CAN A GROWTH MINDSET INTERVENTION INCREASE INDIVIDUALS’ INTENTIONS TO ENGAGE IN INTERGROUP DIALOGUE?

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Dialogue initiatives between different status groups foster meaningful conversations about inequality. Low and high status groups, however, frequently avoid discussions on difficult topics and do not participate in these initiatives. To address this, the current research tested an intervention model that aims to increase dialogue intentions using the growth mindset framework. The model proposes that inducing a malleable mindset toward one’s dialogue skills would boost group members’ intentions to engage with the outgroup. The intervention was hypothesized to be especially effective for high status groups, who have higher anxiety relative to lower status groups when anticipating intergroup dialogue. The intervention was predicted to work through two mediating processes: the reduction of anxiety and the increase in self-efficacy.

The model was tested by conducting three studies with White Americans (high status; Studies 1-3) and two lower status groups: Black Americans (Study 2) and Latinx Americans (Study 3). Across all studies, participants read a (fictional) scientific article about individual’s ability to develop effective dialogue skills, and then self-reported their intentions to participate in various dialogue-related activities. Studies 2 and 3 included measures of anxiety and self-efficacy. Analyses of variance revealed mixed support for the model. In Study 1, participants who received the growth mindset intervention had slightly higher intentions to engage in dialogue compared to those in the control condition. In Study 2, the intervention engendered lower intergroup anxiety for White Americans relative to Black Americans, though this reduction in anxiety did not lead to intentions to join a communication skills workshop or a
dialogue initiative. Participants in the growth mindset condition in Study 3 had significantly less intentions to participate in a real-time intergroup discussion or to sign up for a pilot dialogue program on race, with this effect being more pronounced for Latinx compared to White Americans. Interestingly, self-efficacy across status groups and conditions were above average at baseline and remained unchanged. The discussion summarizes the findings in the context of the intervention model and proposes implications for previous research on dialogue between status groups. Finally, the significance of the results with regard to policy and practical applications are discussed.