



Outgroup members' internal criticism promotes intergroup openness: The role of perceived risk

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Research suggests that hearing an outgroup member voice internal criticism increases individuals' openness to the outgroup's perspective. We replicate and extend these findings in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Israeli participants exposed to a Palestinian official voicing internal criticism reported more openness to the Palestinian narrative of the conflict, an effect that was mediated by an increase in participants' perception that Palestinians are open-minded and a subsequent increase in their hope for more positive relations between the two groups. In our extension of these findings, we examined a complementary mechanism contributing to the effectiveness of the criticism manipulation, specifically the extent to which participants perceive that the Palestinian official took a risk voicing criticism of Palestinians. Positive messages from a hostile outgroup may be received with suspicion, but if they are articulated under great risk to the speaker, greater credibility may be granted. Across two studies, we demonstrate that the criticism conveys risk to the speaker and that this risk is predictive of the perceived credibility of the speaker, and participants' subsequent openness to the outgroup's perspective.

In intergroup conflict that is tense and hostile, each side aims to ensure that their weaknesses are not made public to the rival group, as any such expression could leave them vulnerable to attack. This threat amplifies pressure to conform to ingroup norms and fosters greater dislike of individuals who express dissent or deviate from group norms (e.g., Ariyanto, Hornsey, & Gallois, 2010). In this context, deviance from the group is an incredibly risky endeavour. Recently, though, research has examined how this deviance is perceived by the outgroup (Saguy & Halperin, 2014). Notably, hearing an outgroup member voice criticism of their own group evokes greater openness to the outgroup's perspective. In the current research, we sought to replicate this finding and to explore the role that the perceived risk to the speaker plays in fostering intergroup openness. Although our investigation of the precise role of risk (i.e., as a mediator or moderator) was exploratory, we expected that the risk involved in voicing criticism of one's own group would contribute to the perceived credibility of the person communicating the criticism and therefore predict greater openness to the outgroup's perspective. Thus, a key objective of the current research was to inform the theoretical and practical advancement of an intervention aimed at unfreezing negative attitudes in hostile conflicts.

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Reactions to deviance and dissent

Early research in social psychology focused on the powerful influence the group has on fostering conformity to group norms (e.g., Asch, 1951; Milgram, 1963). As a species that has depended on the group for survival throughout evolutionary history, humans are highly sensitive to signals indicating that they may be on the verge of being excluded from the group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). Indeed, research has shown that individuals experience an immediately painful response when they are excluded from a group (Gerber & Wheeler, 2009), a response that may function to motivate behaviour that repairs and maintains group membership.

This is not to suggest that ingroup deviance and dissent do not occur, but rather that when it does occur, it is undertaken with a great deal of risk. Those who engage in deviance, despite this risk, may be motivated by a variety of factors (Jetten & Hornsey, 2014). Some deviants may be actively attempting to undermine a group's goals, whereas others may engage in deviance or express dissent as a means of improving the group or as an attempt to uphold moral principles with which they strongly identify. When deviance stems from more positive motivations, ingroup members can be quite tolerant of dissent (e.g., Hiew & Hornsey, 2010; Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002). However, a key context in which deviance and dissent are unlikely to be tolerated is during intergroup conflict.

Deviants in a group pose a threat to the positive view of the ingroup as well as to the ingroup's cohesion (Jetten & Hornsey, 2014). If that deviance is expressed publicly, it leaves the group vulnerable to attack by hostile outgroup members. Indeed, deviants and dissenters are subjected to greater derogation when an intergroup context is made salient (Ariyanto *et al.*, 2010; Chekroun & Nugier, 2011; Matheson, Cole, & Majka, 2003), an effect which is exacerbated when the dissent is public or directed at the outgroup (Elder, Sutton, & Douglas, 2005; Hornsey *et al.*, 2005). Here, even if the ingroup may have otherwise been accepting of the dissent, the public 'airing of one's dirty laundry' leaves the group vulnerable to enemies and is unlikely to be tolerated.

Research in this area has primarily focused on how deviance and dissent are perceived and treated within the group from which the deviance stems. Recently, though, researchers have investigated how this behaviour is perceived *across* group lines. Saguy and Halperin (2014) hypothesized that exposure to an outgroup member expressing internal criticism would foster more intergroup openness. This research was conducted in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, where negative views of the outgroup are deeply entrenched. Despite this, Israeli Jews exposed to a Palestinian authority figure voicing internal criticism about Palestinians expressed more openness to the Palestinian narrative of the conflict.

Saguy and Halperin (2014) suggest that this criticism is effective because it challenges participants' belief that the outgroup is incapable of change. Indeed, a major barrier to conflict resolution is group members' tendency to freeze on extremely negative intergroup attitudes and emotions (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2009). This freezing is manifested in a rigid adherence to the ingroup's narrative of the conflict (Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011) and a sense of hopelessness (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, & Gross, 2013). Exposure to an outgroup member's internal criticism can begin to fracture these attitudes and beliefs. The willingness to express criticism conveys an open-mindedness that suggests the outgroup may be a cooperative partner in discussion and negotiation, and that such discussion may not be futile. Along these lines, Saguy and Halperin (2014) found that the effects of internal criticism were mediated by an increase in the perception that the outgroup is open-minded. This led to a subsequent increase in their hope for more positive intergroup

relations. This emotional change is important, as hope is a crucial determinant of action in the context of conflict resolution (Bar-Tal, 2001). The feeling of hope is associated with creativity and the setting of actionable goals (Breznitz, 1986; Snyder, 1994). In conflicts where parties think that negotiations have reached an impasse, feelings of hopelessness are likely to foster complacency, whereas hope can inspire continued effort and action.

The role of risk

Saguy and Halperin (2014) focused on the perception of the outgroup as open-minded and hope for the future as important mediating variables. Here, we suggest the possibility of an additional, complementary mechanism. In particular, we propose that the risk involved in voicing internal criticism is a crucial factor in the effectiveness of the criticism manipulation because it gives rise to perceptions of the speaker as credible and trustworthy. This is based on the recognition that, in intergroup contexts, individuals who choose to make statements that violate prescriptive group norms or reduce the group's positive social identity are likely to suffer negative consequences. This may be particularly true when tensions between groups are high, as any ingroup criticism may be punished quite harshly. For example, Israeli comedienne Orna Banai was not only publicly criticized and threatened for her criticisms of Israel's actions during the 2014 war with Gaza, but was also fired from a spokesperson position (Steinberg, 2014). Thus, it is clear that internal criticism of one's group can carry very real costs. An individual who expresses internal criticism despite this risk is likely to be perceived as truly endorsing the criticism.

We propose that the risk involved in voicing internal criticism will enhance the credibility of the speaker. In essence, an individual is unlikely to be willing to suffer the consequences of expressing criticism of one's group if they do not believe strongly in the message. This is consistent with past theorizing indicating that messages are perceived as less credible when the communicating party has a vested interest in the outcome it produces, whereas an individual who makes a sacrifice in voicing the message is likely to be perceived as more genuine (Moscovici, 1976). We suggest that this credibility is not necessarily in reference to the message (i.e., the *content* of the criticism), but rather to the perception that the *speaker* believes the content of the message to be true. This credibility is important given the detrimental levels of distrust between groups engaged in violent conflict (see, Nadler & Liviatan, 2006). Without trust, individuals are likely to interpret positive messages from the outgroup as disingenuous or manipulative (Saygı, Greer, Van Kleef, & De Dreu, 2015). For example, Israelis and Palestinians' agreement to a structural framework for a two-state solution is inhibited by their inability to trust that the other side supports the peace process. An offer of compromise is met with distrust and suspicion. Yet, if a positive message is articulated under great risk to the speaker, it lends credibility to the speaker and should exert stronger effects on those exposed to it (Kelman, 1958).

In specifying the precise role of risk, we were open to the possibility that risk may play either a moderating or mediating role (Wegener & Fabrigar, 2000). A mediating role implies, conceptually, that internal criticism exerts its influence on intergroup openness indirectly through the increased perception of risk, and the increased perception of the credibility of the speaker. In other words, hearing criticism causes individuals to perceive a high degree of risk, which causes an increase in the perceived credibility of the speaker, which then causes greater openness to the outgroup. Alternatively, a moderating role of risk implies a causal relationship between criticism and intergroup openness that varies in strength or valence depending on whether individuals perceive the criticism to be risky. For example, criticism leads to greater intergroup openness only for individuals who

perceive the criticism as risky. The theoretical rationale for the importance of risk is quite clear; however, it does not directly specify whether risk should act as a mediator or moderator. Because both models are theoretically defensible, we sought to test each empirically. In the following two studies, we test (1) the replication of the mediation model proposed by Saguy and Halperin (2014), (2) the moderation hypothesis for the role of risk, and (3) the mediation hypothesis for the role of risk.

STUDY I

To test these ideas, we conducted an empirical study with two key objectives. First, we sought to replicate the findings reported by Saguy and Halperin (2014). Specifically, we examined whether internal criticism by a Palestinian official would foster greater openness to the Palestinian narrative of the conflict via an increase in the perception of the outgroup as open-minded and a consequent increase in hope regarding future relations between groups. Second, we aimed to investigate the role of risk as both a mediator and a moderator of the effect of criticism on intergroup openness. To do so, we included a manipulation of risk as well as a measure of perceived risk. Risk was manipulated via the audience of the criticism. Rather than explicitly discussing risk, audience was used as a proxy of the risk taken by the speaker. It was expected that criticism conveyed to an outgroup (i.e., Israeli) audience would be perceived as more risky (Elder *et al.*, 2005; Hornsey *et al.*, 2005) relative to an ingroup audience (i.e., Palestinians) owing to the increased vulnerability of admitting one's faults to a hostile enemy.

Method

Participants

Israeli Jews were recruited and financially compensated for an online study conducted via *Midgam*, an Israeli web-based platform for data collection. Participants who failed an attention check were excluded from analyses ($n = 101$), as were individuals who failed to respond to items assessing key constructs ($n = 16$). Of the remaining 152 participants, approximately 54% were men with a mean age of 43.7 years ($SD = 16.4$). Politically 52% of the sample identified as right-wing, 32% as centre, and 16% as left-wing.

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to a control condition or one of two criticism conditions intended to vary the level of risk conveyed by the criticism. Participants in the control condition read an excerpt from a radio interview that focused on current issues related to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Specifically, they read a falsified interview with Shukri Bishara, the finance minister of the Palestinian Authority. He was asked two questions regarding relations between Israel and Palestine (sharing of water and compensation for refugees), to which he responded in accordance with the Palestinian narrative.

Participants in the criticism condition listened to the same interview content, but were also exposed to a third question and answer. Here, Minister Bishara was asked to reflect on an increase in violence directed against Israelis by Palestinians. Rather than responding with a traditional narrative, Minister Bishara voiced internal criticism:

Minisber Bishara: We need, as a society, to look inside ourselves and change our ways. When you look at the big picture you see that there really is no doubt that we have acted too violently. It is time that we find other solutions to the conflict; solutions that do not cost innocent people their lives.

In the high-risk variant of the criticism, the criticism expressed by Bishara was delivered on an Israeli radio broadcast and was spoken in English, with Hebrew subtitles. In the low-risk variant, the criticism was delivered on a Palestinian radio broadcast and was spoken in Arabic, with Hebrew subtitles. Following the interview, participants responded to a series of questions assessing the constructs below, as well as other exploratory measures, and a manipulation check asking them to identify the viewpoint of the Palestinian official.

Measures

All measures were completed online using a 1–7 Likert scale unless otherwise noted. Multi-item measures were averaged to create composite scales. Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1.

Political orientation

Participants' political stance was assessed with a single item, 'What is your political stance?' with response options ranging from: 1 = extreme right; 4 = centre; 7 = extreme left. Political orientation was included as a covariate in all analyses given its associations with the key constructs of interest. It did not interact with the other predictors or significantly alter the pattern of findings when excluded from analyses.

Perceived openness of outgroup

To assess participants' perception of the outgroup's open-mindedness, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with three statements, for example: 'The interview made me feel there is a chance that the Palestinians will listen to the Israeli side of the conflict' ($\alpha = .96$).

Hope

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they feel hope, optimism, and despair (reverse coded) when they think about future relations between Palestine and Israel ($\alpha = .69$).

Openness to Palestinian narrative

Participants indicated their willingness to engage in five different activities in which they would either be consuming or distributing information reflecting the classic Palestinian narrative, for example: 'Meeting personally with Palestinians to hear their point of view of the conflict, even if that point of view is opposite to yours', ($\alpha = .88$). These items explicitly mention the classic Palestinian narrative, or exposure to opposing views, in order to rule out the possibility that participants become more open to Palestinians simply because they now think Palestinians' beliefs are more closely aligned with their own.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for Study 1 and Study 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean (SD)
1. Criticism Condition	–							0.49 (0.50)
2. Risk	.24*	.51*	.15*	.15*	.05	.10	.00	3.68 (1.69)
3. Credibility	.21*	–	.38*	.31*	.06	.26*	.14*	3.48 (1.74)
4. Outgroup open-minded	.30*	.24*	–	.56*	.26*	.43*	.41*	2.54 (1.58)
5. Hope	.06	.27*	.44*	–	.52*	.59*	.44*	2.75 (1.37)
6. Intergroup openness	.18*	.08	.30*	.56*	–	.45*	.24*	2.69 (1.51)
7. Political orientation	.13	.19*	.29*	.43*	.38*	–	.44*	3.41 (1.18)
Mean (SD)	0.39 (0.49)	3.53 (1.99)	3.16 (1.85)	2.59 (1.52)	2.58 (1.34)	2.53 (1.50)	3.41 (1.19)	

Notes. Data in the bottom diagonal are for Study 1. Data in the top diagonal are for Study 2. Condition is scored such that 0 = control, 1 = collapsed criticism condition. For Study 2, risk is the measure assessing perceived risk from Palestinians.
* $p < .05$.

Risk

To assess participants' perception of the risk involved in Minister Bishara's communication of criticism, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement: 'The Palestinian official took a risk voicing his perspective'.

Credibility

To examine participants' perceptions of the Minister's credibility, they were asked the extent to which they thought the Mayor was believable, honest, and genuine ($\alpha = .94$).

Results and Discussion

Replicating the effects of internal criticism

To examine whether the findings reported by Saguy and Halperin (2014) could be replicated, we conducted a serial mediation analysis using the SPSS Macro, PROCESS (serial mediation model 6, 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2013). We collapsed the condition variable across risk to create a control (0) versus criticism (1) condition that was entered into the model as the independent variable (X); perceived openness of the outgroup was entered as the first mediator (M1); hope for more positive relations between groups was entered as the second mediator (M2); openness to the Palestinian narrative was entered as the outcome (Y).

Evidence of mediation is demonstrated by an examination of the indirect path from X to Y, through each of the mediators (Hayes, 2013). Replicating past research (see Figure 1), participants who heard Minister Bishara criticize Palestinians for being too violent were more likely to perceive that the outgroup is open-minded. That perception of open-mindedness was associated with greater hope, which was, in turn, associated with an increased openness to the classic Palestinian narrative (full indirect path: $b = 0.08$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.24]). When the order of the mediators was switched, the full indirect effect was reduced to non-significance.

The moderating role of risk

To examine the influence of the risk manipulation we first examined a univariate ANOVA with condition (control, low-risk criticism, high-risk criticism) as the independent variable

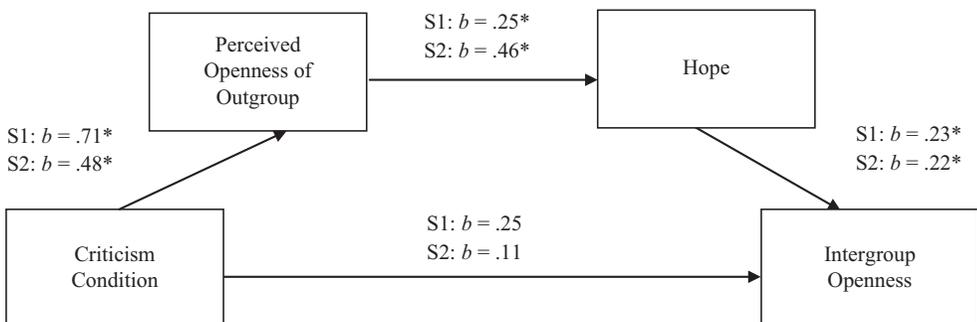


Figure 1. Effect of internal criticism on intergroup openness with serial mediation by perceived openness of outgroup and hope for the future. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients. S1 = Study 1; S2 = Study 2. * $p < .05$.

and perceptions of risk as the dependent variable. Results revealed a significant effect of condition, $F(2, 148) = 3.98, MSE = 14.83, p = .021$. Follow-up tests revealed marginal effects of each criticism condition relative to the control condition (control versus low risk: $M_{diff} = 0.89, SE_{diff} = 0.38, p = .063, 95\% CI [-0.03, 1.80]$; control versus high risk: $M_{diff} = 0.95, SE_{diff} = 0.45, p = .110, 95\% CI [-0.14, 2.04]$) such that participants in the criticism conditions perceived that the speaker took a greater risk voicing his perspective than did participants in the control condition. However, no differences between the low- and high-risk criticism conditions were observed ($M_{diff} = 0.06, SE_{diff} = 0.51, p = 1.00, 95\% CI [-1.18, 1.31]$). These findings suggest that the manipulation of audience had no effect on perceptions of risk beyond what was already inherent to the presence of criticism. This could be due to a failure to design a manipulation that powerfully differentiates levels of risk. It is possible that in the context of the extremely tense conflict between Israel and Palestine that any public criticism of one's ingroup will be perceived as risky. Alternatively, it may be that criticism is so closely connected with risk that manipulating risk separately from criticism is not possible. This explanation for the failed moderation is more consistent with a mediating role of risk.

Without this effect, it was not feasible to further examine the influence of risk on intergroup openness in a moderation model. However, the influence of criticism on openness to the Palestinian narrative was examined by collapsing the two criticism conditions. Results revealed a marginal main effect of condition, $F(1, 149) = 3.39, MSE = 6.89, p = .068$, such that participants in the criticism condition expressed more openness to the Palestinian narrative than did participants in the control condition ($M_{diff} = 0.44, SE_{diff} = 0.24, 95\% CI [-0.03, 0.91]$).

The mediating role of risk

To examine the mediating role of risk perceptions, we again conducted a serial mediation model. The collapsed condition variable was entered into the model as the independent variable (X); perceptions of risk were entered as the first mediator (M1); perceptions of the credibility of the speaker were entered as the second mediator (M2); openness to the Palestinian narrative was entered as the outcome (Y). Results of this analysis (see Figure 2) revealed a significant indirect path (full indirect path: $b = 0.02, SE = .02, 95\% CI [0.001, 0.10]$). These results are consistent with the idea that risk may be an inherent

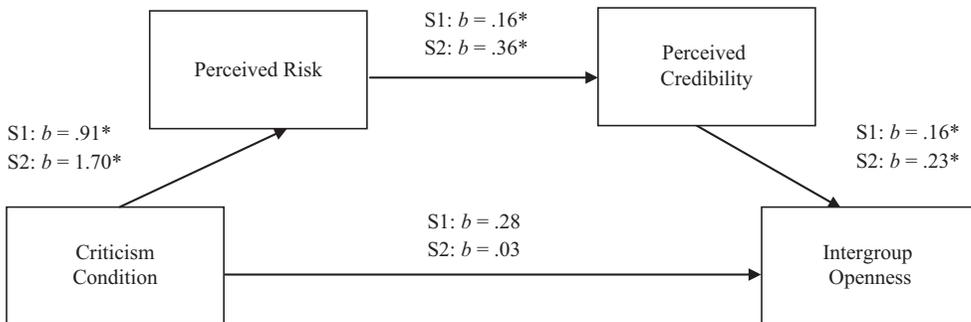


Figure 2. Effect of internal criticism on intergroup openness with serial mediation by perceptions of risk and credibility. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients. S1 = Study 1; S2 = Study 2. * $p < .05$.

consequence of the criticism manipulation that influences participants' perception of the credibility of the speaker and therefore generates greater openness to the outgroup's perspective. Testing an alternative model in which the order of the mediators was switched did not produce a significant indirect path.

Complementary mediating mechanisms

We do not view the role of risk and credibility to be contradictory to that played by perceptions of open-mindedness and hope. In order for the criticism manipulation to be effective, it must be perceived as credible. Relations between Israel and Palestine are marked by distrust and suspicion. Criticism may be effective in overcoming this barrier precisely because it is risky and therefore fosters greater trust that the speaker is delivering a genuine message. This process may then make it possible for participants to begin to change their perspective of Palestinians, increasing their hope, and ultimately promoting greater openness to Palestinians. In other words, risk and credibility may play a mediating role that is more proximal to the criticism, whereas perception of open-mindedness and hope are the downstream consequences of a credible message of criticism that then promote greater intergroup openness. Consistent with this notion, we conducted a follow-up analysis in which all four proposed mediators (M1 = risk, M2 = credibility, M3 = open-mindedness, M4 = hope) were included in a single serial mediation analysis (serial mediation model 6, 10,000 bootstrap samples). Results revealed a significant indirect effect through the full mediation chain (full indirect path: $b = 0.004$, $SE = .004$, 95% CI [0.0002, 0.02]). This suggests that the two mechanisms may be complementary components of the same underlying process.

STUDY 2

The results of Study 1 provide some insight into the role that risk plays in the influence of internal criticism. In Study 2, we aimed to replicate the mediation effects from Study 1 and address key limitations of the research. Notably, the control condition was presented to participants as text only, but the criticism conditions were presented with audio, creating a potential confound.¹ To improve upon this limitation, we conducted a second study with no potential for mode of presentation to produce a confound. To do so, the audience manipulation was replaced with an explicit manipulation of personal risk to the Palestinian speaker, in addition to the manipulation of criticism. This produced a 2 (criticism or no criticism) \times 2 (risk or no risk) factorial design. To manipulate risk, we added a question by the interviewer in which he notes that the Palestinian authority figure is at the end of his political term and hoping to continue for an additional term, asking whether he is worried that his statements may put his political career at risk. We expected that the influence of criticism on intergroup openness would be even stronger when that criticism poses a direct threat to the politician's career.

An additional limitation of Study 1 was that the source of risk was not clearly specified, as only a single-item was used asking for participants' agreement with the statement that the official took a risk voicing his opinion. It is our assumption that participants

¹ This is an unlikely alternative explanation for the effects of criticism given the replication of past findings. Moreover, across conditions, the message was always presented in Hebrew text and this is likely the means by which participants encoded the information, given it is the native language of most Jewish Israelis.

interpreted this to mean personal risk owing to potential backlash from Palestinians, yet it could also be interpreted as risk due to a backlash from Israel (owing to the initial statements confirming the classic Palestinian narrative), or risk due to a weakening of the Palestinian cause in the international community. To address this limitation, we added a detailed measure of risk perceptions to assess each potential source of risk.

Method

Participants

Israeli Jews were recruited and financially compensated for an online study conducted via *Midgam*, an Israeli web-based platform for data collection. Participants who failed an attention check, or who did not complete items for key analyses, were excluded from analyses ($n = 104$). Of the remaining 223 participants, approximately 52% were men with a mean age of 42.2 years ($SD = 15.2$). Politically 54% of the sample identified as right-wing, 26% as centre, and 20% as left-wing.

Procedure

After answering demographic items, participants were presented with a fabricated news interview, purportedly aired by the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation, with the Palestinian Mayor of Beit-Lechem discussing issues of conflict between Israel and Palestine. The interview was recorded in Arabic with Hebrew subtitles. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four combinations of the criticism and risk factors. In the condition without criticism or risk, the mayor was asked to comment on issues related to water sharing and compensation for Palestinian refugees, to which he responded in accordance with the Palestinian narrative (content identical to the control condition of study 1). This portion of the interview provided the foundation for all other conditions. Conditions with criticism included an additional question and answer in which the mayor was asked to reflect on the historical pattern of violence directed against Israelis by Palestinians, to which the Mayor voiced internal criticism of Palestinians (identical to the criticism condition of study 1). Conditions with risk included, at the end of the interview, a statement by the interviewer highlighting the personal risk undertaken by the Mayor:

Interviewer: Interesting that you say this, we know that you are finishing up your term as Mayor and that you hope to continue for a second term. Are you not worried that sharing this perspective comes at great political cost? And that you may put your political career at risk?

Mayor: I cannot control this, I have to simply speak my mind.

Conditions without risk or without criticism were presented as empty controls. Following the interview, participants completed a series of measures assessing key constructs for the study. Participants were then debriefed and compensated for participation.

Measures

Measures for political orientation, credibility ($\alpha = .94$), perceived openness of the outgroup ($\alpha = .94$), hope ($\alpha = .76$), and openness to the Palestinian narrative ($\alpha = .89$) were identical to those included in Study 1. Political orientation was included as a

covariate in all analyses. It did not interact with the other predictors or significantly alter the pattern of findings when excluded from analyses.

Risk source

Participants responded to a series of items assessing the extent to which they perceived the source of the risk to be from Palestinians (Palestinians will not be happy to hear the mayor voice this perspective; the Palestinian mayor risks losing his influence among Palestinians/being the target of violence from other Palestinians; $\alpha = .88$), Israelis (Israelis would not be happy to hear the mayor voice this perspective; the Palestinian mayor risks increasing tensions with Israel/being rejected by Israeli authorities/opening Palestine up to increased financial hardship by Israeli authorities; $\alpha = .75$), and the international community (the international community will not be happy to hear the mayor voice this perspective; the Palestinian Mayor risks weakening the Palestinian cause with the international community; $\alpha = .37$).

Results and Discussion

Replicating the effects of internal criticism

We first sought to again replicate the mediation model presented by Saguy and Halperin (2014) in which criticism (collapsed across risk) (X) predicts greater openness to the outgroup's perspective (Y) indirectly through an increase in the perception that the outgroup is open-minded (M1) and an increase in hope for future intergroup relations (M2). Results revealed a significant indirect path (full indirect path: $b = 0.05$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.12]) providing a replication of our findings from Study 1 and those presented by Saguy and Halperin (see Figure 1). This indirect path was not significant when the order of the mediators was switched.

Sources of risk

We then examined the extent to which the criticism and risk manipulations influence perceptions of the risk taken by the Mayor, and in particular, what type of risk is affected by the manipulations. To examine this, we used the SPSS Macro, PROCESS (moderation model 1; 10,000 bootstrap samples) (Hayes, 2013). The criticism condition was entered as the independent variable and risk as the moderator variable. Variables were mean-centred within the macro to produce the interaction term. The model was repeated for three measures of risk: perceived risk from Palestinians, perceived risk from Israelis, and perceived risk from the international community.

Risk from Palestinians

This model produced a main effect of criticism ($b = 1.73$, $SE = .19$, $t(218) = 9.01$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.35, 2.11]) and risk ($b = 0.41$, $SE = .19$, $t(218) = 2.11$, $p = .036$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.79]), but no interaction between the two. As expected, exposure to the Palestinian Mayor voicing internal criticism increased the perception that the Mayor would experience backlash from Palestinians ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.40$) relative to when no criticism was voiced ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.51$). A similar effect was obtained for the risk manipulation such that participants expected more backlash from Palestinians when the

interviewer highlighted the political risk undertaken by the speaker owing to his pursuit of a second term as mayor ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.74$) than when no statement of risk was made ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.61$). The manipulation of criticism had a very large effect on the perceptions of risk ($d = 1.01$) whereas the effect of the risk manipulation was much smaller ($d = 0.18$). These findings imply that, although the risk manipulation was effective in increasing perceived risk, it was relatively weak in comparison with the risk fostered by the criticism manipulation. Moreover, the lack of an interaction between the two implies that little predictive power is gained by adding the statement of risk to the criticism manipulation.

Risk from Israelis

This model produced a main effect of criticism ($b = -0.61$, $SE = .17$, $t(218) = -3.48$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [-0.95, -0.26]) but no main effect of risk, and no interaction between the two. This effect was reversed such that participants exposed to the Mayor's internal criticism expected that he would receive *less* backlash from Israelis ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.25$) than those who were not exposed to the criticism ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.34$; $d = 0.45$).

Risk from the international community

This model did not produce a main effect of criticism or risk, and no interaction between the two. Given the low reliability of this two-item scale, the analysis was also conducted separately for each item. Neither model produced any significant effects.

Summary

These findings imply that the criticism manipulation is primarily affecting perceptions of risk for the speaker via the perception that Palestinians may retaliate against the speaker for his criticism. This lends credibility to the explanation offered in Study 1, namely that participants who agreed that 'the speaker took a risk voicing his perspective' were envisioning backlash from Palestinians. Indeed, the original risk item from Study 1 was strongly correlated with risk from Palestinians ($r = .65$, $p < .001$), but much less so with risk from the international community ($r = .19$, $p = .005$), and not at all with risk from Israelis ($r = -.08$, $p = .242$).

The moderating role of risk

Although the risk manipulation produced only a small effect on perceptions of risk, we examined the key prediction that the influence of the criticism manipulation would be moderated by risk such that criticism would be especially effective in promoting openness to the Palestinian narrative when the risk of the statement was amplified. To examine this, the criticism and risk manipulations were entered as predictors of participants' openness to the Palestinian narrative.

This analysis produced a marginal main effect of criticism ($b = 0.32$, $SE = .18$, $t(218) = 1.72$, $p = .087$, 95% CI [-0.05, 0.68]), but no effect of risk, and no interaction between the two. Although not significant, these findings conceptually replicate the pattern of findings from our study 1 and those of Saguy and Halperin (2014) such that individuals exposed to the Mayor's internal criticism expressed greater openness to the

Palestinian narrative of the conflict ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.57$) relative to when no criticism was expressed ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.45$; $d = 0.21$).

However, these findings fail to support the primary prediction that the manipulation of risk would amplify the influence of criticism. This does not mean that risk is not an important mechanism contributing to the effectiveness of the criticism manipulation. As demonstrated above, criticism produced a very large effect on perceptions of risk. This signals the possibility that risk is such an integral component to the criticism manipulation that attempts to amplify it may not be effective, and are therefore unlikely to produce additional gains in predictive power for key outcomes. In other words, the role that risk plays may be better described as that of a mediator such that criticism directly conveys an increase in risk that fosters a stronger perception of the speaker as credible, which subsequently predicts intergroup openness.

The mediating role of risk

To examine whether risk plays a mediating role in predicting intergroup openness, a serial mediation model was analysed in which the influence of the criticism manipulation (X) on participants' openness to the Palestinian narrative (Y) was examined through the indirect influence of two serial mediators: participants' perception of the risk to the speaker from Palestinians (M1), and the perceived credibility of the speaker (M2). Results revealed a significant indirect path (full indirect path: $b = 0.14$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI [0.06, 0.27]) providing evidence for a mediational process in which the criticism manipulation is directly associated with an increase in perceived risk to the speaker from Palestinians; that this risk is associated with an increase in perceived credibility of the speaker and that this credibility is associated with greater openness to the Palestinian perspective (see Figure 2). The indirect path of the mediation model was not significant when the order of the mediators was switched.

Complementary mediating mechanisms

As in Study 1, because we view the two mediation models as complementary processes, we again combined the mediators into one large serial mediation model in which the influence of the criticism manipulation (X) on participants' openness to the Palestinian narrative (Y) was examined through the indirect influence of four serial mediators: participants' perception of the risk to the speaker from Palestinians (M1), the perceived credibility of the speaker (M2), perception of the outgroup as open-minded (M3), and hope for improved future relations between Israel and Palestine (M4). Results revealed a significant indirect mediational pathway (full indirect path: $b = 0.03$, $SE = .01$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.06]). These results are consistent with the argument that the criticism manipulation is effective owing both to the credibility it lends to the speaker, and the subsequent attitudinal change and emotional response evoked.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In the context of tense and hostile intergroup conflict, a key barrier to conflict resolution is the rigid adherence to negative intergroup attitudes and emotions (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2009). Simply exposing participants to messages of positivity from the outgroup (e.g., praise of Israel) is unlikely to be effective in unfreezing such attitudes given the high levels of distrust between groups. Research by Saguy and Halperin (2014) has shown that one

means of unfreezing these negative attitudes is to expose participants to internal criticism from an outgroup member. The key contributions of the current research are (1) the replication of these findings and (2) the introduction of a new explanatory mechanism for why criticism is effective.

The role of risk

Across two studies, results provided the most support for a mediating role of risk, relative to a moderating role. Both an attempt to indirectly manipulate risk (via ingroup or outgroup audience) as well as a direct manipulation of risk (via explicit statement of risk) failed to appreciably alter perceptions of the risk taken by the speaker. This may be due to the high degree of overlap in the perception of risk that stems from hearing an outgroup member voice internal criticism. The risk in this action appears to already be quite high such that manipulations aimed at increasing the risk will have little comparative effect. This may be particularly true in contexts where hostility and violence between groups are extreme, making criticism an especially risky endeavour. In contrast, modelling the role of risk as a mediator produced a significant indirect effect in both studies.

We present evidence consistent with the idea that internal criticism side-steps the pitfall presented by distrust between groups because it carries a positive message (i.e., we are open-minded) that is perceived as credible because it is expressed at great risk to the speaker. Individuals who express dissent from their ingroup, or engage in deviant behaviour from the norms of the ingroup, open themselves up to the risk of derogation by their peers and possibly exclusion from the group. Although such behaviour may be tolerated under some circumstances, when it is expressed in a setting that makes the group vulnerable to the outgroup, that is, when it is displayed publicly, it is especially likely to be met with negative repercussions (Elder *et al.*, 2005; Hornsey *et al.*, 2005). Recognition of the inherent risk in the act of internal criticism elevates the credibility of the speaker, allowing for the breakdown of entrenched negative attitudes and emotions.

Results of the two studies are generally supportive of these claims. Jewish Israeli participants exposed to a Palestinian authority figure voicing internal criticism perceived that the speaker took a risk voicing that perspective (in particular, owing to the potential for backlash from the Palestinian community). That risk predicted participants' perception that speaker was honest and genuine. This positive and credible message contradicts the belief that the outgroup is incapable of change, and as a result fosters the alternative perception that the outgroup is open-minded. Breaking down this attitude paves the way for a new emotional response, hope, which can be a powerful force in guiding action. Accordingly, those individuals feeling more hopeful about the future for Israel and Palestine reported a greater openness to engaging with the outgroup and their narrative of the conflict. This openness is an essential component of any bottom-up approach to conflict resolution.

Future directions

These findings replicate and add to a promising foundation of research on the role that internal criticism can play in fostering intergroup openness. Future research should continue to investigate the role of risk. In the current research, we were unable to effectively manipulate risk perceptions beyond what was already associated with the criticism. To more clearly illustrate the causal role of risk, future research may aim to

reduce the risk conveyed by the criticism. For example, the risk may be reduced if the criticism is conveyed privately, rather than publicly. Although we note that such a manipulation may increase the credibility of the message despite the reduced risk, as individuals have little reason to lie when communicating privately with trusted ingroup members. Another means of altering risk may be to reduce the status of the speaker. The speaker's position of authority may be an essential feature of the design such that criticism from less powerful individuals, or individuals who are less representative of the outgroup, may have a weakened effect.

Additional research is also needed to more clearly understand the boundary conditions of the effect. For example, the manipulation may not be effective for those who possess very low levels of intergroup trust. Members of subordinate groups may have especially low levels of intergroup trust and may interpret internal criticism as a strategic manipulation. Finally, it is important to examine whether these effects extend to behavioural outcomes, both those that are directly related to the conflict (e.g., voting behaviour in an election) and those which are more interpersonal in nature (e.g., helping an outgroup member in need). Although more research is certainly needed, these findings suggest that intergroup negotiations and interactions may be more successful if each involved party recognizes the faults and mistakes made by their own group.

Conclusions

The research by Saguy and Halperin (2014) was the first research to examine the impact of internal criticism by an outgroup member. There is much work to be carried out to establish the validity of the effect, as well as understanding the underlying mechanisms. Here, we provide the first replications of their findings and document the critical role of risk in contributing to the effectiveness of internal criticism. These results provide an important step in moving this research domain forward.

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