# Similarity to imagined interlocutor and integration of viewpoints in internal dialogues

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*N*umerous positive functions are ascribed to integrative internal dialogues (IDs). Additionally, IDs simulating social relationships are thought to serve as "prototypes" for interpersonal communication. Therefore, it would be useful to know how to increase the frequency of integrative IDs. Previous studies exploring the relationship between similarity to an imagined interlocutor and the integration in ID have produced inconsistent results. The aim of the present study was to examine the moderating and mediating factors in this relationship. Data from 119 people (mostly students) were analysed. Before the participants conducted IDs, they had written down 3 characteristics common to them and to their interlocutor. Finally, the Integration–Confrontation questionnaire was completed. Plausibility of ID was a moderator of the relationship between similarity to imagined interlocutor and integration in IDs; this relationship was significantly positive at lower plausibility, but non-significant at high plausibility. Perceived similarity in ID exerted an indirect effect on ID's integration in 2 ways. The first pathway was through identifying with the interlocutor and the author's integrative attitude, suggesting a mechanism in line with social identity theory. The second potential mechanism, which seems to be consistent with similarity–attraction theory, was connected with the wishfulness of IDs and the interlocutor's integrative attitude.

*Keywords:* Integrative internal/imagined dialogue; Simulation of social relationships; Plausibility; Wishfulness; Identification with interlocutor.

I have half of him, he thought. Maybe I'll have the luck to bring the forward half in. I should have some luck. No, he said. You violated your luck when you went too far outside.

"Don't be silly," he said aloud. "And keep awake and steer. You may have much luck yet."

"I'd like to buy some if there's any place they sell it," he said.

What could I buy it with? he asked himself. Could I buy it with a lost harpoon and a broken knife and two bad hands?

"You might," he said. "You tried to buy it with eighty-four days at sea. They nearly sold it to you too."

I must not think nonsense, he thought.

In his short story *The Old Man and the Sea,* this is how Ernest Hemingway (1976, pp. 100–101) describes what is taking place in the mind of the old fisherman Santiago, who, in an attempt to avert ill fate, ventures off far into the sea in search of a huge fish, and fights an uneven battle against the adversities of fate. The phenomenon, masterfully illustrated by the Nobel prize winning artist,

is known by many names (Alderson-Day & Fernyhough, 2015). In this article, it will be referred to as internal dialogue (ID). I assume that a person is engaged in ID when he/she adopts (at least) two different viewpoints in turn, 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 and/or someone else's perspectives. The former is represented in the old fisherman's ID, wherein we see two of Santiago's personal perspectives: Santiago-dreamer versus Santiago-realist. The latter is characteristic of IDs reflecting social interactions. For example, when preparing for an important conversation with your boss or friend, you rehearse the arguments you intend to use. In these rehearsals, you sometimes imagine your interlocutor's responses, which in turn, elicit further arguments and responses from you. In such IDs, one viewpoint/party is yours (your personal perspective, further referred to as

the viewpoint of the dialogue's author), whereas the other viewpoint/party represents an (imagined) interlocutor. The current study is focused on IDs simulating social interactions.

IDs may be characterised according to different criteria (Oleś & Puchalska-Wasyl, 2012). Recently, researchers have been interested in the distinction between integrative and confrontational dialogues (Borawski, 2011; Młynarczyk, 2011; Nir, 2012; Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a, 2016b). Assuming that each ID is characterised by two simultaneous processes of integration and confrontation, an integrative ID has a higher intensity of integration than confrontation, whereas a confrontational ID has the reverse pattern (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a, 2016b).

In light of the two-dimensional model of ID which will be adopted in the present paper, integration and confrontation are two independent dimensions of the description of IDs (for comparison to the one-dimensional model see Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a). Integration between the parties of the ID is defined as the level of agreement about an essential question of the discussion, whereas confrontation reflects the advantage of one party over the other.

Integration is based on mutual openness to a partner's viewpoint, as well as readiness to favourably consider their arguments and, consequently, to modify one's own stance. The greater a party's propensity to these behaviours, the stronger is his/her integrative attitude. The general (overall) integration in an ID is conceptualised as the sum of the integrative attitudes of both parties. Hence, the stronger the integration, the greater the chance of finding new, creative solutions for the discussed problem.

The confrontational attitude of a given party reflects that party's perceived advantage over the opposing party (evaluating oneself as the winner in the context of a partner's defeat). As confrontation reflects disproportion in power between the winner and the loser in an ID, it is assumed that the greater the difference in the intensity of parties' confrontational attitudes, the more intense the general (overall) confrontation (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a, 2016b, 2017b).

In sum, integrative IDs take into account and integrate all the viewpoints involved; thus, they can result in creative solutions. On the other hand, confrontational IDs emphasise differences between standpoints by enhancing one point of view and deprecating the others.

Numerous positive functions are ascribed to integrative IDs. As has been shown, integrative IDs enhance situational self-esteem and positive emotions (Borawski, 2011), and diminish discrepancies between ideal and ought selves (Młynarczyk, 2011). Additionally, voicing opposing viewpoints on a problem is conducive to well-being and more adaptive psychological functioning (Hermans, 2003). Presumably, the ability to integrate different perspectives in an ID simulating social interactions translates into greater ease in generating various solutions to difficult situations (Staudinger & Baltes,

1996). Moreover, integrative IDs perform support, bond, insight and self-guiding functions to a greater degree than confrontational IDs (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a). Taking all these positive functions into account, it would be useful to know how to increase the frequency of integrative IDs.

Some studies have focused on determinants and correlates of integrative IDs. Studies have shown that Faithful Friend and Ambivalent Parent are two types of internal interlocutors characteristic of integrative IDs (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a). Another study found that high openness, conscientiousness and agreeableness, combined with low neuroticism and anxious or avoidant attachments, are associated with higher integrative attitudes in both parties in the ID (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2017b). Finally, one study using canonical correlation analysis has shown that the greater the similarity between ID parties the stronger the author's and interlocutor's integrative attitudes, and the weaker the author's confrontational attitude. Hence, this canonical function has been labelled "integration based on similarity" (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016b).

It is extremely difficult to change our personality traits or to treat our adversary as a Faithful Friend if he/she is not. But it is quite simple to seek similarity between us and our interlocutor, and in this way, to open ourselves to integrative IDs. This idea seems to be especially appealing, given that IDs are sometimes considered as "prototypes" of interpersonal relationships (cf. Honeycutt, 2003). If more harmony was found to be introduced into one's social life by such IDs, this would provide additional reason to investigate predictors of ID integration.

But are IDs actually transposable to "overt" interpersonal relationships? Two groups of facts allow us to think that it is possible. First, when analysing IDs and interpersonal relationships, we can observe analogous links between analogous variables. For example, "integration based on similarity" has been found in IDs (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016b). At the same time studies in social psychology confirm that perceived similarity between people positively influences the course of interactions between them. Some studies show a connection between treating others as similar to oneself and perceiving them as attractive, as well as liking them (Fawcett & Markson, 2010; Sprecher, 2014). It is also known that we are more willing to help those who resemble us and those we like (Karylowski, 1976). Similarity may also lead to cooperation and positive evaluations of one another (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Moreover, it has been found that dyads with similar-and-high as well as similar-and-low levels of both agreeableness and extraversion communicate in a more positive emotional manner while negotiating, which in turn reduces time spent negotiating and relationship conflict, and improves perceptions of one's negotiating partner (Wilson, DeRue, Matta, Howe, & Conlon, 2016). Most of these behaviours could be called integrative ones.

Second, IDs simulating social relations can be seen in a broader context of mental imagery—a phenomenon that is of great importance to social functioning. For instance, it is stressed that mental imagery is a key to understanding others by simulating their mental states—intentions, feelings and beliefs ("Theory of Mind"; Goldman & Sripada, 2005). It also serves a fundamental function in the selection, rehearsal, preparation and planning of goal-directed behaviour (Marks, 1999). It helps us regulate our emotional reactions to past and possible future events, and it is a key component needed to effect behaviour change (Crisp & Turner, 2012). Moreover, many studies have shown that mentally simulating a positive interaction with an outgroup member can elicit more favourable explicit and implicit outgroup attitudes, and enhance intentions to engage in future contact (for review see Crisp & Turner, 2012). It has been also found that simulation enhance intentions to a greater extent than did thinking about reasons for a range of beneficial activities (e.g., studying, dieting and exercising) (Ten Eyck, Labansat, Gresky, Dansereau, & Lord, 2006). The findings are consistent with Carroll's (1978) statement that imagining an event reliably increases the likelihood that the event will occur and that individuals are more likely to carry out an imagined target behaviour. In this context, we can suppose that integrative IDs can be translated into integrative behaviour in real interactions, although identification of determinants of this process requires further research.

If we assume that increasing the frequency of integrative IDs is justified, we should consider whether (and under what conditions) similarity manipulation is an effective way to do it. On the one hand, a positive relationship between integrative attitudes of ID parties and their similarity has been observed previously (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016b). On the other hand, an experiment in which similarity between ID parties was manipulated, did not reveal any differences among groups either in general integration or in the integrative attitudes of the ID parties (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2017a).

If the relationship between similarity of ID parties and integration of their viewpoints is significant only in some studies, this may suggest that this relationship is moderated by another variable, for example, by plausibility of ID. Why exactly plausibility? There are at least two reasons. First, regardless of the findings of social psychologists, we know from everyday life that even if we like somebody and perceive them as attractive and similar to us, our dialogues with that person do not always end in agreement. When discussing an important question, we sometimes do not want to make any concession or modification to our viewpoint, under the influence of the other party. The same is about our interlocutor. In this case, integration is not possible. In plausible IDs, such situations must be reflected, but if we do not care about the ID's plausibility, we are inclined to create a more

compliant and understanding imaginary interlocutor who is prone to integrative behaviours. Second, the average person who is not familiar with psychology does not know that similarity between people is conducive to liking each other, and to cooperation and integration of viewpoints in a real discussion. Therefore, even if the person easily arrives at an integrative solution satisfying both parties in an ID with a similar interlocutor, he/she can be convinced that such good terms of agreement would be difficult to achieve in reality, and therefore, he/she may assess the whole ID as implausible. In this context, the first hypothesis was formulated:

H1. Plausibility of IDs is a moderator in the relationship between similarity of dialoguing parties and the general integration of their viewpoints. Similarity of ID parties will be significantly positively related to the general integration in IDs with a low level of plausibility, but not in those with a relatively high level of plausibility.

The extant literature provides at least two possible suggestions on how similarity between parties of a dialogue may trigger positive results. First, according to similarity–attraction theory, positive affect is often a mechanism by which similarity influences responses (Strauss, Barrick, & Connerley, 2001). Additionally, Byrne (1962, p. 164) claims that the positive affect resulting from similarity is usually "directed toward the rewarding person." Thus, we can hypothesise that perceived similarity between parties of an ID triggers positive or even overly positive thinking about the course of the ID, and in turn, about an imagined interlocutor. Consequently, the ID becomes wishful and the interlocutor created is a person characterised by an integrative attitude, that is, a friendly person who understands us perfectly and who, for our sake, resigns from his/her own needs. Second, in accordance with social identity theory, similarity drives identification with others. This identification may lead to cooperation and positive evaluations of one other (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Based on these theories, the second hypothesis was advanced:

H2. Identifying with an interlocutor, as well as wishfulness of an ID, act as parallel mediators in the relationship between ID author-interlocutor similarity and general integration in an ID.

In light of the two-dimensional model of ID (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a, 2016b, 2017b) which is adopted in this paper, general integration depends on integrative attitudes of both parties. Therefore, two additional hypotheses, which are in fact supplementary to the H2, were posed:

H2a. Identifying with the interlocutor exerts an indirect effect on general integration, through the author's integrative attitude.

H2b. Wishfulness of an ID exerts an indirect effect on general integration, through the interlocutor's integrative attitude.

H2a is consistent with social identity theory, because identification with an internal interlocutor may lead the ID's author having a better understanding of the partner's needs, and thus, modification of his/her own stance (author's integrative attitude). H2b is consistent with similarity–attraction theory, because overly positive (wishful) thinking about the imagined interlocutor allows us to see him/her as more understanding and compliant (interlocutor's integrative attitude).

## METHOD

### Participants

In the study participated 121 people[1] (60 men) with a mean age of 21.66 years (*SD* = 1.81; range 19–28). The mean age of the female participants was 21.54 years (*SD* = 1.67; range 19–26) and the mean age of the male participants was 21.78 years (*SD* = 1.94; range 19–28). Most participants (*n* = 119) were students of 34 majors (e.g., law, economy, information technology, philosophy, mathematics) at five Polish universities. Two additional participants who volunteered were working men.

Finally, data from 119 people were analysed, because in the plausibility scores two outliers were found who seriously biased regression model used to test H1. It means that although there was no correlation between ID plausibility and the general integration in an ID ($r = -.003$, $p = .971$), in the regression model ID plausibility was significantly positively related to ID integration. It is known that outliers can cause a model to be biased because they affect the values of the estimated regression coefficients (Field, 2005, p. 215). Thus, to check for outliers the plausibility scores were converted into *z*-scores and according to the normal distribution criteria two cases ($z = -3.49$ and $z = -2.77$) were excluded (Field, 2005, p. 102). It should be added that after excluding these cases the above-mentioned odd relationship became non-significant, and the path $a_1d_{21}b_2$ in the model competitive for model C became non-significant. However, all the remaining results in this and the other models did not change significantly.

### Procedure

Four research assistants randomly invited students encountered at a campus or university to participate in the study. The participants were examined individually. Before testing commenced, they were informed that their data would be anonymous and that the study concerned imagination and its relationship to personality. Next, the participants were instructed to think about a problematic issue of importance to them, and then about a person who contributed to the occurrence of that problem. Afterwards, each participant was asked to write down three characteristics common to him/her and to the afore-mentioned person. After that task, they were asked to write down an imaginary dialogue with that person, concerning the problem. Finally, the participants completed the Integration–Confrontation (ICON) questionnaire.[2]

### Measures

#### Integration-Confrontation questionnaire

This questionnaire by Puchalska-Wasyl (2016a, 2016b) is a 13-item measure of the integrative and confrontational characteristics of an ID. ICON is based on the assumption that integration and confrontation are two independent dimensions of ID description (see Introduction).

ICON consists of eight core items and five supplementary items. All responses are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, from 0 to 6. On the basis of the first eight items, one can calculate the following indices: general integration (INT), general confrontation (CONF), ID 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). The supplementary items concern the dialogue author's identification with the interlocutor's and his/her own role, the author's similarity to the interlocutor, as well as the plausibility and wishfulness of the ID.

In the current study, the correlation between integration and confrontation indices was non-significant and close to zero ($r = -.102$, $p = .268$). Similar results were obtained in previous studies (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a, 2016b). This supports the theoretically postulated independence of the integration and confrontation dimensions measured in ICON.

Cronbach's α for the three indices of the ICON analysed in the study were as follows: INT = .64; INT_aut = .68; INT_int = .83. The validity of the ICON has been previously demonstrated (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016a, 2016b).

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[1]This sample size was similar to the one used by Hayes (2013, p. 135, 153) when presenting how to test models of parallel and serial mediation. However, in the light of Fritz and MacKinnon's (2007) empirical estimates of sample sizes needed for 0.8 power, my sample size can be considered suboptimal to detect mediation in some instances.

[2]The procedure has been approved by The Research Ethics Committee at the Institute of Psychology at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland.

**TABLE 1**
Correlations for the study variables

| | SIM | INT | ID_int | WISH | INT_aut | INT_int |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INT | 0.178 | — | | | | |
| ID_int | 0.376*** | 0.357*** | — | | | |
| WISH | 0.271** | 0.340*** | 0.265** | — | | |
| INT_aut | 0.171 | 0.767*** | 0.360*** | 0.188* | — | |
| INT_int | 0.105 | 0.780*** | 0.194* | 0.336*** | 0.196* | — |
| PLAUS | 0.065 | −0.086 | 0.095 | −0.276** | −0.025 | −0.107 |

*Note:* SIM = similarity between ID parties; INT = integration, ID_int = identification with interlocutor, WISH = ID wishfulness; INT_aut = author's integrative attitude; INT_int = interlocutor's integrative attitude; PLAUS = plausibility.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .005$, *** $p \leq .001$

**TABLE 2**
Results of moderation analysis: Effect of similarity between ID parties (SIM) on integration moderated by ID plausibility (PLAUS)

| | | | | | | Interaction | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Antecedent | B | SE | t | p | CI | $B_L$ | $p_L$ | $B_M$ | $p_M$ | $B_H$ | $p_H$ |
| SIM | 3.720 | 1.227 | 3.031 | .003 | 1.289, 6.151 | | | | | | |
| PLAUS | 1.620 | 0.864 | 1.875 | .063 | −0.091, 3.331 | | | | | | |
| SIM × PLAUS | −0.613 | 0.236 | −2.592 | .011 | −1.081, −0.145 | 1.484 | .001 | 0.702 | .026 | 0.042 | .913 |
| Constant | −1.979 | 4.434 | −0.446 | .656 | −10.763, 6.804 | | | | | | |
| | $R^2 = .094$ | | | | | | | | | | |
| | $F(3,115) = 3.977, p < .010$ | | | | | | | | | | |

*Note*: Medium $_{(M)}$, high $_{(H)}$ and low $_{(L)}$ levels of plausibility were determined as, respectively, the mean (4.92) and plus/minus 1 SD (1.27) from the mean.

## RESULTS

Correlations for the study variables are presented in Table 1. All the remaining 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 (CI) of indirect effects with 5000 resamples.

To verify H1, I conducted a regression analysis examining whether the relationship between similarity of ID parties and integration of their viewpoints is moderated by ID plausibility. It turned out that similarity of ID parties and ID plausibility interacted their influence on the general integration in an ID (see Table 2 and Figure 1).

A strong significantly positive relationship between similarity of ID parties and general integration was observed when ID plausibility was low; this relationship was also significantly positive but weaker when plausibility was medium, and it was non-significant at high levels of plausibility. Thus, H1 was confirmed.

To examine H2, the mediation model A (Figure 2) with two mediators operating in parallel, that is, identification with the interlocutor and ID wishfulness, was tested. The 95% bias-corrected bootstrap CI for the indirect effect through identification with the interlocutor ($a_1b_1 = 0.378$) was entirely above zero (CI: 0.146, 0.705), confirming that this effect was positive and significant. The 95% bias-corrected bootstrap CI for the indirect effect through

ID wishfulness ($a_2b_2 = 0.250$) was also above zero (CI: 0.051, 0.609), confirming that this effect was positive and significant as well. There was no evidence that similarity of ID parties influenced general integration independent of its effects on identification with the interlocutor and ID wishfulness ($c' = -0.008$, $p = .981$, CI: −0.644, 0.629). Thus, H2 was supported.

Although formulation of H2a and H2b suggests testing simple mediation models, I actually tested models of serial multiple mediation. In these models, analogically to H2 and to the respective model A (Figure 2), the predictor of similarity of ID parties was added, because H2a and H2b were treated as supplementary to H2.

In regard to H2a, the mediation model B (Figure 2) with two mediators operating in serial, such as identification with the interlocutor and the author's integrative attitude, was tested. Analysis confirmed that there was a positive indirect effect of similarity of ID parties on the integration of their viewpoints through these two serial mediators ($a_1d_{21}b_2 = 0.331$, CI: 0.115, 0.672). For the other paths of influence through only one of the mediators, the bootstrap CIs straddled zero ($a_1b_1 = 0.112$, CI: −0.063, 0.340; $a_2b_2 = 0.105$, CI: −0.351, 0.549), so these effects were considered statistically non-significant. The direct effect of similarity of ID parties on general integration was also statistically non-significant ($c' = 0.071$, $p = .752$, CI: −0.371, 0.513). Thus, H2a was confirmed.

Apart from the above-mentioned planned analyses I performed two exploratory analyses. In light of the
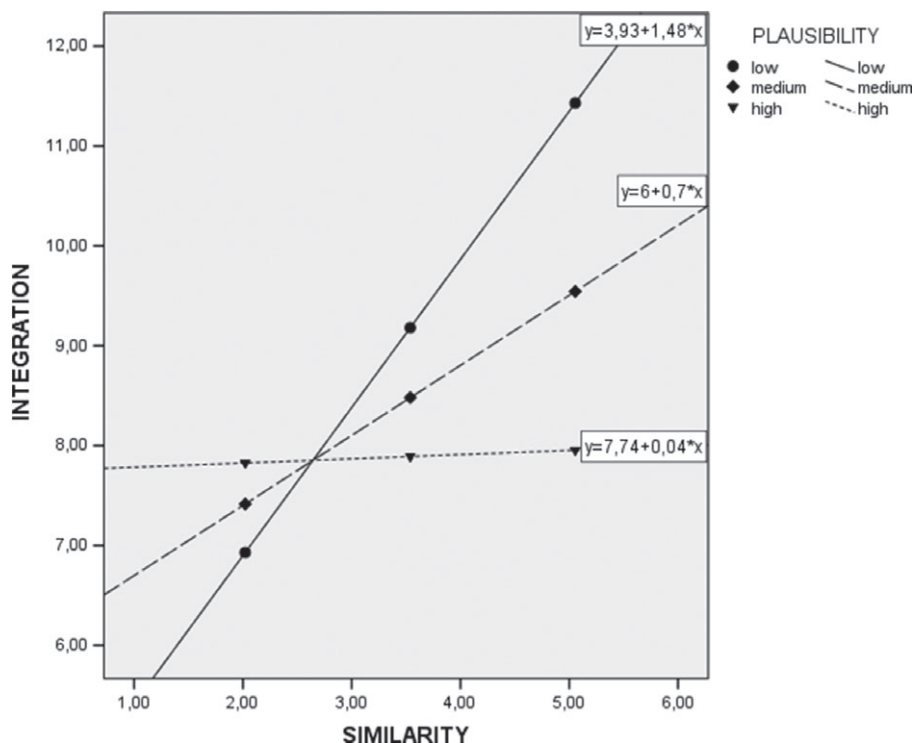
**Figure 1.** Effect of similarity between ID parties on integration at different levels of plausibility.

two-dimensional model of ID, which is adopted in this paper, integration is conceptualised as the sum of integrative attitudes of the author and interlocutor. In order to check whether these integrative attitudes of both parties do not work interchangeably in the postulated models of serial multiple mediation, B and C (Figure 2), I decided to test competitive mediation models. First of them was analogous to model B discussed above, with the exception that the author's integrative attitude was replaced by the interlocutor's integrative attitude ($M_2$). There was one specific indirect effect that was different from zero ($a_1b_1 = 0.269$), as determined by a bootstrap CI that did not contain zero (CI: 0.076, 0.550). This was the effect through only one mediator—identification with the interlocutor (ID_int); and this was established previously when testing model A. In the competitive model, the direct effect of similarity of ID parties on general integration was statistically non-significant ($c' = 0.081$, $p = .696$, CI: −0.329, 0.491). Thus, it appears that, if similarity between ID parties and identification with the internal interlocutor are observed, then an increase in general integration in an ID results from the author's (not interlocutor's) integrative attitude.

To evaluate H2b, the mediation model C (Figure 2) with two mediators operating in serial, such as ID wishfulness and the interlocutor's integrative attitude, was tested. The indirect effect through these two serial mediators was positive ($a_1d_{21}b_2 = 0.235$) and the 95% bias-corrected bootstrap CI excluded zero (CI: 0.058, 0.554), providing support for H2b. The other paths of

influence through only one of the mediators were statistically non-significant ($a_1b_1 = 0.063$, CI: −0.038, 0.249; $a_2b_2 = 0.039$, CI: −0.477, 0.536). The direct effect of similarity of ID parties on general integration was also statistically non-significant ($c' = 0.283$, $p = .176$, CI: −0.129, 0.696).

Additionally, in the second exploratory analysis I tested a competitive mediation model which was analogous to model C, except that interlocutor's integrative attitude was replaced by author's integrative attitude ($M_2$). There was only one specific indirect effect that was positive ($a_1b_1 = 0.192$) and statistically significant, as determined by a bootstrap CI that did not contain zero (CI: 0.043, 0.475). This was the effect through one mediator—ID wishfulness (WISH); and this effect was established previously when testing model A. In the competitive model, the direct effect of similarity of ID parties on general integration was statistically non-significant ($c' = -0.007$, $p = .973$, CI: −0.418, 0.404). This allows us to conclude that, if similarity between ID parties triggers a wishful ID, then an increase in general integration in the ID results from the interlocutor's (not the author's) integrative attitude.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to examine moderators and mediators in the relationship between similarity of ID
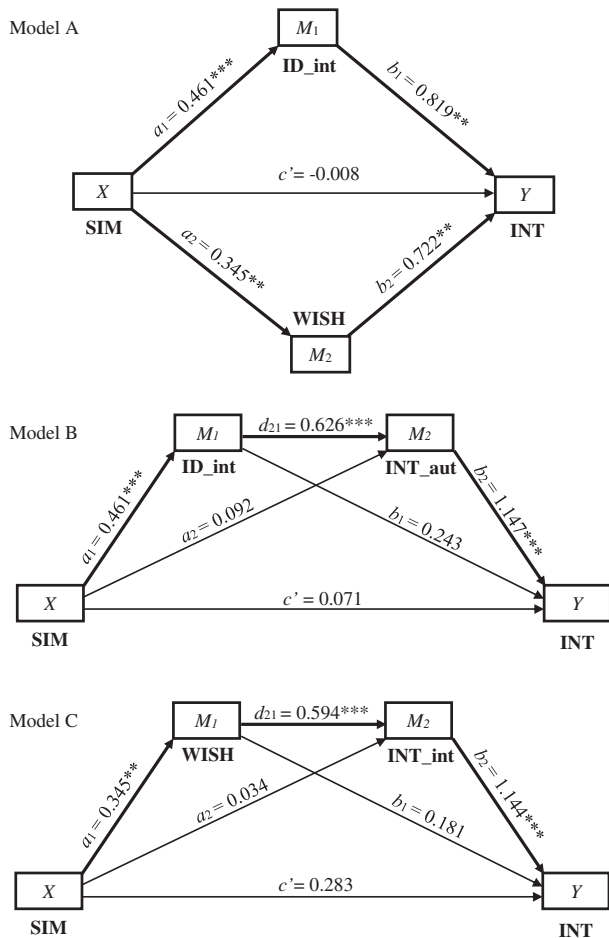
**Figure 2.** Models of parallel multiple mediation (A) and serial multiple mediation (B and C); unstandardised regression coefficients are presented. ID_int = identification with interlocutor; INT = integration; INT_aut = author's integrative attitude; INT_int = interlocutor's integrative attitude; SIM = similarity between ID parties; WISH – ID wishfulness. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .005$, *** $p \leq .001$.

parties and ID integration. The findings were consistent with the hypotheses. The studied relationship was moderated by ID plausibility; this relationship was significantly positive when plausibility was lower, whereas it was non-significant when plausibility was high. Perceived similarity in an ID exerted an indirect effect on ID integration in two ways. Firstly, through identifying with the interlocutor, and in turn, through the author's integrative attitude, suggesting a mechanism in line with social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Similarity to the interlocutor drives identification with them. This makes the ID's author prone to take the interlocutor's needs into account, and to modify his/her own stance, which consequently triggers cooperation and integration of the viewpoints in the ID. The second potential mechanism, which is connected with ID wishfulness and the interlocutor's integrative attitude, is consistent with similarity–attraction theory (Byrne, 1962). The positive affect resulting from perceived similarity

to the imagined interlocutor can lead to overly positive, wishful thinking about the course of an ID. In such ID an internal interlocutor can be created as understanding and even compliant person, who is inclined to change his/her own stance under the influence of the dialogue's author (the interlocutor's integrative attitude). As a consequence, the general integration in ID can effectively increase.

Are there any practical implications of these findings? My investigation was accompanied by the supposition that the relationship between similarity of ID parties and ID integration is worth exploring because thinking of internal interlocutor as similar to oneself seems to be an easy way to increase frequency of integrative IDs. Given that IDs can serve as a kind of prototype for real interactions, in the next step I wanted to investigate under what conditions an integrative solution of a problem discussed in ID can be an effective incentive to conduct interpersonal dialogues modelled on integrative IDs. However, my findings indicated that similarity between parties in an ID increases integration only in IDs with a low level of plausibility.

Thus, we should ask, is it possible for such IDs to influence real social relationships? First of all, it must be emphasised that in my analysis medium, low and high levels of plausibility were established as the mean and plus/minus one standard deviation from the mean, that is, respectively, 4.92, 3.65 and 6. Taking into account that plausibility was rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 0 to 6, the level of plausibility, which we used to determine as low, was in fact located in the middle of the scale. This was due to the small number of scores in the range of 0–3 in my sample.

But what about those people who estimated their IDs as implausible or almost implausible? Can such IDs affect real social relations? Presumably yes, given that just thinking about an interlocutor as similar to oneself triggers positive attitudes towards them. Sprecher (2014) showed that people who received bogus information (prior to an interaction) that the other party was similar to them, expected to experience more liking towards the other and more enjoyment from the interaction. Another uncertainty is what people were focused on when they assessed their ID as (almost) implausible. Indeed, if they treated their ID's course as implausible, they could become discouraged from modelling their real dialogues on imagined integrative IDs. If, however, they assessed the integrative solution as implausible, the effect of discouragement could be weaker, because in this situation, "implausible" could mean "difficult to achieve but desirable and worth the effort". In this context, further research should differentiate between plausibility of an ID's course and an ID's result.

There are also other limitations of this study that ought to be considered when interpreting the findings. To date, most studies based on similarity–attraction theory have investigated the effects of similarity in terms of

directly stated attitudes on several issues (e.g., smoking, drinking, marriage; Byrne, 1962). With reference to personality similarities, Byrne (1971) highlights that personality characteristics linked to behaviour in an interpersonal situation are crucial when studying the similarity–attraction relationship. Several studies have found support for Byrne's (1971) contention. Wilson et al. (2016) found that being similarly high or similarly low on agreeableness or extraversion positively impacted outcomes of negotiations, but this effect did not generalise to the personality dimensions of the Big Five, outside of the "interpersonal plane." In my study, the participants listed any three characteristics that were to show the similarity between them and their interlocutors. It is possible that this aspect of the procedure could have modified the studied relationship in an uncontrolled way. In further research it would be advisable to control the types of perceived similarity. Analogous to the categorisation of diversity proposed by Harrison, Price, and Bell (1998), one could distinguish between surface-level similarity in terms of outwardly observable physical characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race), and deep-level similarity in terms of underlying beliefs, attitudes and other personality characteristics. Differentiation between stable similarity and transient similarity could also be useful.

As regards to other shortcomings of the study, it should be stressed that cross-sectional, non-experimental design limits our ability to make causal interpretation about the findings. Furthermore, because of reliance on cross-sectional data, my mediational models could be evaluated in alternative directions/configurations to the ones presented in the paper.

Next, the study was mainly attended by students from one country and sample size can be considered relatively small for the evaluated models. Thus, the results ought to be replicated in bigger groups originating from different countries, and including people of different ages and statuses.

Additionally, the study was limited to IDs reflecting social interactions. Therefore, it is worth studying these relationships in IDs that involve two or more personal perspectives (like in the Santiago example).

Finally, I did not control any contextual conditions under which integration of viewpoints in IDs was possible. Presumably, the quality of a real contact with a person who plays the role of our internal interlocutor has an impact on the integration in our ID. For example, if we are in a conflict with that person a high level of ID integration can be difficult to achieve and a course of the ID can be specific. As my sample was completed randomly, I could assume that the impact of different contextual factors was minimised. However, when we consider further research the question of situational determinants of ID integration seems to be worth exploring.

Taken together, this is the first study to examine the moderating and mediating factors in the relationship between similarity to an imagined interlocutor and the integration in ID. The findings indicated that plausibility of ID was a moderator of this relationship. Moreover, I identified two mechanisms by which perceived similarity of ID parties exerted an indirect effect on ID integration. The first mechanism is in line with social identity theory, the second mechanism is consistent with similarity–attraction theory. The results should be replicated in studies in which shortcomings of the current study will be minimised.

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