Adventist Mission among Muslim Immigrants: A Prejudice Reduction Model

Introduction

The number of people moving across international borders is growing at a steady pace. According to the International Migration Report (2013), between 1990 and 2013 the number of international migrants rose by 50 percent.

Migration is one of the major features of the changing face of urban society. Immigrants are reshaping city landscapes in terms of demographics and are contributing to greater ethnic, social, and religious diversity (MacDonald and Sampson, 2012:14-15; Hiebert, 1995:267). Due to many reasons, but mostly economic, large urban centers attract immigrants from diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds (National Research Council 2003:322).

Migration presents new challenges and opportunities for Adventist mission in urban contexts. In the past, the church put a lot of effort into sending missionaries to other countries and continents in order to take the gospel to the predominantly non-Christian populations there. Nowadays, those same groups and Western Christians are living together in many urban contexts since immigrants from non-Christian countries are flocking into historically Christian-dominated communities. However, many Christian communities are not at all welcoming. In the past the challenge was to communicate the gospel in understandable ways, but today there is a more basic problem of even getting Christians to interact with and accept the immigrants that have moved into their neighborhoods.

This article looks at the attitudes Seventh-day Adventists in Moscow have toward Muslim immigrants and seeks to determine the factors that influence those attitudes. I will focus on ten factors influencing intergroup relations such as prejudice, social distance, symbolic and realistic threats, intergroup anxiety, stereotypes, ethnocentrism, in-group identity, intergroup contact, and spirituality.
Theoretical Framework

The growing influx of immigrants and refugees fosters hostility and discriminative attitudes toward the newcomers (Stephan, Ybarra, and Bachman 1999:2222). The conflict between local people and immigrants is due to the intergroup relations issue. People tend to favor their own group over other groups in order to maintain a positive perception of their in-group and to maintain an appropriate level of self-esteem (Turner and Hewstone 2010:44). The in-group relationships are marked by loyalty, trust, and intimacy, while relations to the out-group representatives are usually associated with greater ambiguity and uncertainty, and sometimes with anger and hostility (Matsumoto and Juang 2008:374).

Prejudice is expressed in cognitive, affective, and behavioral forms and implies open or subtle antipathy towards the disliked group (Brown 2010:7). Social distance is the behavioral expression of prejudice, which arises due to the natural tendency of the in-group members to sustain positive social identity (Turner and Hewstone 2010:42).

Perceived threats influence attitudes, emotions, and behavior and lead to intergroup anxiety when interacting with out-group members (Stephan and Stephan 1996:409). Among the constructs of the Integrated Threat Theory (ITT) are symbolic and realistic threats (Stephan and Stephan 2000:23). Symbolic or intangible fears are related to the issue of status, norms, and values that threaten the in-group’s identity (Triandis and Trafimow 2003:375). When confronted by a foreign group, the indigenous group will likely perceive threats to their religious beliefs, philosophy, morality, and worldview (Stephan, Ybarra, and Morrison 2009:44).

Realistic or tangible fears deal with territorial, economic, or physical threat (43). Since there is an increasing number of labor migrants coming into the receiving country, the host community is becoming concerned about physical or material harm from the out-groups such as pain, death, deprivation of valued resources, economic loss, threat to health, and personal security (Stephan, Renfro, and Davis 2008:55).

Threats in effect influence attitudes, emotions, and behavior and lead to intergroup anxiety when interacting with out-group members (Stephan and Stephan 1996:409). Oskamp notes, “People feel personally threatened in intergroup interactions because they are concerned about negative outcomes for the self, such as being embarrassed, rejected, or ridiculed” (2000:40). The constant expectation of negative reaction leads to intergroup bias and prejudice (Riek, Mania, and Gaertner 2006:336).

Stereotyping is a cognitive component of prejudice and is related to a judgment about an individual or an entire group. The process of categorization involves classifying people into groups based on common
similarities (Matsumoto and Juang 2008). Stereotypes, from categories and perceptions, influence people’s feelings about the out-group members (Stephan and Stephan, 1985).

Ethnocentrism reflects a tendency to view one’s group as superior to others (Hall 2005). Its role in intergroup relations is aptly summed up by Stephan and Stephan (1985), “So basic is ethnocentrism to intergroup relations that perceived superiority has been found even in minimal interactions between members of arbitrarily created groups” (163). Religious ethnocentrism is found to be a powerful predictor of hostility toward marginal out-groups (Altemeyer and Hunsberger 2005:383, 384).

Intergroup contact has proven to be one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice since it changes cognitive perspectives of bias towards the individual/group (Pettigrew 2008:929). The greater the intergroup contact, the lower the intergroup prejudice.

The effect of religion on attitudes, motivation, and behavior of its adherents appears to be somewhat ambiguous. Allport (1954) observes that there is the two-way pull of religion as it leads some toward prejudice and some away from it (422). It has been widely confirmed that church members are more prejudiced than non-members (Allport 1954; Dittes 1973). Yet, as Varga (2007:146) aptly notes, to have religion and to be religious are not the same.

Spirituality was found to strongly influence emotions (Cunningham, Nezlak, and Banaji 2004:1332; Emmons 2005:235). Wakefield (1983) states that spirituality is not simply for “the interior life” but is “directed to the implementation of both the commandments of Christ, to love God and our neighbor” (362). Walsh (as cited in Serlin 2004) found positive correlation between spirituality and decreased anxiety and conflict. Spirituality involves positive psychological dynamics, such as positive emotions and reduced anxiety (Oman and Thoresel 2005:435).

This study seeks to examine the cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors that impact on social distance and prejudice of Seventh-day Adventist church members toward Muslim immigrants in Moscow, Russia.

The Context of Study

Moscow, as the capital city of the Russian Federation and one of the megacities in the world in terms of economic and population growth has become a “migration magnet” for both legal and undocumented immigrants (Religion 2012). Russia has become the second largest country after the United States in terms of receiving immigrants (Mykhtaev 2013). The continuous decline of the Russian population is contributing by a steady growth of immigration. The Institute of National Strategy (INS) published a report in April 2014 that if migration maintains its current...
pace immigrants will comprise about 50 percent of the Russian population by 2050 (INS 2014). Labor immigrants from almost 120 countries flock by the thousands to the large cities of the Russian Federation in search of jobs (Rybakovsky and Ryazantsev 2005). According to the Bureau of Migration, as of 2013 there were about 11 million immigrants in Russia (Rossiyskaya Gazeta 2013). However, the official statistics do not reflect the number of undocumented immigrants.

Most of the labor immigrants come from Muslim countries such as Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan (Noskova 2011). They occupy all kinds of low-skilled jobs such as janitorial works, retail market traders, public transportation drivers, construction workers, and also work in mining and housekeeping. The absolute majority of labor immigrants are male (90%) and are between 18-39 years old (Rybakovsky and Ryazantsev 2005).

Immigrants often become victims of illegal exploitation, fraud, and discrimination from the recipient society (V Peterburge migranty zhivut 2009; Mukomel 2002). According to one report, every fifth immigrant in Moscow is working in conditions close to slavery (Burnos 2011).

Frisch (1967:100) aptly points to the central paradox of labor migration: “We called for labor, and human beings came.” The ever-growing number of immigrants evokes anxiety and fear among the local Russian population. The immigrants were ranked the highest on the scale as a potential source of threat for Muscovites, even higher than the threat of terrorists and other criminals (Ryabikov 2012).

**Methodology**

The participants of the study were recruited from all 16 Seventh-day Adventist churches in Moscow consisting of 200 respondents. The survey instrument was constructed by designing a new and also adapting existing scales obtained from previous research. There was a total of 78 items. All the scales were tested and yielded a reliability coefficient of above \( \alpha = .70 \).

The proposed model included two criterion, five mediatory, and three predictor variables. The social distance scale was adapted from the Bogardus Social Distance Scale (Bogardus 1933). Seven items represent different types of social relationships: within marriage, friendship, within neighborhoods, within occupational and business groups, and within national and political groups, along with refusal to have any relationships. The participants were asked to judge the amount of social distance using seven questions, which were rated on a 5-point scale; 1 (no/none), 2 (a few), 3 (some), 4 (most), 5 (any). A higher score indicated lower social distance and a low score indicated greater social distance.
The prejudice scale was adapted from Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, and Voci (2004:770). Six bipolar traits were used to assess how the respondents felt towards immigrants. The items were measured on a 7-point scale (1 warm — 7 cold; 1 negative — 7 positive; 1 friendly — 7 hostile; 1 suspicious — 7 trusting; 1 respect — 7 disrespect; 1 admiration — 7 disgust). The higher the score, the more prejudice that was manifested.

The mediatory variable, the intergroup anxiety scale was adapted from Stephan and Stephan (1985:157). It measured eight (8) items to determine if people would feel more or less anxious, impatient, irritated, frustrated, happy, defensive, apprehensive, or nervous when interacting with immigrants. Higher scores indicated higher levels of anxiety.

The symbolic and realistic threat scales were adapted from Laher (2008) and was modified by the researcher. The statements were rated on a 5-point Likert scale with “strongly disagree” to a “strongly agree” order. Higher scores indicated greater perceived symbolic or realistic threats.

The ethnocentrism scale was constructed by the researcher on the basis of related literature and contained 12 items, which included statements on the perception of superiority of the SDA Church organization, its distinctive beliefs, practices, and people in comparison to other Christian denominations. The items employed a 5-point Likert scale with the highest score indicating the ethnocentric attitudes of the respondents.

The stereotype scale was used to assess the respondents’ beliefs about immigrants. Each participant was asked to indicate the percentage of Asian and Caucasian immigrants who might possess any of 9 traits given in the scale, such as laziness, greed, dishonesty, arrogance, etc. The responses were constructed on a 10-point scale from (0% — 100%) thereby making 10% intervals. A higher score indicated a greater amount of stereotypical attitude.

For the predictor variable, the contact scale was adapted from McNally (2010), and was further modified for the context of the present research. The questions sought to gain information on how often and where Muscovites came in contact with immigrants. The amount of contact was measured by a 5-point Likert scale, which was comprised of the following degrees, 1 (almost never), 2 (seldom), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often), 5 (very often). The higher the score, the greater the amount of contact and the lower the score, the less contact.

The development of the five items for the in-group identity construct indicators came from social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979:33), self-categorization theory (Turner et al. 1987), and from Cheek and Briggs (1982:401). The church members were asked to indicate their level of personal commitment to the in-group in terms of sharing common beliefs, involvement in church activities, and friendship with other members of the
group. The items were constructed on a 5-point Likert scale, with the highest score indicating stronger in-group identity of the respondent.

The spirituality construct was measured by 16 items adapted from the 1998 Thayer Long-form Faith Maturity Scale (Thayer 2008). In the present study the respondents were asked to indicate their level of spiritual maturity in terms of their relationship with God, with people, personal Bible study and prayer, and witnessing. The scale was based on a 5-point Likert scale with the highest score indicating greater spiritual maturity of the respondent.

For data analysis this study employed SEM using (AMOS) version 17.0 to determine the patterns of relationships among the variables and to explain the variance with the model proposed in this research (Kline 2005). SEM was used to build the model from 10 latent variables, spirituality (S), in-group identity (ID), contact (C), symbolic threat (ST), realistic threat (RT), stereotype (SR), ethnocentrism (ET), anxiety (A), prejudice (P), and social distance (SD).

This study employed a two-step approach in model analysis (Kline 2005). In the first step the measurement models were evaluated, and in the second step the structural model was assessed. Prior to the evaluation of the measurement model, outliers were detected. Since outliers affect the mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient values, they must be identified and deleted (Schumacker and Lomax 2004:34). The process of identification of outliers was done using Mahalanobis distance assessment and the outliers were removed when p2 < 0.05.

In order to obtain the model fit and remove insignificant items, the following parameters were used, Chi-square, normed fit index (NFI), comparative fix index (CFI), incremental fix index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and relative fix index (RFI), which were expected to be above 0.90 (Kline 2005). After running the SEM software, all indicators with critical ratio above 1.96 were removed (2005). Furthermore, indicators showing low factor loading (less than about .70) and those greater than 0.05 levels as appeared in parameter estimates were also removed in order to ensure model fit for every measurement.

As a result of preliminary analysis the final measures contained the following items: prejudice—four items, social distance—three items, symbolic threat—four items, realistic threat—four items, intergroup anxiety—five items, stereotypes—four items, ethnocentrism—two items, in-group identity—two items, intergroup contact—four items, and spirituality—four items.

Since two variables (in-group identity and ethnocentrism) were left with less than three indicators and two variables (contact and symbolic threat) and had a weak relationship with other latent variables, they were removed from the structural model.
After the removal of non-significant indicators, paths, and the latent variables, the model was processed and evaluated again. The goodness-of-fit results for the final model were as follows, Chi-square (χ²/df) = 1.055, \( p = .283 \), NFI = .936, RFI = .926, IFI = .996, TLI = .996, CFI = .996 (see Table 1). These results indicate a very good model (see Figure 1) since the \( p \)-value is higher than 0.05 and all tests for model fit are above 0.90 (Byrne, 2001).

### Table 1. Goodness-of-fit Index for Final Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Threshold Value</th>
<th>Values Obtained</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMIN P</td>
<td>&gt; .050</td>
<td>.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>&gt; .900</td>
<td>.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFI</td>
<td>&gt; .900</td>
<td>.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFI</td>
<td>&gt; .900</td>
<td>.996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>&gt; .900</td>
<td>.996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>&gt; .900</td>
<td>.996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>&lt; .050</td>
<td>.017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Final structural model.
Results of the Study

The model shows that prejudice directly and significantly influences social distance ($\beta = .40$, $p< 0.05$) and along with realistic threat explains 41% of its variance ($R^2 = .41$) (see Table 2). This indicates that the way church members feel about interaction with immigrants (friendly-hostile, warm-cold or positive-negative) increases or decreases their desire to associate with them by way of friendship, common workplace, and desire to see them coming to work in Moscow. When prejudice increases, social distance increases accordingly; hence Adventists express less desire to see Muslim immigrants as their friends or to work with them, and do not want to see them come into the country to work.

Spirituality directly and indirectly through anxiety (10%) negatively influences prejudice ($\beta = -.16$, $p < 0.05$) with a total effect of 26% ($R^2 = .26$). In other words, the indicators of spirituality such as relationship with Jesus Christ, love for each other, worshipping together, and witnessing about Jesus reduce prejudice, namely, feeling friendly-hostile, warm-cold, or positive-negative toward immigrants. That means, the more the members are committed to Christ, love each other, come together in worship, and are involved in witnessing, the less they feel prejudiced toward Muslim immigrants.

Realistic threat directly and indirectly (through stereotypes and anxiety) affects prejudice ($\beta = .31$, $p < 0.05$) and explains in total 60% of its variance ($R^2 = .60$). This means that the indicators of realistic threat such as threat of losing jobs because of immigrants, increased tax burden on the local population, threat of personal safety, and health concerns influence negative, cold, and hostile feelings in relation to immigrants.

Intergroup anxiety directly influence prejudice ($\beta = .60$, $p < 0.05$). When Muscovite Adventists meet Muslim immigrants, their feelings of irritation, frustration, impatience, and defensiveness influence their hostility, coldness, and negative reaction toward them.

The final structural model shows a direct relationship between intergroup anxiety and realistic threat and anxiety and stereotypes. The latent variable RT directly and indirectly influences A ($\beta = .35$) and, along with SR explains 31% of its variance. Perception of threat which means that because of the immigrants Muscovites may loose their jobs, pay more taxes, experience health problems, and have less security positively seem to evoke feelings of anxiety associated with irritation, impatience, frustration, and defensiveness when they interact with immigrants.

Overall, prejudice is directly influenced by realistic threat (31%), spirituality (16%), and anxiety (61%), and also has indirect effects from spirituality (10%), and realistic threat (29%). All direct and indirect effects
explain 72% of the variance of prejudice ($R^2 = .72$) (see Table 3). However, the remaining 28% of unexplained variance for $P$ may be explained by other factors such as the history of intergroup relations (Matsumoto and Juang 2008), cultural value differences, and situational and personality factors (Stephan, Renfro, and Davis 2008).

The contact of the respondents with Muslim immigrants in Moscow was found to be an insignificant predictor of prejudice against immigrants. The amount of contact with immigrants in residential areas, in business transactions, in friendly conversations, and at work did not influence the Adventists’ feelings toward being more or less warm, positive, friendly, and trustful toward them. This finding partially negates the results of several studies of the contact hypothesis, which repeatedly report that contact with the members of the out-group is associated with lower levels of prejudice toward that group (Allport 1954; Combs and Griffith 2007:222; Miller, Smith, and Mackle 2004:221; Pettigrew 1998:65).

Table 2. Significant and Non-Significant Path Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Path</th>
<th>Non-Significant Paths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S to A ($\beta = -.17, p = 0.02$)</td>
<td>S to SR ($\beta = .00, p = .834$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT to A ($\beta = .35, p = 0.00$)</td>
<td>SR to SD ($\beta = .02, p = .773$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A to P ($\beta = .61, p = 0.00$)</td>
<td>A to SD ($\beta = .07, p = .843$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S to P ($\beta = -.16, p = 0.00$)</td>
<td>S to RT ($\beta = -.07, p = .704$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT to P ($\beta = .31, p = 0.00$)</td>
<td>S to SD ($\beta = -.07, p = .473$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P to SD ($\beta = .40, p = 0.00$)</td>
<td>SR to P ($\beta = .09, p = .116$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT to SR ($\beta = .53, p = 0.00$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR to A ($\beta = .23, p = 0.00$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT to SD ($\beta = .31, p = 0.00$)</td>
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One possible explanation for the contact being an insignificant predictor of intergroup relations is the quality of the contact of Muscovite Adventists with Muslim immigrants. According to descriptive statistics, the majority of the respondents (77.5%) indicated the most frequent contact occurred on city streets, while 79% of them said they met Muslims in their neighborhood only rarely or from time to time. At the same time, almost all the respondents (96%) reported that they host immigrants at home rarely or very rarely, with only 4% hosting them often.

Taking this perspective into consideration, one may perceive that the quality of the contact between the Muscovite Adventists and Muslim immigrants is only occasional and superficial, rather than personal and longitudinal. Meanwhile, the recent study in Moscow has shown that the primary need and the greatest problem for immigrants is not legal documents, and not even lack of money, but rather a lack of community (Sreda 2012). Most of the immigrants indicated loneliness as one of the major problem they experience in a foreign land.

One of the major findings of this study is that spirituality facilitates both contact within the group and between groups of people. The quality of personal relationships with God and fellowship with one another influences the quality of intergroup relationships as well as attitudes toward out-groups. The more church members associate with God and with one another, the less they feel prejudiced against Muslim immigrants. Hence, spirituality, unlike the contact variable, does not only focus “when” and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Direct Effects</th>
<th>Indirect Effects</th>
<th>Total Effects</th>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>-.158</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>-.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.104</td>
<td>-.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>-.165</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>.309</td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>.598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.310</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>.552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>.352</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>.533</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>.232</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
<td>.141</td>
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<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>.057</td>
<td>.057</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>.245</td>
<td>.245</td>
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<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.403</td>
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“where” the contact occurs but it goes further to “why” and “how” people connect with each other.

This descriptive study supports the influence of spirituality on prejudice. Low spirituality among the age group of 20-29 year olds correlates with the highest amount of prejudice among the same age group. Conversely, a higher perception of spirituality among the age groups 50-59 and 60 and above corresponds with lower prejudice among the respondents of the same age.

The study found negative correlation between spirituality and anxiety, meaning that higher perceptions of spirituality correlate to decreased feelings of anxiety (Oman and Thoresel 2005:435; Serlin 2004:27). It appears that such dimensions of spirituality as commitment to Christ, relationships with other people, witnessing to others, and worshipping together negatively influence such anxiety feelings as impatience, irritation, frustration, and defensiveness in relation to Muslim immigrants. Hence, the more spiritual Adventists are, the less they feel anxious about interaction with Muslim immigrants. This is one of the major findings of this study.

Symbolic threat was removed from the structural model due to a low significance level in relationship to the other variables in the model. It appears that symbolic threats such as perceptions that Muslim immigrants negatively influence Russian culture, Russian language, national traditions and values, and Christian norms do not significantly influence prejudice toward immigrants.

In the prejudice reduction model, perceived realistic threat turned out to be the independent variable, which influenced all four dependent variables (SR, A, P, and SD). Realistic threat influences attitudes (SR, P), emotions (A), and behavior (SD) in relation to Muslim immigrants. This indicates that realistic threat should be considered as one of the most important factors in predicting prejudice against Muslim immigrants in Moscow. The study conducted by Maddux, Galinsky, Cuddy, and Polifroni (2008:74) among university students, confirms the importance of RT as an independent variable in explaining negative attitudes and feelings toward Asian immigrants.

The reason for such a high perception of realistic threat may be due to the fact that threat is connected with the social categorization process, which involves categorizing people into in-groups and out-groups, “us” and “them” (Brewer and Gaertner 2003; Brown 2010). Public media fosters this process by showing Asian and Caucasian immigrants as unwanted and even dangerous elements in Russia. They are labeled as potential criminals, job-stealers, and threatening the safety of Muscovites (Kalinin 2004; Otnoshenie k immigrantam 2005:12; Zibrova 2008).
Ethnocentrism was removed from the analysis due to an insufficient number of remaining indicators. It seems that ethnocentrism does not influence prejudice and social distance, which means, the ethnocentric attitudes of the Adventist church members do not influence their prejudice against Muslim immigrants in Moscow. One of the feature characteristics of ethnocentrism is negative attitudes towards out-group members and positive evaluation of in-group members (Brewer 2001:17).

However, from the descriptive research on perceptions of ethnocentrism it appears that Adventists in Moscow do not really believe in their superiority over other religious groups. The overwhelming majority of the respondents believe that the Adventist Church has better doctrines (99% agree and strongly agree, \( M = 4.60, \ SD = 0.602 \)), but when it comes to people in the church, they are not so optimistic. Only 64% believe that Adventists are more trustworthy than others, while 36% either disagreed or were undecided (\( M = 3.74; \ SD = 0.909 \)). When asked about whether they agree that Adventists are special people, the respondents were almost equally divided (46% disagreed or were undecided and 54% agreed or strongly agreed; \( M = 3.51, \ SD = 1.080 \)). Finally, for the question, if the respondents prefer to do business with Adventists rather than with non-Adventists, 42.5% were undecided or disagreed, while 57.5% agreed or strongly agreed. Hence, the respondents believe Adventism is better compared to other denominations but Adventists are probably no better than the rest.

To sum up, this study supports some initial hypotheses of the research. First of all, it has found the ITT model to be an effective predictor of prejudice toward Muslim immigrants in Moscow. There is substantial evidence that the SDA church members in Moscow share common threats and attitudes toward immigrants with the rest of the population. Of two threats (ST and RT) only realistic threat was found to be a strong predictor of prejudice. Second, with respect to the mediating role of the cognitive factor (stereotypes), the emotional factor (intergroup anxiety) has the highest direct effect on prejudice (61%). In addition, anxiety appears to play a predominant role in predicting negative attitudes toward Muslim immigrants in Moscow (Bizman and Yinon 2001:191; Stephan and Stephan 1985:157).

On the other hand, intergroup contact and symbolic threats had no effect whatsoever on other mediating and dependent variables and were removed from the model. However, taking the moderating effect of contact, spirituality was found to play a crucial role in reducing negative feelings and attitudes. Consistent with the intergroup contact theory (Dovidio, Gaertner, and Kawakami 2003:5; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008:922), which prescribes the prerequisites for meaningful contact, on
the level of relationships spirituality facilitates knowledge and cooperative interaction. It also encourages reaching common goals, friendship opportunities, and interdependence of church members within the religious community through their involvement in Christian fellowship and worship. Moreover, it fosters cognitive reassessment of the in-group identity to a more inclusive, superordinate identity by relating to one another and to others from a spiritual and missional perspective.

**Romans: Towards a Theology of Inclusive Relationships**

The unity of the church is one of the major themes in the Pauline letters. In light of the ethnic and social divisions in the Roman society of the first century, particularly a prejudice toward the Jewish minority in Rome, which affected the Christian community as well, Paul is carving his theology in a way to put down the ethnocentric attitudes of his audience. He does it by challenging the groups’ distinctive identities and creating the common in-group identity model (Esler 2003).

First, he dismisses any claims of superiority over the out-groups by introducing the creation theme in Rom 1, which annihilates any claim for religious or racial superiority. This process of recognizing others as basically no worse than one’s own group is called a de-categorization process (Brewer and Gaertner 2003:451). By introducing judgment and salvation themes in chapters 2-5 Paul challenges the Jews claim that they “know His will and approve the things that are essential” (2:18), but in reality they fail to act accordingly. Thus, both groups had been given a chance to “know” God, and both failed to obey.

By providing superseding similarities between the groups Paul takes the next step to eliminate the intergroup barriers and to set the stage for a common superordinate identity, a process that is called re-categorization (Brewer and Gaertner 2003:451). For the Jews Paul says, “Are we better than them? Not at all” (3:9), and for the Gentiles, he bids them to remember that “it is not you who supports the root” (11:18). Both, concludes Paul, are not perfect and therefore have no right to assert their superiority over the other.

Finally, with respect to the differences between Jews and Gentiles Paul attempts to unite them under a common superordinate identity (a new covenant community; Rom 9-11), which is now based on the intrinsic rather than extrinsic markers, such as faith in Christ and mutual loving relationships extended to others outside the Christian community.

The new, inclusive attitudes informed by the grand theological themes such as creation, judgment, salvation, and covenant promises now take effect in proper feelings and behavior between Jews and Gentiles. The way
God relates himself to people is now to be mirrored in the relationships of welcome and hospitality between the Jews and Gentiles in Rome. Therefore, the admonition of Paul to “receive one another” (15:7) should be considered as a call to show one’s love and good will toward the strangers, which, among the hostilities of Roman society, was an essential tool to develop inclusive attitudes toward the people of different ethnic origins and thus to employ the gospel power “for salvation of everyone who believes” (1:16). The gospel brings believers together at the table of fellowship so that they can bring that gospel to the rest of the world.

**Summary and Recommendations**

The research conducted among the Adventist church members in Moscow found that economic, health, and security threats significantly increase negative feelings, attitudes, and stereotypes toward Muslim immigrants. It also confirmed that fellowship with Christ and with one another, as well as witnessing to others help Adventists lessen their feelings of anxiety and prompt them to become more positive, more inclusive, and to have a more friendly attitude toward Muslim immigrants in Moscow. While the contact theory (Stephan and Stephan 2000:32) advocates that contact be established with out-group members in order to change attitudes toward them, this study submits that contact should take place first *within* the group, thereby changing attitudes toward those who are socially and ethnically distant. Contact inside the group should precede contact between the groups in order that meaningful relationships with the out-group members might be established.

Based on the theology of inclusive relationships, as well as on the prejudice reduction model, this study submits that accepting Christ and one another, as well as taking part in God’s mission to this world could change negative attitudes, feelings, and behavior to be more positive and inclusive. Biblically informed contact embraces first one’s fellow church members and then extends that acceptance to outsiders.

The study makes the following recommendations:

**Spiritual life.** First of all, the factor of commitment to Christ, relationship with one another, witnessing, and worshipping together was found to negatively correlate with feelings of impatience, irritation, frustration, and defensiveness toward Muslim immigrants; it was also found to negatively correlate with coldness, negativism, and hostility toward immigrants. Therefore, church leaders, as well as church members should be interested to improve the quality of spiritual life.

**Fellowship and hospitality.** It has been found that Christian fellowship is a critical component of spirituality and is important for the development
of positive attitudes toward each other and toward people of other races. It is suggested that pastors should strengthen this dimension of spirituality by organizing fellowship times, including church potlucks and outings. It is important to continually be involved in get-together activities among people of all social and ethnic groups in the church in order to encourage longitudinal relationships and cross-cultural friendships. In like manner, the church should be taught and encouraged to practice hospitality, especially toward strangers such as working immigrants from post-Soviet republics.

**Witnessing.** Talking to other people about one’s faith was likewise found to be of critical importance in reducing anxiety and negative attitudes toward Muslim immigrants. The pastors and church leaders should plan for greater involvement of church members in missionary activities. It is especially important to note that younger church members (20-29 years old) are significantly less involved in mission ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.694$), compared to the members 50-59 ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.504$) and 60 and above years old ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 0.532$) [$F(4, 195) = 8.356$, $p = .000$]. Church leaders might want to offer young people more opportunities for witnessing concerning their faith.

**Dealing with threats and stereotypes.** It was found that church members share common threats and stereotypes about Muslim immigrants along with other Muscovites. It might be useful for pastors and church leaders to offer more correct and reliable information about immigrants to church members. Especially important would be meetings dedicated to people of other cultures so that church members could learn more about ethnic groups and celebrate, not be threaten by, cultural diversity.

**Mission to Muslim immigrants.** According to the demographic profile of the respondents, there are nearly no converts from Muslim countries among Adventist church members in Moscow except for a few Tajiks (1.5%, $N = 3$). Considering the four million Muslim immigrants in Moscow, this mission field is yet untouched. The church organization at all levels should pay proper attention to this mission shortfall. Escobar suggests three challenging areas of ministry to immigrants: to sympathize with their hardships, to stand up for their human rights, and to communicate the gospel to them (Escobar 2003:27). This mission to Muslim immigrants may require considerable efforts in cross-cultural communication and contextualizing of the Adventist message. Along with evangelizing, the Adventist Church should consider offering social support and assistance for immigrants, such as help with legal issues, help with finding jobs, family issues, Russian language classes, and assimilation plans.
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