

Running head: PREDICTORS OF ASSERTIVE BYSTANDER INTERVENTION  
INTENTIONS

What makes a young assertive bystander? The effect of intergroup contact, empathy, cultural  
openness and in-group bias on assertive bystander intervention intentions

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### Abstract

The present research tests the indirect effects of intergroup contact on adolescents' bystander intervention intentions via four potential mediators: 'empathy', 'cultural openness', 'in-group bias' and 'intergroup anxiety'. White British adolescents (N = 855), aged 11-13 years, completed measures of intergroup (inter-ethnic) contact and the identified indirect variables. Intended bystander behaviour was measured by presenting participants with an intergroup (immigrant) name-calling scenario. Participants rated the extent to which they would behave assertively. The findings extend previous intergroup contact research by showing a significant indirect effect of intergroup contact on assertive bystander intentions via empathy, cultural openness and in-group bias (but not via intergroup anxiety). Theoretical implications and practical suggestions for future prejudice-reduction interventions are discussed.

What makes a young assertive bystander?: The effect of intergroup contact, empathy, cultural openness and in-group bias on assertive bystander intervention intentions

In UK schools, intergroup bullying, and particularly inter-racial bullying (e.g. name-calling) has reached alarming levels: recent figures show that between 2007 and 2011, nearly 88,000 racist incidents were recorded in British schools (Ofsted, 2012). The impact of such bullying can be devastating, for example, past research has shown that victims of bullying often experience social exclusion from school peers (Olweus, 1993; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988). In turn, the psychological consequences of social exclusion are well documented, including detrimental effects on young people's academic performance, self-esteem and pro-social behaviour (Leary, 1990; Nansel et al., 2001; Twenge & Baumeister, 2005). Recently, social developmental psychologists have highlighted the potential role that assertive peer bystanders can play in efforts to tackle intergroup bullying (Aboud & Joong, 2008). However, assertive intervention by peer bystanders during incidents of bullying is rare (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001), and little is known about the predictors of assertive intervention when young people witness name-calling among their peers. Contributing to the emerging literature on developmental *intergroup* processes (Abrams & Killen, 2014) the current research examines whether young people intend to respond assertively when witnessing intergroup bullying, and potential underlying predictors derived from intergroup literature.

Social exclusion amongst young people encapsulates a variety of social behaviours, including bullying (Killen, 2007). Recently offensive *name-calling* has gained prominence as the most common form of bullying in schools (e.g. Smith & Shu, 2000) and *intergroup* name-calling has also been identified as the most common form of inter-group bullying (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). Importantly, intergroup name-calling can lead to both personal and intergroup damage: it causes public humiliation to the victim, but also serves to maintain group status and reinforce norms supporting stereotypes and prejudice (Aboud & Joong,

2008). With this in mind, the current research will focus on inter-group name-calling.

One intergroup context that may be particularly harmful is name-calling directed towards immigrants. Recent research found high levels social isolation amongst adolescent immigrants, with 1 in 5 reporting feeling like an outsider (Oxman-Martinez, et al., 2012). Furthermore, adolescent immigrants' may be particularly sensitive to the detrimental effects of social exclusion, including anxiety, depression, and delinquent behaviour (McKenney, et al., 2006; Strohmeier, Kärnä, & Salmivalli, 2011). Arguably, when bullying is directed towards an individual's race, or ethnicity, the psychological impact on the victim is greater as the attribution of the event is internal, stable and uncontrollable (McKenney, Pepler, Craig, & Connolly, 2006). In light of these findings, the current research focuses on young people's intention to intervene in inter-group bullying situations where the victim is an immigrant.

Recently, social developmental psychologists (Aboud & Joong, 2008) and educational practitioners have highlighted the potential role that *assertive* peer bystanders can play in efforts to tackle intergroup name-calling. Assertive bystanders are onlookers who challenge bullies and comfort victims (Salmivalli, et al., 1996). Importantly, peer bystanders have been found to be present in as many as 85% of bullying incidents (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig & Pepler, 1995). However, assertive intervention by peer bystanders during incidents of bullying is rare (Hawkins, et al., 2001), and little is known about the predictors of assertive intervention when young people witness name-calling among their peers. Assertive bystander behaviour may be particularly effective for tackling intergroup name-calling as assertive bystanders have the potential to establish new social norms and intergroup attitudes of tolerance and acceptance (Aboud & Joong, 2008). The current study builds on this previous research by examining assertive bystander intervention in an *intergroup* name-calling context, and by testing potential predictors of intended assertive bystander behaviour

derived from research on *intergroup relations*: intergroup contact and potential underlying mechanisms (empathy, cultural openness, in-group bias and intergroup anxiety).

### **Predictors of assertive bystander intentions**

**Intergroup contact.** Intergroup contact is defined as a meaningful interaction between members of different social groups (Allport, 1954). Over the past 60 years there has been considerable support for the success of intergroup contact in reducing prejudice, among both adults and young people (Crisp & Turner, 2009; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011; Tropp, O'Brien and Migacheva, 2014); particularly when Allport's (1954) proposed facilitating conditions are met, including equal status contact, cooperative interaction, common goals, and the support of relevant authorities. A number of underlying mechanisms through which intergroup contact reduces prejudice have been identified. Notably, intergroup contact has been linked to greater empathy (Batson, et al., 1997), greater cultural openness (Nesdale & Todd, 2000), lower in-group bias (Bettencourt, Brewer, Rogers-Croak, & Miller, 1992) and lower anxiety (Miller, 2002) which each, in turn, can generalize to more positive attitudes of the group as a whole.

To our knowledge, there has been no research to date examining the impact of intergroup contact on assertive bystander intentions in an intergroup name-calling incident. However, recently intergroup contact has been linked to behavioural intentions measures, such as greater intentions to engage positively with the out-group (Turner, West & Christie, 2013), therefore, we argue that intergroup contact could also increase children's willingness to intervene assertively to assist an immigrant victim. We also aim to shed light on whether the aforementioned underlying mechanisms of the contact-attitude relationship, also underlie the relationship between intergroup contact and assertive bystander intentions.

**Empathy.** This can be defined as ‘the ability to experience the same feelings as those of another person in response to a particular situation’ (Nesdale, Griffith, Durkin, & Maass, 2005, p. 624). Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) identified empathy as a strong positive mediator of the relationship between intergroup contact and intergroup attitudes. Empathy has also been linked with pro-social or helping behaviours (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990) and more recently, defending victims of bullying (Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009; Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2008). Therefore, we predict that greater intergroup contact will be associated with higher empathy, which in turn will be associated with greater assertive bystander intentions.

**Cultural openness.** This can be defined as the extent to which an individual is open to, and interested in, the similarities and differences between their own and other groups (Nesdale & Todd, 2000). Intergroup contact is thought to reduce ethnocentrism, which enhances openness to other groups (cultural openness) and positive intergroup attitudes (Drapela, 1975; Nesdale & Todd, 2000). The current research predicts that intergroup contact will be associated with greater cultural openness, which in turn will be associated with greater assertive bystander intentions.

**In-group bias.** This is defined as a strong favouritism towards members of an individual’s own group, as opposed to members of other groups (Hewstone, Rubin, & Wills, 2002). Experimental research has connected intergroup contact with lower in-group bias (Bettencourt, et al., 1992; Hewstone & Swart, 2011). Furthermore, in-group bias has been linked with intergroup helping behaviours (Dovidio, Piliavin, Gaertner, Schroeder, & Clark, 1991). Thus, we predict that greater intergroup contact will be associated with lower in-group bias, which will in turn be associated with greater assertive bystander intentions.

**Intergroup anxiety.** Finally, a key underlying mechanism that has been found to account for the positive impact of intergroup contact on reducing prejudice is intergroup

anxiety (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Under the right conditions, intergroup contact alleviates the initial anxiety that often accompanies an intergroup interaction (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001). Therefore, we predict that intergroup contact will be associated with lower intergroup anxiety, which in turn, will be associated with greater assertive bystander intentions.

Considering the past research demonstrating the importance of empathy, cultural openness, in-group bias and intergroup anxiety for intergroup attitudes, we examine each simultaneously as potential underlying mechanisms of the effect of intergroup contact on assertive bystander intentions. A multiple mediation analysis was conducted to determine the role of each of the four proposed underlying mechanisms. Furthermore, this analysis allowed us to determine which effect could best account for a significant increase in assertive bystander intentions, controlling for each of the other proposed mediators. In sum, our multiple mediation model predicted two positive and two negative indirect effects. We argue that intergroup contact will be associated with greater levels of empathy and cultural openness, which in turn will both be uniquely associated with *higher* levels of assertive bystander intentions. Whereas conversely, intergroup contact will be associated with *lower* levels of in-group bias and intergroup anxiety, which in turn will both be uniquely associated with greater assertive bystander intentions.

## Method

### Participants

Participants (N = 902, 341 males and 553 females) were recruited from 8 secondary schools in the South East of England. The majority (94.79%) of participants identified as native to the UK, and 5.21% as immigrants to the UK. As the focal out-group in this study was immigrants, all participants who were born outside of the UK were excluded from the analysis (N=47) leaving 855 participants (327 males, 520 females and 8 who did not disclose

their gender). The mean age of the sample was 12.4 years ( $SD=.505$ , range: 11-13 years). The ethnic composition comprised of 88.5% White British, 1.2% White Irish, 2.1% White other, 3.5% Mixed, 0.4% Black African, 0.2% Black other, 0.4% Asian, 0.5% Chinese, 0.8% Other and 2.4% did not disclose their ethnicity.

### **Materials**

Participants completed a questionnaire including all measures which will be outlined in this section. Firstly, the demographic information (gender, age, ethnicity and country of birth) of the participant was requested.

**Intergroup contact** was measured using an instrument modified from Nigbur, et al. (2008). Participants were asked about contact with Black and Minority Ethnic individuals (herein referred to as BME, a common term used in the UK). The aim of this was to encapsulate experience of ethnic diversity. Due to the extremely low levels of contact with immigrants, a measure of direct contact with immigrants was not appropriate. Adolescents were asked about the level of contact they have with BME individuals in five contexts: neighbourhood, school, class, friends and sports teams or clubs. An example of an item includes “in your neighbourhood where you live, would you say there are...”, followed by the 5 response options (mainly black people and ethnic minority people, mostly black and ethnic minority people with some white people, about half and half, mostly white with some black and ethnic minority people, and finally mainly white people). A pictorial 5 point scale was also used to illustrate different ethnic proportions respectively. The responses for all items were coded so that a low score indicated low opportunity for contact with BME people and a high score illustrated high opportunity for contact. To compute an overall intergroup contact score, an average score across the five contexts was calculated. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  coefficient for the intergroup contact scale was .63.

**Empathy** was measured using a modified version of Bryant's (1982) Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents. Six items were selected from the original 22-item Bryant scale. Rather than using Bryant's forced choice response format, the responses were measured on a unipolar scale for each item, ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 4 (a lot like me). All four reversed items were removed from the analysis due to low reliability; the remaining 6 item empathy scale had a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of .80. In order to calculate an overall empathy score an average score across items was calculated.

**Cultural openness** was measured using five items based on an instrument devised by Black (1990). All responses were measured on a 4 point scale, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much). The wording of the items was modified from asking about "other cultures" to focusing on immigrants. For example, the original item "do people from other cultures interest you" was adapted to "do people from other countries who now live in the UK interest you?". Analyses showed high internal reliability for cultural openness (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  = .82), a mean score was then calculated.

**In-group bias.** The in-group bias measure was modified from the in-group bias measure used by Cameron, Rutland and Brown (2007) to refer to immigrants as opposed to refugees. The measure consisted of five positive and five negative attributes: honest, friendly, hardworking, clever and clean, lazy, unintelligent, dirty, unfriendly and dishonest. The items were presented twice, to measure attitudes towards the in-group (people born in the UK) and the out-group (people born in another country who now live in the UK) separately. Participants were asked to indicate, on a 4 point scale, "How many of [these people] you think are..." followed by each attribute. Response options were: 1 (All), 2 (Some), 3 (Most) and 4 (None). All items were reversed scored. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  analysis showed high internal reliability for out-group positive and negative scale items (.85 and .84 respectively), and good internal reliability for in-group positive and negative scale items (.64 and .65

respectively). A total score was computed for each of the following: in-group positive attributes, out-group positive attributes, in-group negative attributes and out-group attributes. A cumulative difference score was then computed by subtracting the total out-group negative attribute score from the total in-group positive attribute score. This difference score was then added to the difference score for the total in-group negative attribute score subtracting the total out-group positive attribute score.

**Intergroup anxiety** was measured using 10 items adapted from Stephan and Stephan's (1985) intergroup anxiety scale. The instructions for the measure were modified to focus on immigrants as the focal out-group: "If you were to meet someone who was born in another country and has moved to the UK in the future, how do you think you would feel?". Of the 10 items presented 7 were negative affect items (awkward, suspicious, embarrassed, defensive, anxious, careful, self-conscious) and 3 were positive (happy, comfortable confident). All responses were measured on a 5 point scale, from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). Firstly, the 3 positive items were reverse scored. Analyses showed high internal reliability for intergroup anxiety (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .77$ ), a composite mean score for intergroup anxiety was then calculated.

**Assertive Bystander Intervention.** This was adapted from a bystander measure created by Palmer and Cameron (2010). In the version used in this study the participant is presented with the following vignette of an immigrant name-calling incident: "Imagine that it is the end of the school day, and as you are walking down the corridor you hear someone (Person A) shout a rude word to someone else (Person B) because they are from another country and now live in the UK. What would you do?". Following the vignette participants are presented with four possible responses that are each a form of assertive bystander behaviour. The four items were: "I would try and make Person B feel better", "I would tell Person B to ignore Person A", "I would tell Person A not to say nasty things" and "I would

tell a teacher or member of staff". Ten bystander responses were originally presented, with additional possible responses including ignoring, watching and joining in. The current research focusses on assertive bystander intentions only, therefore, only those bystander responses concerning assertive bystander behaviour were included. A confirmatory factor analysis with varimax rotation showed that the 4 assertive bystander items did indeed load on one distinct factor [.82, .77, .75 and .62 respectively], this also corresponds with the findings of Palmer and Cameron (2010). For each behaviour, participants indicate how likely they are to behave in that way on a 3 point scale (1 "I would not do this", 2 "I might do this" and 3 "I definitely would do this"). Analyses showed high internal reliability for these assertive bystander behaviour items (Cronbach's alpha =.77), a composite mean score was then calculated.

### **Design**

A multiple mediation bootstrap analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) was used to test the indirect effect of intergroup contact on assertive bystander intentions via empathy, cultural openness, in-group bias and intergroup anxiety.

### **Results**

A summary of descriptive statistics and a correlation matrix for the study variables are provided in Tables 1 and 2.

[Insert Tables 1 and 2]

### **Multiple Mediation Analysis Procedures**

The proposed multiple mediation model was then tested using the Preacher and Hayes (2008) bootstrapping method for indirect effects. Bootstrapping is a nonparametric approach to hypothesis testing and effect-size estimation that is increasingly recommended for many types of analyses, including mediation (Derek, Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011; Hayes, 2009). Rather than making assumptions of the distribution of the data, bootstrapping

generates an empirical approximation of the sampling distribution of a statistic by repeated random resampling (with replacement) from the available data. Bootstrapping uses this distribution to calculate p-values and construct confidence intervals. Furthermore, this statistical procedure provides superior confidence intervals (CIs) that are corrected for bias and accelerated (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993; Preacher & Hayes, 2008, for details).

This analysis was based on 5000 bootstrap samples to describe the confidence intervals of indirect effects. Interpretation of the bootstrap data is achieved by observing whether a zero is contained between either the 90% or 95% confidence intervals (CI), thus indicating a lack of significance. As argued by Hayes (2009), an indirect effect is estimated as significant from the confidence intervals not containing a zero, as opposed to the individual paths. This is due to the overall mediation model not being pertinent on whether the individual paths are either significant or non-significant.

Furthermore, in accordance with new recommendations for mediation we reject the emphasis on the significance of a total ( $c$ ) and direct effect ( $c'$ , e.g., Derek, et al., 2011; Hayes, 2009). An independent variable may exert a stronger influence on a mediator (path  $a$ ) than on the dependent measure (path  $c$ ), which could lead to a stronger indirect effect than total effect. Thus, the  $a$ - $b$  path can be significant, even when the  $c$  path is not. In line with Derek et al. (2011), if theoretically driven indirect effects exist, these effects can be explored regardless of the significance of the total or direct effect. Notably, for this research, indirect effects that are in opposing directions can obscure the total effects, as they are potentially competing with each other (for example, the effect of empathy opposes that of in-group bias).

Table 3 displays the bootstrapped estimates for the total and specific indirect effects obtained from the main analysis. In line with our predictions, the indirect effects of empathy, cultural openness and in-group bias were significant, as demonstrated by confidence intervals

that did not contain zero. Specifically, greater intergroup contact was related to higher levels of empathy, which in turn, was associated with greater assertive bystander intentions.

Greater intergroup contact was also related to higher levels of cultural openness, which in turn, was associated with greater assertive bystander intentions. Additionally, intergroup contact was associated with lower levels of in-group bias, which in turn, was related to greater assertive bystander intentions (see Figure 1). Contrary to our predictions, the total indirect effect of intergroup contact on intended bystander behaviour through intergroup anxiety was not statistically significant, as the confidence intervals contained a zero.

Importantly, this analysis enables examination of each predictor whilst controlling for each other predictor. That is, a significant indirect effect of one predictor means it is statistically significant above and beyond the effects of the other predictors in the model. For example, empathy was found to have a significant unique indirect effect on assertive bystander intentions, whilst statistically controlling for cultural openness and in-group bias. Contrasting the three significant indirect effects revealed that the indirect effect via cultural openness was significantly stronger than the indirect effect via empathy (point estimate of contrast  $-.0693$ , with a 95% confidence interval of  $-.1143, -.0319$ ). The indirect effect of cultural openness was also significantly stronger than the indirect effect via in-group bias (point estimate of contrast  $.0926$ , with a 95% confidence interval of  $.0528, .1383$ ). The contrast between empathy and in-group bias revealed no significant difference (point estimate of contrast  $.0233$ , with a 95% confidence interval of  $-.0063, .0558$ ).

In sum, regarding the strength of the predictors, the strongest indirect effect was found for cultural openness, which was stronger than both empathy and in-group bias. This was followed by the significant indirect effects of empathy and in-group bias (where no significantly stronger predictor was identified). Thus, both empathy and in-group bias each

exert an indirect effect on assertive bystander intentions, over and above all other predictors, but neither was found to have a stronger indirect effect than the other.

[Insert Figure 1]

### **Discussion**

Past research has shown that victims of bullying are often excluded by their peers (Olweus, 1993; Perry, et al., 1988) with immigrants identified as particularly vulnerable victims (McKenney, et al., 2006; Oxman-Martinez, et al., 2012; Strohmeier, et al., 2011). Name-calling has been highlighted as the most common and damaging form of intergroup bullying in schools (Aboud & Joong, 2008; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). Recently, promoting *assertive* peer intervention has been identified as an effective avenue for tackling intergroup name-calling. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine young people's intentions to intervene assertively in an intergroup (immigrant) name-calling situation, and to identify predictors of assertive bystander intentions.

By testing our model, we found that intergroup contact had an indirect effect on assertive bystander intentions via empathy, cultural openness and in-group bias. More specifically, greater intergroup contact was related to higher levels of empathy, higher levels of cultural openness and reduced intergroup bias, which in turn were associated with greater assertive bystander intentions. Contrary to our predictions, one potential mechanism, namely, intergroup anxiety was not found to have a significant indirect effect. Interestingly, the effect of cultural openness was found to be significantly stronger than both empathy and in-group bias, thus we found it was the most important mechanism in fostering assertive bystander intentions.

The positive effect of cultural openness was in line with our predictions and previous research investigating the intergroup contact-prejudice relationship. Our findings suggest that intergroup contact influences assertive bystander intentions in the same way that it

impacts attitudes: by reducing the individual's tendency towards ethnocentrism (Nesdale & Todd, 2000). Intergroup contact can promote a tendency to be open to other cultural groups, and to take an interest in the similarities and differences between the in-group and out-group, in turn, increasing assertive bystander intentions. Future research should examine more closely the particular aspects of cultural openness that predict assertive bystander intentions.

Past research illustrated a positive relationship between intergroup contact and empathy (Batson, et al., 1997), and also between bystander empathy and defending behaviour (Caravita, et al., 2009; Gini, et al., 2008). Consistent with these findings, we found that intergroup contact was linked to higher empathy, and in turn, greater assertive bystander intentions. Importantly, this current study has combined the previously separate intergroup and bystander literature in relation to empathy, placing each into a model for assertive bystander intentions.

Finally, the current study highlights the indirect effect of in-group bias, in that higher levels of intergroup contact were associated with lower levels of in-group bias, which in turn, was associated with higher intentions to intervene assertively. Firstly, these findings are in line with intergroup contact theory which purports that in-group bias should decrease as a function of positive intergroup contact (Allport, 1954). Secondly, they concur with theory put forward by Dovidio et al. (1991), suggesting that lower in-group bias increases bystander arousal whilst simultaneously reducing the perceived costs of helping, resulting in greater helping behaviours, in this case assertive bystander intentions. Recently, Thijs, Verkuyten and Grundel (2014) found ethnic in-group bias to moderate the effects of out-group contact on ethnic peer discrimination. Taken together with the current research, these findings suggest that both intergroup contact and in-group bias are crucial for promoting positive intergroup relations.

In general, cultural openness, empathy and in-group bias are all thought to impact helping behaviour through valuing difference, or reducing perceived difference, in this case on an interpersonal level of contact. In addition to interpersonal contact, psychologists are beginning to examine the effects of social categorisation on promoting helping behaviour by *altering the level of categorisation that is most salient* (for review see Dovidio, Gaertner, Shnabel, Sagay, & Johnson, 2010). This is based on the idea of ‘we-ness’ or a common in-group (a more inclusive in-group that consists of in-group and erstwhile out-group members), which is thought to be a potential avenue for reducing in-group bias and encouraging helping behaviour (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). For example, if a school promotes a more inclusive common in-group, such as school membership, this could lead to greater pro-social and helping behaviour across students. This is due to the common ‘school’ in-group category becoming more salient than the other group categories, in this case categorisation by ethnicity or country of origin. Thus, increasing the salience of a common in-group could also form the basis of future school-based interventions to promote assertive bystander intervention amongst students. Future research should examine how levels of categorisation are linked with cultural openness, empathy and in-group bias, and how categorization could serve as a mechanism by which inter-group contact impacts on bystander behaviour intentions.

Although the current research focuses on intergroup attitudes (such as in-group bias) as powerful forces in legitimizing intergroup social exclusion, there is also a moral component. Future research should examine moral reasoning, as the act to intervene assertively is relevant to moral development; in particular, the moral concepts of fairness and concern for another’s welfare (Killen, 2007). We believe this to be a fruitful area of future research, particularly as our research linked higher assertive bystander intention with higher levels of empathy. This finding could encompass a moral component, whereby greater assertive intentions resulted from a concern for another’s welfare, comparable to the ability to

experience the same feelings as another person (empathy). Furthermore, intergroup interactions can facilitate moral judgements by promoting perspective taking. Therefore, future research could further investigate our model of assertive bystander intervention, by examining moral reasoning alongside the indirect effect of empathy.

Contrary to our predictions, intergroup anxiety did not mediate the relationship between intergroup contact and assertive bystander intentions. This is surprising as the link between intergroup contact, anxiety and intergroup attitudes is well-established in the literature (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). One possible explanation is that while anxiety towards interacting with an out-group member (intergroup anxiety) may be reduced by intergroup contact, it could be unimportant for intervening assertively in an intergroup name-calling situation. We argue that other forms of intergroup anxiety could instead be important in this context, for example, anxiety regarding whether the out-group victim would wish you to intervene, or anxiety about the reaction of fellow in-group members (Abrams, Rutland, Cameron, & Marques, 2003). Furthermore, research has shown that an *intrapersonal* form of anxiety, namely, self-efficacy in intervening, is an important predictor of bystander behaviour (Gini, et al., 2008). Future research should explore in greater detail the specific dimensions of self-efficacy and anxiety that could prohibit assertive bystander intervention in an inter-group name-calling context.

**Limitations.** The current study examined adolescent's *intentions* to intervene assertively. However, whether adolescents would truly act assertively if they saw the intergroup name-calling scenario described is not known. Moreover, the lack of a measure of actual bystander intervention could also account for the lack of an association between intergroup anxiety and the purported assertive bystander behaviour. We recognise the limitations of measuring behavioural intentions, however they are still of value. The theoretical framework of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (ToPB: Ajzen, 1991) stresses the

importance of behavioural intentions as it proposes that intentions are the most important predictor of whether an individual performs a particular action. Moreover, past ToPB research has found pro-social intentions to be a strong predictor of pro-social behaviours, such as charitable donations (Smith & McSweeney, 2007). However, empirical findings regarding the extent to which behavioural intentions predict actual behaviour are varied and have been criticised (Armitage & Connor, 2001). We argue that measuring behavioural intentions is a first step in this new line of research, and future research should attempt to include measures of actual bystander behaviour that meet ethical guidelines in this sensitive area of research. Future research could also investigate the same behaviour towards a variety of different groups (e.g. compare in-group victim to out-group victim, or different out-group victims) to differentiate between bystander reactions to name-calling in general and name-calling specific to immigrants.

**Implications.** The current study has theoretical and practical implications in both the intergroup contact and bystander intervention literature. The current findings build on the recent focus on the intergroup contact-behaviour relationship (Hewstone & Swart, 2011; Turner, West & Christie, 2013), with a particular theoretical advancement in the under-researched area of the predictors of assertive bystander behavioural intentions. Importantly, the current study also has important practical implications for future school-based interventions, highlighting the possibility of countering intergroup social exclusion with educational intergroup contact interventions and policies that also target interpersonal characteristics (e.g. empathy and cultural openness, and reduce in-group bias). In line with the work of Thijs et al. (2014), this current research further emphasises the importance of moving beyond simple main effects of intergroup contact, to examine the effects of other school or classroom based characteristics (e.g., the ethnic in-group bias) to limit the negative effects and promote the positive effects of intergroup contact.

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Table 1

*Means and standard deviations of main study variables*

Variable	Mean (SD)
Intergroup contact	1.96 (.44)
Empathy	2.76 (.51)
Cultural openness	2.46 (.67)
In-group bias	1.37 (4.16)
Intergroup anxiety	2.48 (.64)
Assertive bystander intentions	2.09 (.53)

*Note.* Standard deviation in parenthesis.

<sup>a</sup>Contact scores have a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 with higher scores indicating greater intergroup contact. Empathy and cultural openness scores have a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 4 with higher scores indicating greater empathy and cultural openness respectively. In-group bias scores have a minimum of -30 and a maximum of 30 with higher (positive) scores indicating greater bias in favour of the in-group, lower (negative) scores indicating greater bias in favour of the out-group. Intergroup anxiety scores have a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 with higher scores indicating greater intergroup anxiety. Assertive bystander intervention scores have a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 3 with a higher score indicating greater assertive bystander intervention intentions.

Table 2

*Indirect effects of intergroup contact on intended assertive bystander intentions through empathy, cultural openness, in-group bias and intergroup anxiety and contrasts between proposed mediators*

Mediator	Bootstrap estimate	SE	BCa 95% CI lower	BCa 95% CI upper
Indirect effects				
Empathy	.0432	.0168	.0113	.0775
Cultural openness	.1125	.0235	.0688	.1597
In-group bias	.0199	.0086	.0063	.0406
Intergroup anxiety	.0032	.0045	-.0033	.0155
Contrasts				
Empathy vs Cultural openness	-.0693	.0206	-.1143	-.0319
Empathy vs In-group bias	.0233	.0158	-.0063	.0558
Empathy vs Intergroup anxiety	.0400	.0167	.0095	.0737
Cultural openness vs In-group bias	.0926	.0221	.0528	.1383
Cultural openness vs Intergroup anxiety	.1093	.0238	.0665	.1591
In-group bias vs Intergroup anxiety	.0167	.0095	.0014	.0401

*Note.* CI=confidence interval. Based on 5,000 bootstrap samples.

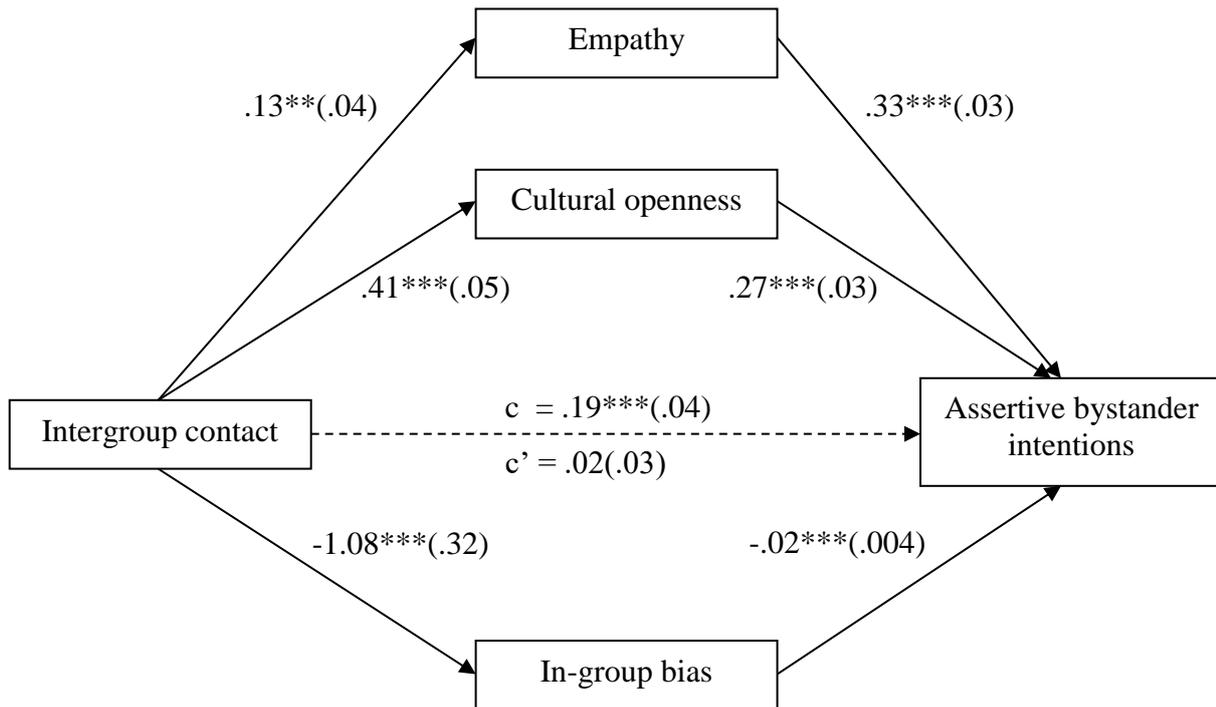


Figure 1. A multiple mediation model of intergroup contact and assertive bystander intentions through empathy, cultural openness and in-group bias. Unstandardised regression coefficients from a bootstrap procedure are provided along the paths. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .