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Can imagined intergroup contact change (internal) dialogues on differences between ingroup and outgroup?

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Several positive functions have been ascribed to integrative internal dialogues (IDs), which are based on mutual openness to a partner's viewpoint and a readiness to consider his/her arguments in order to potentially modify one's own stance. As the technique of imagined intergroup contact (IIC) favorably influences attitudes towards outgroup members, it was hypothesized that IIC would have a beneficial impact on IDs with an outgroup member when the dialogue is focused on differences between ingroup and outgroup. In the experiment, 151 people (80 women) participated. It revealed that after IIC, both the dialogue author's confrontational attitude and the interlocutor's integrative attitude decreased. Thus, IIC made participants less inclined to gain an advantage over their imagined outgroup interlocutors and more inclined to give them freedom in IDs. However, the effect was significant only when the author's involvement in ID was high or medium.

Key words: Imagined intergroup contact, integration and confrontation, internal/imaginary dialogue, outgroup interlocutor, simulation of social relationships.

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INTRODUCTION

In the movie *Cast Away*, the main character, Chuck Noland, portrayed by Tom Hanks, becomes a castaway on a deserted island as a result of a plane crash. He gradually gets used to living in the wilderness, but cannot cope with the lack of human company. Therefore, when he perceives a dirty ball as a human face he calls it Wilson, and from this moment he and the ball Wilson become inseparable friends. Chuck speaks to Wilson and reacts to his imaginary responses.

The phenomenon illustrated in the film is known by many names (Alderson-Day & Fernyhough, 2015). In this article it will be referred to as internal dialogue (ID). The concept of ID is strongly rooted in Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans, 2003; Hermans & Gieser, 2012; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010), according to which dialogical relationships exist not only between the self and others but also within the self. The dialogical self is conceptualized as a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I-positions that represent different points of view available to a person. Each I-position, shaped by a particular social context, is endowed with a voice (the voice of a culture, community, significant other, or one's own voice) and intertwined with other I-positions, resembling people in social relationships (Hermans, 2003). Consequently, not only external/interpersonal but also internal/intrapersonal dialogues are possible. Question and answer as well as agreement and disagreement are basic forms of dialogical relationship (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). In this context, I assume that a person engages in ID when he/she alternately adopts (at least) two different viewpoints, and the utterances formulated (silently or aloud) from these viewpoints respond to one another (Hermans, 2003; Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a, 2016b). The viewpoints adopted in ID can represent personal perspectives (e.g., "I-as a tolerant person" or "I-as a xenophobic person") and/or someone else's perspectives (e.g., the viewpoint of an outgroup member or "my group" position).

The current study focuses on IDs reflecting social interactions. In such IDs, one viewpoint is the person's own (the personal perspective, further referred to as the viewpoint of the dialogue's author), the other that of an (imagined) interlocutor. This type of ID can be a substitute for real dialogues if the latter are impossible for some reason, as was the case with Chuck Noland. In such IDs, people can also rehearse real discussions. In order to reduce feelings of uncertainty they can confront their emotions, test the power of their arguments, and refute their opponent's reasoning; or, they can make an attempt to better understand their interlocutor and find a creative solution to the problem under discussion, thanks to which both ID parties will be satisfied (cf. Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Honeycutt, 2003; Puchalska-Wasyl, 2018c).

Recently, IDs simulating social interactions have tended to be analyzed in terms of integration and confrontation processes (Borawski, 2011; Młynarczyk, 2011; Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a,b). In the two-dimensional model of ID adopted in the present paper, integration and confrontation are two independent dimensions of IDs (for a comparison with the one-dimensional model, see Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a). Integration between two parties to an ID is understood as the level of agreement on the essential question being discussed, whereas confrontation reflects the advantage of one party over the other.

The basis of integration is mutual openness to the partner's viewpoint, as well as readiness to favorably consider his/her arguments and, consequently, to modify one's own stance. A party's propensity for engaging in these behaviors defines his/her **integrative attitude**. The integrative attitudes of both parties contribute to general integration in an ID. The greater the general

integration, the greater the chance of finding new, creative solutions to the problem discussed.

The **confrontational attitude** of a given party reflects his/her perceived advantage over the opposing party (treating him-/herself as the winner and the partner as the loser). Since confrontation is defined as an imbalance of power between the winner and loser in an ID, it is assumed that the greater the difference in the intensity of parties' confrontational attitudes, the greater the general confrontation (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a, 2016b, 2017).

Several studies show that general integration and general confrontation as defined in the two-dimensional model of ID are not correlated with each other (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a,b, 2017, 2018a), thereby supporting their theoretically postulated independence. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the integrative and confrontational attitudes of the ID author and his/her interlocutor can be related, reflecting different patterns of integrative and confrontational characteristics of IDs. For example, in a competitive ID the strong confrontational attitude of the dialogue's author is accompanied by both the imaginary interlocutor's and the author's own low integrative attitudes. The aim of the author in such IDs is not to convince the interlocutor but to show an advantage over him/her. A competitive ID ends when the author perceives him-/herself to be the winner, even though the stances taken in the discussion do not change. In a persuasive ID, by contrast, the strong confrontational attitude of the dialogue's author is accompanied by both the imaginary interlocutor's and the author's own high integrative attitudes. Here, as in the competitive ID, the dialogue's author tries to be the winner in the discussion. However, in contrast to the competitive ID, he/she arranges the dialogue in such a way that both his/her own viewpoint and (to a much greater degree) the interlocutor's viewpoint become modified under their mutual influence. In other words, the dialogue's author, in his/her pursuit of victory, is able to take the partner's needs into account and to modify his/her own stance to some degree in order to gain the interlocutor's greater concession. As a result, the author's victory here is based on persuading the interlocutor (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2018c).

If IDs have a higher level of integration than confrontation, we call them integrative; if confrontation is higher than integration, they are called confrontational. Integrative IDs take account of and integrate all the viewpoints involved; thus, they are conducive to creative solutions. In contrast, confrontational IDs stress differences between viewpoints by enhancing one of them and depreciating the others.

Research on internal dialogical activity points to several positive functions of integrative IDs. Compared with confrontational IDs, integrative IDs perform functions of support, bond, insight, and self-guiding to a greater degree (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a). Additionally, they diminish discrepancies between ideal and ought selves (Młynarczyk, 2011) as well as enhance situational self-esteem and positive emotions (Borawski, 2011). Voicing opposing viewpoints on a problem promotes well-being and adaptive psychological functioning (Hermans, 2003). Presumably, the ability to integrate different perspectives in IDs simulating social interactions also translates into ease in generating various solutions to difficult situations (Staudinger & Baltes, 1996). Given that integrative IDs fulfill many positive functions, as mentioned above, it would be useful to know how to increase integrative attitudes and decrease confrontational attitudes in ID parties.

Another phenomenon that is in some sense connected with IDs, and has recently proved to be a fruitful strategy for improving attitudes towards outgroup members, is that of imagined intergroup contact (IIC). This concept is defined as "the mental simulation of a social interaction with a member or members of an outgroup category" (Crisp & Turner, 2009, p. 234). The IIC technique is based on activating a cognitive script of a first encounter. The script includes conducting an imagined dialogue with a member of an outgroup. It is important that such an imagined dialogue as part of the IIC technique must be positive in tone and general in content. Research has shown that IIC elicits more favorable outgroup attitudes, reduces intergroup anxiety, and enhances intentions to engage in future contact (Crisp & Turner, 2012; Husnu & Crisp, 2010; Turner & Crisp, 2010; Turner, Crisp & Lambert, 2007). But what would be the impact of the IIC technique on an ID with an outgroup member if the dialogue was focused on a criterion differentiating between ingroup and outgroup? For example, what would be the IIC impact if the ID concerned tattoos and my interlocutor had tattoos and was in favor of getting tattoos while I was against it? Would my expectations and attitudes towards my interlocutor change if the ID was preceded by my positive imagined contact with a tattooed person? Would my confrontational attitude decrease and my integrative attitude increase? To answer these questions, an experiment was designed. In the experimental condition (the IIC condition) I decided to precede IDs focused on differences between ingroup and outgroup with IIC, and then compare the integrative and confrontational characteristics of such IDs with those in a control group.

Many studies measuring explicit (Husnu & Crisp, 2010; Stathi & Crisp, 2008) and implicit (Turner & Crisp, 2010) attitudes show that ingroup-favoring bias is significantly reduced by IIC. Hence, participants conducting IDs in the IIC condition were expected to exhibit less willingness to gain an advantage over their opponent – the imagined outgroup interlocutor – rather than control-condition participants. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was as follows:

> **Hypothesis 1.** Compared with IDs conducted in the control group, IDs conducted in the experimental group (preceded by the IIC technique) will be characterized by a lower level of confrontational attitude on the part of the dialogue's author.

Moreover, if ingroup-favoring bias is significantly reduced by IIC (Husnu & Crisp, 2010; Stathi & Crisp, 2008; Turner & Crisp, 2010), it is possible that participants in the IIC condition will perceive their imagined outgroup interlocutors as more similar to themselves (Gaertner, Mann, Dovidio, Murrell & Pomare, 1990; Stephan, 1999). Social psychologists confirm that perceived similarity between people positively influences the course of interactions between them and is conducive to integrative behaviors. It is known that there is a connection between treating others as similar to oneself and perceiving them as attractive as well as liking them (Fawcett & Markson, 2010; Sprecher, 2014). We are also more willing to help those who resemble us and those we like (Karylowski, 1976). Additionally, it has been found that

people who have similar levels of agreeableness or extraversion communicate with each other in a more integrative manner when negotiating: negotiation time is shorter, relationship conflicts are weaker, and perceptions of the negotiating partner are better (Wilson, DeRue, Matta, Howe & Conlon, 2016). Similarly, Puchalska-Wasyl's (2016b) study has shown that the greater the perceived similarity between the parties to an ID, the stronger the author's and interlocutor's integrative attitudes and the weaker the author's confrontational attitude. As positive behavior during dyadic interactions tends to be reciprocated (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Petty & Mirels, 1981), it can be predicted that the IIC technique will increase not only the integrative attitude of participants (dialogue authors) in the IIC condition but also the integrative attitude of their internal outgroup interlocutors. In this context Hypothesis 2 was advanced:

> **Hypothesis 2.** Compared with IDs conducted in the control group, IDs conducted in the experimental group (preceded by the IIC technique) will be characterized by higher levels of integrative attitudes on the part of the dialogue's author and his/her interlocutor.

According to Crisp and Turner (2012), engaging in mental simulation (i.e., running through the mental script of an interaction) is critical for the positive effects of IIC to occur. By analogy, I postulate that involvement in ID, understood as identification with one's own role in the ID, is crucial for the beneficial impact of IIC on ID to occur. In view of this, Hypothesis 3 was formulated:

> **Hypothesis 3.** The influence of the IIC technique on the confrontational and integrative attitudes of dialogue parties (mentioned in H1 and H2) will be moderated by the author's involvement in an ID. Significant differences in these attitudes between the experimental and control groups will be observed if involvement in ID is high; however, the difference will be non-significant if involvement in ID is low.

METHOD

Participants

Assuming that the obtained effect size for comparisons between groups would be medium ($d = 0.5$) and the statistical test power would be 0.85, the minimum total sample size was established as 144 participants. In fact, the sample comprised 151 people (80 women), with a mean age of 22.09 years ($SD = 1.93$, range 18–30). The mean age of the female participants was 21.74 years ($SD = 1.82$, range 18–26), and that of the male participants 22.49 years ($SD = 1.98$, range 18–30). The experimental group (IDs preceded by IIC technique, i.e., IIC condition) consisted of 75 people (38 women). The control group (IDs without IIC technique) consisted of 76 people (42 women). Most participants ($n = 137$) were students of one of 59 majors (e.g., law, economics, information technology, medicine, education studies) at 18 Polish universities. Of the remaining 14 participants, nine were working, one was unemployed, and four were college students.

During the experimental procedure, the participants were asked whether they were "for" or "against" young people getting tattoos. The study was conducted in Poland, where tattooing is becoming more and more popular, especially among adolescents and young adults. However, there are still a lot of people in this age group who are against tattoos for health or religious reasons. Thus, it was expected that attitudes towards getting

tattoos would tangibly polarize participants, allowing them to experience the division between "we" (ingroup) and "they" (outgroup). It turned out that 63.6% of the respondents were "for" and 36.4% were "against" young people getting tattoos. Similar proportions were apparent in both the experimental and control groups. Women were mostly "for" (77.5%), whereas men were mostly "against" (52.1%) tattoos. Participants also indicated the certainty of their standpoint on a scale from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*to a very high degree*). Sixty-nine per cent of people who were against tattoos assessed the certainty of their stance to be high (3) or very high (4). The equivalent figure for tattoo supporters was 69.8%.

Procedure

Five research assistants invited students encountered on campus or at university to participate in the study. Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental or control group and examined individually. Before testing commenced, they were informed that their data would be anonymized and that the study concerned imagination and attitudes.

In the experimental group, the procedure was as follows. At the beginning, participants answered the question of whether they were "for" or "against" young people getting tattoos. Then, on a scale from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*to a very high degree*) they indicated the certainty of their standpoint. During the next seven minutes they were to write down arguments supporting their stance. Afterwards, the IIC technique was used, which was an experimental manipulation. As proposed by Husnu and Crisp (2010), an elaborate contact scenario was applied; participants were asked to imagine not only that the conversation was relaxing, interesting, comfortable, and positive in its tone (cf. Stathi & Crisp, 2008), but also when and where it might occur. The imagery task lasted about one minute. Participants who were against tattoos imagined a first encounter with a tattooed person, while tattoo supporters imagined an encounter with a person wearing a T-shirt with the words "stop tattoos." After the IIC, participants had to write several lines describing the scenario they had imagined. This was meant to enhance the experimental manipulation (the IIC instruction) and served as a valuable manipulation check (cf. Crisp & Turner, 2012). The IIC technique was followed by the presentation of a list of arguments allegedly formulated by someone whose viewpoint on tattoos was contrary to that of the participant. The participant then had to conduct (and write down) an imagined/internal dialogue with that person, focused on getting tattoos. Finally, participants completed the Integration-Confrontation questionnaire to assess the intensity of the integrative and confrontational attitudes of the dialogue's author (themselves) and their imagined interlocutor. In the control group the procedure was similar, except that it included neither the IIC technique nor the manipulation check. Thus, participants in the control group indicated their standpoint on getting tattoos and assessed the certainty of it, wrote down arguments supporting their stance, and then received a list of arguments allegedly formulated by someone whose viewpoint on tattoos was contrary to their own. Finally, they conducted an ID on getting tattoos and completed the Integration-Confrontation questionnaire.

Measures

Integration-Confrontation (ICON). The ICON questionnaire by Puchalska-Wasyl (2016a, 2016b) was used to assess the dependent variables. This 13-item measure of the integrative and confrontational characteristics of an ID is based on the assumption that integration and confrontation are two independent dimensions of an ID (see Introduction).

ICON consists of eight core and five supplementary items. All responses are rated on a seven-point Likert scale with two anchors: 0 – *not at all* and 6 – *very well*. The first eight items cover the four attitudes of ID parties: author's integrative attitude (INT_aut), author's confrontational attitude (CONF_aut), interlocutor's integrative attitude (INT_int), and interlocutor's confrontational attitude (CONF_int). Each attitude is represented by two items and its index is calculated as the sum score of these two items. Example items include: *Under the influence of new content heard in the dialogue, I changed my stance and took my*

interlocutor's arguments into account (INT_aut); *I feel I have won the discussion thanks to the force of my arguments* (CONF_aut); *In order not to spoil the relationship with me, my interlocutor changed his/her stance and took my arguments into account* (INT_int); *I feel I am the loser in this discussion* (CONF_int). The above-mentioned indices allow for the computing of two additional ones: general integration (INT = INT_aut + INT_int) and general confrontation (CONF = |CONF_aut−CONF_int|). The supplementary items concern: the dialogue author's identification with the interlocutor's role, the author's involvement in the ID (understood as identification with one's own role in the ID), the author's similarity to the interlocutor, the plausibility of the ID, and the wishfulness of the ID.

In previous studies (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a,2016b, 2017, 2018a), the correlation between the indices of general integration (INT) and general confrontation (CONF) was non-significant and close to zero. Similar results were obtained in the current study, in both the experimental (see Table 1) and control (see Table 2) groups. This supports the theoretically postulated independence of the integration and confrontation dimensions measured in the ICON (see Introduction). However, it does not mean that the indices of integrative and confrontational attitudes (INT_aut, INT_int, CONF_aut and CONF_int) that contribute to those of general integration and confrontation (INT, CONF) cannot be correlated, especially if they are analyzed within subgroups of a general population (see Tables 1 and 2; cf. Puchalska-Wasyl, 2018c).

Cronbach's alphas for the ICON indices analyzed in the study were as follows: INT_aut = 0.64, INT_int = 0.75, CONF_aut = 0.82, CONF_int = 0.82. Internal consistency for general integration and general confrontation in the current study was low (INT = 0.53; CONF = 0.68). Therefore these indices were not analyzed. The validity of ICON has been demonstrated previously (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a,b).

Table 1. *Correlations between confrontational and integrative characteristics of dialogues in experimental group*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. CONF_aut	—				
2. CONF_int	−0.20	—			
3. INT_aut	−0.36**	0.58***	—		
4. INT_int	0.52***	−0.06	0.06	—	
5. CONF	0.69***	−0.01	−0.10	0.27*	—
6. INT	0.14	0.33**	0.70***	0.76***	0.13

Notes: CONF_aut: author's confrontational attitude; CONF_int: interlocutor's confrontational attitude; INT_aut: author's integrative attitude; INT_int: interlocutor's integrative attitude; CONF: general confrontation; INT: general integration.
***$p \leq 0.001$; **$p < 0.005$; *$p < 0.05$.

Table 2. *Correlations between confrontational and integrative characteristics of dialogues in control group*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. CONF_aut	—				
2. CONF_int	−0.24*	—			
3. INT_aut	−0.27*	0.58***	—		
4. INT_int	0.59***	−0.17	0.08	—	
5. CONF	0.82***	−0.34**	−0.27*	0.47***	—
6. INT	0.27*	0.22	0.67***	0.79***	0.18

Notes: CONF_aut: author's confrontational attitude; CONF_int: interlocutor's confrontational attitude; INT_aut: author's integrative attitude; INT_int: interlocutor's integrative attitude; CONF: general confrontation; INT: general integration.
***$p \leq 0.001$; **$p < 0.005$; *$p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

To test Hypotheses 1 and 2, the Student's *t*-test for independent groups was used. Table 3 presents comparisons between the experimental and control groups for all the variables measured by ICON. As postulated in Hypothesis 1, the IIC technique preceding IDs caused a decrease in the confrontational attitude of the dialogue's author, and this effect was fairly strong ($d = -0.58$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

The findings concerning Hypothesis 2 were unexpected. It was observed that the IIC technique preceding IDs did not cause any significant difference in the integrative attitude of the dialogue's author but did cause a decrease in the interlocutor's integrative attitude, and this effect was also quite strong ($d = -0.52$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Hypothesis 2 was based on the assumption that integrative attitudes in the IIC condition would increase with an increase in perceived similarity between participants and their outgroup interlocutors (see Introduction). The ICON questionnaire made it possible to measure this variable, and thus a comparison between the experimental and control groups in perceived similarity was performed. It revealed no significant differences, however, and hence further analysis of a mediating role of similarity was abandoned. There were also no differences between the groups in terms of author's involvement in the ID or the other variables measured by the ICON and not included in the hypotheses, such as the dialogue author's identification with the interlocutor's role, or the plausibility or wishfulness of the ID (see Table 3).

To test Hypothesis 3, I conducted regression analyses examining whether the influence of the IIC technique on confrontational and integrative attitudes of the dialogue parties (mentioned in Hypotheses 1 and 2) was moderated by the author's involvement in the ID. The analyses were performed with PROCESS for SPSS and SAS (Hayes, 2013). I used the bootstrapping method with biased corrected confidence estimates and obtained 95% confidence intervals for indirect effects with 5,000 resamples (see Table 4).

It transpired that the IIC technique and involvement in ID significantly interacted in their influence on the interlocutor's integrative attitude ($p = 0.006$), and marginally significantly interacted in their influence on the author's confrontational attitude ($p = 0.069$). It can be said that the interlocutor's integrative attitude and the author's confrontational attitude decreased (significantly and marginally significantly, respectively) in IDs after the IIC, but only when the author's involvement in ID was high or medium; when involvement was low, such decreases were non-significant. It should be emphasized, however, that in this analysis medium, high, and low levels of involvement in ID were established as the mean and $\pm 1SD$ from the mean; that is, respectively 4.99, 6, and 3.83. Taking into account that involvement in ID was rated on a seven-point Likert scale from 0 to 6, the level of involvement in ID that I determined as low was in fact located in the middle of the scale. This was due to the small number of scores in the range 0–3 in the sample. This also means that few participants in the study were barely or not at all involved in the ID. To summarize, the interlocutor's integrative attitude and the author's confrontational attitude decreased in IDs after the IIC, but only when the author's involvement in ID was

Table 3. *Comparison between experimental (with IIC) and control groups in variables measured by Integration-Confrontation questionnaire*

| | Groups | | | | Differences | | | |
| | Experimental (n = 75) | | Control (n = 76) | | | | | |
Measured variables	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	p	d
CONF_aut	4.89	3.40	6.92	3.89	−3.157	149	0.002	−0.58
CONF_int	2.33	3.00	2.05	2.74	0.600	149	0.549	0.10
INT_aut	2.55	2.30	2.76	3.02	−0.445	149	0.657	−0.08
INT_int	3.85	3.26	5.66	3.67	−3.193	149	0.002	−0.52
CONF	4.32	4.18	5.76	4.27	−2.099	149	0.038	−0.34
INT	6.40	4.53	8.42	4.93	−2.621	149	0.010	−0.43
INVOL	4.96	1.28	5.01	1.03	−0.282	149	0.778	−0.04
SIM	1.89	1.78	1.99	1.77	−0.323	149	0.747	−0.06
IDENT	3.52	1.82	3.11	1.92	1.359	149	0.176	0.22
PLAUS	4.36	1.64	4.57	1.61	−0.778	149	0.438	−0.13
WISH	3.05	1.68	2.96	1.71	0.337	149	0.737	0.05

Notes: CONF_aut: author's confrontational attitude; CONF_int: interlocutor's confrontational attitude; INT_aut: author's integrative attitude; INT_int: interlocutor's integrative attitude; CONF: general confrontation; INT: general integration; INVOL: author's involvement in the dialogue; SIM: author's similarity to the interlocutor; IDENT: author's identification with the interlocutor's role; PLAUS: plausibility; WISH –wishfulness.

Table 4. *Results of moderation analysis: Effect of group (experimental vs. control) on integrative and confrontational attitudes moderated by involvement in internal dialogue*

| | | | | | | | Interaction | | | | | |
Moderator	Dependent variable	R^2_{ch}	B	t	p	95% CI	B_L	p_L	B_M	p_M	B_H	p_H
Involvement in dialogue	CONF_aut	0.021	−1.038	−1.831	0.069	−2.159, 0.082	−0.811	0.378	−2.010	0.002	−3.062	<0.001
	CONF_int	0.006	0.399	0.970	0.334	−0.413, 1.211						
	INT_aut	0.001	0.131	0.302	0.763	−0.727, 0.990						
	INT_int	0.045	−1.340	−2.791	0.006	−2.289, −0.391	−0.214	0.783	−1.761	0.001	−3.120	<0.001

Notes: CONF_aut: author's confrontational attitude; CONF_int: interlocutor's confrontational attitude; INT_aut: author's integrative attitude; INT_int: interlocutor's integrative attitude; medium $_{(M)}$, high $_{(H)}$ and low $_{(L)}$ levels of involvement in dialogue were determined as, respectively: the mean (4.99) and ± 1 *SD* (1.16) from the mean.

higher than the average involvement of the sample, that is, when it was assessed as 5 or 6 on a 0–6 scale.

For the remaining two dependent variables (the author's integrative attitude and interlocutor's confrontational attitudes), no interaction between the IIC technique and involvement in ID was found. As there were no differences between experimental and control conditions for these two variables (see Table 3), the absence of the above-mentioned interaction is in accordance with Hypothesis 3. Thus, Hypothesis 3 can be considered supported.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to examine the impact of the IIC technique on an imagined/internal dialogue with an outgroup member when the dialogue is focused on a criterion differentiating between ingroup and outgroup. As IIC favorably influences attitudes towards outgroup members and intentions to engage in future contacts with them (Crisp & Turner, 2012; Husnu & Crisp, 2010; Turner & Crisp, 2010; Turner *et al.*, 2007), by analogy I postulated a beneficial impact of the IIC technique on IDs. It was hypothesized that IIC would enhance the integrative attitudes of both ID parties and weaken the

confrontational attitude of the dialogue's author. Some results, however, diverged from the expectations.

According to Hypothesis 1, the IIC technique should be followed by a decrease in the confrontational attitude of the dialogue's author. This hypothesis was confirmed. A confrontational attitude in an ID is associated with a tendency to gain an advantage over the dialogue partner and reflects the conviction that the interlocutor is the loser and the author the winner in the discussion. The observed decrease in this attitude of dialogue authors is in accordance with the results of many studies showing that ingroup-favoring bias is significantly reduced by the IIC technique (Husnu & Crisp, 2010; Stathi & Crisp, 2008; Turner & Crisp, 2010). In this context, it is understandable that the IIC condition participants exhibited a lower tendency to gain a win over their imagined outgroup interlocutors. Similar findings have recently been reported by Meleady and Seger (2017). In their study, participants believed that they were playing an economics game with an outgroup member and could choose whether to co-operate or compete with him/her. IIC was found to be conducive to abandoning competitive behaviors in favor of co-operative ones.

Presumably, the decrease in confrontational attitude following the IIC technique is connected with a decrease in participants'

anxiety. Numerous studies on IIC have confirmed that it reduces anxiety (Husnu & Crisp, 2010; Stathi, Tsantila & Crisp, 2012; Turner, West & Christie, 2013; Vezzali, Crisp, Stathi & Giovannini, 2013). At the same time, studies on IDs show that the confrontational attitude of dialogue authors is positively associated with neuroticism as well as an anxious or avoidant attachment style. Dialogue authors with such personality characteristics arrange IDs in which they win an argument with their imagined interlocutor, because by enhancing their own position at the expense of the partner they manifest their power and, consequently, reduce their anxiety. In this context, the term "anxious-avoidant confrontation" is used (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2017). Assuming that anxiety in the present study was reduced by a means of IIC, it can be hypothesized that there was no reason to reduce it by means of the author's confrontational attitude. Hence, a decrease in this attitude could be observed. Of course, there were no measures of anxiety in the present study, so this interpretation is only speculative and requires empirical verification.

Hypothesis 2 assumed that IIC would be followed by an increase in integrative attitudes in dialogue authors and their imagined interlocutors. This hypothesis was not supported. Instead, IIC preceding IDs caused no significant difference in the integrative attitude of the dialogue author but did cause a decrease in the interlocutor's integrative attitude. These results are surprising, especially in light of the above-mentioned study by Meleady and Seger (2017), wherein participants in the IIC condition abandoned competitive behaviors for co-operative ones. However, interpretation of Meleady and Seger's findings should take into account the fact that these researchers defined competitive and co-operative behaviors as extremes of one dimension whereby "competitive" meant "non-co-operative" and "co-operative" meant "non-competitive." In my study, by contrast, integration and confrontation were treated as two independent processes in accordance with the two-dimensional model of ID (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a,b, see Introduction). While confrontation is defined as an imbalance in power between winner and loser in an ID, integration is understood as the level of agreement between the parties on the essential question being discussed (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016b, 2017). Various studies based on the two-dimensional model of ID show that these processes are not correlated with each other and that they work independently (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016b, 2017). An experimental study has also confirmed that a decrease in confrontation does not have to be accompanied by an increase in integration (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2018b). The present study provides further support of this.

Even when one is aware of the different interpretations of integrative/co-operative and confrontational/competitive behaviors in Meleady and Seger's and the present study, the decrease in the interlocutor's integrative attitude following the IIC technique can still be confusing. At first glance, the finding can be seen as contradicting the results of other IIC studies, and even as an argument against using IIC immediately before IDs. However, upon reflection it could be seen as an indication of a dialogue author's tolerance towards his/her outgroup interlocutor. It should be emphasized that a person conducting an ID has full control over what his/her interlocutor says and does, which sometimes means that the interlocutor becomes a puppet fulfilling the dialogue author's needs and expectations. Presumably, this was

the case in the control group of the present study, where the author created the interlocutor as someone with a much stronger tendency than the author him/herself to exhibit an integrative attitude. This can be interpreted as the creation of an understanding and even compliant interlocutor who is inclined to change his/her own stance under the influence of the dialogue's author. After IIC (in the experimental group), the interlocutor's integrative attitude becomes significantly weaker, that is, the dialogue's author gives more "freedom" to the interlocutor, treating him/her to a greater extent as an equal. This line of thinking concurs with the findings of Falvo, Capozza, Di Bernardo and Pagani (2015), who observed that following application of the IIC technique the homeless were perceived to be more clearly characterized by uniquely human features (e.g., rationality). Similar results have been obtained for attributions of uniquely human emotions to outgroup members in a sample of children (Vezzali, Capozza, Stathi & Giovannini, 2012). In their review, Capozza, Falvo, Di Bernardo, Vezzali and Visintin (2014) concluded that not only direct contact but also IIC attenuates infra-humanization and favors outgroup humanization.

According to Hypothesis 3, the influence of the IIC technique on the confrontational and integrative attitudes of the dialogue parties (mentioned in the previous hypotheses) is moderated by the author's involvement in an ID, that is, by identification with their own role in the ID. The hypothesis was supported. It transpired that the confrontational attitude of the dialogue's author and the integrative attitude of the interlocutor decreased in the ID following the IIC technique, but only when the author's involvement in the ID was assessed as 5 or 6 on a 0–6 scale.

Involvement in an ID requires engaging in mental simulation, as does involvement in IIC. In this sense, present findings are consistent with Crisp and Turner's (2012) statement concerning IIC, to the effect that engaging in mental simulation (i.e., running through the mental script of an interaction) is critical for reducing intergroup bias. In contrast, it is known that just thinking of an outgroup member in the absence of any simulated interaction has no positive effects on attitudes, and can in fact exacerbate bias (Turner *et al.*, 2007).

Does the present study have any practical implications? According to Carroll (1978), imagining an event reliably increases the likelihood that the event will occur, while individuals are more likely to carry out a target behavior that they have imagined. This concurs with Gollwitzer's (1993) remark, that making more detailed plans provides a behavioral script that can serve as a cognitive roadmap for future behaviors. In this context, it is conceivable that IDs can be translated into real interactions. If this is true, a question arises: Is it worth using my experimental procedure in practice for such translation? Will it allow us to reduce ingroup bias in dialogues with outgroup members when discussing differences between ingroup and outgroup?

With regard to the decrease in the confrontational attitude of the dialogue's author after the IIC technique, we can give an affirmative answer. This is a very promising result, which should be seen as the main practical implication of the present study. The decrease in the interlocutor's integrative attitude can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, as mentioned above it can be interpreted as an indication of the dialogue author's tolerance towards his/her outgroup interlocutor, to whom more

freedom and human characteristics are attributed. In light of this interpretation, the result seems to be "optimistic" and worth transferring into real behavior. On the other hand, the same finding can be treated as "unsatisfactory" when juxtaposed with Hypothesis 2 predicting an increase in the integrative attitudes of both dialogue parties. Confirmation of this hypothesis was an appealing prospect because integrative IDs perform many positive functions *per se* (see Introduction) and could, additionally, potentially shape real discussions.

However, this "unsatisfactory" perspective needs an addendum. It is possible that minor changes in my procedure could result in an increase in the integrative attitudes of both dialogue parties. I expected integration in the IIC condition to increase as a consequence of increasing perceived similarity between participants and their outgroup interlocutors (see Introduction). Indeed, Stathi, Cameron, Hartley, and Bradford (2014) observed that perceived similarity between participants' selves and the outgroup was higher after IIC. However, these findings came from research on children. It is well known that the IIC technique is more effective and induces stronger effects in children (Cameron, Rutland, Turner, Holman-Nicolas & Powell, 2011; Miles & Crisp, 2014). My study, in which the participants were young adults, revealed no differences in the perceived similarity of dialogue parties between the experimental and control groups. Therefore, further research should examine how the "balanced similarity imagined contact" scenario would work (Ioannou, Hewstone & Al Ramiah, 2017) in comparison with the scenario used in my study (Husnu & Crisp, 2010). Presumably, a "balanced similarity" instruction would increase perceived similarity between participants and outgroup members and would consequently be conducive to integrative attitudes in both dialogue parties. Another option might be an instruction to introduce co-operation in IIC (Kuchenbrandt, Eyssel & Seidel, 2013), which could model integrative behaviors/discussion in partners in an ID.

Thus, in order to take full advantage of the application potential of this study, further research is needed. New types of IIC scenarios aside, other topics for the imagined dialogue should be used in the experimental procedure to reflect different intergroup conflicts. Although attitudes towards tattoos may polarize people (as in the present study), the emotions triggered by tattoos are not as strong as, for example, emotions related to homosexuals or followers of Islam. For this reason, the results discussed here cannot be generalized to the above-mentioned groups, which is one of the limitations of the current study. Additionally, studies on how IDs can be translated into real interactions are necessary. Such "translation" seems to be possible in the context of Carroll's (1978) and Gollwitzer's (1993) ideas. However, identifying the specific determinants of this process requires further exploration. The consequences of the "translation process" would also be an interesting topic for future research. For example, it is probable that the pattern of integrative and confrontational attitudes in ID following the IIC procedure translates into greater confidence in an actual, future interaction. Therefore, measuring participants' confidence or predictions about how likely they would be to convince a real interaction partner appears worth exploring. Moreover, in future research the shortcomings of this study should be minimized. One such limitation is the fact that

participants were given a list of arguments allegedly formulated by someone who was later to be the imagined interlocutor. This could potentially have modified the results. As has been mentioned above, normally a person conducting an ID has full control over what his/her interlocutor does and says. Providing such a list of arguments could have limited this control on the part of the dialogue's authors and may even have contributed to the reported decrease in the interlocutor's integrative attitude. On the other hand, this element of the procedure was designed to help the dialogue's author better understand his/her outgroup interlocutor and prevent the imagined interlocutor from becoming a puppet simply fulfilling the dialogue author's needs and expectations. As Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010, p. 359) claim: "conflict resolution begins with the awareness, recognition, and acceptance of differences between individuals and between groups" thus, it can begin in an ID in which we try to view our outgroup interlocutor without intergroup bias. Another weakness of this study is that the sample consisted mainly of university students. Therefore, in future we need samples that include people of different ages and statuses, and representing various intergroup conflicts.

To conclude, this is the first study to examine the impact of the IIC technique on IDs concerning differences between ingroup and outgroup. My findings indicate that the dialogue author's confrontational attitude and the interlocutor's integrative attitude decrease following the IIC technique, but only when the author's involvement in the ID is high or medium. When involvement is low, this decrease is non-significant. Further research is needed, in which the procedure is developed and the limitations of the current study minimized.

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