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Improving intergroup attitudes via mediated intergroup contact in a bilingual setting¹

Abstract: This paper explores the role of mediated intergroup contact in improving intergroup attitudes between Italian speakers and German speakers in South Tyrol, Italy. Specifically, we examine how German-language television consumption affects attitudes towards the German-speaking group among Italian-speaking youth. The data ($N = 229$) were collected among Italian-speaking secondary school students in 2011. As expected, the results indicated that more German TV use was associated with more positive attitudes toward German speakers. A cognitive mediator (intergroup understanding) had a greater influence than an affective one (intergroup anxiety) in mediating the effect of TV use on attitudes. The effect of TV use on attitudes was greater among those who had less personal intergroup contact, but there were no differences in the effects of television based on variations in the local ethnolinguistic vitality of the two groups. Findings and implications are discussed, and suggestions for future research are made.

Keywords: South Tyrol, Italy, Italian, German, mediated contact, ethnolinguistic vitality

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1 Introduction

According to the intergroup contact hypothesis (Allport 1954), optimal contact with out-group members can contribute to promoting positive attitudes towards

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the out-group and undermining stereotyping. In the last few decades, numerous studies have been conducted and support has been found for Allport's hypothesis (Pettigrew & Tropp 2006). Thus, it seems to be clear at this point that having social contact with people from other social groups can improve the relationship with those groups. In the current paper, we examine whether contact with media presented in the minority language can change the attitudes of majority language group members towards the minority language group.

The evidence for the effects of social contact on intergroup attitudes is now solid. Pettigrew & Tropp (2006) demonstrate prejudice reduction effects of intergroup contact in a meta-analysis of over 700 samples. These effects are typically explained by both cognitive and affective mediators. By mediators, we mean variables that carry the effect of contact to attitudes: explanatory or intervening variables (Preacher & Hayes 2008). In terms of cognition, *learning* about and *understanding* of the out-group can lead people to see members of the out-group in more individuated and personalized ways, which undermines stereotyping. Greater knowledge can also reduce uncertainty about how to interact with the out-group, and enhance intergroup understanding. In terms of affect, contact can reduce intergroup anxiety (an affective state of negative expectations about interacting out-group members) and enhance liking of and affection for out-group members, resulting in more positive attitudes (Dovidio *et al.* 2003; Pettigrew 1998). Meta-analytic work demonstrates that the affective mediators are typically more powerful than the cognitive ones (Pettigrew & Tropp 2008).

A vital development in contact theory has been the expansion of research in the direction of indirect intergroup contact (Wright *et al.* 1997). Studies of indirect contact have included examinations of contact through the media, imagining intergroup contact, and having a friend-of-a-friend who belongs to an out-group, each of which has been shown to have positive effects on intergroup relations (e.g., Ortiz & Harwood 2007; Paolini *et al.* 2004; Paolini *et al.* 2007; Schiappa *et al.* 2005). Although the functioning of indirect contact is less clear than that of direct contact, researchers suggest that the two processes involve different mediating mechanisms leading to improved attitudes toward the out-group (Paolini *et al.* 2007). Specifically, while the impact of direct intergroup contact on prejudice is more strongly mediated by intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan 1985), indirect contact appears to have more effect on prejudice through cognitive mediators such as *learning*. Intergroup anxiety, the major affective obstacle to positive direct contact effects, is far less present in indirect contact (Ortiz & Harwood 2007; Pettigrew *et al.* 2007). A real physically present out-group member may constitute a source of anxiety, but an imagined out-group member or one shown on television is much less affectively powerful.

Hence, mediated contact should reduce affective influences and permit cognitive processes to gain prominence.

Mass media have often been considered as a means of connecting people across time and space. Recently, the media's role in linking social groups and hence building healthier intergroup relations has been examined (Schiappa *et al.* 2005; Ortiz & Harwood 2007; Mazziotta *et al.* 2011). Integrating intergroup contact theory (Allport 1954) and parasocial interaction (Horton & Wohl 1956), Schiappa *et al.* (2005) proposed the parasocial intergroup contact hypothesis. Within this model, on-air contact with out-group members through television results in indirect contact, which can lead to changing perceptions of the out-group and assist improvements in attitudes toward the out-group (Joyce & Harwood 2012; Ortiz & Harwood 2007). Television provides knowledge about out-group norms, behavior and habits, and thus contributes to learning about the out-group (Harwood 2010). Evidence for such mediated effects is small but growing, and a number of theoretical mechanisms have been posited (Mazziotta *et al.* 2011).

This paper explores the role of mediated intergroup contact in improving intergroup attitudes in a bilingual setting (see also Harwood & Vincze 2011). Specifically, we examine how German language TV use affects attitudes about the German-speaking group among Italian-speaking youth in South Tyrol, Italy. The study examines three hypotheses. First, we expect that the use of German TV will be associated with more positive attitudes toward German speakers (*Hypothesis 1*). This reflects the basic expectations of applying intergroup contact theory to a mediated setting. Second, we anticipate that intergroup understanding and intergroup anxiety will mediate the effect of television use on prejudice, and that understanding (as a cognitive mediator) will be more powerful than anxiety (the affective mediator) (*Hypothesis 2*). This reflects the earlier argument concerning the primacy of cognitive processes in interpreting media. Finally, as previous research has revealed (Fujioka 1999; Schiappa *et al.* 2005), the role of mediated intergroup contact is more important among those who lack or have limited direct contact with the out-group. Hence, we hypothesize that the positive effects of watching German TV on attitudes toward German speakers will be more pronounced in participants who have less direct contact with German speakers in their everyday lives (*Hypothesis 3*). For those with extensive direct interpersonal contact, any effects of mediated contact would presumably be diluted or discounted as a function of the direct knowledge of 'real' out-group members.

2 The intergroup setting²

2.1 The vitality of German in South Tyrol

Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977) offer a framework for describing the strength, or *ethnolinguistic vitality*, of language groups along three dimensions – demography, status and institutional support (see also Harwood *et al.* 1994). The vitality of the German-speaking group in South Tyrol is very strong regarding all three dimensions.

Today, about 70 percent of the population of South Tyrol speak German as their L1; thus, the German group constitutes the majority in the region. The German-speaking community is one of the few national minority communities that is continuously growing in number: while there were 224,000 German speakers in the area in 1910, in 2001 their number was 296,000. At the same time, there is a considerable variation in the proportion of German speakers in different parts of the region, which affects the local vitality of the language greatly (Landry & Allard 1994; Henning-Lindblom & Liebkind 2007). Out of the 116 municipalities, 103 have a German majority with the proportion of German speakers above 99 percent in 21 settlements and above 95 percent in 46 (Bonell & Winkler 2006). Italians only form a majority in five towns: Bozen (73 percent), Leifers (70.4 percent), Salurn (62.2 percent), Branzoll (59.9 percent), and Pfatten (57.1 percent).

Both Italian and German have official status and the same rights. Language equality is also ensured by two special regulations. One of these is the principle of ethnic proportions: jobs in the public sphere, public housing, and subsidies for culture and sport are divided in accordance with the proportion of ethnolinguistic groups. The other special regulation says that knowledge of both languages is obligatory in the public sector, therefore applicants have to pass a language exam to occupy a job there (Bonell & Winkler 2006).

German is also supported by a strong formal and informal institutional network including among others a provincial parliament and government, political parties, a Catholic diocese, and different educational and media institutions (Bonell & Winkler 2006; Oberrauch 2006). The residual legislative power of South Tyrol is vested in a provincial assembly. Laws passed by the South Tyrolean parliament (*Landtag*) are valid in the whole of the province; the *Land-*

² Although the focus of this paper is on the Italian and German language groups, there is also a third traditional language group in South Tyrol – the Ladins with about 18,000 native speakers. Ladin is a local official language in eight municipalities in the eastern part of South Tyrol, where most Ladin-speakers live.

tag has 35 representatives. The strongest political organization of the German community of South Tyrol is the conservative South Tyrolean People's Party, which has about 55,000 members. German speakers and Italian speakers have their own school system from kindergarten to secondary school (see Meraner 2004). From the second grade it is obligatory to learn Italian in the German-schools, and to learn German in the Italian ones. One of the cornerstones of the South Tyrolean education system is that the schools can only employ a teacher of the second language who is a native speaker of that language (so in an Italian school only a native German-speaker can teach German).

2.2 The German television landscape

The German television landscape has two main sectors: one local and one coming from abroad. First, the most important local electronic media in South Tyrol are the regional programs of the *RAI (Radio Audizioni Italiane)*, the Italian public-service broadcasting network. The *RAI Sender Bozen*³ started to air German-language programs in channel 2 of the Italian public service television in 1966. In 1979 *RAI Sender Bozen* began broadcasting via its own special channel. Now the television channel can be received with analog and digital technology all over South Tyrol. The length of German-language programs ranges between two to four hours per day, which is in accordance with the 1997 convention of the Council of Ministers that orders at least 550 hours of air time a year (Bonell & Winkler 2006). Outside its own broadcasting hours, *RAI Sender Bozen's* frequencies are used by the Italian-language *RAI 3*. The television channel of *RAI Sender Bozen* primarily broadcasts news and cultural programs. Unlike most other *RAI* channels, *RAI Sender Bozen* carries no commercials.

Second, paragraph 10 of the 691/1973 decree issued by the President enables South Tyrol to set up the technical equipment to receive German-speaking radio and television programs from abroad. Based on this, the provincial parliament passed the 16/1975 law founding the *Rundfunkanstalt Südtirol (RAS)*. All the public broadcasters from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland allow RAS to broadcast their programs in South Tyrol without any cost; hence the provincial citizens do not have to pay extra license fees. RAS is a public company formed by a board elected by the Government of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano. Not surprisingly, surveys show that the television consumption of German-speaking South Tyroleans is dominated by the use of German-speaking channels (Ausserbrunner 2005; Moring *et al.* 2011).

³ The *Rai Sender Bozen* broadcasts news and programs also in Ladin.

3 Methods

Self-report questionnaire data were collected from Italian speakers in three South Tyrolean secondary schools where the language of instruction was Italian. Participants from families that were bilingual ($N = 57$) or used a third language ($N = 39$) were excluded; so the final sample size was $N = 229$. One secondary school was selected in Bozen/Bolzano, where Italian speakers are the local majority ($N = 116$), and one school in Brixen/Bressanone and in Bruneck/Brunico each, where Italian-speakers make up a local minority ($N = 113$).

3.1 Measures

3.1.1 Independent variables

The research did not draw a distinction between watching original South Tyrolean TV programs in German and watching trans-frontier German channels, i.e., TV products from Austria, Germany, or Switzerland. The language pattern of TV use was measured by two variables. General TV language was measured by a five-point scale from 'only in German' to 'only in Italian.' About a quarter of the respondents reported using TV also in German (24 percent), while the others watch it only in Italian. Frequency of German TV use was assessed by a five-point scale as well, which included categories 'almost every day,' 'more times a week,' 'once a week,' 'more seldom,' and 'almost never.' Approximately 8 percent of the students watch German TV channels multiple times a week, 11 percent at least once a week, and the others more seldom or never. The two variables were collapsed into a single variable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$).

3.1.2 Mediator variables

The study used intergroup understanding as a cognitive mediator and intergroup anxiety as an affective mediator (Stephan 2006). These were measured by four 5-point scales each. In the case of intergroup understanding, the scales included items like 'I believe that I have a good understanding of how German speakers view the world.' With respect to intergroup anxiety, the participants indicated how they feel when they interact with out-group members (anxious, confident, etc.). The subscales were added together and averaged. Reliability analysis indicated high internal consistency for both (intergroup understanding: $\alpha = .74$; intergroup anxiety $\alpha = .75$).

3.1.3 Dependent variables

The attitude of participants towards German speakers was assessed by intergroup attitude and willingness for interaction scales developed by Stephan (2006). The participants were asked four questions on both constructs, which were measured by five-point scales. The intergroup attitude scale contained items such as ‘I like German speakers very much.’ Willingness for interaction was assessed by respondents indicating how willing they would be to engage in different activities with German speakers (e.g., inviting them as guests, visiting them in their home). All subscales were reversed so that the higher score indicated a more positive stance towards German speakers, and then averaged. Reliability analysis indicated acceptable consistency in both scales (intergroup attitude $\alpha = .69$, willingness for intergroup contact $\alpha = .91$).

3.1.4 Moderator variables

The study used two moderator variables: local vitality as a macro level moderator, and frequency of intergroup contact as a micro level moderator. Moderator variables are those that change the association between the primary independent and dependent variables (Hayes & Matthes 2009). For our Italian subjects, we presumed that the higher the local presence of German, the greater the opportunities and demands for them to have direct contact with German-speakers. Municipalities were grouped into two categories with respect to whether German speakers make up a minority or a majority in the local population. Approximately 51 percent of the respondents were from a low German vitality environment, and 49 percent from high German vitality environment. Independent sample *t*-tests showed that students living in high German vitality areas use German TV more ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 2.06$) than students in low German vitality areas ($M = 1.37$, $SD = 1.66$) $t(226) = 2.84$, $p < .01$.

The other moderator, frequency of intergroup contact, was measured with a 5-point scale. Students were asked how often they had interpersonal contact with minority (German) language speakers: 12.3 percent of the respondents reported having daily interpersonal contact with German speakers, 24.1 percent of them more times a week, 14.5 percent at least once a week, 36.4 percent more seldom, while 12.7 percent almost never. There was a significant correlation between German TV use and frequency of personal intergroup contact, $r(227) = .30$, $p < .01$, indicating that a more frequent contact with German speakers is associated with more German TV use. There was also a significant correlation between local vitality and frequency of personal intergroup contact, $r(228) =$

.30, $p < .01$, indicating more frequent interpersonal contact with German speakers in a high German vitality environment.

3.1.5 Control variables

Gender (27 percent of the participants were girls) and level of education of the parents were used as control variables. The highest level of education of the parents was recoded into dichotomous variables (1=having a higher education degree, 0=not having) for each parent; 15 percent of the mothers and 17 percent of the fathers had a higher education degree.

3.2 Analysis

Means and standard deviations of the main measures are presented in table 1. Mediation analyses were conducted by the INDIRECT SPSS macro (Preacher & Hayes 2008). In statistics, mediation is a process by which an independent variable affects a dependent variable indirectly through an intervening or mediator variable (Preacher & Hayes 2008). In the models, intergroup attitude and willingness for interaction were used as dependent variables, TV use was entered as predictor, and intergroup understanding and intergroup anxiety were proposed as mediators. The model controlled for gender and the level of education of the parents (see figures 1 and 2). Mediation was tested with 5,000 bootstrap estimates of the indirect path coefficient. As Preacher & Hayes (2008) recommend, indirect effects were significant when the bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval did not include zero. Accordingly, we present the standardized bootstrap estimates of the total and specific indirect effects together with bias corrected and accelerated 95 percent confidence intervals. The macro also provides contrasts of the size of the two mediating effects.

Finally, we ran OLS-regression with moderating effects using the MOD-PROBE macro (Hayes & Matthes 2009). In statistics, moderation or moderating effects imply a process by which the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable depends on, or is changed by a moderator variable. In the models, intergroup attitude and willingness for interaction were dependent variables, TV use was the focal predictor, and local vitality and interpersonal contact were the moderators. The predictors that constructed the interaction terms were centered. Significance was assessed via bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

4 Results

Table 1 illustrates the mean ratings on the four scales on intergroup relationship. Supporting our first hypothesis, the results indicate that the users of German-speaking TV channels have significantly more positive attitudes towards German speakers than those who watch only Italian TV:

	TV only in Italian <i>M (SD)</i>	TV also in German <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Intergroup understanding	2.38 (.72)	3.08 (.89)	225	-5.97**
Intergroup anxiety	3.01 (.51)	2.63 (.57)	186	4.25**
Intergroup attitude	3.05 (.88)	3.58 (.73)	222	-3.98**
Willingness for interaction	3.26 (.96)	3.87 (.74)	226	-4.34**

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of variables on intergroup relations ($N = 229$).
Note: All variables are measured on 1–5 scales; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Our second hypothesis proposed that intergroup understanding and intergroup anxiety would mediate the effects of German TV use on intergroup relations, and that understanding would be a stronger mediator than anxiety. The mediation analysis with intergroup attitudes as the dependent variable is depicted in figure 1. The total model was significant and explained 31 percent of the variance in intergroup attitude ($F_{6,174} = 13.15$, $p < .001$). The total effect of TV use on intergroup attitude was significant, whereas the direct effect after inserting intergroup understanding and intergroup anxiety as mediators was not significant, indicating full mediation. The total indirect effect ($CI_{.95} = .03$, .15) and the specific indirect effects through intergroup understanding ($CI_{.95} = .02$, .11) and intergroup anxiety ($CI_{.95} = .00$, .07) were all significant. The results showed that the mediating effect of intergroup understanding is somewhat stronger than that of intergroup anxiety, but the contrast of the two effects was not significant ($CI_{.95} = -.01$, .08).

Figure 2 shows the results of the mediate on analysis with willingness for interaction as the dependent variable. The model was significant and explained 24 percent of the variance in the dependent variable ($F_{6,178} = 9.56$, $p < .001$). The total effect of TV use on willingness for interaction was significant, while the direct effect was non-significant, indicating full mediation. The total indirect effect ($CI_{.95} = .03$, .15) as well as the specific indirect effect through understanding ($CI_{.95} = .02$, .12) were significant. The mediating effect of intergroup anxiety ($CI_{.95} = -.00$, .06) was not significant. The contrast of the two mediating

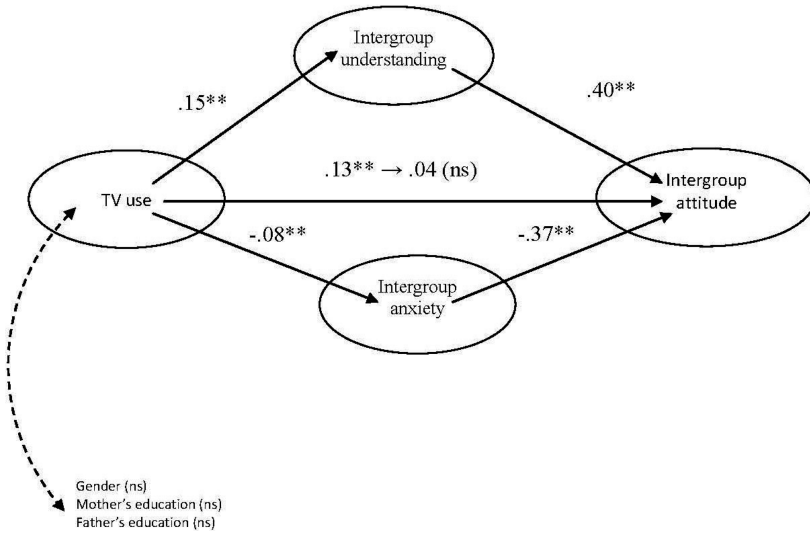


Figure 1: Effect of mediated intergroup contact on intergroup attitude with intergroup understanding and intergroup anxiety as mediators ($N = 181$).

Note: Coefficients reflect unstandardized parameter estimates (B). * $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

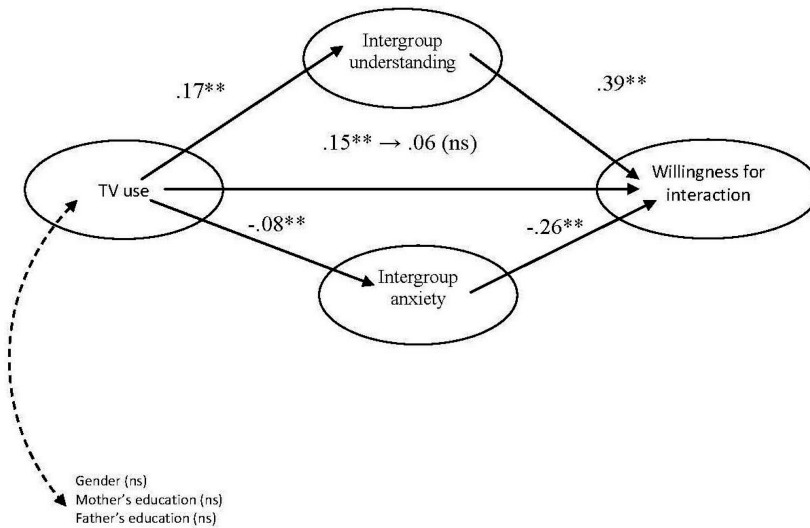


Figure 2: Effect of mediated intergroup contact on willingness for interaction with intergroup understanding and intergroup anxiety as mediators ($N = 185$).

Note: Coefficients reflect unstandardized parameter estimates (B). * $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

effects was again not significant ($CI_{.95} = -.01, .11$). All covariates were non-significant in both mediation models.

Our third hypothesis predicted that the prejudice-reducing properties of German-language TV in German would be more pronounced in participants who had less everyday contact with German speakers. To test the hypothesis we ran OLS-regression with interactions terms (Hayes & Matthes 2009). There was no moderating effect of local vitality. For intergroup attitude, the model explained 13 percent of the variance ($F_{6,215} = 5.13, p < .01$). Television use had a significant effect ($B = .13, p < .01$), but neither local vitality ($B = .16, p = .17$) or the TV use by local vitality interaction term ($B = -.06, p = .28$) were significant. The same results emerged for willingness for interaction ($R^2 = .13, F_{6,219} = 5.23, p < .01$; TV use $B = .14, p < .01$; local vitality $B = .14, p = .29$; moderator effect $B = .01, p = .83$).

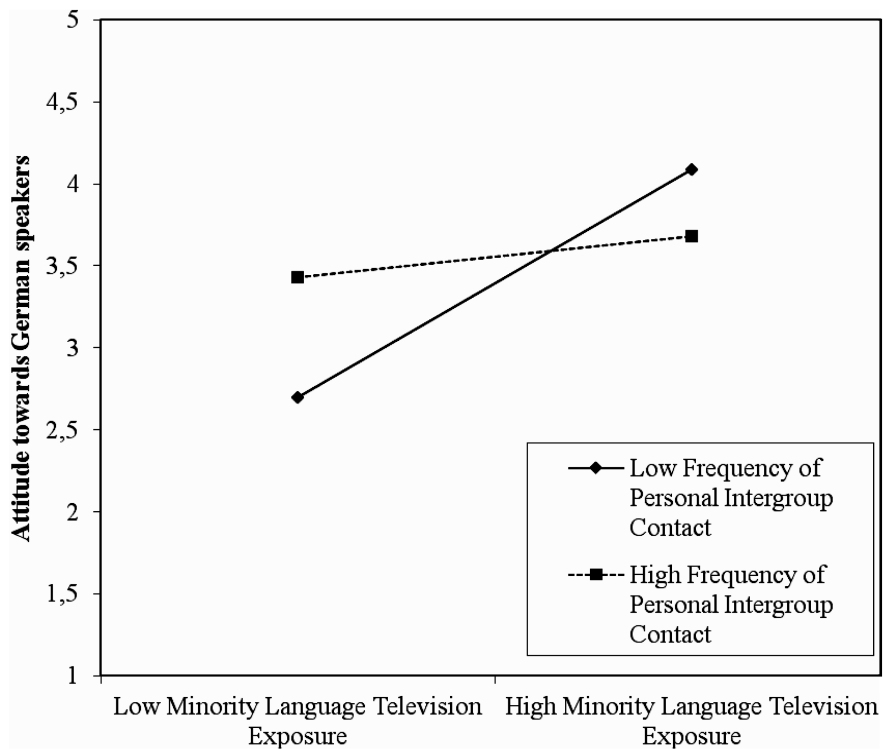


Figure 3: Simple slopes for frequency of interpersonal contact moderating the effects of mediated intergroup contact on attitudes ($N = 223$).

When examining the moderating effect of frequency of personal intergroup contact, we found partial support for the hypothesis. In the case of intergroup attitude, the model was significant and explained 21 percent of the variance ($F_{3,219} = 19.19, p < .01$). Both television use ($B = .34, p < .01$) and the frequency of contact ($B = .32, p < .01$) had a significant effect, and the TV use by frequency of contact interaction term ($B = -.07, p < .01$) was also significant. The interaction was decomposed by examining the effect of the focal predictor at low ($-1SD$), medium (mean) and high ($+1SD$) levels of the moderator. As predicted, the effect of mediated contact was significant when interpersonal contact was low ($B = .22, p < .01$), and also at the mean ($B = .13, p < .01$), but nonsignificant when interpersonal contact was high ($B = .04, p = .27$); simple slopes are shown in figure 3. No moderator effect emerged with willingness for interaction ($R^2 = .19, F_{3,223} = 17.95, p < .01$; TV use $B = .17, p = .06$; frequency of contact $B = .27, p < .01$; moderator effect $B = -.02, p = .46$).

5 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of German TV use in shaping attitudes towards the German national minority among Italian speakers in South Tyrol. Supporting our first hypothesis, we found that there were notable differences between users and non-users of German TV channels in their attitudes towards German-speaking South Tyroleans. Consistent with our second hypothesis, the effects of German TV use on intergroup relations were completely transmitted by the proposed mediators. The results offered some support for our third hypothesis. Although local vitality did not moderate significantly the prejudice-reducing impact of German TV, frequency of personal intergroup contact had a significant moderating effect regarding one of the dependent variables. People with less personal contact with out-group members were more strongly influenced by TV contact.

To the extent that we can infer causal relations from our data, it appears that minority-language television reduces majority group prejudice towards the minority group through affective and cognitive processes simultaneously. Some patterns in our data suggested support for our hypothesis that cognitive patterns would dominate: the effect of the affective mediator was smaller for one dependent variable, and nonsignificant for the other. However, no analyses indicated that the cognitive mediator was statistically stronger than the affective mediator. In combination, however, it is clear that the two processes we examined (anxiety and understanding) explain this process very nicely, with both models demonstrating full mediation.

Two important implications can be derived from these findings. First, it is likely that these specific mediators have particular power in this context. Relations between Italian and German speakers in South Tyrol are not particularly positive (e.g., Eichinger 2002; Schweigkofler 2000; Steininger 2003) and are characterized by considerable self-segregation (e.g., Cavagnoli & Nardin 2009). Hence, anxiety concerning contact and a lack of knowledge and understanding of the out-group are likely to be salient features negatively impacting interaction in this context. Future work should examine whether the relative impact of these (and other) mediators changes based on the local contextual features. For example, in settings characterized by more positive overall relations but continued segregation, cognitive mediators might gain additional power given the lack of affective concerns; in settings characterized by frequent and negative intergroup contact, affective concerns should be stronger mediators. Such findings are of course also sensitive to the specific dependent variable; in our analyses we focused on attitudes and willingness to interact. From a social distance perspective (Bogardus 1959; Wark & Galliher 2007), we would anticipate somewhat different processes predicting general attitudes versus more specific feelings about having an intimate relationship with an out-group member, welcoming them to the family, or having them move in next-door. Second, these findings suggest strategies for media producers interested in improving intergroup relations. Programming specifically targeting anxiety and understanding appears to have positive potential, relative to programs that focus on other aspects of intergroup relations (e.g., legal issues, current conflicts).

Consistent with previous research (Fujioka 1999; Schiappa *et al.* 2005) we found that the effect of German TV use on intergroup attitudes was stronger among those who had limited direct contact with German speakers. As noted by those previous researchers, the effects of the media are diluted for people who have real world experience with a target group, or alternatively interpersonal contact inoculates against the effects of media exposure. This moderating effect did not hold when using the macro-level vitality measure as a proxy for contact. The explanation for this may lie in the specific intergroup setting. Although we detected a significant correlation between the linguistic composition of the municipalities and the frequency of personal intergroup contact, the demographic difference between the municipalities with low German vitality (27 percent German speakers) and high German vitality (73–83 percent German speakers) may not be sufficient to make salient the difference in the frequency of intergroup contact in the two localities. The linguistic composition of low German vitality location is large enough that many Italians may have daily or almost daily contact with German speakers. It is also worth noting that a considerable part of the overwhelmingly German-speaking rural population

commutes to work in the towns on a daily basis. As a consequence, the proportion of German speakers increases in towns during daytime and hence 'low' German vitality areas become substantially more German during work hours.

Limitations to this study, including a relatively small sample size and drawbacks in the measurement of real life intergroup contact, call for further research on this topic. As our paper focused on secondary school students, we believe that it may be important for future research to gauge whether the relationship between TV use and intergroup relations is similar across other age groups. Moreover, our results should be re-examined using longitudinal data in order to further test the cause–effect relationships between media use and intergroup relations. In our current data, we cannot exclude the possibility that attitudes drive television viewing – that is, people with more positive attitudes towards German speakers might also be more inclined to view German language television. This alternative explanation, however, has a harder time explaining our mediator and moderator effects. It is reasonable to suggest that attitudes might influence anxiety, for instance, but it is hard to explain why anxiety might subsequently influence television viewing. Nonetheless, exploration of both causal directions is warranted and it is likely that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between attitudes and television viewing that merits attention.

In spite of these limitations, our study was successful in extending the focus of mediated intergroup contact on bilingual settings and demonstrating a supportive role of mass media in intercultural relations in multilingual contexts. In the last few years several scholars have drawn attention to the lack of research into the impact of media use of language minorities (e.g., Busch 2004; Cormack 1998, 2004, 2007; Moring 2007). These scholars have urged examination of linguistic patterns of media use supporting or undermining the vitality of minority languages and cultures. The present paper argues that the use of minority language media can play an important role not only for the minority language group but also for *majority* language speakers. In this respect, media can provide a space for encountering a language and a language group, through which it can improve the attitudes toward the minority language group.

Bionotes

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