the USA, two samples reveal differing results on the efficacy of interculturalism relative to multiculturalism. However, as data collection for the two studies was conducted years apart (2016 vs. 2019) and using two different platforms (Crowdfunder vs. Turk Prime), more research is needed to establish whether interculturalism and multiculturalism are indeed any different in leading to positive intergroup relations. In New Zealand, interculturalism and multiculturalism both significantly improve outgroup attitudes, willingness for intergroup contact, and behavioral intergroup trust and cooperation relative to controls, but are no different from each other. As New Zealand tends to score high on the Multiculturalism Policy Index (2018) and New Zealanders, on average, tend to show strong support for multiculturalism (Sibley & Ward, 2013; Ward & Masgoret, 2008), it may be that interculturalism and multiculturalism would be equally effective strategies for

improving intergroup relations. However, future work is needed to replicate and extend this work, especially using a more diverse community sample to better establish this finding. More broadly, future work would benefit from more systematically examining the effectiveness of interculturalism and multiculturalism depending on the cross-national variability on the Multiculturalism Policy Index (2018).

Another limitation of the present work is that we focused on only three psychological processes that may underlie the effects of interculturalism. While we found essentialist beliefs mediate the effects of interculturalism, more work is needed for examining additional processes involved and whether these differ from those involved in promoting multiculturalism. For example, research has shown that multiculturalism can promote more positive intergroup relations by increasing perspective-taking and encouraging other-focused orientations (Todd & Galinsky, 2012; Vorauer et al., 2009), but it is unclear whether this would differ for interculturalism. As interculturalism promotes the value of intergroup dialogue and mutual understanding, the same psychological processes may be involved. However, the emphasis on openness to cultural change in interculturalism and a focus on commonality may mean that it also reduces epistemic freezing and cognitive closure (Tadmor et al., 2012), while also encouraging recategorization and perceived self–other overlap (Dovidio et al., 2009). For example, research on polyculturalism has found that it leads to greater openness to criticizing elements of one’s culture and therefore to lower sexual prejudice (Rosenthal et al., 2013, 2014). Future work would benefit from examining whether such processes drive the effects of interculturalism on intergroup relations.

And finally, the present research only focuses on the consequences of interculturalism on White/European majority group members’ reactions toward ethnic outgroups. While such a focus is important to improving intergroup relations and the treatment of marginalized groups in society, future work should directly examine the impact of interculturalism on marginalized or ethnic minority

outcomes such as well-being, collective self-esteem, or collective action.

Broader Implications

Survey research has found positive associations between multiculturalism and interculturalism (Verkuyten et al., 2020) and also between multiculturalism with polyculturalism (Bernardo et al., 2016; Rosenthal & Levy, 2012). This indicates that interculturalism should not be considered a replacement for multiculturalism, but rather an additional, complementary strategy to create intergroup harmony in societies that are increasingly characterized with super-diversity, mixed-origin individuals, dual identifiers, and processes of individualization and cultural hybridization. The intercultural perspective can intensify dialogue, cultural mixing and the sense of belonging together as a necessary basis of a democratic plural society, while multiculturalism can guarantee that interculturalism does not violate the rights of ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, whereas multiculturalism is typically construed as excluding the majority group and thereby resisted in policy (Plaut et al., 2011), interculturalism may better address majority group anxieties through its emphasis on superordinate identity alongside differences, dialogue and collaboration, as well as the promotion of new border-crossing identities (Taylor, 2012). Thus, in principle, these two perspectives are not contradictory, and nations may benefit from a combination of both perspectives that value diversity (e.g., Rosenthal & Levy, 2012, 2013). The balancing of the recognition of minority cultures and diversity with the requirements of social unity is a difficult and ongoing challenge, and thinking about the best way forward should take changing social realities into account. Plural societies are increasingly made up of hundreds of heterogeneous, ethnic, faith and language groups, with a growing number of people who have a mixed origin and multiple identities, and are faced with diaspora and transnational influences that are not considered in the majority-minority distinction that is central in multicultural ideology (Cantle, 2016; also see Vertovec,

2007, on superdiversity). Interculturalism may provide a more adequate and promising perspective for dealing with these realities. However, multiculturalism is more responsive to the reality that for many minority group members, their ethnic, racial, or religious identity continues to be an important and central part of their sense of self, and that minority, compared to majority, members face unfair disadvantages and social exclusion in many domains of life. Interculturalism might also increase the societal support for multicultural initiatives because it provides a sense of unity and interaction out of which can grow recognition of diversity. Yet, it can also be argued that multiculturalism is a precondition for the beneficial effects of interculturalism. Feeling recognized and confident in one's group identity might be necessary for the willingness to share ideas and assumptions and develop a shared sense of belonging. Future research should examine these possible relations between these two perspectives on dealing with cultural diversity. Future work is also needed to examine the impact of these two ideologies on intergroup relations when it is highlighted exactly how these goals can be achieved (Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014) as the present work only emphasized the broad goals of both ideologies.

Another implication of the present work is practical. Governments and international organizations already spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year on diversity programs grounded on principles of diversity ideologies such as colorblindness or multiculturalism that can backfire and lead to more harmful intergroup outcomes (e.g., Kaiser et al., 2013; Kaley et al., 2006). Therefore, it is important to empirically examine the costs and benefits of such ideologies for intergroup outcomes ahead of time. Interculturalism has been championed by various governments and international organizations, but yet, little empirical work has been done to explore its consequences. The present work, therefore, provides social psychologists with an important starting point for exploring the costs and benefits of a relatively new diversity ideology by going beyond the existing social psychological research

on assimilation, colorblindness, and multiculturalism. We hope that our work will stimulate researchers to further examine the causes and consequences of interculturalism, and when and why interculturalism has beneficial or detrimental implications for intergroup relations in our increasingly diverse societies.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that neither threat nor category indispensability mediated the effects of diversity ideologies on outgroup attitudes and willingness to engage in intergroup contact.
2. The pattern of results reported in Experiment 3 is identical if we include the 43 non-Asian, non-European participants and examine outgroup attitudes (implicit and explicit), willingness to engage in intergroup contact, and intergroup trust and cooperation. However, for the sake of consistency with the other studies, we report our results focusing only on European participants.

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