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Intercultural Relations in Malta

Gordon Sammut & Maryanne Lauri
University of Malta

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Introduction

In many contemporary societies, everyday and routine instances of positive intercultural relations abound. These include, but are not limited to, cultural exchange programmes, international trade, globalization, as well as the geopolitical organization of nation-states such as the European Union. Few contemporary public spheres around the world remain uncontaminated by the ways of life of different others (Giddens, 1991). Whilst the positive consequences of intercultural contact are seemingly obvious to many, the most recent Eurobarometer (EB83, 2015) shows that migration has risen to being the primary concern amongst European citizens. This is specifically the case in Malta, in which the present study is conducted. Scholars have noted how human beings are predisposed to distinguish between outgroup and ingroup. This categorical distinction leads to discrimination along social, ethnic and cultural lines (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Haslam, Ellemers, Reicher, Reynolds & Schmitt, 2010). In an encounter with culturally different others, human subjects are predisposed to deprecate others' views especially those who are perceived to be in some way inferior (Sammut & Sartawi, 2012). This intergroup attribution can potentially precipitate a spiral of conflict between ethnocultural groups (Sammut, Bezzina & Sartawi, 2015) that co-exist within the same society. In an age of calamitous warfare technology, the psychological underpinnings of intercultural contact have become a serious and justified concern (Moghaddam, 2008). As Farrell and Oliveri (2006) have argued, the predominant challenge facing contemporary plural societies remains that of turning cultural diversity into added value.

Addressing the challenge of diversity requires a coherent and concerted effort to map the states and strategies of intercultural contact between dominant and nondominant groups. This challenge constitutes the central focus of the present volume. This chapter reports the findings of an inquiry into the mutual acculturation preferences amongst diverse ethnocultural groups in Malta.

Intercultural relations in Malta

Acculturation research in Malta is relatively new. Malta has a history of colonization up until the years following World War II. Over the years, Malta was colonized by the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Moors, the Normans, the Sicilians, the Spanish, the Order of St John, the French, and lastly the British. All these powers left some indelible mark on the country, its culture and the habits of its citizens. In 1964, Malta gained independence from the United Kingdom and proceeded to declare itself a republic in 1974. Thirty years later, in 2004, Malta joined the European Union [EU] as a full member state. It joined the Schengen zone in 2007 and the Eurozone soon after in 2008. Geographically, Malta lies around 80 kilometers south of Sicily and 284 kilometers north-east of Tunisia. Malta, or more accurately the Maltese islands, consists of an archipelago of three islands (Malta, Gozo and Comino), of which the island of Malta is the largest (246 km²) with a population of 386,057 as per the last census (NSO, 2014). The combined population in Gozo (67 km²) and Comino (3.5 km²) is of 31,375. Its small size and population of less than half a million make Malta the most densely populated country in the EU (Eurostat, 2014).

Whilst the history of Malta is highly diverse, the culture embraced by the population is relatively homogenous, as evidenced in the last national census carried out in 2011 that coincided with the administration of our survey (NSO, 2014). Out of a total population of 417,432 inhabitants only 20,289 are non-Maltese, representing 4.86% of total inhabitants. The present state of intercultural relations in Malta reflects its recent history. Malta opened its borders to migrants upon EU accession. During the same period, Malta became a target destination for irregular migration from North Africa. British migrants constitute by far the largest group of non-Maltese inhabitants at 6,652, representing 33% of migrants. A further 5,563 inhabitants hail from various other EU countries. The total proportion of migrants from within the EU thus stands at just over 60% of total migrants. A total of 4,496 respondents to the census, representing a further 22% of immigrants, hail from unspecified countries. The census (NSO, 2014) does not identify the nationality of these immigrants. A clue, however, may be found in the percentage of the population that is versed in foreign languages. Amongst the population aged 10 and over (360,325), 3,948 report that they speak Arabic very well. It is fair to conclude, therefore, that the Arab community in Malta is rather sizeable, relative to the number of migrants hailing from other countries. Moreover, migration to Malta shows signs of settlement in the last census. Out of a total of 413,209 inhabitants aged 1 and over, only 4,178 (1%) resided abroad in the year preceding the census. This figure includes Maltese citizens who

lived abroad. A further set of noteworthy statistics concerns the distribution of the non-Maltese population across various regions in Malta. Out of a total of 20,289 non-Maltese inhabitants, 4,262 reside in the neighboring villages of Sliema, St. Julians and Swieqi (21%), 3,023 (15%) reside in St Paul's Bay, and a further 1,986 (10%) reside in Birżebbuġa. Almost half of the non-Maltese inhabitants (46%) are clustered in 5 regions out of a total of 54 identified in the census for the island of Malta.

The present study investigated intercultural relations amongst the dominant Maltese population and five nondominant ethnocultural groups, namely Western European, Eastern European, South Asian, East Asian and Arab groups. We omitted a focus on the sub-Saharan African community due to the fact that at the time the study was undertaken, this community was heavily transient with migrants often leaving to continue their journey towards other European destinations at the first available opportunity. We recommend that this community be included in future acculturation research in Malta.

For the purposes of the present study, we started by looking at the various groups' acculturation preferences, as detailed in Chapter 1 of this volume. We expected the dominant group to demonstrate a higher preference for a melting pot acculturation strategy than any of the other strategies. Previous acculturation research has demonstrated that this preference is salient amongst many dominant groups including those in European countries (Van Oudenhoven, Ward & Masgoret, 2006; Zick, Wagner, Van Dick & Petzel, 2001). Conversely, we expected nondominant groups to demonstrate higher preferences for integration relative to the other acculturation strategies. This is in line with previous acculturation research concerning migrant communities (see Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006). We proceeded to study reciprocal attitudes between the various ethnocultural groups. We expected a predominance of warm attitudes, given the seemingly low level of intercultural discord in Malta. However, we also expected that the Arab group would be perceived less warmly than other groups. This is in line with previous findings concerning widespread Islamophobic attitudes leveled at Arabs in a number of European countries (Helbling, 2012). Following these contextual analyses, we proceeded to test the three MIRIPS hypotheses detailed in Chapter 1, as per hereunder.

Hypotheses

H1: The Multiculturalism hypothesis

The Multiculturalism hypothesis states that a sense of security in one's identity is a psychological precondition for the acceptance of culturally different others, whereas a sense of insecurity leads to rejection of others. We hypothesized that Security would be positively correlated with Multicultural Ideology amongst both dominant and nondominant groups.

H2: The Contact hypothesis

The Contact hypothesis posits that intercultural contact promotes mutual acceptance amongst diverse ethnocultural groups. We hypothesized [H5] that Contact with other ethnocultural groups would be positively correlated with Multicultural Ideology.

H3: The Integration hypothesis

The Integration hypothesis posits that when individuals seek integration they achieve a higher level of wellbeing including personal wellbeing and social wellbeing. We hypothesized that Integration/Multiculturalism preferences would be positively correlated with Self-Esteem and Sociocultural Competence in the case of nondominant and dominant groups respectively.

Participants and procedure

The total number of respondents for the survey including dominant and nondominant groups in Malta stood at 443 ($n=443$). The first wave of the survey was administered to a random sample of 193 Maltese respondents ($n_1=193$) stratified by geographical region in Malta. Data gathering was undertaken in 2010 with randomly selected respondents from the General Election Register of Malta. The second wave of the survey targeting nondominant groups utilized a convenience sampling strategy, due to the fact that no official data is available on the residence distribution of immigrants in Malta that could enable random sampling. The second wave of administration was carried out in 2011.

Fifty respondents from each of the targeted ethnocultural groups participated in this phase of the study from each of the following communities: Western European, Eastern European, South Asian, East Asian and Arab communities. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 83 ($M=38$, $SD=15.747$). 260 respondents (59%) were female, whilst 183 (41%) were male. Respondents reported varying levels of education. Only 2.9% reported having stopped their formal education at primary level or lower. Conversely, 24.4% of respondents reported that they had completed part or all of secondary school. A further 44.7% had completed some post-secondary education, whilst 25.8% reported having completed a tertiary level qualification. The remaining respondents failed to identify their educational attainment. With regards to religious beliefs, the largest religious orientation was Roman Catholic (43.1%). Catholicism remains the official religion of Malta, so its widespread distribution is not surprising. This was followed by those expressing no faith in a religious organization (23.9%), Muslim (11.3%), Orthodox Christian (8.1%), Hindu (4.3%), Protestant (4.1%) and Buddhist (1.4%). All respondents in the study (100%) confirmed that they have a mobile phone, a washing machine, a car, and a computer at home. These possessions were construed as a measure of socioeconomic status.

Methods

We started our analyses by looking at the four acculturation attitudes and expectations (melting pot/assimilationism; separation/segregation; exclusion/marginalization; integration/multiculturalism) and their variability across both dominant and nondominant groups. To assess acculturation attitudes and expectations, we used the four acculturation scales in the MIRIPS questionnaire (see Appendix). We conducted one-way ANOVAs on each of these attitudes to determine whether any mean differences transpired between the various sociocultural groups. Where indicated we ran Tukey's HSD post-hoc tests to determine which differences proved significant. Following this analysis, we proceeded to explore variability in the four acculturation attitudes in more depth by examining how these varied across the dichotomous dominant/nondominant group conditions. We conducted a 2x4 mixed design ANOVA and a repeated measures ANOVA within groups to explore main effects and interaction effects across group conditions.

Following the analysis of acculturation preferences, we conducted a 2x6 mixed design ANOVA and a repeated measures ANOVA to explore differences in reciprocal Attitudes towards Ethnocultural Groups. We used a 100 point feeling thermometer with 50 set as the mid-point between warm and cold attitudes towards the various ethnocultural groups investigated in the present inquiry.

We then proceeded to investigate our three hypotheses. We administered the Security scale, incorporating elements of personal, cultural and economic security, the Multicultural Ideology scale, the Self-Esteem scale and the Sociocultural Competence scale from the MIRIPS questionnaire to this end (see Appendix). We also asked respondents about their extent of social contact with other ethnic friends, measuring both number and frequency of contact using the Social Contacts scale in the questionnaire. We started by conducting one-way ANOVAs on each of the former four variables to determine whether any mean differences existed across ethnocultural groups. We also looked at descriptive statistics for (i) number and (ii) frequency of Social Contacts. We then tested the Multiculturalism hypothesis [H3] by correlating Security with Multicultural Ideology. We tested the Integration hypothesis [H4] by correlating the Integration/Multiculturalism acculturation preference (nondominant/dominant groups) with Self-Esteem and Sociocultural Competence. Finally, we tested the Contact hypothesis [H5] by correlating Multicultural Ideology with the (i) number and (ii) frequency of Social Contacts. We used the Pearson correlation coefficient to test these three hypotheses. We adopted the 0.05 level of probability throughout our analyses.

Results

Acculturation Attitudes and Expectations

Melting Pot/Assimilation

We expected the dominant group to demonstrate a significantly higher mean on this measure relative to nondominant groups. The Maltese group ($M=8.21$, $SD=2.48$) and the Arab group ($M=8.21$, $SD=2.54$) demonstrated the highest mean on this measure whilst the Eastern European group demonstrated the lowest ($M=5.38$, $SD=0.86$). A one-way ANOVA showed that the differences between groups were statistically significant, $F(5, 409) = 16.471$, $p<0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.168$. Post-hoc tests showed that all differences between the Maltese and Arab groups with every other group were statistically significant except for that between the Arab and the East Asian group ($M=6.67$, $SD=2.54$). All other differences between groups were not statistically significant.

Segregation/Separation

We expected the Maltese group to demonstrate a high preference for this acculturation form relative to nondominant groups. The Eastern European group demonstrated the lowest mean for separation ($M=5.98$, $SD=1.49$) relative to every other group. A one-way ANOVA showed this to be significantly different from all other groups, $F(5, 408) = 17.19$, $p<0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.174$ (Maltese: $M=9.80$, $SD=3.23$; W. European: $M=8.68$, $SD=2.77$; S. Asian: $M=11.06$, $SD=3.42$; E. Asian: $M=10.02$, $SD=3.39$; Arab: $M=9.17$, $SD=3.32$). Post-hoc tests showed the difference between the Western European and the South Asian groups to be statistically significant.

Exclusion/Marginalization

We again expected the dominant group to demonstrate a higher preference for this acculturation form than nondominant groups. The Maltese group had the highest mean ($M=8.47$, $SD=2.72$) for this measure. A one-way ANOVA showed this to be significantly different from every other group except Western Europeans, $F(5, 408) = 40.36$, $p<0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.331$ (W. European: $M=7.54$, $SD=2.55$; E. European: $M=4.00$, $SD=0.01$; S. Asian: $M=5.06$, $SD=1.57$; E. Asian: $M=7.00$, $SD=2.39$; Arab: $M=5.72$, $SD=2.36$). Tukey's HSD showed the differences between Western European and Eastern European ($p<0.01$) as well as South Asian ($p<0.01$) and Arab ($p<0.05$) were statistically significant. On the other hand, the differences between Eastern European and East Asian ($p<0.01$) and Arab ($p<0.05$) groups were statistically significant as was the difference between South Asian and East Asian groups ($p<0.01$). The difference between East Asian and Arab groups was not statistically significant.

Multiculturalism/Integration

We expected nondominant groups to express a clear preference for this acculturation form relative to other forms. We also expected the dominant Maltese group to rate this acculturation form less highly than other forms. The Multiculturalism/Integration strategy was rated more highly by all groups than all other acculturation preferences. However, the Maltese

group demonstrated the lowest mean ($M=14.95$, $SD=2.97$) and a one-way ANOVA demonstrated this to be significantly different from the mean of all other groups except the East Asian group, $F(5, 408) = 17.83$, $p<0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.179$ (W. European: $M=16.46$, $SD=2.94$; E. European: $M=17.28$, $SD=1.09$; S. Asian: $M=18.38$, $SD=1.63$; E. Asian: $M=15.98$, $SD=3.19$; Arab: $M=17.45$, $SD=2.79$). Tukey's HSD showed the difference between the Western European and the South Asian group to be significant ($p<0.01$), as was the difference between the South Asian and the East Asian groups ($p<0.01$).

Acculturation strategies and preferences across groups

We expected the dominant group to demonstrate a higher preference for the melting pot strategy over other forms, whilst the nondominant groups were expected to demonstrate a higher preference for integration. The Multiculturalism/Integration strategy was rated more highly than any other acculturation strategy by all groups, as detailed above. We conducted a 2x4 mixed design ANOVA using the dichotomous variable dominant/nondominant group, to explore preferences for the various acculturation strategies. Results showed a significant main effect for acculturation strategies (Wilks' Lambda: 0.14, $F(3, 410)=836.77$, $p<0.01$) as well as a significant interaction effect (Wilks' Lambda: 0.72, $F(3, 410)=52.79$, $p<0.01$). This demonstrates a difference between the dominant/nondominant group conditions for the various acculturation preferences, despite multiculturalism/integration being the most favored by all groups.

We conducted further analyses using a repeated measures ANOVA within groups design. This revealed that differences between preferences for the multiculturalism/integration strategy and the other three acculturation strategies were statistically significant for all groups (Table 1). Our expectations were thus partially confirmed. Specifically, however, our expectation of a high preference for the melting pot strategy amongst the dominant group was rejected. The Maltese dominant group expressed a significant preference for multiculturalism over other forms. Our expectations regarding high endorsement for integration amongst nondominant groups were supported, in line with previous research findings. The Maltese expressed a statistically significant preference for multiculturalism over other forms. However, the magnitude of this preference was significantly less than that expressed by nondominant groups, as demonstrated in the interaction effect in the previous analysis.

Table 1: Repeated measures ANOVA

| Ethnocultural Group | Wilks' Lambda | F-Statistic |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Maltese | 0.23 | (3, 190) = 215.46* |
| W. European | 0.14 | (3, 47) = 97.66* |
| E. European | 0.10 | (3, 47) = 2698.88* |
| S. Asian | 0.24 | (3, 47) = 640.56* |

| | | |
|----------|------|------------------|
| E. Asian | 0.15 | (3, 39) = 72.21* |
| Arab | 0.10 | (3, 26) = 76.56* |

* $p < 0.01$

Attitudes towards Ethnocultural Groups

We expected the Arab group to be rated less warmly than other groups by the various other ethnocultural groups. Our expectations were confirmed for all groups except the Eastern European group (Table 2). The Maltese dominant group along with the South Asian and the East Asian groups rated only the Arab group in negative territory (i.e. cold attitudes) (Maltese: $M=29.9$, $SD=23.2$; S. Asian: $M=33.7$, $SD=25.8$; E. Asian: $M=46.5$, $SD=23.0$). They rated every other group in positive territory (i.e. warm attitudes). The Western European and Eastern European groups rated every other group in positive territory. The Western European group, however, also rated the Arab group lowest amongst the various groups ($M=54.60$, $SD=26.7$).

Table 2: Attitudes towards ethnocultural groups.

| | Maltese | West Europeans | East Europeans | East Asian | Asian | Arab |
|----------------------|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| Maltese | M=85.91 (z= .32) SD=14.72 (z= .83) | M=75.21 (z= .13) SD=18.24 (z= 1.00) | M=59.69 (z= -.10) SD=22.85 (z= 1.12) | M=55.11 (z= -.32) SD=22.48 (z= 1.04) | M=53.15 (z= -.21) SD=23.55 (z= 1.06) | M=29.87 (z= -.46) SD=23.22 (z= .83) |
| West European | M=75.66 (z= -.26) SD=21.60 (z= 1.22) | M=81.40 (z= .47) SD=16.54 (z= .91) | M=70.10 (z= .41) SD=19.47 (z= .95) | M=65.90 (z= .18) SD=21.56 (z= 1.0) | M=67.20 (z= .42) SD=20.46 (z= .92) | M=54.60 (z= .42) SD=26.74 (z= .96) |
| East European | M=85.58 (z= .30) SD=8.52 (z= .48) | M=67.60 (z= -.29) SD=16.97 (z= .93) | M=66.00 (z= .21) SD=15.39 (z= .75) | M=78.40 (z= .76) SD=11.84 (z= .55) | M=56.80 (z= -.05) SD=13.32 (z= .60) | M=65.60 (z= .81) SD=17.16 (z= .62) |
| East Asian | M=60.12 (z= -1.13) SD=20.89 (z= 1.18) | M=59.38 (z= -.73) SD=18.35 (z= 1.00) | M=55.23 (z= -.32) SD=17.56 (z= .86) | M=54.30 (z= -.36) SD=20.60 (z= .95) | M=72.21 (z= .65) SD=22.13 (z= 1.00) | M=46.51 (z= .13) SD=22.98 (z= .82) |
| Asian | M=76.80 (z= -.19) SD=14.83 (z= .84) | M=72.00 (z= -.05) SD=15.78 (z= .87) | M=60.60 (z= -.06) SD=15.96 (z= .78) | M=73.90 (z= .55) SD=11.35 (z= .53) | M=53.00 (z= -.22) SD=20.10 (z= .90) | M=33.70 (z= -.33) SD=25.75 (z= .92) |
| Arab | M=76.03 (z= -.23) SD=13.59 (z= .77) | M=72.24 (z= -.03) SD=14.61 (z= .80) | M=65.00 (z= .16) SD=19.37 (z= .95) | M=64.14 (z= .10) SD=18.62 (z= .86) | M=62.41 (z= .20) SD=17.86 (z= .80) | M=79.48 (z= 1.31) SD=17.13 (z= .61) |

We conducted further analyses using a 2x6 mixed design ANOVA using the condition of dominant/nondominant group to explore differences in inter-group attitudes amongst the six ethnocultural groups. The results showed a main effect for attitudes (Wilks' Lambda=0.31, $F(5, 409)=180.67$, $p<0.01$) as well as an interaction effect with the dominant/nondominant group condition (Wilks' Lambda=0.65, $F(5, 409)=43.20$, $p<0.01$). We also conducted a repeated measures ANOVA within groups that showed statistically significant differences in inter-group attitudes for all groups (Table 3).

Table 3: Repeated measures ANOVA for inter-group attitudes

| Ethnocultural Group | Wilks' Lambda | F-Statistic |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Maltese | 0.17 | (5, 188) = 188.21* |
| W. European | 0.50 | (5, 45) = 8.87* |
| E. European | 0.18 | (5, 45) = 41.3* |
| S. Asian | 0.24 | (5, 45) = 28.72* |
| E. Asian | 0.48 | (5, 38) = 8.28* |
| Arab | 0.52 | (5, 24) = 4.45* |

* $p<0.01$

Hypotheses

Security

We expected all groups to report high levels of security perceptions. A one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences in the levels of security perceived by respondents, $F(5, 414) = 15.813$, $p<0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.19$. The Arab group demonstrated the highest mean for this measure ($M=45.52$, $SD=5.05$). Tukey's HSD demonstrated this to be significantly different from all other groups except the Maltese (Maltese: $M=42.97$, $SD=5.57$, $p=n.s.$; W. European: $M=41.80$, $SD=5.51$, $p<0.05$; E. European: $M=38.98$, $SD=2.02$, $p<0.01$; S. Asian: $M=37.66$, $SD=4.29$, $p<0.01$; E. Asian: $M=40.63$, $SD=4.70$, $p<0.01$). Similarly, the differences between the Maltese group and all the other groups except the Arab group were significant ($p<0.05$). The difference between the Western European and the South Asian group, and the South Asian and the East Asian groups were also statistically significant ($p<0.05$).

Multicultural Ideology

We expected the Maltese group to demonstrate a lower mean on this measure than the other groups. A one-way ANOVA showed that the differences between groups were statistically significant, $F(5, 408) = 19.641$, $p<0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.194$. Tukey's HSD showed that the mean for the Maltese group ($M=32.40$, $SD=4.77$) was significantly different from all other groups except for the Eastern European group (W. European: $M=36.20$, $SD=6.77$; E. European: $M=34.24$, $SD=1.60$; S. Asian: $M=38.14$, $SD=3.97$; E. Asian: $M=36.17$, $SD=4.23$; Arab: $M=38.28$, $SD=5.54$). The

difference between the Arab group, who demonstrated the highest mean on this measure, and the Eastern European group, who demonstrated the lowest mean, was found to be significant by Tukey's HSD ($p < 0.01$). The difference between the Eastern European group and the South Asian group was also significant ($p < 0.01$).

Self-esteem

We expected the Maltese to demonstrate a higher mean on this measure than the other nondominant groups. In fact, the Maltese group showed the lowest mean ($M = 32.36$, $SD = 3.14$). A one-way ANOVA showed statistically significant differences between groups, $F(5, 409) = 70.46$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.463$. Tukey's HSD showed the differences between the Maltese group and all the other groups to be significant (W. European: $M = 40.34$, $SD = 5.94$; E. European: $M = 43.22$, $SD = 0.93$; S. Asian: $M = 36.06$, $SD = 6.50$; E. Asian: $M = 38.37$, $SD = 5.32$; Arab: $M = 39.17$, $SD = 5.24$). Moreover, the differences between the Eastern European group, who demonstrated the highest mean for this measure, and all other groups were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). The differences between the South Asian group and the Western European group as well as the Arab group were also significant ($p < 0.05$).

Sociocultural Competence

We expected the Maltese to demonstrate a higher mean on this measure than other groups. In line with our expectations, the Maltese reported the highest mean on this measure ($M = 83.37$, $SD = 11.26$) and a one-way ANOVA showed that the differences between the Maltese and every other ethnocultural group were statistically significant, $F(5, 385) = 421.2$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.85$ (W. European: $M = 39.72$, $SD = 14.1$; E. European: $M = 39.76$, $SD = 3.83$; S. Asian: $M = 32.92$, $SD = 9.63$; E. Asian: $M = 33.74$, $SD = 9.1$; Arab: $M = 25.76$, $SD = 7.87$). Tukey's HSD showed statistically significant differences between the Western European and the South Asian group ($p < 0.05$), the Eastern European and the South Asian group ($p < 0.05$), the Western European and the Arab group ($p < 0.01$) and the Eastern European and the Arab group ($p < 0.01$).

Social Contacts

We asked respondents the number of co-ethnic and other ethnic friends they have, and the frequency of contact with these friends. The Maltese dominant group reported having mostly Maltese friends. Almost half of respondents (45.6%) have no friends who are not Maltese. Respondents further reported that they met their Maltese friends more regularly than they did their other ethnic friends. Over three quarters (76.7%) of Maltese respondents reported meeting other ethnic friends either rarely or never. The nondominant groups reported a broader range of both Maltese and other ethnicity friends as well as increased contact. The majority reported having a few Maltese friends (31.4%), a few co-ethnic friends (37.6%) and a few other friends of a different ethnic background (37.6%). Only 15.3% reported having no

Maltese friends at all and almost a quarter (22.3%) reported having many Maltese friends. Moreover, the large majority of respondents reported meeting their Maltese friends either often or daily (59.4%). However, respondents nevertheless demonstrated a bias, like the Maltese, towards both the number of and level of contact with co-ethnic friends.

H1: Multiculturalism Hypothesis

We hypothesized that Security would be positively correlated with Multicultural Ideology for both dominant and nondominant groups. Amongst the Maltese, security was negatively correlated with Multicultural Ideology ($r = -0.21, p < 0.01$). For nondominant groups, the correlation was not statistically significant ($r = -.09, p = ns, 1-\beta = 0.4$). Our first hypothesis was therefore not supported.

H2: Contact Hypothesis

We hypothesized that Multicultural Ideology would be positively correlated with (i) number and (ii) frequency of contact with other ethnic friends. Amongst members of the dominant group, Multicultural Ideology was correlated with both number ($r = 0.24, p < 0.01$) and frequency ($r = 0.25, p < 0.01$) of other ethnic friends, as expected. For the nondominant groups, however, Multicultural Ideology was negatively correlated with number ($r = -0.20, p < 0.01$) and frequency ($r = -0.30, p < 0.01$) of contact with Maltese friends, and was not statistically significant with number ($r = -0.09, p = ns, 1-\beta = 0.4$) or frequency of other ethnic friends ($r = -0.04, p = ns, 1-\beta = 0.2$). Our second hypothesis was therefore confirmed for the dominant group but not supported for nondominant groups.

H3: Integration Hypothesis

We hypothesized that the integration/multiculturalism acculturation preference would be positively correlated with (a) self-esteem and (b) sociocultural competence. Amongst the Maltese, the Multiculturalism acculturation preference was in fact negatively correlated with self-esteem ($r = -0.25, p < 0.01$). The correlation for nondominant groups was not statistically significant ($r = -0.05, p = ns, 1-\beta = 0.2$). Conversely, the Multiculturalism acculturation preference was uncorrelated with sociocultural competence for the dominant group ($r = 0.01, p = ns, 1-\beta = 0.99$). The integration acculturation preference, however, was negatively correlated with sociocultural competence ($r = -0.27, p < 0.01$) for nondominant groups. Our third hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Discussion

The findings of the present inquiry present clear cause for concern with regards to the nature of intercultural relations in Malta. Our finding that integration is the preferred acculturation strategy amongst both dominant and nondominant groups in Malta provides little, if any, consolation. Effectively, the discrepancy between the dominant and nondominant groups on

this measure is worrying insofar as it spells a degree of resistance amongst the Maltese towards the integration of migrants in Malta. Whilst the Maltese dominant group express a preference for integration over other acculturation forms, they do so significantly less than the other ethnocultural groups. At the same time, they also express relatively high preferences for melting pot as well as exclusion.

The integration of the Arab community is particularly concerning. Arab migration to European countries has increased dramatically over recent years due to widespread social unrest in a number of Arab countries in recent years. For the Maltese, the events in Libya leading to and following the displacement of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi played an acute role, as Malta became a target destination for asylum seekers fleeing the unrest from Libyan shores across the Mediterranean. Consequently, the proportion of migrants in Malta originating from Arab countries has increased, and whilst no formal statistics documenting the prevalence of Arab migrants in Malta are available, the proportion of fluent Arabic speakers in Malta suggests that this community is sizeable relative to other communities. The findings of the present study demonstrate that by and large Arabs are negatively regarded, that diverse ethnocultural groups in Malta converge in their antipathy towards Arabs, and that the Arab group is not faring well in terms of social wellbeing. We believe that this scenario provides fertile grounds for a spiral of conflict (Sammut, Bezzina & Sartawi, 2015) between the Arab community and the rest of the population, as Arab migrants struggle to secure a legitimate place for themselves in Maltese society. We recommend further research to investigate the grounds for this antipathy to determine whether the preferences for multiculturalism/integration demonstrated by all groups are qualified with regards to Arabs.

With regards to the three MIRIPS hypotheses discussed in this volume, the present study provides a mixed bag of findings. The multiculturalism hypothesis, suggesting that higher feelings of security are associated with increased acceptance of different others, was not supported. The more security the Maltese reported feeling, the less they were inclined to accept different others. We believe that these findings are sensible for the dominant group given Malta's very brief history of immigration. Given that Malta has only recently opened up its borders to immigrants, those Maltese who are comfortable in Malta and who find it a reasonably secure place to live are also the ones most threatened by the presence of different others who stand to change the sense of comfort and security they presently enjoy as dominant group. The high endorsement rate for melting pot and exclusion acculturation strategies amongst the dominant group, once again, lends support to this interpretation. We further suggest that this sense of security is based in cultural norms and practices, considering that the Arab community along with the Maltese report significantly higher levels of security than other ethnocultural groups, along with similarly higher preferences for melting pot/assimilationism. Contrarily, those Maltese who are not equally positive about Malta and the status presently enjoyed by the dominant group, perhaps due to what they perceive as undue privileges granted to a proportion of their compatriots, perceive greater value in integrating different others. We

believe that this endorsement of others' different ways may serve to mitigate a discomfort they experience with the present state of affairs and a hope that integration of different others may ameliorate their present condition.

Similarly, we found no support in the present study for the contact hypothesis amongst nondominant groups. Seemingly, the more nondominant group members affiliate with the dominant Maltese, the less they subscribe to multicultural ideology. Contact, in this case, may be serving to rub off restrictive attitudes held amongst the Maltese on nondominant group members. This is a form of acculturation that may serve the interests of those seeking to displace a stigmatized identity through assimilation with the host culture (Sammut, 2012), and this could well be the case for the Arab community in Malta who are aware of the negative attitudes levelled in their regard. This interpretation is supported by the finding that, in the present study, the Maltese dominant group along with the Arab group reported high preferences for melting pot/assimilationism relative to other groups. It is therefore reasonable to expect the Arab group in Malta, given the fact that this group is largely negatively regarded, to express equally high preferences for a melting pot/assimilationist acculturation strategy as the dominant group. Some Arabs may perceive that they stand to lose a stigmatized identity through assimilation, which could be replaced by that pertaining to the dominant group. On the other hand, nondominant group members who are not quite as ready to shun their own native identities and align themselves with the cultural practices of a homogeneous dominant group may, in their turn, disassociate themselves from locals and seek fewer opportunities for contact. Clearly, the Arab group has the least reason to pursue this form of acculturation. With regards to the dominant group, our findings support the contact hypothesis. Maltese respondents who report having non-Maltese friends and who report associating with them also report higher levels of multicultural ideology. One wonders whether, over time, as opportunities for contact inevitably increase with certain immigrant communities taking root in Malta, levels of multicultural ideology amongst the dominant group may rise precipitating changes in the extent to which multiculturalism is preferred and potentially reversing the trend evidenced in the present findings concerning the multiculturalism hypothesis. Should this prove to be the case, the present findings concerning these hypotheses are also expected to change.

We believe that this explanation further accounts for our findings regarding the integration hypothesis, which suggests that preferences for multiculturalism/integration are associated with higher levels of personal and social wellbeing. In the present study, the integration hypothesis was not supported. In fact, we found that self-esteem is negatively correlated with a preference for multiculturalism amongst the dominant Maltese. Seemingly, Maltese individuals who experience relatively lower levels of self-esteem endorse multiculturalism more than those with reportedly higher levels of self-esteem. We believe that this finding needs to be interpreted in light of the very recent history of migration in Malta. In particular, it is worth noting that Malta has opened its borders following EU accession a little more than a decade ago. This finding might be due to the fact that those Maltese individuals who command a good

level of social and psychological wellbeing (Ward, 1996) in Malta presently do so by virtue of their inclusion in a relatively homogenous society, as noted at the outset. This situation may serve to bolster self-esteem amongst those who are accustomed to and who subscribe to Maltese ways, particularly amongst those who enjoy some privilege by virtue of their status as dominant group. These individuals arguably have much less reason to incorporate elements from other cultures into their own society. The high rate of endorsement for melting pot as well as exclusion amongst the Maltese relative to these acculturation preferences amongst nondominant groups lends support to this interpretation. On the other hand, those Maltese individuals who, for one reason or another, do not entirely fit in with this homogeneity may endorse multiculturalism to a greater extent in the hope that it will provide a remedy to homogeneity. Their ill fitment with their own dominant group is arguably reflected in their self-esteem. This explains the fact that those reporting lower levels of self-esteem endorse multiculturalism more strongly than those reporting higher levels of self-esteem. We think our interpretation of this finding is reasonable and warrants further study. It will be interesting to observe whether this trend reverses in future in the event that Malta becomes more heterogeneous over time as a result of European immigration. With regards to nondominant group members, the present findings present additional cause for concern. Nondominant group members who report a higher preference for integration seem to be less, not more, socially adjusted. Arguably, their inclination towards integration proves to be an obstacle rather than a resource for achieving social wellbeing. This low level of sociocultural competence seems particularly acute for the Arab group. It seems, that an integrationist mindset amongst immigrants is actually counterproductive to their achieving social wellbeing. Migrants who seek to integrate in Malta do not fare well.

Conclusion and implications

We strongly believe that the findings of the present study need to be considered in light of Malta's very brief history of immigration. The three MIRIPS hypotheses tested in the present inquiry were largely unsupported. We found security to be negatively correlated with multicultural ideology amongst the dominant group. We also found self-esteem to be negatively correlated with a preference for multiculturalism amongst the same group. We believe that the reason for this, as suggested above, lies in the fact that the same objective situation may be perceived very differently by different groups depending on their respective social representations (Sammut & Howarth, 2014) of the issue. We found that contact with different ethnocultural groups is correlated with multicultural ideology amongst the Maltese, but that contact is negatively correlated amongst nondominant group members who associate with the Maltese. We also found that integration is correlated with low levels of social wellbeing amongst nondominant group members. We reiterate that these findings present cause for concern, particularly with regards to relations with the Arab community in Malta. A further concern relates to the fact that whilst positive, the findings concerning the contact hypothesis amongst the dominant group may be curtailed by the fact that migrants in Malta are

concentrated in a very small number of localities. Indeed, almost half of Maltese respondents in this study reported having no friends who are not Maltese. This clearly impedes opportunities for contact and may serve to facilitate segregation at a societal level regardless of the acculturation preferences prevailing in the population. Clearly, the policy debate concerning multiculturalism versus assimilationism (Moghaddam, 2008) is relevant for Malta. We believe that the Maltese case requires active social policy to transform cultural diversity into added value (Farrell & Oliveri, 2006) as this is seemingly not ensuing of its own accord. We conclude by recommending that contact, particularly that between the dominant group and other nondominant groups, especially Arabs, be actively promoted as it seems to provide the only glimmer of hope to potentially negative and adversarial intercultural relations in Malta.

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