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Promoting intergroup openness and support for equality in a new cultural context: Replicating the effects of internal criticism

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ABSTRACT
Exposure to an outgroup member voicing criticism of his or her own group fosters greater openness to the outgroup’s perspective. Research suggests that this effect owes its influence to a serial process in which participants’ perception of the risk involved in voicing internal criticism leads to an increase in the perceived credibility of the speaker. The credibility makes it possible for the speaker to be viewed as open-minded, which subsequently inspires greater hope. This process culminates in an increased openness to the outgroup. These findings have been restricted to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but here we examine their generalizability to racial conflict in the United States. Results reveal that White Americans exposed to internal criticism expressed by a Black authority figure express greater openness to African-American perspectives on race relations and are more willing to support policies of racial equality. Replicating past research, this effect is serially mediated by risk, credibility, and hope.

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Credibility; criticism; culture; hope; intergroup relations; intervention; openness; prejudice; risk

The development of interventions to reduce conflict between groups is a difficult task. Each conflict presents a unique history and set of challenges. Ideal psychological interventions are robust to changes in the intergroup context. Here we test the cross-cultural generalizability of an intervention that has been demonstrated to be both a powerful predictor of intergroup openness as well as a replicable effect within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (McDonald, Brindley, Halperin, & Saguy, 2018; Saguy & Halperin, 2014).

Individuals who express criticism or dissent from their ingroup are often viewed negatively by the members of their own group, particularly if the dissent is made publicly to a rival group (Elder, Sutton, & Douglas, 2005; Hornsey et al., 2005). Ingroup members are likely to feel that such criticism compromises their position in an intergroup conflict. Consequently, the expression of internal criticism is a risky endeavor. Yet, such a message is likely to be received positively by an outgroup member. Saguy and Halperin (2014) were the first to examine how internal criticism is perceived across group lines. In their research, Israeli participants were exposed to a Palestinian authority figure expressing criticism of the violent tactics used by Palestinians. Hearing this criticism engendered a greater willingness to engage with the Palestinian narrative of the conflict (an effect that was mediated by participants’ perception of Palestinians as open-minded) and a subsequent increase in their hope for a more peaceful future.

In an attempt to better understand the underlying mechanisms of this effect, McDonald and colleagues (2018) proposed that the risk involved in one’s expression of internal criticism may play a key role in its effectiveness. A key barrier to conflict resolution is distrust between groups. Positive messages and offers of compromise from the outgroup are likely to be received with suspicion. However, a message of criticism of one’s own group, owing to its inherent risk, may lend credibility to the source of the message. Consistent with this theorizing, across two studies, McDonald et al. replicated the original findings of Saguy and
Halperin (2014) and provided evidence for a new, complementary, mediating mechanism. Specifically, Israeli participants exposed to the internal criticism of a Palestinian perceived that the action of the speaker was risky, which led to an increase in their perception of the speaker’s credibility. This credibility makes it possible for participants to see the speaker as open-minded, which subsequently inspires greater hope for the future. This process culminates in a change in one’s own openness to the outgroup.

The extant research on internal criticism has been isolated to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (McDonald et al., 2018; Saguy & Halperin, 2014). The present research seeks to conceptually replicate these findings in the new cultural context of Blacks and Whites in the United States. This context shares some similarities with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in that it has a long history marked by the oppression of a disadvantaged group. Yet the racial conflict in the United States has not produced a formal declaration of war since its Civil War (1861-1865). Moreover, it is not intertwined with religious ideology or centered on disputes over access to sacred religious sites. As a result, the tense race relations in the United States offer a strong test of the generalizability of the effectiveness of the internal criticism intervention.

McDonald et al. (2018) examined the possibility that risk could play either a mediating or moderating role and found strong evidence for mediation and weak evidence for moderation. A mediating role implies that hearing criticism causes individuals to perceive a high degree of risk, which then has the downstream effect of promoting greater openness to the outgroup. Alternatively, a moderating role of risk implies a causal relationship between criticism and intergroup openness that varies in strength depending on whether individuals perceive the criticism to be risky.

We expected to replicate the mediating role of risk given the findings of past research. These findings suggest that internal criticism and perceived risk are so closely tied to one another that it is difficult to amplify or reduce the impact of the criticism via a manipulation of risk. However, we sought to verify this and therefore included an attempt to directly manipulate the risk taken by the speaker in order to test a moderation model. A measured risk variable was also included in order to test the proposed mediation model.

**Method**

**Participants**

White American Mturk workers were recruited and financially compensated for an online study (payment was $1 for the 20–30 minute long study) that was described as assessing reactions to news events. Participants who failed an attention check were excluded from analyses ($n = 3$). Of the remaining 237 participants, approximately 47% were men, and the average age was 38.6 (SD = 10.48). Anonymized data and the materials to replicate this study are available at: https://osf.io/vk4hp/.

**Procedure**

Study procedure and measures were based closely on McDonald et al. (2018), with changes made only to suit the new cultural context. The study description indicated that participants would read a short article about a recent news event and provide their reactions and opinions on related topics. Participants were randomly assigned to a control condition (no criticism) or one of two criticism conditions. The pure criticism condition included only criticism, and the high-risk criticism condition contained the criticism and an explicit statement about the risk involved in voicing criticism. This manipulation was intended to be quite explicit, owing to past failures to adequately show a moderating effect of amplified risk (McDonald et al., 2018). Participants in all conditions read a news article describing the impact of institutional racism within the United States’ criminal justice system, including acts of extreme police brutality targeting Black Americans. The article then illustrated how some individuals have reacted to the treatment of Black Americans by describing two recent events. Although real events were used, the news article was fabricated to uniquely suit our purposes. In the first, a White police officer, Deputy Darren Goforth, was shot to death by a Black male
suspect in Houston, Texas. The second event occurred at a Black Lives Matter protest in Minnesota the day after the shooting, in which a group of protestors chanted, “Pigs in a blanket, fry ‘em like bacon.”

An alleged quote from Reverend Al Sharpton followed, in which he notes that people of color make up 60% of the American prison and jail population but only 12% of the population, and that this is clear evidence of racial inequality. The article was truncated here for participants in the control condition. In the pure criticism condition, an additional quote from Sharpton was included in which he speaks out against the violence in Texas and Minnesota:

When you look at the big picture, you see that there really is no doubt that we have acted too violently. It is unacceptable to encourage violence against police officers. It reflects a lack of values. It is time that we, as a Black community, find other solutions to this issue, solutions that do not incite more hate, more harm.

In the high-risk criticism condition, an explicit statement of the risk involved was added:

Sharpton speaks out on this issue of violence despite putting himself at great professional and personal risk. Such remarks have the potential to be perceived as ‘airing one’s dirty laundry in public.’ Indeed, Sharpton risks being labeled an outsider and certainly compromises his ability to run for public office in the future.

Following the interview, participants responded to a series of questions assessing the constructs below and an attention check asking them to identify Al Sharpton as the quoted speaker.

**Measures**

All measures were completed online using a 1–7 Likert scale, unless otherwise noted. Participants’ political stance was assessed with a single item, “What is your political orientation?” with response options ranging from extremely conservative to extremely liberal. Political orientation was included as a covariate in the mediation analyses, though the pattern of results was largely unchanged if political orientation was excluded as a covariate.

**Mediators**

To assess participants’ perception of Sharpton’s open-mindedness, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with three statements; for example, “He is open-minded” and “He understands the issue of race relations from both sides” (α = .90). Participants’ hope was assessed by asking participants the extent to which they feel “hope,” “optimism,” and “despair” (reverse coded) when they think about future relations between Blacks and Whites in America (α = .85). To assess participants’ perception of the risk involved in Sharpton’s communication of criticism, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement “Sharpton took a risk voicing his perspective.” To examine participants’ perceptions of Sharpton’s credibility, they were asked the extent to which they thought he was “believable,” “honest,” and “trustworthy” (α = .97).

**Outcomes**

To assess intergroup openness, participants indicated their willingness to engage in five different activities in which they would either be consuming information presenting an African American perspective on race relations (e.g., “How interested are you in attending local talks given by leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement? NAACP?”) or supporting activities to promote racial equality (e.g., “How interested would you be in participating in local, peaceful demonstrations, to support racial equality?; α = .89). As a measure of policy support, participants were asked to report their support for various policies aimed at promoting racial equality, such as requiring police officers to wear body cameras, repeal of mandatory-minimum sentences for non-violent drug offenses, and increased government funding for school districts in low-income communities (policy support; α = .91). Finally, participants were given the opportunity to sign a petition formalizing their support for ending procedural racial profiling by law enforcement (i.e., behavioral support; 0 = no, 1 = yes).
Results

Preliminary analysis

To examine the influence of the risk manipulation, we first conducted a univariate ANOVA on all continuous outcomes, with condition (control, pure criticism, high-risk criticism) as the independent variable. As a manipulation check, we first examined the impact of condition on participants’ perceptions of risk taken by the speaker. Results revealed a significant effect of condition, $F(2, 234) = 20.25$, $MSE = 3.30$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc tests (see Table 1) revealed significant differences between the control condition and both the pure criticism, and the high-risk criticism condition, such that Sharpton’s message was perceived as less risky in the control condition than the criticism conditions. Additionally, Sharpton was perceived as engaging in more risk in the high-risk criticism condition compared to the pure criticism condition.

Univariate analyses predicting the mediating variables revealed that the pure criticism and high-risk criticism conditions did not differ in their ability to predict these outcomes. In these analyses, the only significant comparisons were those between the control condition and each criticism condition (see Table 1). Examining the impact of the criticism manipulations on the mediators indicated that condition was a significant predictor of perceptions of speaker credibility, $F(2, 234) = 7.82$, $MSE = 2.82$, $p = .001$, speaker open-mindedness, $F(2, 234) = 12.11$, $MSE = 2.57$, $p < .001$, and hope for the future, $F(2, 234) = 12.39$, $MSE = 1.96$, $p < .001$. The post-hoc Bonferroni comparisons indicated that for each of these effects there was a significant difference between the control condition and both the pure criticism, and the high-risk criticism condition, such that Sharpton’s message was perceived as less risky in the control condition than the criticism conditions. Additionally, Sharpton was perceived as engaging in more risk in the high-risk criticism condition compared to the pure criticism condition.

Further examination of the effect of condition on the outcomes indicated a marginally significant effect on political support, $F(2, 234) = 2.71$, $MSE = 1.62$, $p = .068$, and no significant effect of condition on intergroup openness, $F(2, 234) = 2.12$, $MSE = 2.33$, $p = .122$, or on the dichotomous measure of behavioral support, $\chi^2 (2) = .44$, $p = .801$. The post-hoc tests on these outcomes revealed no significant pairwise comparisons.

Table 1. Influence of criticism on mediating and outcome variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator/Outcome</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>$M_{diff}$</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>0–1</td>
<td>-0.79</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>-1.49 to -0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–2</td>
<td>-1.83</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>-2.53 to -1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>-1.74 to -0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–3</td>
<td>-1.31</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>-1.81 to -0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>0–1</td>
<td>-0.89</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-1.54 to -0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–2</td>
<td>-0.93</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>-1.57 to -0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.68 to 0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–3</td>
<td>-0.91</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>-1.37 to -0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker Open-minded</td>
<td>0–1</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>-1.69 to -0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–2</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>-1.71 to -0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.64 to 0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–3</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>-1.52 to -0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>0–1</td>
<td>-0.75</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-1.29 to -0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–2</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>-1.62 to -0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.426</td>
<td>-0.87 to 0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–3</td>
<td>-0.91</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>-1.29 to -0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergroup Openness</td>
<td>0–1</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.525</td>
<td>-0.91 to 0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–2</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>-1.08 to 0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-0.75 to 0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–3</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.525</td>
<td>-0.82 to 0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Support</td>
<td>0–1</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>-0.90 to 0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–2</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>-0.89 to 0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-0.48 to 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–3</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>-0.75 to -0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Conditions coded such that 0 = control, 1 = pure criticism, 2 = high-risk criticism, 3 = collapsed criticism condition.
Although these findings suggest that the high-risk manipulation was effective in increasing perceptions of risk, it is also clear that risk was inherent to the pure criticism condition without any explicit statement of risk. Notably, although perceptions of risk differ between the two experimental conditions, there are no distinguishing downstream consequences of this difference in perceived risk. In other words, both criticism conditions produce differences, relative to the control, in perceptions of speaker credibility, speaker openness, and hope for the future, but the two criticism conditions do not differ from each other in their influence on these outcomes, or in their influence on the outcomes of intergroup openness, policy support, or behavioral support. Thus, the increase in perceived risk in the high-risk criticism condition may be due to demand characteristics owing to the rather explicit statement of risk, but it is clear that this increased risk is not predictive of the outcomes assessed here. Given this, the subsequent analyses collapse the two criticism conditions into one criticism condition.

Main analysis

Univariate models

Having chosen to collapse the two criticism conditions, we repeated the univariate analyses above (control = 0; collapsed criticism = 1) for all mediating and outcome variables (see Table 1). Results indicated a significant effect of condition on risk, $F(1, 235) = 26.23$, MSE $= 3.47$, $p < .001$, credibility, $F(1, 235) = 15.69$, MSE $= 2.81$, $p < .001$, open-mindedness of the speaker, $F(1, 235) = 24.33$, MSE $= 2.56$, $p < .001$, hope, $F(1, 235) = 22.49$, MSE $= 1.97$, $p < .001$, policy support, $F(1, 235) = 5.45$, MSE $= 1.62$, $p = .020$, and a marginal effect on intergroup openness, $F(1, 235) = 3.82$, MSE $= 2.32$, $p = .052$. The effect on behavioral support was not significant, $\chi^2 (1) = .39$, $p = .533$.

Mediating role of openness and hope

To replicate the original mediation model proposed by Saguy and Halperin (2014) and replicated by McDonald and colleagues (2018), we performed a serial mediation analysis (see Figure 1) using the SPSS Macro, PROCESS (model 6, 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2013). The two criticism conditions were collapsed to create a control (0) versus criticism (1) condition that was entered into the model as the independent variable (X) (comparing the control condition to the pure criticism condition alone produced a similar pattern of results for the analyses that follow1). Perceived open-mindedness of Sharpton was entered as the first mediator (M1). Hope was entered as the second mediator (M2). The model was analyzed with three different outcomes (Y): intergroup openness, policy support, and behavioral support.

Conceptually replicating past research, the indirect path from X to Y through each mediator (M1 and M2) was significant for all three outcomes. Participants in the criticism condition, relative to the control condition, perceived Reverend Sharpton as more open-minded, and this perception was associated with increased feelings of hope for future relations between Blacks and Whites in America. This hope, in turn, predicted increases in the key outcomes: openness to the outgroup’s perspective, $b = 0.05$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.12], support for polices that promote racial equality, $b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.08], and more willingness to sign a petition to end racial profiling, $b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.28].

Mediating role of risk

To examine the mediating role of risk perceptions, we conducted a second serial mediation analysis (see Figure 1). The collapsed condition variable (0 = control; 1 = criticism) was entered into the model as the independent variable (X), perceptions of risk as the first mediator (M1), and perceptions of Sharpton’s credibility as the second mediator (M2). The model was analyzed for three separate outcomes (Y): intergroup openness, policy support, and behavioral support. Results revealed a significant indirect path from X to Y through both mediators, for all modeled outcomes: intergroup openness, $b = 0.02$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI [0.001, 0.07], policy support, $b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.09], and behavioral support, $b = 0.09$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.22]. These results are consistent with the prediction that risk acts as a mediator, such that perceived risk is inherent to the criticism manipulation, and that this risk fosters the
perception of a credible message source, thereby exerting a stronger influence on intergroup openness and policy/behavioral support.

**Complementary mediating mechanisms**

Overall, this pattern of findings provides stronger evidence for a mediating role of risk and conceptually replicates findings from past research (McDonald et al., 2018; Saguy & Halperin, 2014). We next examined whether the two mediation processes could be combined into a single serial mediation. This is based on the assumption that the two are complementary but varying in their position in the (presumed) causal chain. To test this hypothesis, a third serial mediation analysis was conducted in which risk (M1), credibility (M2), the perception of Sharpton’s open-mindedness (M3), and hope (M4) were entered as serial mediators of the criticism. Results revealed a non-significant indirect path for each outcome. Examination of the individual paths in the serial mediation suggested that credibility was not a significant predictor of perceived openness of the speaker. Adjusting the model to exclude open-mindedness as a mediator (see Figure 1), however, did produce a significant indirect effect for all models: intergroup openness, $b = 0.01, SE = 0.01, 95\% \text{ CI}[0.002, 0.03]$, policy support, $b = 0.01, SE = 0.004, 95\% \text{ CI}[0.001, 0.02]$, and behavioral support, $b = 0.02, SE = 0.01, 95\% \text{ CI}[0.004, 0.07]$. This suggests that risk and credibility may be key to the effectiveness of the criticism manipulation, and that hope functions as a down-stream emotional antecedent to attitude change and behavioral intention.

**Discussion**

The research reported here examines the influence of an outgroup member’s internal criticism on intergroup openness and support for policies that promote greater intergroup equality. Importantly, this research conceptually replicates past research and expands the cultural context to which the manipulation may be effectively applied, thereby elevating confidence in the robust nature of the manipulation.

One question raised by these findings is whether the effects are driven by an increased perception that the outgroup simply agrees with one’s own perspective of the conflict between groups. One way that we attempt to address this concern is by using a measure of intergroup openness that assesses participants’ openness to
engaging with the outgroup’s perspective of the conflict. If the internal criticism manipulation were only effective because it is increasing participants perception that the outgroup agrees with them, we should not expect to see an increase in their willingness to attend talks given by the NAACP or the Black Lives Matter movement, as the perspective of these groups is likely to differ from their own. Additionally, we note that the first paper to examine the influence of internal criticism (Saguy & Halperin, 2014) conducted a study in which the internal criticism was not relevant to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. That is, the criticism was about a topic that Israelis would have little knowledge of or pre-formed opinions on (i.e., the education system in Palestine). The same pattern of findings was observed as when the criticism was relevant to the conflict (i.e., that Palestinians engage in violent acts against Israelis). This suggests that the effects observed are not likely to be due simply to the perception that the outgroup shares one’s perspective. Another way to address this potential concern, is for future research to include a measure of intergroup bias to determine whether the influence of the manipulation varies as a function of one’s bias.

**The role of risk**

A key aim of this research was to investigate the role of risk as both a potential moderator and mediator of the effects of internal criticism. Consistent with past research (McDonald et al., 2018), we find very little support for a moderating role and strong support for a mediating role. Coupled with the findings reported by McDonald and colleagues (2018), this is the third attempt to augment risk that has not been successful, at least in producing change in key outcome variables. Yet each attempt has also shown that internal criticism produces a strong and reliable increase in risk perceptions. Based on this pattern of findings, we suggest that there may be a “critical threshold” of risk perception that triggers credibility assessments. Internal criticism, on its own, appears to be sufficient to reach this threshold, but additional increases in risk perceptions (if they can be engendered) produce no gains in predictive power for intergroup openness, policy support, or behavioral support. If this is true, we might expect that attempts to augment risk will not be effective, but manipulations that reduce risk may be better equipped to demonstrate the causal role of risk.

Future research may also consider how risk directs the route of processing of the outgroup’s message. In their Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion, Petty and Cacioppo (1986) argue that there are two routes to attitude change, the central route and the peripheral route. The central route entails extensive consideration and elaboration on the message received and is more likely to result in lasting attitude change. The peripheral route relies on heuristics to determine the validity of the message and tends to result only in short-term attitude change. We expect that hearing a message from an outgroup is likely to activate the peripheral route owing to one’s negative bias toward the outgroup. Indeed, Cialdini (1984) described a number of heuristics that people rely on when determining the value of a message; one such heuristic is whether you like the person who is trying to persuade you. Most messages from outgroup members are therefore likely to be discounted as invalid and unpersuasive.

However, internal criticism from the outgroup, owing to the risk involved in its expression, lends credibility to the speaker and his/her message. This is also consistent with the idea that messages are perceived as more credible when the source speaks against their own interest by communicating the message (Moscovici, 1976). Internal criticism may also be particularly useful in promoting attitude change in intergroup contexts because it is unlikely to evoke cognitive dissonance. The message received is unlikely to sharply contrast with one’s existing beliefs, and therefore individuals will not be motivated to reject the message as invalid in order to restore consonance. In this way, the process of attitude change is less direct. This is important because explicit attempts at attitude change can sometimes evoke a reactive response (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009).

The credibility engendered by internal criticism may subsequently be used as a heuristic on its own and produce attitude change in favor of the message. However, given that the message is already likely to confirm existing beliefs of the receiver, the fact that criticism engenders more positive attitudes toward the outgroup following receipt of the message suggests that the credibility may lead them to switch to the more elaborative, central route of processing. This switch may be due to the importance of the issue to the
message receiver. However, knowing which has occurred may require an assessment of the longevity of the attitude change, an important direction for future research. Although these ideas are currently speculative, they provide an excellent jumping-off point for future research.

Conclusion

These findings provide strong support for the generalizability of the influence of internal criticism as a means of promoting intergroup openness across unique cultural contexts. Although future research should continue to test the intervention’s replicability in the United States and other contexts, there is strong promise in the possibility of applying this model in the real world. Parties to a conflict are often reluctant to publicly admit to the real or imagined wrong-doings of their group, likely for fear of making their group vulnerable or compromising their own position within the group. Recognition of the positive effects that this criticism may carry may serve as an important step in opening lines of communication between groups and fostering greater openness to policies that could promote equality for members of disadvantaged groups.

Notes

1. All analyses were also conducted excluding the high-risk criticism condition and comparing instead only the control and pure criticism condition. This produced a very similar pattern across the three sets of mediation models. Some of the models did drop to non-significance at the .05 alpha level, however, relaxing the confidence intervals to 90% (α = .10) produced significant effects in all but one of nine tests of mediation.

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