Ethnic Attitudes of Hungarian Students

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Purpose

The purpose of this study was to confirm intergroup contact theory from the perspective of an ethnic minority.

The Article

Social distance measures how comfortable one feels at various levels of closeness with individuals of different groups such as race and/or ethnic groups, disability groups or those with mental illness. People who experience greater social distance from minorities are less supportive of giving equal rights to minorities. This study was particularly interested in two ethnic minorities in Romania: Hungarians and Rroma. The goal of this study was to investigate the attitudes of Hungarian students towards ethnic and cultural groups. Thirty self-described ethnic Hungarians participated. They were within the first generation of citizens in Romania to have lived their entire lives under a democratic government, as well as one open to western media. Participants completed a questionnaire to assess social distance relative to various ethnic, national and cultural groups based on the Romanian Cultural Distance Scale (RCSD). The results of this study were consistent with Allport’s intergroup contact theory. Students reported a wide range of tolerance levels for majority and minority ethnic groups with which they were likely to have contact in Romania. However, the students reported little difference in tolerance levels for groups that are not a recognized part of the Romanian cultural landscape, such as people of Hispanic origin, and Native Americans.

What This Means for the Field

The strongest causal inferences concerning the predictions of intergroup contact theory on this question would come from randomized controlled trials to the extent that they are practical and ethical. Further, Allport’s intergroup contact theory has been linked to the existence of prejudice. Prior to implementing prejudice reduction in school, exploration of the character of interactions among different ethnic groups is important.

Citation


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