



Thinking about Mutual Influences and Connections across Cultures Relates to More Positive Intergroup Attitudes: An Examination of Polyculturalism

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Abstract

Polyculturalism is an ideology focusing on the many ways that racial and ethnic groups have interacted, exchanged ideas, and influenced each other's cultures throughout history and into the present. In this paper, we first briefly review the introduction of and research on polyculturalism by historians. Then we summarize numerous studies with racially and ethnic diverse college students and adult community members in the United States, which have found that greater endorsement of polyculturalism is significantly associated with more positive racial/ethnic intergroup attitudes (less support for social inequality, greater interest in, appreciation for, and comfort with diversity and differences, greater interest in intergroup contact, and greater support for liberal immigration and affirmative action policies) and lower sexual prejudice (lower affective prejudice toward gay men and lesbians, traditional heterosexism, and denial of discrimination against homosexuals, and more positive attitudes toward gay men and lesbians). We conclude by discussing several future directions of this work.

All of us, and I mean ALL of us, are the inheritors of European, African, Native American, and even Asian pasts, even if we can't exactly trace our blood lines to all of these continents. (Kelley, 1999; p. 81)

Culture cannot be bounded and people cannot be asked to respect 'culture' as if it were an artifact, without life or complexity. Social interaction and struggle produces cultural worlds, and these are in constant, fraught formation. Our cultures are linked in more ways than we could catalog, and it is from these linkages that we hope our politics will be energized. (Prashad, 2001; p. 148)

Each of these quotations from historians Kelley and Prashad captures "polyculturalism", which is an ideology focusing on the many ways that racial and ethnic groups have interacted, exchanged ideas, and influenced each others' cultures throughout history and into the present. In this paper, we briefly trace through the introduction of and research on polyculturalism by historians and then describe recent social psychological research findings from a series of studies in the United States examining the associations that endorsement of polyculturalism has with intergroup attitudes, including racial/ethnic attitudes and sexual prejudice. We suggest that the continued interdisciplinary study of polyculturalism will add to a fuller understanding of intergroup attitudes and relations.

What Is Polyculturalism?

While polycultural ideas, or the recognition of cross-cultural interactions and influences, may have long been understood, historian Robin D. G. Kelley (1999) introduced the term "polyculturalism". Both Kelley (1999) and Vijay Prashad (2001, 2003), also an historian, presented evidence of the many interactions and cultural influences among many different

racial and ethnic groups. They documented both historical and contemporary examples of cross-cultural influences, including influences that were a result of both positive and negative interactions among groups, and they suggested that more attention be paid to such cross-cultural influence. The first quotation above is taken from Kelley's (1999) essay "The People in Me", in which Kelley describes the complexity involved in answering the question posed to him – "So, what are you?" Kelley suggests that we as individuals are all diverse or polycultural because we are "products of different 'cultures' – living cultures, not dead ones. These cultures live in and through us every day, with almost no self-consciousness about hierarchy or meaning". Thus, Kelley suggests that it may be oversimplified or inaccurate to define ourselves or identify with simply one group or culture, when we all are deeply influenced by other cultures and have polycultural roots. Prashad (2001) also argues the importance of paying attention to cross-cultural contact and influences instead of emphasizing cultural distinctiveness. In his book *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (2001), from which the second quotation above is taken, Prashad presents historical evidence of the ways that Kung Fu, often thought of as a uniquely or solely Asian cultural product, has African roots as well and has been influenced and changed over time by many cultures from around the world.

Other scholars have provided historical examples of polyculturalism in other settings, giving further support to this way of studying and understanding history. For example, Flint (2006) presented evidence of the ways that contemporary medical practices in South Africa have been greatly influenced by and combined the practices of both Zulu and Indian peoples and cultures. Additionally, there is work across disciplines exemplifying polyculturalism, even when not using the actual term. For instance, a book by Hooks and Mesa-Bains (2006), *Homegrown: Engaged Cultural Criticism*, engages in a discussion of the ways that Black and Latino peoples are more connected through shared history and culture than many people recognize, which they bring to light in discussions about family, religion, art, and political movements, among other things.

There are many other examples of polyculturalism throughout history and in contemporary times. For instance, other notable historical and contemporary examples of polyculturalism are the mutual influences of African, Asian, European, and Indigenous American cultures on music and dance in the Americas including salsa, reggae, hip hop, and jazz. Yet another example of historical and contemporary cross-cultural influences has been on cuisines from all around the world, as produce, spices, and cooking techniques have always been transported, learned, shared, and adapted among many different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups globally, long before chefs began calling their foods "fusion cuisine". Furthermore, many different racial and ethnic groups have communicated and influenced each other during past and current political and social struggles all over the world, such as a part of independence movements, protests against social oppression, and civil rights movements, including for example contemporary struggles to legalize marriage for gay men and lesbian women. These are just a few representative examples.

Studying Polyculturalism from a Social Psychological Perspective: Endorsement of Polyculturalism and its Relationship with Intergroup Attitudes

Drawing on the work of historians Kelley and Prashad, we as social psychologists began to study polyculturalism as an intergroup ideology or belief system held by individuals, which potentially has an important relationship with intergroup attitudes. While polyculturalism is not a popular everyday term, it may be a long-standing belief in countries such as the United States, as people have long recognized cross-cultural influences. We set out to answer

the question of whether people's level of endorsement of polyculturalism (belief that different racial and ethnic groups have interacted and greatly influenced each other's cultures and therefore have many connections to each other) was associated with how positive or negative their intergroup attitudes were.

We hypothesized that because of polyculturalism's focus on the mutual influences and connections among different racial and ethnic groups, people who endorse polyculturalism to a greater extent would view different racial and ethnic groups on a more level or equal playing field as contributors or members of society in a broad sense and believe more in social equality, be more comfortable and appreciative of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and would be more interested in having contact with and getting to know people from diverse backgrounds (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010). First, we developed a scale to measure level of endorsement of polyculturalism. We developed a brief 5-item measure designed to be free of valence, not focusing only on positive interactions among groups, nor only on negative interactions, but simply on interactions in a neutral way. We did this because polyculturalism is not simply about positive interactions but could also include recognition of negative interactions among groups that have resulted in cultural exchange and influences, such as colonization and slavery. A sample item from our measure is "Different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups influence each other" (see full scale in appendix of Rosenthal & Levy, 2012).

After developing the scale, we explored our hypotheses for the relationship of polyculturalism with racial/ethnic attitudes, in a series of studies with racially and ethnically diverse college students and adults (Rosenthal & Levy, 2012). Because polyculturalism is a newly tested ideology in the social psychological literature, in our initial studies, we sought to examine polyculturalism in relation to recognized measures of intergroup attitudes. We also sought to compare polyculturalism to other intergroup ideologies that are well established as relating to racial and ethnic attitudes to see whether polyculturalism emerged as a unique intergroup ideology and would explain a unique amount of variance in intergroup attitudes.

We (Rosenthal & Levy, 2012) tested polyculturalism's associations with racial/ethnic attitudes in comparison to three ideologies that have been compared with polyculturalism and have been investigated as predictors of intergroup attitudes in numerous countries, including Canada, the Netherlands, and the United States (see Esses & Dovidio, 2002; Rosenthal & Levy, 2010; Ryan, Casas, & Thompson, 2010; Verkuyten, 2009; Wolsko, Park, & Judd, 2006). Multiculturalism is essentially an ideology arguing for greater recognition and celebration of the unique contributions of and differences between different racial and ethnic groups' cultures (e.g., Banks, 2004; Berry & Kalin, 1995; Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007; Verkuyten, 2009; Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000; Zirkel, 2008). Polyculturalism, while still recognizing and valuing group memberships and identities, focuses more on the many connections and influences among groups and less on group distinctions. Colorblindness is essentially an ideology arguing for less focus on racial and ethnic group memberships and instead on the commonalities across all people (e.g., how all people living in a country are citizens of that country) or in treating people as individuals without attention to group affiliations (e.g., Correll, Park, & Smith, 2008; Ryan et al., 2007; Wolsko et al., 2000). Polyculturalism, by contrast, does not ignore group memberships, but at the same time focuses on how groups are intertwined with one another through past and current exchanges, interactions, and influences. Assimilation ideology is essentially the ideology that diverse groups should become incorporated into one culture (the dominant culture) such that differences between groups disappear (e.g., Allport, 1954; Ryan et al., 2010; Wolsko et al., 2006; Zárate & Shaw, 2010), which is different from polyculturalism that pushes for a recognition of how many different groups are connected to each other in many domains in

life (e.g., art, culinary practices, literature, medical practices, music) but are not subsumed into only one group or culture.

In order to test that polyculturalism is indeed a distinct ideology, we had participants complete a variety of established measures of the aforementioned ideologies and then used factor analyses to test whether polyculturalism was distinct from the other intergroup ideologies. Factor analyses across the four studies (approximately 1400 total participants) including items from our measure of polyculturalism (Studies 1–4; Rosenthal & Levy, 2012), our measures of colorblindness and multiculturalism (Studies 1–3, scales also designed to be free of valence), and others' measures of colorblindness (Study 4; Ryan et al., 2010), multiculturalism (Study 4; Ryan et al., 2010; Ryan et al.'s, 2010 adaptation of Berry & Kalin, 1995; Wolsko et al., 2006), and assimilation ideology (Study 4; Ryan et al.'s, 2010 adaptation of Berry & Kalin, 1995; Wolsko et al., 2006) supported polyculturalism as a distinct ideology, with the expected four factors emerging and items designed to measure each ideology loading on its distinct factor.

Testing the Association between Polyculturalism and Racial/Ethnic Attitudes

The first study examining polyculturalism's association with racial/ethnic attitudes involved a sample of nearly 700 racially and ethnically diverse college students (including Asian, Black, Latino, White, and Other/Mixed Americans) in Long Island, New York (Rosenthal & Levy, 2012), which allowed us to examine potential mean differences in endorsement of polyculturalism by race/ethnicity of participants, or potential differences in the relationships that polyculturalism has with racial/ethnic attitudes. In this sample, there were no mean differences by racial/ethnic group in level of endorsement of polyculturalism, with general endorsement across groups being high (overall mean of 5.8 on scale of 1–7, indicating being close to "Agree", which is a 6 on the scale).

To examine the relationships that polyculturalism had with intergroup attitudes, we used regression analyses, which allowed us to statistically control for the contributions of endorsement of multiculturalism and colorblindness. In these analyses, we found that, consistent with our hypotheses, endorsement of polyculturalism was significantly associated with greater support for social equality, greater interest in, appreciation for, and comfort with diversity and differences, as well as greater interest in having intergroup contact.

We also ran the same regression analyses separately for Asian, Black, Latino, and White American participants, and we found that the relationships that polyculturalism had with the intergroup attitudes mentioned above were significant for all racial/ethnic groups. This suggests that polyculturalism is associated with more positive intergroup attitudes among all racial/ethnic groups. Finally, we also ran regression analyses controlling for two other well-established ideologies from the intergroup relations literature that were included in this study, social dominance orientation (general support for social inequality and hierarchy; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) and right-wing authoritarianism (tendency toward submissiveness to authorities, aggressiveness toward social deviants, and conventionalism; Altemeyer, 2006; Duckitt, & Sibley, 2007). Controlling for these powerful predictors of intergroup attitudes did not change the results for polyculturalism, suggesting that polyculturalism explains a unique amount of variability in intergroup attitudes.

We next sought a community sample so that we could test polyculturalism's associations with intergroup attitudes among a wider age range of adults and with a wider range of educational experiences, thus beginning to address the generalizability of our initial findings. This second study involved a sample of over 100 community adults in the Long Island and New York City areas of New York (Rosenthal & Levy, 2012). In regression analyses, while controlling for the contributions of multiculturalism and colorblindness, we found again that

endorsement of polyculturalism was significantly associated with greater support for social equality, and greater interest in, appreciation for, and comfort with differences and diversity. There were no differences in level of endorsement of polyculturalism between White and Black American participants; however, we did find that polyculturalism's association with greater interest in and appreciation for diversity was significant only for White American participants.

Next, we aimed to replicate our results outside of the diverse New York area and used an established survey center to conduct brief telephone surveys with adults living all across the United States. We collected data with only Black and White Americans, focusing on the two groups that have a history of strained relations and that have therefore been the focus of abundant prior work on intergroup relations in the United States. This third study (Rosenthal & Levy, 2012) involved approximately 100 Black and White American adults, who were even more diverse in many ways than our previous two samples (e.g., socioeconomic status, political affiliation, education level, etc.). In regression analyses, while controlling for the contributions of multiculturalism and colorblindness, we replicated the finding that endorsement of polyculturalism was significantly associated with greater support for social equality, greater interest in, appreciation for, and comfort with differences and diversity, and we also found it to be associated with greater support for liberal immigration (legalizing the status of all undocumented immigrants currently in the United States) and affirmative action (in schools and workplaces) policies. We replicated the finding of no differences in level of endorsement of polyculturalism between White and Black American participants, and we also again found that polyculturalism's association with greater interest in diversity was significant only for White American participants.

We then conducted another study with a large racially/ethnically diverse college sample, in which we were able to administer a longer survey and thus examine multiple measures of comparison intergroup ideologies and attitudes. This fourth study involved a sample of 500 racially and ethnically diverse college students in Long Island, New York (Rosenthal & Levy, 2012). As in our previous studies, regression analyses controlling for multiculturalism, colorblindness, and assimilation ideology revealed that endorsement of polyculturalism was significantly associated with greater support for social equality, greater appreciation for and comfort with diversity and differences, and lower evaluative bias (or greater willingness for having contact with people from different racial/ethnic backgrounds). In only this study, we found a significant racial/ethnic difference in endorsement of polyculturalism, with Black American participants endorsing it to the greatest extent of all groups.

The results of these four studies support polyculturalism as a unique intergroup ideology that has unique associations with intergroup attitudes. Results demonstrate fairly consistent positive associations that endorsement of polyculturalism has with racial/ethnic attitudes across different samples in the United States, although mostly in New York. Across studies, there were generally no mean differences by racial/ethnic group in level of endorsement of polyculturalism, which is noteworthy because prior work on other relevant ideologies has shown more consistent differences, such as more advantaged groups (e.g., White Americans) being more likely to endorse colorblindness and less advantaged groups (e.g., Black Americans) being more likely to endorse multiculturalism (e.g., Ryan et al., 2007, 2010). Polyculturalism seems to appeal to diverse groups of people. This, together with the mostly consistent findings that the relationships that polyculturalism has with intergroup attitudes were significant across racial/ethnic groups, suggests that polyculturalism could be a universally held belief with shared positive benefits. These results are promising and encouraged us to continue to study the associations of polyculturalism with intergroup attitudes in other realms.

Testing the Association between Polyculturalism and Sexual Prejudice

In addition to issues of racial/ethnic prejudice and conflict being of great concern in diverse societies throughout the world, there are also concerns about other forms of intergroup prejudice and conflict, including based on sexual orientation. Intergroup ideologies, such as multiculturalism and colorblindness, have at times been discussed as having implications for other forms of prejudice besides racial and ethnic prejudice, including sexual prejudice or sexism, but for the most part, these other implications have not been studied. After finding that polyculturalism is associated with more positive racial and ethnic intergroup attitudes, we were interested in testing whether it could also be associated with lower sexual prejudice. Prashad (2001) suggested that if people think of cultures as separate from each other and unchanging – essentially the opposite of polyculturalism – that “we’d have to accept homophobia and sexism, class cruelty and racism, all in the service of being respectful to someone’s perverse definition of a culture” (p. xi). We hypothesized that because polyculturalism involves a focus on the ways that different racial and ethnic groups have interacted and influenced each other’s cultures and therefore cultures are constantly changing, then the more people endorse polyculturalism, the less protective or possessive they might be of elements of their culture that are thought of as traditional or customary, and the more they might be open to criticizing elements of their culture that marginalize or discriminate against some groups of people, such as homosexuals. Therefore, we hypothesized that through the mechanism of greater openness to criticizing one’s own culture, endorsement of polyculturalism would be associated with lower sexual prejudice.

We tested our hypothesis about the association between polyculturalism and sexual prejudice in three studies with racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse college students and community adults in the United States (Rosenthal, Levy, & Moss, 2012). The first study involved a sample of over 300 college students in Long Island, New York. In regression analyses, while controlling for relevant ideologies (multiculturalism, colorblindness, and social dominance orientation), we found that endorsement of polyculturalism was significantly associated with more positive or “warm” ratings of gay men. Controlling for gender or race of participant did not change the results for polyculturalism, and neither gender nor race was a significant moderator of the relationship that polyculturalism had with affective prejudice toward gay men.

The second study involved a sample of over 200 college students in Long Island, New York, and we again controlled for relevant ideologies (multiculturalism, colorblindness), as well other variables that could potentially confound the relationship of polyculturalism with sexual prejudice, including conservatism and ethnic identification (e.g., Haslam & Levy, 2006; Herek, 1988; Tremble, Schneider, & Appathurai, 1989). Polyculturalism was significantly associated with more positive (or warm) ratings of lesbian women (non-significant trend for gay men), lower traditional heterosexism, and less denial of discrimination against homosexuals. There was a non-significant trend for polyculturalism to be associated with greater support for gay marriage. In this study, we also found evidence for one hypothesized mechanism through which polyculturalism may be related to sexual prejudice and potentially other marginalized groups; that is, as hypothesized, endorsement of polyculturalism was significantly associated with greater openness to criticizing one’s own culture, and that this greater openness significantly mediated the relationships that polyculturalism had with ratings of lesbian women, traditional heterosexism, and denial of discrimination against homosexuals. As found in the previous study, controlling for gender or race of participant did not change the results for polyculturalism, and gender was not a significant moderator of any of the relationships that polyculturalism had with the sexual prejudice measures. However, we did find that the

relationships that polyculturalism had with traditional heterosexism and denial of discrimination against homosexuals were significant for non-White, but not White American participants, suggesting polyculturalism may have a stronger relationship with some forms of sexual prejudice for non-White Americans than White Americans. Also, the association that polyculturalism had with attitudes toward lesbian women was stronger for people higher in ethnic identification, suggesting that polyculturalism may play a stronger role in some sexual prejudice attitudes for those who have stronger ethnic identification and therefore may be more influenced by traditional beliefs that discriminate against homosexuals.

In another follow-up study, we sought a more diverse sample in terms of education and socioeconomic background so as to get a better sense of the generalizability of the findings. The third study involving a sample of nearly 200 community adults in the Long Island, New York area (Rosenthal et al., 2012), replicated the finding that greater endorsement of polyculturalism was significantly associated with less negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women, as well as greater openness to criticizing one's own culture, and that greater openness significantly mediated the relationships that polyculturalism had with attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women. Again, controlling for gender or race did not change the results, and neither gender nor race was a significant moderator of the relationships that polyculturalism had with the sexual prejudice variables. These studies supported hypotheses that polyculturalism, an ideology focusing on interactions and influences among racial and ethnic groups, is associated not just with more positive racial/ethnic attitudes, but also more positive attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. These findings suggest that polyculturalism potentially has far-reaching implications for intergroup relations and attitudes, and suggest many interesting future steps for continuing to study polyculturalism.

Testing the Association between Polyculturalism and Sexism

Building on our reasoning for and findings supporting the hypothesis that polyculturalism is associated with lower sexual prejudice, we are currently investigating the association between polyculturalism and sexism (Rosenthal, Levy, & Militano, forthcoming). Because endorsement of polyculturalism means focusing on the ways that different racial and ethnic groups have interacted and influenced each other's cultures and therefore cultures are constantly changing, we hypothesized that greater endorsement of polyculturalism would be associated with less sexist attitudes, mediated by greater openness to criticizing elements of one's culture that may promote inequality between men and women. Across four studies, we have thus far found that greater endorsement of polyculturalism is significantly associated with less sexist attitudes, even while controlling for other important and relevant variables, including colorblindness, conservatism, essentialism (both gender and race), gender, gender identification, multiculturalism, race/ethnicity, racial/ethnic identification, right-wing authoritarianism, and social dominance orientation. Results also suggest that greater openness to criticizing one's own culture partially mediates the association between greater endorsement of polyculturalism and less sexist attitudes (Rosenthal et al., forthcoming). Moreover, results from a longitudinal study thus far indicate that greater endorsement of polyculturalism at the very beginning of college predicts less sexism about one year later among diverse undergraduates (Rosenthal et al., forthcoming).

Next Steps for Studying Polyculturalism

The first wave of social psychological research on polyculturalism described above suggests that it is widely endorsed across racial and ethnic groups, as well as across all of our different samples, which were diverse in terms of gender, age, socioeconomic status, education level,

and residential area of the United States. We found fairly consistently that greater endorsement of polyculturalism was associated with more positive intergroup attitudes, including general social equality beliefs and measures specific to several different social categories, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender. It seems that when people focus more on the dynamic connections among different racial and ethnic groups' cultures due to interactions and influences, they have more positive social attitudes.

How Generalizable Are the Findings on Polyculturalism?

Our work on polyculturalism is still in relatively infancy stages. Our findings thus far are encouraging, but we recognize the relatively limited samples, contexts, and measures. Below we suggest some future directions but also acknowledge that one of the most important future steps involves testing the generalizability of our findings among different samples in different parts of the United States and around the world. Because polyculturalism is a belief about the interconnections among different groups throughout history and in contemporary times, it is a belief that is relevant to the study of intergroup attitudes and relations all around the world. Also, given continued intergroup strife along with increasing globalization, the study of polyculturalism outside the United States seems to be a worthwhile and important future step.

Should the Study of Polyculturalism Replace the Study of Other Intergroup Ideologies?

Polyculturalism seems to be an ideology that can be studied in relation or in addition to other ideologies and belief systems for understanding intergroup attitudes and may add an important piece. We do not suggest that the study of polyculturalism should replace the study of other ideologies, such as multiculturalism or colorblindness. Across studies, our findings suggest that polyculturalism explains unique variance in intergroup attitudes, but that studying multiple ideologies simultaneously may help us understand the way belief systems contribute to attitudes in a more complex and complete way (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010). For example, we have found endorsement of polyculturalism to be positively correlated with endorsement of multiculturalism (Rosenthal & Levy, 2012), and other work has found endorsement of multiculturalism to be positively associated with endorsement of colorblindness (Ryan et al., 2007). Researchers themselves have often pitted ideologies against each other, such as multiculturalism and colorblindness, and while theoretically these ideologies may seem to contradict each other, in studying people's endorsement of them, it becomes apparent that these are not necessarily opposing ideologies in people's thoughts, but may work together or complementarily, and can even be positively associated with each other. People endorse multiple belief systems in their world. After all, belief systems are taught in one's environment, such as by the mass media, communities, parents, peers, and teachers, and therefore people are constantly exposed to many messages reflecting different belief systems. People learn and endorse multiple belief systems likely because each belief system has qualities that make it relevant and worthwhile to an individual's understanding of the surrounding world, and so it may not be realistic or useful to suggest that one belief system or ideology would replace all others anyway. Future work that continues to study multiple ideologies or belief systems simultaneously may reveal more complex and dynamic ways that people learn, think about, and use beliefs to formulate, justify, or understand their own prejudice and intergroup attitudes, and polyculturalism may be an important ingredient for this future work to consider.

Can Polyculturalism Be Fostered to Improve Intergroup Relations?

Intergroup ideologies like multiculturalism and colorblindness are often discussed in terms of their potential for being taught or emphasized in settings such as schools or workplaces, for example in educational curricula or policy in order to improve or foster positive intergroup relations (e.g., Banks, 2004; Zirkel, 2008). We have suggested that it might be possible to use the insights of research on multiple ideologies – polyculturalism, multiculturalism, and colorblindness – to inform curricula, extra-curricular activities, or other educational policies that may foster improved intergroup relations across age groups (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010). Application of polyculturalism in educational settings would include curricula and lesson plans that incorporate discussion of interactions, influences, and connections among diverse groups across and within different countries and societies. Such curricula and lesson plans need not be limited to history classes. For example, an art class could include a discussion of how interactions and influences from diverse individuals and cultures at a particular time created or contributed to a particular style of art. As another example, an English class could include a discussion of the cross-cultural literary influences that have contributed to different styles and works of literature.

The educational applications of polyculturalism seem to be a worthwhile future area of inquiry, although more research is needed with more samples, in more settings, and specifically addressing issues of causality. Our correlational data to date do not allow us to establish the causal direction of the relationship between endorsement of polyculturalism and intergroup attitudes. The use of experimental methods in tightly controlled settings is critically important to establish the direction of effects for polyculturalism and intergroup attitudes. As one possibility, future work could manipulate polyculturalism by providing written, visual, or other exposure to examples of polyculturalism (e.g., in different types of art, cuisine, dance, medicine, music) to see if exposure to those examples or information results in improved intergroup attitudes or behaviors. It will be important to explore whether exposure to examples of polyculturalism need to be specific to one's own racial/ethnic group, or whether any examples from any culture can increase endorsement of polyculturalism and thereby improve intergroup attitudes.

As mentioned previously, we are currently conducting longitudinal work in which we are assessing endorsement of polyculturalism and intergroup attitudes at multiple time periods, and we thus far have evidence that greater endorsement of polyculturalism at the very beginning of college predicts less sexism about one year later among diverse undergraduates (Rosenthal et al., forthcoming). This work can potentially help to understand the direction of effects over time (between polyculturalism and intergroup attitudes) and can also help us to better understand the processes or mechanisms involved (e.g., comfort with interacting with diverse others) in the relationship between polyculturalism and intergroup attitudes over time. For example, longitudinal work can possibly test whether there is a bidirectional or cyclical process involved, such that greater endorsement of polyculturalism leads to greater comfort with interacting with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and greater intergroup contact then reinforces greater endorsement of polyculturalism.

Are There Potential Downsides to Endorsement of Polyculturalism?

The findings described above so far suggest that polyculturalism has consistent positive associations with intergroup attitudes including racial/ethnic attitudes, sexual prejudice, and sexism. However, it is possible that future work could uncover some negative associations of endorsement of polyculturalism. Just as multiculturalism is studied as an ideology to

potentially improve intergroup attitudes and foster equality among diverse groups, research has uncovered some weaknesses of multiculturalism, such as its association with increased stereotyping (e.g., Ryan et al., 2007; Wolsko et al., 2000). That is, emphasizing the distinctness of racial and ethnic groups, even if casting those differences in a positive light, seems to reaffirm group differences resulting in stereotyping (e.g., Bigler, 1999; Ryan et al., 2007). It is possible that polyculturalism could also have some downsides that we have yet to uncover. For example, our measure of endorsement of polyculturalism was intentionally created to be valence free and focus on a neutral form of this belief, simply whether one believes that racial and ethnic groups have influenced each other, regardless of whether those influences or interactions are viewed as positive or negative. But, certainly we know that there are a variety of ways that different racial and ethnic groups interact, some positive, some negative, and some mixed. So is it possible that if someone focuses only on the negative interactions that have resulted in cultural influence (e.g., wars, slavery, colonization, genocide), they could also have greater hostility toward other racial ethnic groups? At the same time, if someone only focuses on the positive interactions among groups and thus sugarcoats the history of group interactions, this could also have negative associations such as a denial or disregard of racism that still persists. Moreover, it is possible that polycultural ideas taken to the extreme could undermine the pride felt by group members if they come to feel that their groups' contributions to society have been undervalued or undermined. In light of this, it will be important for future work to continue to test potential moderators of the relationship that polyculturalism has with intergroup attitudes, as it is possible that polyculturalism could have positive implications for some groups of people but negative implications for other groups of people, as has been found in some work examining other ideologies (e.g., Ryan et al., 2007; 2010). All in all, it will be important for future work to pay attention to possible negative consequences of polyculturalism in order to understand the full spectrum of its implications for intergroup attitudes and relations (see Rosenthal & Levy, 2010).

Conclusion

Work thus far on polyculturalism has begun to support it as a distinct ideology that has unique associations with intergroup attitudes, although many more exciting questions remain to be addressed. We have evidence that endorsement of polyculturalism is associated with more positive racial/ethnic attitudes and less sexual prejudice, but what are the mechanisms driving these relationships? Are there other forms of prejudice or intergroup attitudes that might be associated with endorsement of polyculturalism? How universal are the findings within and across cultures? Would different measures of polyculturalism (e.g., focused on either positive or negative influences among groups) yield different results? What are the origins of people's belief in polyculturalism, or where and from whom is it learned? Who tends to be receptive (or not) to polyculturalism, and how does polyculturalism relate to exciting work in cultural psychology on how people can fluidly navigate back and forth through their multiple identities or cultures (e.g., Chiu & Hong, 2007; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000)? Does endorsement of polyculturalism change over time, or is it a static belief? Can polyculturalism be taught or primed to improve intergroup attitudes and relations? How might the study of polyculturalism by social psychologists be connected with broader interdisciplinary interest in understanding the complex dynamics of culture, both historically and in an increasingly globalized world? We look forward to future work addressing questions such as these that take us closer to understanding the effect that polyculturalism has on intergroup attitudes and relations around the world.

Short Biographies

Sheri R. Levy is currently an Associate Professor of Psychology at Stony Brook University in New York, USA. She earned her BA in psychology and a BFA in graphic design from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA. She earned her MA and PhD at Columbia University in New York City, USA. Her research focuses on understanding sociocultural and developmental processes that increase and decrease prejudice and particularly the role of people's belief systems in their intergroup attitudes and relations. Sheri has published in journals such as *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, *Child Development*, *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, *Journal of Social Issues*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, and *Social Issues and Policy Review*.

Lisa Rosenthal is currently a post-doctoral associate in Public Health at Yale University. She received her BA in psychology from Queens College of the City University of New York in June 2006, and she received her PhD in social and health psychology from Stony Brook University in May 2011. Her research interests include intergroup ideologies and their relationships with intergroup attitudes, as well as the social, academic, and health consequences of experiencing discrimination and marginalization. Lisa's publications focusing on polyculturalism have been published in *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, and *Social Issues and Policy Review*.

Endnotes

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