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Intergroup Contact and Communication

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When individuals from different social groups communicate with one another, their social identities (whether they be ethnic, age, gender, sexuality, religion, etc.) affect *interpersonal* perceptions and relationships, but also *intergroup* stereotypes and attitudes. These, by extension, affect intergroup relations. The potential positive effects of communication with outgroup members (members of groups to which you do not belong), have been theorized extensively within intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954), and have seen extensive empirical support. Much of this research focuses on the psychological constructs that relate to contact, but the *communication* processes at work in intergroup contact are equally important. In this chapter, we provide an overview of research on contact theory from a socio-psychological perspective. This review will include discussion of psychological and communicative mediators and moderators of contact's effects. We then consider extensions of contact theory's scope, again with particular emphasis on communicative issues (e.g., mediated contact, relational communication). Finally, we present an extended epilogue discussing directions for future theory and research combining communication and intergroup contact.

BACKGROUND

It is difficult to think of intergroup interaction without thinking of Allport's contact hypothesis, but before Allport's seminal work there was already empirical work examining the effects of desegregation efforts in the 1940s. Prior to desegregation of Black and White Americans in the schools, there were concerted efforts in other institutions, and social scientists began to investigate how the desegregation of the merchant marines (Brophy, 1946), housing projects (Deutsch & Collins, 1951), and police forces (Kephart, 1957) would impact the lives and feelings of White Americans. With minor variations, these studies demonstrated that in desegregated institutions Whites had more positive attitudes towards African Americans, and were more supportive of desegregation in other arenas. Far from reinforcing fears that integration would increase conflict, these studies illuminated a simple solution to a complicated problem: Interpersonal communication between individuals from different groups improves attitudes not only about those individuals, but about entire groups of people (see Chapter 14 & 21, this volume).

In 1954, Allport formalized this basic idea into a more complete theoretical framework and began to consider facilitating factors for these effects. This early work described four necessary conditions to improve intergroup attitudes through intergroup contact: individuals from different groups should be of equal status in the situation, they should be engaged in a cooperative (rather than competitive) task, they should share common goals, and they should have the support of authorities (Allport, 1954).

These features have communicative implications, although they have not been examined explicitly in many studies. Equal status and cooperative tasks clearly point to communicative dynamics. Communication behaviors such as taking the floor, credit taking, interrupting, conflict management, and other leadership behaviors may render the context more (or less) cooperative (see Chapter 28, this volume). Behaviors such as turn-taking and expressing appreciation for others' ideas are likely to change perceptions of relative status. In addition to specific behaviors, research suggests that individual communication styles may often exude cooperation or endorse hierarchy (Wilson, Roberts, Rack, & Delaney, 2008). These individual differences, in addition to any other contextual factors, are likely to impact contact's effectiveness (cf. Sharp, Voci, & Hewstone, 2011).

Institutional support has received relatively little examination in the literature, and its communicative features have been largely ignored, yet institutional support implies the communication of norms within the larger community. Research has found that effective leadership (i.e., modeling effective intergroup behaviors, explicit advocacy) may encourage intergroup appreciation (Pittinsky, 2010). Other research has examined how institutions will use media to communicate norms of tolerance on a larger scale (Paluck, 2009), and yet there is very little empirical understanding about the role that specific content plays in moderating the efficacy of messages advocating intergroup harmony.

Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) extensive meta-analysis suggests broad support for Allport's conceptualization of contact effects. The overall effect of contact was as predicted (contact reduces prejudice), and this effect was strengthened when it occurred in contexts characterized by Allport's conditions. Striking examples of contact's effects in real-world settings are now common in the literature. Cook's railroad studies (1971) were well-controlled laboratory studies on a real world stage over the course of a meaningful amount of time. In these studies, Cook hired racist Whites for a racially-integrated job, and allowed them to keep working for a month. After this month, these formerly prejudiced White "employees" rated their "Black coworker" much more highly both personally and professionally, a seemingly unlikely outcome in 1960s America. Even in an intense conflict situation like Israel, field research indicates that structured intergroup communication between Palestinians and Israelis increases Israeli trust towards Palestinians and support for integrationist and compromise-based policies (Maoz & Ellis, 2008). Pettigrew and Tropp's meta-analysis did not distinguish between Allport's specific conditions, rather demonstrating that they operate *as a set* to improve contact effects. In addition to Allport's criteria, other variables have been found to facilitate or suppress the effects of contact. Although many of these variables have communication elements inherent to them, most research considers them in terms of psychological constructs. In what follows, we elaborate on this literature, emphasizing communicative aspects wherever possible. We begin by discussing psychological mediators, and then communicative mediators. Following this, we consider psychological, and subsequently communicative, moderators.

MEDIATORS OF INTERGROUP CONTACT'S EFFECTS

Intergroup *anxiety* stems from expectations of negative personal consequences resulting from intergroup contact and was originally conceptualized as a suppressor of contact's effects (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). This research suggested that anxiety-provoking contact would be ineffective and possibly harmful. Anxiety is often a product of negative stereotypes and serves to reinforce stereotypes during contact (Islam & Hewstone, 1993). This increased reliance on stereotypes precipitates perceptions of dissimilarity which can, in turn, negate prosocial effects of contact (Britt, Boniecki, Vescio, & Biernat, 1996). Empirical research on contact has shown that anxiety is harmful, but also that more previous contact reduces anxiety during intergroup contact (e.g., Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001).

Contact seems to affect the way we feel about groups rather than the way we think about them; meta-analysis shows that *empathy* mediates contact effects over and above other mediators (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). Empathy involves extending the sense of self to include someone else (which relates well to explanations for prejudice reduction that treat shifting levels of categorization as the mechanism: Pettigrew, 1998). Empathy reduces prejudice by making the ingroup and outgroup appear less distinct and by placing outgroup members and the self in the same category (Gaertner, Dovidio, & Houlette, 2010). Empathy may also be related to trust. Increased trust is one of the primary mechanisms involved in improving intergroup relations, and to the extent we imbue others with our own characteristics we are more likely to trust them (Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, & Cairns, 2009).

Allport (1954) originally suggested that contact improves attitudes towards outgroups by providing more accurate *knowledge,* and Pettigrew and Tropp's (2008) meta-analysis found a small mediating effect of knowledge on positive attitudes. However, most work suggests that intergroup contact reduces prejudice more through affective than cognitive mechanisms (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005); accuracy of knowledge is not a good predictor of intergroup attitudes (Ajzen, Joyce, Sheikh, & Gilbert Cote, 2011). This may be, in part, because contact research typically focuses on affective, rather than cognitive, dependent variables.

Changes in perceived group *norms* also mediate contact's effects, particularly in settings such as integrated classrooms and communities. De Tezanos-Pinto, Bratt, and Brown (2010) found that while direct one-on-one contact improved attitudes through a reduction of intergroup anxiety, perceptions of other ingroup members coming in contact with the outgroup also improved attitudes towards the outgroup through group norms (see Chapter 28, this volume). This relates in interesting ways to Allport's suggestions concerning institutional support, as well as leading into our discussion of extended contact.

Intergroup contact typically focuses on reducing prejudice towards a single target group. Emerging research examines whether intergroup contact can improve attitudes about many groups simultaneously. Support for such *secondary transfer effects* has been found in cross sectional studies (Tausch et al., 2010) and laboratory experiments (Harwood, Paolini, Joyce, Rubin, & Arroyo, 2011). The laboratory research suggests that this transfer effect is more effective for semantically-related groups. In this case, then, the mediation effect occurs through an effect on specific target-group related attitudes, to non-target-group related attitudes.

Communicative Mediators

While the above mediators are interesting and relevant to the contact literature, we are particularly focused on studies examining mediation processes that involve communication. Of course,

the mediators already described may in fact reflect or influence communicative processes; anxiety, for instance, is heavily implicated in communicative behavior (particularly nonverbals), and may itself be a response to specific communicative phenomena (Gudykunst, 1995). This leads to the critical question what kinds of communication are likely to change anxiety during intergroup contact, as well as what forms of communication might change levels of anxiety in anticipation of future contact. There are rich veins of research possibilities in uncovering the connections between extensively researched psychological variables and less frequently studied interactive phenomena.

In the vast majority of the research that *does* examine communication, the assessments of communicative behavior rely on self-report, often grounded in cross-sectional data. Hence, while various authors speculate on mediated path models, these tend to be limited by the nature of the data. Nonetheless, a number of these models provide suggestions for ways in which communication might function in the contact process.

Research shows that self-disclosure has positive effects in family communication between gay and straight family members (Soliz, Ribarski, Harrigan, & Tye-Williams, 2009; see Chapter 25, this volume) and interracial relationships (Shelton, Trail, West, & Bergsieker, 2010). Data suggest that self-disclosure's mediating effects may be stronger for explicit than implicit attitudes (Tam, Hewstone, Harwood, Voci, & Kenworthy, 2006). In the specific case of intergroup contact, self-disclosure offers a unique route to accurate knowledge of the outgroup communicative partner. It also engenders trust (Tropp, 2008) that comes from allowing another access to in-depth knowledge of the self, permitting development of more intimate intergroup relationships. Self-disclosure ties to some of the psychological processes described in the literature (e.g., *personalization*: Brewer, 1996). Perhaps most intuitively self-disclosure is associated with positive interactions and relationships (Ledbetter et al., 2011), and intergroup contact research has found that self-disclosure mediates the relationship between positive contact and its effects (Ensari & Miller, 2002).

One study invoked communication accommodation theory and examined the accommodative dynamics of intergroup contact (Harwood, Hewstone, Paolini, & Voci, 2005). As might be predicted given the positive tone of accommodative communication, more accommodative exchanges in intergroup contact were associated with more positive outcomes of contact. Specific accommodative processes merit attention given their long history in the study of intergroup communication. Specifically, research demonstrates negative effects of communicative *divergence* (i.e., shifting speech style away from the other to accentuate group-based differences: Giles & Coupland, 1991). To the extent that divergence is prevalent in intergroup encounters, positive contact effects are likely to be suppressed.

Imamura, Zhang, and Harwood (2011) position communicative variables as exogenous, and examine relational solidarity as a mediator, showing that for sojourners adjusting to a host culture, relational solidarity serves as a significant mediator of the effects of communicative variables on attitudes. This suggests that good communication builds good relationships, and those relationships influence intergroup attitudes. Imamura et al. also find that Japanese sojourners' relational quality with Americans significantly mediates associations between *linguistic competence* in English and attitudes about Americans. Future research should attend to linguistic competence in the contact experience to aid our understanding of how the basic prerequisites for conversation impact the ability to negotiate successful contact.

A final area of communicative relevance is nonverbal communication during intergroup interaction (Hebl & Dovidio, 2005; Richeson & Shelton, 2010). The majority of this work, however, has examined outcomes related to specific interaction partners rather than group memberships: group-based attitudes are often predictor variables in these studies rather than

outcomes (Hummert, 2008). However, two relevant patterns implicate contact theory. First, stereotype-driven nonverbal communication can solicit stereotype-confirming behavior from a target (Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974). Such self-fulfilling prophecies have the ability to reinforce prejudice. Second, research has examined the effects on nonverbal communication of motivation not to appear prejudiced, as well as minority groups' suspicions that a majority group member is prejudiced (Richeson & Shelton, 2010). This work demonstrates multiple ways in which nonverbal communication contributes to interactional environments which sustain (or reduce) prejudice.

Moderators of Intergroup Contact Effects

Moving on from mediators, we now examine first the psychological and then the communicative variables that moderate the effectiveness of contact.

Research suggests that the level of *ingroup-identification* may moderate whether anxiety or threat operates in a contact situation. Tausch, Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, and Cairns (2007) suggest that for people who are highly identified, symbolic threats such as threats to values or traditions are most likely to mediate the relationship between contact and positive attitudes (i.e., higher quality contact leads to reduced feelings of symbolic threat which, in turn, improves intergroup attitudes). However, for people who were less identified with the ingroup, reduction in anxiety was a more powerful mediator of positive contact effects.

By manipulating the amount of *empathy* a group felt towards the outgroup, Vorauer and Sasaki (2009) found that individually both the empathy manipulation and intergroup contact on their own improved attitudes towards the outgroup, but the combination of the two failed to improve attitudes. These findings suggest that the priming of emotions before contact may create conversational demands that reduce the quality of the interaction.

In terms of *power* issues, the point of intergroup contact is often to reduce prejudice against a disadvantaged group (see Chapter 9, this volume). Regardless of Allport's suggestion that status should be equal within the contact experience, the reality is that one group is generally more powerful than another. The effects of contact may be different for advantaged and disadvantaged groups: while minorities may report feeling more interracial closeness and less perceived discrimination after contact, the effects are much larger for the majority group (Tropp, 2007). In addition, for members of disadvantaged groups there is an ironic effect wherein contact reduces desire for social change (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2009). Such ironic effects do not negate the utility of contact, but they do suggest a need for research to understand how contact's intended and unintended effects combine.

Despite the efficacy of contact, it often appears that individuals who can interact sensibly in a structured environment then leave that environment and continue to harbor prejudice towards the outgroup (Minard, 1952). While many of the moderators we have discussed so far may impact the size of contact's effect, one variable in particular seems to have an impact on both the longevity and generalizability of contact. *Group salience* can be best thought of as the degree to which we recognize an individual as a member of a group. Individuals who are seen as exceptions will be discounted when forming a generalized evaluation of a group. Since Hewstone and Brown (1986) posited this idea much empirical research has validated it (Brown & Hewstone, 2005), suggesting that salience needs to be a part of the contact experience if the improvements in attitude are to transcend the interpersonal level.

Finally here, Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis showed that participants who had full *choice* about whether to participate in contact *never* showed stronger effects than those who had only a partial or no choice, and that the stronger effects are for participants who had less

choice. Contact does not just work for the willing few that volunteer for laboratory studies, but also for individuals not initially interested in contact with other groups, lending further ecological validity to the theory.

Communicative Moderators

The content and context of communication during contact may influence contact's effectiveness. For example, communication that aims to disconfirm stereotypes may increase perceptions of outgroup variability (Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Bachelor, 2003). However, focusing on disconfirmation may instead lead to an individual being seen as unrepresentative of their group, reducing the ability of contact to generalize to the whole group. To address this type of issue, communicative dynamics of group salience have been discussed and examined. Harwood, Raman, and Hewstone (2006) show that negative communicative features predict salience in predictable ways (painful self-disclosure from the grandparent: Giles, Coupland, and Coupland, 1991). However, positive communication phenomena that appear age-related actually suppress salience (storytelling, displaying wisdom; see Chapters 17 & 18, this volume). The communicative manifestations of salience appear almost inherently negative.

This finding is consistent with research demonstrating consistently negative associations between group salience and valence of contact. Paolini, Harwood, and Rubin (2010) demonstrate in two studies that a causal relationship exists between valence and salience: group salience tends to be higher in negative encounters. Paolini et al. note that negative encounters often have better "fit" with our cognitive representations of outgroups. Invoking self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), they conclude that there is a necessary causal relationship between valence and salience, at least for negatively perceived outgroups. This creates difficulties for the Hewstone and Brown (1986) perspective. If encounters require salience to generalize, and salience is more likely in negative encounters, then increased (not reduced) prejudice is the likely outcome (Paolini et al., 2010).

Communicative features that might systematically enhance salience while *not* increasing negativity have received consideration (e.g., Giles & Harwood, 1997; Harwood, 2010). Giles, McIlrath, Mulac, and McCann (2010) elaborate on communicative predictors of age salience, focusing on events that make people's age identity salient, and specifically on those things that make one "feel" older or younger. They show that media portrayals and encounters with new technology can trigger age salience, thus suggesting a broader conceptualization of communicative triggers than previous work. They note that triggers of age salience vary across generations, suggesting that communication of group salience changes across intergroup contexts.

We are unaware of work examining communication variables related to secondary transfer of contact effects. Theory offers some reasonable candidates to facilitate such effects. If secondary transfer is a function of perceived similarity between a target group and a secondary group, communication could be used to enhance such perceived similarity (e.g., messages emphasizing common characteristics of a contacted group and a non-contacted group). If secondary transfer results from the development of a multicultural ideology, communication could be used to enhance such notions (e.g., explicit endorsement of the value of diversity). These messages are unlikely to come up within an intergroup encounter, but might be emphasized by authorities or ingroup members outside of the interaction (e.g., media role models).

The source of the message must also be considered. Research has found that in contact situations ingroup messages of common identity increase the effectiveness of contact, but similar messages coming from the outgroup can reduce contact's effectiveness (Gómez, Dovidio, Huici, Gaertner, & Cuadrado, 2008). Much like the research on reactance against persuasive

messaging, the authors argued that coming from the outgroup, a message of togetherness was actually a message that limited the perceptual choices of the ingroup leading to a rejection of the message.

This highlights an asymmetry in intergroup communication between messages we wish to *produce* and those we wish to *receive*. This asymmetry may be similar for both groups, or based on power differences between groups. For example, Saguy, Dovidio, and Pratto (2008) found that while advantaged groups wanted to talk about issues of commonality, disadvantaged groups (particularly their highly identified members) were more interested in talking about intergroup power differences. This effect was mediated by motivation for social change on the part of the disadvantaged group member. While most advantaged group members were not interested in talking about disadvantage, when they felt their advantage was illegitimate they too were interested in talking about power. Majority group members interpret discussion of group membership negatively, while minority group members interpret it positively (Tropp & Bianchi, 2007), once again suggesting that power imbalances imply asymmetrical communication expectations and interpretations. Although much of this research did not directly examine the outcomes of different communication strategies, we can infer that disadvantaged groups will not favor talk of commonality from the advantaged group and that such talk may reduce motivation to pursue social change. Likewise, the advantaged group will not respond well to messages about status inequity. These asymmetries may lead to anxiety with all of its deleterious effects.

These communication variables highlight the delicate nature of contact; while even suboptimal contact has small positive effects, structuring and moderation of the communication elements of intergroup contact may prove to be one of the key components in increasing the technique's efficacy. In what follows below we discuss several extensions of contact theory, many aimed at addressing some of contact's psychological and communicative pitfalls.

EXTENSIONS OF INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY

Close relationships. Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis concludes that contact in close relationships is particularly effective in changing attitudes. They are not alone in this, and much work now suggests that intimate relationships have more dramatic contact effects than casual acquaintanceships. Among other explanations, researchers point to self-expansion processes in explaining these effects. When we engage in close relationships we essentially "expand" our selves to include others (Wright, Aron, & Tropp, 2002). When those others are members of outgroups, the self expands to include the outgroup, the outgroup is internalized, and hence liked (Pittinsky, 2010). Pittinsky focuses, like Hewstone and Brown (1986), on maintaining rather than eliminating group boundaries, while other models integrate perspectives targeting breaking down barriers between groups and those advocating maintaining the salience of group boundaries. For instance, Pettigrew (1998) presents a model in which group differences are downplayed initially in order to focus on improving interpersonal relationships, presumably though communication behaviors linked to positive relationships such as self-disclosure, social support, strong social skills, and the like. Once trust is developed, Pettigrew advocates increasing the salience of group memberships in order to enhance generalization, as suggested by Hewstone and Brown, avoiding the negativity-salience paradox described above. Empirical research supports this, finding that positive intergenerational relationships (Harwood et al., 2005) and positive familial relationships with people of different sexuality (Soliz et al., 2009) improve attitudes towards those groups. Interestingly, Soliz and Harwood (2003) found that having diverse intergenerational family relationships created increased perceptions of *heterogeneity* of the entire group.

Extended and imagined contact. Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, and Ropp (1997) describe the extended contact effect, whereby knowledge of positive intergroup relations involving *other people*, especially ingroup friends, can influence one's own attitudes about the outgroup. The four studies reported by Wright et al. convincingly demonstrate that positive attitudinal effects accrue from knowledge, or observation, of contact, above and beyond actual contact. Work on this extended contact effect—also sometimes called "indirect contact"—has continued, and solid evidence has accumulated (Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2004). Explanations for the effect are diverse, and some differences may stem from discrepancies in the original conceptual definitions. In the Wright et al. (1997) study, for instance, extended contact is sometimes defined as "observation of a cross-group friendship" (p. 87) and sometimes as "knowledge of cross-group friendships" (p. 77); these are clearly nonequivalent. Knowledge of ingroup friends' outgroup friendships may affect perceptions of norms concerning intergroup relations or perceived connectedness of the outgroup to the ingroup. Direct observation or participation, however may permit modeling of effective intergroup communication behaviors. Such mechanisms are not often separated in the existing literature. Nonetheless, extended contact offers numerous productive routes for reducing prejudice (Dovidio, Eller, & Hewstone, 2011). Knowledge and observation of intergroup relationships is likely to feature lower anxiety than direct interaction; interventions aimed at publicizing ingroup targets' intergroup relationships could be administered en masse; and group memberships in such scenarios are almost by definition salient.

In *imagined contact* interventions, an individual imagines having positive contact with an outgroup member. This exercise yields more positive attitudes towards the outgroup than simply imagining an outgroup member without imagining and interaction. Crisp and Turner (2009) review this literature; among the key points they make is that imagined contact is part of a continuum of contact, where imagined contact can be followed by extended contact, and ultimately actual face-to-face contact. Research shows that imagined intergroup contact between Turkish and Greek people in Cyprus results in greater intentions to engage in face-to-face intergroup contact (Husnu & Crisp, 2010). Shelton and Richeson (2005) integrate work in imagined and extended contact, showing that imagining a close friend having outgroup friends reduces fear of rejection by the outgroup.

Vicarious and computer-mediated contact. Researchers have become interested in leveraging the media's ubiquity to increase intergroup contact. Horton and Wohl (1956) suggested that people form the equivalent of social relationships with characters on TV, and follow-up research on these parasocial relationships suggests that they fulfill similar basic needs, and have similar consequences to face-to-face relationships (Kanazawa, 2002). Growing evidence suggests that intergroup contact through the media has effects similar to face-to-face contact. Some research has focused on how we form parasocial relationships with outgroup media characters, showing that parasocial intergroup relationships lead to more positive attitudes towards outgroups (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005). Other work focuses on how identification with an ingroup media character engaged in intergroup contact can result in modeling—(vicarious contact: Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). Beyond television, a post-genocide radio program in Rwanda used fictional tribes that listeners understood to be proxies for the tribes involved in the conflict. After hearing the show, attitudes towards the other group and towards reintegration were improved (Paluck, 2009).

Recent research has helped clarify the boundary conditions in which vicarious contact is most effective. Joyce and Harwood's (2011) experiment found that exposure to positive interactions led to more positive attitudes towards the target group, especially when the outgroup character was seen as representative of their group. However, when the interaction was negative and identification with the ingroup member was high, participants reported more negative attitudes towards the target outgroup.

Mediated contact offers considerable advantages over other forms of contact. Messages can be manipulated in microscopic fashion to yield precise combinations of facilitative elements, and then be transmitted to massive populations who regard exposing themselves to those messages as an enjoyable (rather than anxiety-provoking) leisure activity. Thus, it offers potential for mass exposure to constructive messages. On the other hand, it is difficult to tailor messages to specific audience sub-groups, nor can we force people to consume messages (see Chapter 27, this volume). Also, different individuals can draw radically different conclusions from the same messages (e.g., Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974). In addition, specific prosocial messages may need to compete with large numbers of messages sending less positive information about intergroup relations (Mastro, 2010). Finally, new interactive media (e.g., video games) offer increasingly complex challenges (as well as opportunities) for researchers interested in the ways that mediated contact influences attitudes (e.g., Eastin, Appiah, & Cicchirllo, 2009). Hence, challenges clearly exist to making this a dominant and influential force in changing intergroup attitudes.

Computer-mediated intergroup contact has been studied increasingly in recent years (Walther, 2009). Such mediated communication often features reduced cues and less immediacy (e.g., asynchronous, text-based, lacks nonverbals). As such, the communicative dynamics of such contact differ from face-to-face contact. This work is described in detail in Chapter 14 of this volume, and so we will avoid repeating that information here. For our purposes, it will suffice to note that the differences in the medium offer the potential for positive outcomes via reduced anxiety, more time to develop appropriate accommodation strategies, and the potential "idealization" of the other that can occur outside of direct contact (Walther, 2009). However, the medium also offers the possibility of depersonalization and the ensuing stereotyping of outgroup members (Postmes & Baym, 2005). Such effects would be primarily negative. Hence, the online world offers a diversity of potential outcomes of contact that differ in important ways from more direct interaction—these are the subject of considerable current research (Amichai-Hamburger & McKenna, 2006; see Chapter 14, this volume).

The contact space. Harwood (2010) synthesized work on alternate models of contact into a single framework called the contact space. The space is defined by two dimensions that recognize (a) the degree to which the self is directly involved in the contact, and (b) the richness of self's experience of the outgroup. The first dimension distinguishes, for instance, direct contact experiences and mediated interpersonal contact (self interacting with an outgroup member) from experiences in which I am an observer (e.g., seeing intergroup contact in the media; having a friend who has an outgroup friend). The second dimension distinguishes instances in which I have direct and immediate experience of an outgroup member (e.g., by talking with them face-to-face; seeing them in my immediate social space) from cases featuring more impoverished experience of the outgroup (e.g., computer-mediated contact; merely hearing about intergroup contact). Harwood argues that not only is the contact experience different across the contact space, but that the mediators and moderators of contact differ in these different forms of contact. For example, the mediating effects perceived ingroup norms are hypothesized to be stronger in cases where *other* ingroup members engage in contact (e.g., extended contact) than in cases where the self is directly involved in the contact experience. This model is communicatively relevant because it defines different forms of contact using fundamentally communicative dimensions underlying the contact experience.

EPILOGUE

This chapter underlines the centrality of communication processes to the intergroup contact experience, and shows the potential of contact for reducing intergroup prejudice and enhancing

intergroup peace. Our goal has also been to emphasize the numerous challenges facing this literature, a number of which offer productive directions for future research, which we outline in this final section.

In the interpersonal and media area, contact researchers have tended to focus on the positive and rather disregarded the negative. However, negative intergroup interactions are common and have bad effects; negative media portrayals of outgroups swamp positive portrayals, and contact can have negative effects (e.g., Stephan's, 1978, studies of school integration). Future work needs to attend more to the relative impact of positive and negative contact and how positive contact can have effects while the effects of negative contact are ameliorated. When we are seeking peaceful resolutions to genuinely conflict-ridden situations, the negative potential for conflict to exacerbate an already difficult situation should not be ignored.

Related, a small amount of work demonstrates ironic effects of contact (e.g., Wright & Lubensky's, 2008, demonstrations of how intergroup contact reduces desire for social change among minority group members). Contact can also lead to unrealistic expectations of dominant group fairness among members of subordinate groups (Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009). Such effects may enhance intergroup harmony, while simultaneously supporting a status quo in which dominant groups retain their power. These effects deserve more attention.

Recent years have seen greater attention to the real world ecology of intergroup contact, via innovative observational studies (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003) and broader survey research (Pettigrew, 2008). More work in this area will enhance our knowledge of actual interaction and provide more information about the relative prevalence of positive and negative contact. Pettigrew (2008), for instance, shows that positive contact is (perhaps surprisingly) prevalent in some contexts. Dixon, Schell, Giles, and Drogos's (2008) examination of police-civilian interactions (see Chapter 20, this volume) shows precisely why contact in certain contexts is far from a panacea for positive intergroup relations. Other research contexts might contribute to our understanding of such effects. Gottman (1998), for instance, suggests a ratio of five positive behaviors to one negative behavior is necessary to maintain stability in marriage. Investigation of the prevalent ratios of positive to negative intergroup contact and their effects would be valuable.

Our discussions of contact via different media suggest attention should be paid to interactions *between* forms of contact. Can one form of mediated contact open the door for other forms, and are there other as yet unconsidered forms of mediated contact? For instance, research demonstrates both positive (Rodríguez-Bailón, Ruiz, & Moya, 2009) and negative (Reyna, Brandt, & Tendayi Viki, 2009) effects of exposure to group-associated music on intergroup attitudes. A White person listening to hip hop music by a Black artist is a form of intergroup contact and one that deserves more attention given the ubiquity of music in culture (Giles, Denes, Hamilton, & Hajda, 2009). The simultaneous operation of different forms of contact is also a phenomenon meriting more serious academic attention (e.g., a straight person discussing a movie featuring gay characters with a gay friend).

Finally, we would emphasize the importance of understanding the role of specific group memberships in affecting contact effects. The literature takes a rather homogeneous view of contact effects (i.e., contact with a group X member has effects on attitudes about group X). However, contact effects actually vary by group and we know relatively little about why that might be (e.g., Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis shows stronger effects for contact with gay people than for contact with elderly people). Perspectives that attend to structural and psychological differences between specific intergroup relations contexts (e.g., Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) may provide more information about why such differences exist, and could be developed into better understandings of what type of contact works for whom.

In closing, we see three specific ways in which communication research and theory can contribute directly to work on contact effects. First, communication researchers can attend to the *medium* of contact in more sophisticated ways than other disciplines. The history of work on mediated communication is long and rich in our discipline, hence we should be able to contribute broadly to theorizing on how media interactivity, richness, accessibility, and the like, will influence contact effects. Second, communication researchers should be more attuned to the specific *content* of messages exchanged in contact than others. Whether in dyadic interaction or a mediated intergroup context, communication research should contribute to our understanding of the micro-dynamics of contact. In this context, integrating detailed content analyses of media into the effects of vicarious contact offers great promise. Finally, scholars in the field of communication should be able to contribute more to contact theory's understanding of the *structure* of a contact situation. Considerable communication research examines the effects of group size, relationship type, the presence of third-parties, formality of situation, and the like, on interaction outcomes. Dimensions defining the structure of a communication event warrant more attention in the study of intergroup contact, particularly as they connect to fundamental elements of the theory (e.g., institutional support).

Contact offers great potential for improving human society, but it also has pitfalls that need closer examination. The contact literature has moved from being a simple applied idea to being a theoretically rich and complex domain of research. We hope to have emphasized the roles that communication researchers can play in the further development of this area, and made clear to all researchers concerned with intergroup relations that examination of specific communication processes can provide new layers of understanding contact processes.

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14

Reducing Intergroup Conflict in the Digital Age

Yair Amichai-Hamburger

This chapter will assess how the Internet may be utilized to bring warring factions together and so bring about healthier intergroup relationships (see Chapter 16, this volume). It will discuss cyber-based interventions which aim to assist in the cessation of intergroup conflict. First, however, it is necessary to understand the roots of such antagonisms. This is to be found, in the stereotyped perception of outgroup members, which starts in early childhood of our intergroup experiences. Studies have shown that children as young as 6 years old demonstrate a stereotypical perception of others (Rideout, Vandewater, & Wartella, 2003). With this in mind, we suggest that an Internet solution to intergroup conflict will start in early childhood.

The chapter will open with a study of the unique psychological environment the Internet creates and how it relates to intergroup conflict. It will then discuss the importance of increasing the individual's sense of identity and offer a new approach to doing so. In this way, the likelihood of breaking the severance between ourselves and an outgroup is decreased. We continue by discussing the leading intergroup contact environments found on the Internet and explore some futuristic possibilities for online contact platforms. We next look at the world of games, how games are used to promote intergroup relationships, and how this use can be enhanced further. Following this, we describe an innovative online outgroup "empathy" platform which shows people how it feels to interact in society as an outgroup member. We then discuss a project for training social change agents and how it could be adapted to form an online training program. The chapter concludes with some guidelines as to how to put all of this into action.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT CREATED BY THE INTERNET

The Internet creates a unique psychological environment for its users, the leading components of which are explored below.

Greater Anonymity

On many websites, people can maintain a high degree of anonymity. They can choose a false name and hide other identifying personal details. This frequently happens in chatrooms where people interact using nicknames, without exposing their own identity and without knowing the