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FOCUSING BEYOND THE SELF: GOAL ORIENTATIONS IN INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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Cross-group interactions create stress and anxiety (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001; Stephan & Stephan, 1985), motivating people to avoid intergroup contact (Butz & Plant, 2006; Plant & Devine, 2003). People often fear rejection by outgroup members (Frey & Tropp, 2006; Kramer & Messick, 1998; Shelton & Richeson, 2006), and they worry about whether others perceive them as prejudiced (Devine & Vasquez, 1998), whether they can meet the demands of the contact situation (Blascovich et al., 2001), and whether they can successfully navigate cross-group interactions (Butz & Plant, 2006; Plant & Butz, 2006; see also Butz & Plant, this volume).

We propose that the goals people have in cross-group interactions contribute to the discomfort they feel and that by shifting goals, people may not only reduce their discomfort and avoidance of cross-group interactions but may be better equipped to create positive relationships across group boundaries. We distinguish between two motivational systems underlying these goals: an *egosystem*, in which people focus on their own desires and needs; and an *ecosystem*, in which people recognize their connection to others. We then describe two sets of goals associated with each system and consider how a goals framework can inform strategies and interventions to improve relations between groups.

TWO MOTIVATIONAL SYSTEMS: ECOSYSTEM AND EGOSYSTEM ORIENTATIONS

A number of researchers have proposed that a fundamental problem in cross-race interactions involves perceived threats to desired self-images (Crocker & Garcia, 2006; Frey & Tropp, 2006; Shelton & Richeson, 2006; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). For disadvantaged group members, cross-race interactions raise concerns about devaluation and being rejected (Crocker & Garcia, 2006; Shelton, Richeson, & Vorauer, 2006; Steele et al., 2002). For advantaged group members, cross-race interactions raise concerns about being seen as unfair and prejudiced or as unfairly benefiting from privileged status (Devine & Vasquez, 1998; Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Vorauer, 2006). Hence, cross-race interactions can threaten desired self-images for people on both sides. Driven by these fears, people typically approach cross-group interactions with a largely self-focused orientation, highly sensitive to possible threats to the social self (Vorauer, 2006; Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001). Accordingly, research shows that people often respond more favorably toward outgroup members when concerns about the self are reduced (Fein, Hoshino-Browne, Davies, & Spencer, 2003; Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008).

Thus, it appears that sensitivity to possible threat and discomfort in cross-group interactions may be reduced by shifting people's focus beyond the self and related concerns for their desired self-images. Crocker and her colleagues (Crocker, 2008; Crocker, Olivier, & Nuer, 2009) use an ecosystem as a metaphor for a perspective on human relationships in which the self is seen as part of a larger whole. People with an ecosystem orientation see themselves as connected to others, recognizing that their actions have consequences for others and can affect the ability of everyone to satisfy fundamental needs. It should be noted that an ecosystem orientation is not selfless, self-sacrificing, or self-disparaging; rather, in the ecosystem orientation, the self is seen as part of a larger context, and the needs of the self are as important as the needs of others.

Of course, people do not typically have an ecosystem orientation all, or even most, of the time. People instead tend to have a narrower perspective in which they focus on themselves and their own needs and desires, without thinking as much about those of others (Crocker, 2009). Within such an egosystem orientation, people focus on others only insofar as others can give or withhold social goods, such as approval, inclusion, or validation (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), or serve as a source of feedback about how one is viewed in the eyes of others (Tesser, 1988). Consequently, people with an egosystem orientation want to prove themselves, demonstrate their desired qualities, and validate their ability and worth.

Using ecosystem and egosystem orientations as a unifying framework, we describe two separate yet complementary perspectives on goals stemming from

these orientations. One perspective distinguishes between compassionate and self-image goals (Crocker et al., 2008), and the other perspective adapts descriptions of learning and performance goals in achievement to the context of intergroup relations (Migacheva & Tropp, 2009). We summarize and explore points of convergence and divergence between these two approaches, and we discuss their utility for designing strategies to enhance people's intergroup experiences.

Self-Image and Compassionate Goals

Crocker and her colleagues have investigated the consequences of self-image and compassionate goals for interpersonal relationships. In one study, Crocker and Canevello (2008, Study 2) recruited 65 previously unacquainted roommate dyads, not selected on the basis of race, early in their first semester of college. Both roommates of each dyad completed pretest measures of relationship satisfaction and closeness. They then completed daily reports of their goals for the roommate relationship including support given and received, responsiveness, and competitive versus cooperative feelings. Participants rated how they wanted or tried to be with their roommate in the past day, using items to assess compassionate goals (e.g., "Be aware of the impact my behavior might have on my roommate's feelings"; $\alpha = .84$ at pretest, .93 at posttest) and self-image goals (e.g., "Avoid being blamed or criticized"; $\alpha = .80$ at pretest, .87 at posttest). After 21 days, participants again completed posttest measures of relationship satisfaction and closeness.

Without regard to the racial match or mismatch of the roommate dyads, initial analyses examined how self-image and compassionate goals predicted students' feelings when they were interacting with their roommates on subsequent days in lagged-day, multilevel modeling analyses (Crocker, Liu, & Canevello, 2008). Compassionate goals on one day predicted increased cooperative feelings the following day, which in turn predicted feeling more peaceful on the subsequent day. Self-image goals one day predicted increased competitive feelings the following day, which in turn predicted feeling more conflicted, confused, and fearful when interacting with roommates on the subsequent day. Participants' goals also interacted to predict change in their roommates' reports of support received and given: Participants with chronically high compassionate goals and chronically low self-image goals had roommates who reported receiving increased support and giving back increased support (Crocker & Canevello, 2008, Study 2).

This study was not originally designed to test the effects of self-image and compassionate goals in same-race and cross-race roommate relationships. However, about half of the roommate dyads were same-race dyads (mostly White–White), and half were cross-race dyads (mostly White–Asian or White–Black). Preliminary analyses of change in relationship quality in

same-race compared with cross-race roommate dyads showed that, consistent with other recent work (e.g., Shook & Fazio, 2008a, 2008b), cross-race relationships started out less close and deteriorated over the first semester of college, relative to same-race roommate pairs. More important, over time, self-image goals predicted significantly larger drops (i.e., residual change) in closeness in cross-race than in same-race dyads, whereas compassionate goals predicted marginally greater increases in relationship satisfaction in cross-race compared with same-race dyads. These effects are particularly striking in light of the brief interval between pretest and posttest (23 days) and the heterogeneity of the cross-race dyads.

Thus, initial research suggests that self-image (egosystem) goals can undermine the quality of cross-group roommate relationships, whereas compassionate (ecosystem) goals can enhance relationship quality. These findings support other research showing that people worry about how others see them in cross-group interactions (Devine & Vasquez, 1998; Vorauer, 2006) and initially find cross-group interactions to be anxiety provoking (Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton, & Tropp, 2008). Anxiety may be especially problematic in cross-group interactions because the nonverbal behaviors associated with anxiety are often interpreted as dislike (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002), which can disrupt the development of relationships across group boundaries (Tropp, 2008). However, approaching cross-group interactions with compassionate goals may attenuate the negative effects of self-image goals and reduce anxiety (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Crocker, Canevello, Breines, & Flynn, 2010), thereby setting the stage for greater closeness and intimacy in cross-group relationships (Page-Gould et al., 2008).

Learning and Performance Goals in Intergroup Relations

A complementary approach views learning goals as a way to promote constructive cross-group interactions (Crocker & Garcia, 2006; Migacheva & Tropp, 2009). Achievement motivation researchers have compared two major categories of achievement goals: learning and performance. People with learning goals seek to obtain new information and knowledge, whereas people with performance goals seek to validate their own qualities and abilities (Grant & Dweck, 2003). Learning goals lead people to focus on growth and improvement (Elliott & Dweck, 1988), thereby reducing ego concerns (Dweck, 2000) and enhancing a range of positive outcomes, such as sustained intrinsic motivation and persistence (Grant & Dweck, 2003). Conversely, performance goals are largely ego-driven, in that people desire approval from others and seek to prove what they know (Nicholls, 1984); these tendencies in turn are associated with impaired performance, external motivation, and poor resilience to failure (Grant & Dweck, 2003).

When applied to the context of cross-group interactions, these conceptions of learning and performance goals mesh well with the ecosystem and egosystem motivational framework discussed previously. Learning goals reflect an ecosystem orientation to focus beyond oneself and view others as sources of knowledge and growth, whereas performance goals reflect an egosystem orientation to focus on evaluative concerns and self-presentation. As such, by adopting learning goals in cross-group interactions, people may be able to shift their focus away from evaluative concerns toward a focus on learning about and from their outgroup partners. We expect that such shifts help people to move beyond seeing outgroup members as sources of threat to viewing them as sources of knowledge and growth (Crocker & Garcia, 2006)—a change in viewpoint that should in turn promote greater motivation for, and less discomfort during, intergroup contact (see Ely & Thomas, 2001).

In an initial test of these ideas, 127 European American undergraduates completed surveys about their orientation toward learning (i.e. "I think I could learn a lot from . . . ") and their performance concerns (i.e., "I feel I would be misunderstood if I tried to interact with . . . ") in relation to contact with Asian Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans. Responses to the learning and performance items were inversely correlated: A greater focus on learning was typically associated with less concern about being misunderstood by Asian Americans ($r = -.33$, $p < .001$), African Americans ($r = -.15$, $p < .10$), and Latino Americans ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$).

We also found that the learning and performance measures were correlated with additional items assessing interest in intergroup contact (i.e., "How interested are you in interacting with . . . ") and avoidance of intergroup contact (i.e., "I generally try to avoid interactions with . . . "). Learning goals positively correlated with interest in contact ($r = .52$, .55, and .56, in relation to Asian Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans, respectively, ps $< .001$) and negatively correlated with contact avoidance ($r = -.38$, $-.29$, and $-.32$ in relation to Asian Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans, respectively, ps $< .001$). By contrast, performance concerns related negatively to interest in contact with Asian Americans ($r = -.20$, $p < .05$), African Americans ($r = -.16$, $p < .10$), and Latino Americans ($r = -.25$, $p < .01$) and positively to avoidance of contact with Asian Americans ($r = .37$, $p < .001$), African Americans ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), and Latino Americans ($r = .39$, $p < .001$).

We obtained similar findings in a more recent survey of 111 European American and 152 African American students attending two different New York middle schools in racially homogeneous neighborhoods (Migacheva & Tropp, 2010). Regardless of their own race, children who reported being more curious about and interested in people of a different race (i.e., orientation toward learning) were more willing to form cross-group friendships and

anticipated feeling more comfortable around people from other racial groups. At the same time, among European American children, concerns about how to act around people of a different race (i.e., concerns about performance) negatively related to their desire to form cross-group friendships and to their anticipated feelings of comfort during cross-group interactions.[1] Together, these findings suggest that an orientation toward learning may promote positive responses to intergroup contact, whereas concerns associated with the self and one's performance might inhibit such positive tendencies.

Experimental Evidence

Recent experimental research provides further evidence of the positive effects of learning goals in intergroup contexts (Goff et al., 2008; Migacheva & Tropp, 2009). For example, Goff et al. (2008) explored whether learning goals can alleviate participants' evaluative concerns in cross-group interactions. In two related studies, they instructed half of their European American participants to view an upcoming interaction with an African American or a European American partner as a learning experience and did not give any goal instructions to the other half. Those European American participants who did not receive learning-goal instructions created greater physical distance with an outgroup partner than with an ingroup partner. However, European American participants who received learning-goal instructions did not differ in their distancing patterns, regardless of the race of their partner. Goff et al. concluded that the learning-goal orientation led these participants to perceive their situation as less evaluative, thereby protecting them from stereotype threat concerns and reducing their need to distance themselves from the outgroup partner.

Building on Goff et al.'s (2008) initial support for the utility of learning goals in intergroup contexts, a recent experimental study (Migacheva & Tropp, 2009) extended this research in several important ways. First, Goff et al. (2008) manipulated only participants' learning goals and measured participants' evaluative concerns as a function of whether they did (or did not) receive learning-goal instructions. While showing the usefulness of learning goals in alleviating these concerns, such a design did not experimentally contrast them with the

[1]Unlike the results for European American children, African American children's concerns about how to act were not related either to their desire to form cross-group friendships or to how comfortable they reported feeling about interactions with people of other races. This divergence may have emerged because, by growing up in a largely White society, African American children are likely to have more intergroup contact experiences and therefore may be more accustomed to interactions with the White majority (see Blau & Schwartz, 1997).

potential effects of performance goals. Hence, we experimentally tested the effects of both learning- and performance-goal orientations on participants' experiences during cross-group interactions.

Further extending Goff et al.'s (2008) work, we also manipulated the racial sensitivity of the topic to be discussed during the interaction. Although discussing racially sensitive topics can be threatening (Tatum, 1992), it is conceivable that different goal orientations would be more or less effective in reducing such threat. This study allowed us to test the effects of goal orientations in a broad variety of interaction contexts, ranging from those that may be least threatening (e.g., race-neutral topic with a member of one's own racial ingroup) to most threatening (e.g., race-sensitive topic with a member of a racial outgroup).

Thus, we (Migacheva & Tropp, 2009) asked female European American participants to focus either on learning about their partner during their interaction (i.e., "Focus on learning about your partner, her thoughts, ideas and opinions"), or on presenting themselves to their partner (i.e., "Focus on presenting yourself to your partner, your thoughts, ideas and opinions"). We then observed and coded participants' nonverbal behaviors during a short interaction with either a European American or an African American confederate partner, when discussing a race-neutral (e.g., global warming) or a race-sensitive (e.g., racial profiling) topic. Behaviors such as eye contact, gaze aversion, and fidgeting were used to assess participants' affect toward outgroup partners, as well as their desire to avoid cross-group interactions (see Dovidio et al., 2002; Ickes, 1984; Mehrabian, 1972). Particularly among those discussing a race-sensitive topic with a cross-race partner, participants who were instructed to focus on learning maintained longer eye contact, averted their gaze less often, used fewer speech dysfluencies (e.g., "like," "umm"), and exhibited fewer fidgeting behaviors than those who were instructed to focus on how they present themselves to their partner. Together, these findings suggest that people who adopt learning goals may be less likely to exhibit discomfort during cross-group interactions than those who adopt performance goals.

The distinction between learning and performance goals in the achievement literature provides a useful framework when applied to the context of intergroup relations. The parallel between these two domains seems rather clear: In both cases, performance and evaluative concerns generally lead to negative achievement and intergroup outcomes, whereas focusing beyond the self, and specifically on learning, can lead to positive outcomes. Emerging research provides preliminary support for the effectiveness of learning goals in intergroup relations, whether defined as an orientation toward learning from experience (Goff et al., 2008) or toward acquiring knowledge about an outgroup member (Migacheva & Tropp, 2009). Thus, setting learning goals for cross-group

interactions may be an effective tool for overcoming anxiety and threat even when discussing racially sensitive topics. Though more studies are necessary to enhance our understanding of how and why learning goals have these effects, these initial findings show promise for reducing people's anxieties and encouraging them to welcome future contact opportunities with outgroup members (see Plant & Devine, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

TOWARD AN INTEGRATIVE MODEL OF GOAL ORIENTATIONS IN INTERGROUP CONTEXTS

Thus far, we have discussed two different sets of goals, which, we argue, stem from a broader distinction between eco- and egosystem motivations. Our exploration of ecosystem and egosystem motivations is a timely endeavor, echoing several related discussions in the recent literature. Social psychological research has increasingly paid attention to participants' regulatory focus during cross-group interactions (e.g., Trawalter & Richeson, 2006; Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001), as well as to the expectations, orientations, and motivations with which people enter such interactions (e.g., Butz & Plant, this volume; Butz & Plant, 2006; Devine, Brodish, & Vance, 2005; Plant & Butz, 2006). Focusing beyond the self, such as concentrating on creating a positive experience (Trawalter & Richeson, 2006), being internally motivated to establish egalitarian relations (Plant & Devine, 2009), learning from the outgroup partner and the interaction experience (Goff et al., 2008; Migacheva & Tropp, 2009) or considering another's needs (Crocker, Liu, & Canavello, 2008) may all contribute to approaching cross-group interactions with an ecosystem orientation. Conversely, focusing on self-related concerns, such as monitoring one's own behavior and image (Vorauer & Turpie, 2004), avoiding expressions of prejudice (Devine et al., 2005), questioning one's efficacy and fearing rejection (Butz & Plant, 2006), may all contribute to avoiding cross-group interactions with an egosystem motivation.

In the present analysis, we examine two sets of goals—compassionate and self-image goals on the one hand, and learning and performance goals on the other—that we view as distinct yet complementary concepts that might help us better understand the structure of cross-group interactions. In our view, these goals basically differ in the degree to which the self is involved in the motivations for a cross-group interaction. Compassionate and learning goals tend to avert group members' focus from the self and evaluation (ecosystem orientation), whereas self-image and performance goals aim to protect and control one's desired image and monitor behavior (egosystem orientation). However, there are important differences within each set.

Compassionate Goals and Learning Goals

Compassionate goals focus on the needs of others; people who adopt these goals consider others' feelings and are motivated to care about others' well-being (Crocker & Canevello, 2008). When people are motivated by compassionate goals, they want to make sure they understand and meet the needs of the other, trusting that their own needs will be met. Learning goals, on the other hand, focus on the other as a source of knowledge or on the process of cross-group interaction itself, construing it as learning experience (Goff et al., 2008; Migacheva & Tropp, 2009). Thus, while learning and compassionate goals may both divert people's attention away from preoccupation with their own image, needs, and behaviors, they differ in the extent to which they emphasize the needs of the other.

Such qualitative differences between compassionate and learning goals may affect how these goals function in real-life contact situations between members of different groups. Whereas compassionate and learning goals may be either chronic or situational in nature, the focus on others' needs, more evident in compassionate goals, sets a higher bar for the motivation needed to adopt such a goal. For example, compassionate goals might take time to evolve, particularly in intergroup contexts of ongoing conflict or early stages of reconciliation; yet, once established, these goals may be more sustainable over time and likely to generalize to other intergroup situations. Conversely, although a well-developed learning-goal orientation may also require time to develop, its lesser focus on accommodating the needs of an outgroup member might make it more malleable and more readily induced in novel situations (see Ames, 1992). Still, while people with learning goals may be motivated to listen to others, they may not be as willing to extend themselves and take action to address their needs as would be those driven by compassionate goals.

Self-Image Goals and Performance Goals

Underlying the essence of both self-image and performance goals is a desired image, including how we wish to see ourselves and how we wish others to see us. These two goals likely work together to bolster, validate, and protect this image; however, each may have its own role in this process. In particular, a self-image goal orientation motivates people to focus on defining the image they wish to portray to others, whereas performance goals drive them to monitor and modify their behaviors in line with that image and in relation to their partner's responses and their beliefs about their efficacy and ability to do so. Given their conceptual relatedness, it may be difficult to operationally distinguish between these goals. But future research should further investigate

whether self-image and performance goals function separately or cumulatively in predicting people's psychological and behavioral responses to cross-group interactions.

Caveats

Are Ecosystem and Egosystem Motivations Mutually Exclusive?

In describing ecosystem and egosystem motivations and in defining the goals we see as corresponding to each, we may give the impression that we view these orientations as mutually exclusive. But we believe such a perspective would overlook the complexity and dynamic nature of people's orientation systems and motivations, which may change as a function of situational factors, their relationships, and individual experiences (Crocker et al., 2008). Ecosystem and egosystem motivations may operate simultaneously, with one being relatively more dominant and providing stronger effects in one instance, and being latent and less pronounced in another instance. Consequently, it would also be naive to imagine that people possess only compassionate and learning goals, or only performance and self-image goals. Instead, people may approach cross-group interactions motivated both to validate their desired images and to understand the needs and perspectives of outgroup members, with one being more primary than the other.

One illustration of how both ecosystem and egosystem orientations may function simultaneously is provided by Vorauer and colleagues, who cautioned that attempts to take the perspective of an outgroup member may ironically trigger evaluations of how one or one's own group is viewed by the outgroup member; such evaluative concerns may in turn lead to outgroup derogation (for higher prejudice individuals; Vorauer & Sasaki, 2009) or complacency and decreased effort to communicate positive feelings toward outgroup members (for lower prejudice individuals; Vorauer, Martens, & Sasaki, 2009). More work is needed to understand the interplay between eco- and egosystem goals and how they affect intergroup outcomes both concomitantly and independently.

Are Compassion and Learning Always Indicative of a Focus Beyond the Self?

Generally, we have also discussed an ecosystem orientation as one in which people are focused beyond the self. However, we recognize that people may perform acts of compassion or show attempts to learn about members of another group to fulfill less than benevolent objectives: to gain trust, to get access to the resources, and/or to use the acquired information against them later. As has been proposed in the empathy–altruism debate (e.g., Batson, 1997; Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997), seemingly other-focused behaviors (e.g., learning, compassion, helping) might stem from self-focused

motivations (e.g., personal gain, self-preservation). Thus, it is important to distinguish compassion and learning as *behaviors*, from compassion and learning as *motivations for behaviors*. In the case of less generous objectives, acquisition of knowledge and displays of compassion are behaviors that stem from self-serving motives. We hope, however, that when group members' behaviors are driven by compassion and learning motives, they will be likely to set constructive and positive objectives for cross-group interactions. The behavior-motivation distinction is also important for future investigations of how people interpret outgroup members' behaviors and what motivations they see behind them.

Are Self-Image and Performance Goals Inherently Selfish?

A related observation is that people who enter cross-group interactions with self-image or performance goals are not necessarily selfish. For example, people may adopt a performance goal to monitor and modify their behaviors during an interaction in order to make an outgroup partner feel welcome and included and/or to avoid hurting them with thoughtless remarks. Thus, while the description of these goals may initially seem negative, the resulting behaviors may in fact be pursued with the best of intentions.

It is also useful to remember that having an egosystem orientation is part of the human condition; it evolved as a means to cope with actual and perceived threats to survival. Under threat, our focus of attention narrows and physiological resources are mobilized to cope with the threat (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004). Consequently, people may have the capacity to adopt an ecosystem orientation only in the absence of threat or when they care about something beyond the self strongly enough to counteract the stress response (e.g., see Butz & Plant, this volume).

Moreover, it is important to note that ecosystem and egosystem are broad orientations and that additional motivational processes may function within both of these systems. For example, research on self-regulation (e.g., Jonas, Sassenberg, & Scheepers, 2010) suggests that both ecosystem and egosystem goals could stem from a motivation to promote a desired outcome (e.g., to ensure that an interaction partner feels comfortable) or from a motivation to prevent an undesired outcome (e.g., to avoid hurting an interaction partner's feelings; see Plant & Devine, 2008). Emerging research has linked motivation to avoid a negative outcome (e.g., exhibiting racial bias) with increased cognitive depletion (Trawalter & Richeson, 2006), intergroup anxiety, and tendencies to withdraw from outgroup members (Plant & Butz, 2006; Plant & Devine, 2003), as well as with diminished enjoyment during cross-group interactions (Shelton, 2003; Vorauer & Turpie, 2004). Still, more research is needed to understand how and when attempts to promote positive outcomes and prevent negative outcomes may both stem from egosystem and ecosystem motivations.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our initial integration of these motivational perspectives lays important ground for further exploration of the nature and utility of goal setting in intergroup contexts. Although research on goals in intergroup relations is in its nascent stages, initial findings indicate that the goals people have for cross-group interactions can shape their own experiences and the experiences of their relationship partners in important ways. Because goals are to some degree malleable, they may provide a useful point of intervention to improve the nature of cross-group interactions.

Admittedly, introducing ecosystem motivations in intergroup contexts characterized by mistrust and spirals of violence may be challenging. When trust is lacking, group members are likely to doubt their adversaries' benevolent intentions (often with good reason) and are reluctant to make steps toward positive cross-group interactions themselves (Kramer & Messick, 1998; Nadler & Liviatan, 2006; Tropp, 2008). That being the case, if ecosystem motivations are important for positive contact, what can or should be done if such goals are not likely to emerge spontaneously? Future research on goal setting in intergroup contexts should therefore explore the challenges and conditions that would affect the ability of an ecosystem motivation to thrive.

Further examination of goals stemming from ecosystem motivation should also consider how they relate to other strategies that have been shown to enhance intergroup outcomes. For example, empathy and perspective taking might involve compassion (Crocker, 2008), seeing outgroup members as a source of knowledge (Migacheva & Tropp, 2009), or framing cross-group interactions as opportunities to gain valuable experience (e.g., Goff, et al., 2008). Alternatively, to counter potential negative effects of performance goals and self-image goals, we might remind people that they often anticipate experiences in cross-group interactions to be worse than they actually turn out to be (Mallett, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008; see also Mallett, Wagner, & Harrison, this volume). We might also use self-affirmation as a tool to help people transcend the self (Crocker, Niiya, & Mischkowski, 2008).

Importantly, future studies should also examine how these sets of goals may have similar or divergent effects on the experiences of members of dominant and devalued groups. The expectations and concerns that group members bring into cross-group interactions are largely determined by their everyday experiences and differ between dominant and low-status group members (Devine & Vasquez, 1998; Shelton et al., 2006; Tropp, 2006). Thus, it is possible that different framings of goals may be needed to address the distinct motivations that different status groups bring to intergroup contexts (Shnabel, Nadler, Canetti-Nisim, & Ullrich, 2008).

CONCLUSION

People enter cross-group interactions not knowing what to expect and bearing multiple concerns about how they will be perceived and treated. These concerns negatively affect group members' experiences during cross-group interactions and often lead to the desire to avoid them. In this chapter, we have argued that one way to alleviate the discomfort raised by intergroup contexts is through fostering ecosystem motivations by setting goals that lead people to focus beyond the self (e.g., compassionate goals and learning goals). A growing number of studies provide evidence for the positive effects of these goals, indicating that this approach holds great promise for making cross-group interactions less stressful and thereby more constructive experiences.

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