On the Nature of Prejudice

Fifty Years after Allport

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Chapter Sixteen

Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence

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What happens when groups interact? In a single chapter in *The Nature of Prejudice* (chapter 16, "The Effect of Contact"), Allport set the stage for researchers' efforts to answer this question by presenting his "intergroup contact hypothesis." This seminal chapter inspired a vast research literature that has spread far beyond race relations. In the present chapter, we will trace the origins of Allport's formulation by considering the 1950's intellectual climate in which he was working. We will also present a meta-analysis of intergroup contact studies that reveals strong support for his intergroup contact theory, while suggesting modifications to guide future research (see also Kenworthy, Turner, Hewstone, & Voci's ch. 17 in this volume).

Allport's Views: The Seeds of Intergroup Contact Theory

Theorists and practitioners began to speculate about the effects of intergroup contact long before there was a research base to guide them. Nineteenth-century thinking, dominated by Social Darwinism, was quite pessimistic. William Graham Sumner (1906) held that intergroup contact almost inevitably led to conflict. This followed from his famous contention that hostility toward outgroups is a reciprocal function of an ingroup's sense of superiority. Because Sumner also believed that most groups felt themselves to be superior, his theory viewed intergroup hostility and conflict to be natural and inevitable outcomes of contact. More recent perspectives make similar predictions (see Jackson, 1983; Levine & Campbell, 1972).

Twentieth-century writers continued to speculate about intergroup contact without empirical evidence. Some persisted in believing that contact between the races, even under conditions of equality, would only breed

"suspicion, fear, resentment, disturbance, and at times open conflict" (Baker, 1934, p. 120). Others, especially following the Second World War, were more optimistic. Lett (1945) held that shared interracial experiences with a common objective led to "mutual understanding and regard" (p. 35). Instead, when groups "are isolated from one another," Brameld (1946) wrote, "prejudice and conflict grow like a disease" (p. 245).

The newly emerging discipline of social psychology soon began to study intergroup contact. This interest followed logically from the field's emphases on intergroup relations and interactions between people. University of Alabama researchers were among the first to conduct a study focused specifically on the effects of contact (Sims & Patrick, 1936). Their initial results were not encouraging. With each year students from the north attended the southern university, their anti-Black attitudes increased. Because the university's faculty and student body were then all White, northern students were likely to have met only lower-status Blacks and to respond according to Alabama's racist norms of that period.

Later studies investigated Black–White contact under more favorable conditions. After the desegregation of the Merchant Marine in 1948, close bonds developed between Black and White seamen on the ships and in the maritime union (Brophy, 1946). Consequently, the more voyages the White seamen took with Blacks, the more positive their racial attitudes became. Similarly, White police in Philadelphia who had worked with Black colleagues differed sharply from other White police (Kephart, 1957). They showed fewer objections to teaming with a Black partner, having Blacks join their previously all-White police districts, and taking orders from qualified Black officers.

The Social Science Research Council then asked the Cornell University sociologist, Robin Williams Jr., to review the research on intergroup relations. Williams's (1947) monograph, *The Reduction of Intergroup Tensions*, offers 102 testable "propositions" on intergroup relations that included the initial formulation of intergroup contact theory. Based on the scant research available, Williams (1947) stressed that intergroup contact would maximally reduce prejudice when: (a) the two groups share similar status, interests, and tasks; (b) the situation fosters personal, intimate intergroup contact; (c) the participants do not fit the stereotyped conceptions of their groups; and (d) the activities cut across group lines. These general principles will be familiar to anyone versed in Gordon Allport's framework.

In 1949, Stouffer et al.'s extensive study of "the American Soldier" provided the first massive field test of intergroup contact's effects. Using an ingenious quasi-experimental design, Stouffer showed that the experience of fighting side-by-side with African American soldiers in the desperate Battle

of the Bulge during the winter of 1944–5 sharply changed the attitudes of White American soldiers. Though limited to the fighting situation, these altered attitudes were found among southerners as well as northerners, and among officers as well as enlisted men. Later field studies of racially desegregated public housing projects provided additional evidence for contact's ability to diminish racial prejudice among both Blacks and Whites (Deutsch & Collins, 1951; Wilner, Walkley, & Cook, 1955; Works, 1961).

This intellectual climate of the 1950s provided the foundation and context for Allport's thinking. Armed with this early work, he introduced in 1954 the most influential statement of contact theory in *The Nature of Prejudice*. The 24 notes of the book's chapter 16 on the effects of contact reveal what directly shaped Allport's formulation. He was well aware of Williams's initial statement; and he cited the Brophy, Stouffer et al., and housing studies.[1] But he also relied on the work of his doctoral students – Bernard Kramer (1950) and Barbara MacKenzie (1948). And, true to his belief in the richness of personal documents and idiographic methods, he also cited papers on personal intergroup contact experiences written for him by students in his annual graduate seminars on morale and prejudice.

From the student papers especially, Allport noted the contrasting effects of intergroup contact – often reducing but sometimes exacerbating prejudice. To account for these inconsistencies, Allport adopted a "positive factors" approach. Reduced prejudice will result, he held, when four positive features of the contact situation are present: (a) equal status between the groups, (b) common goals, (c) intergroup cooperation, and (d) the support of authorities, law, or custom.

Developments Since Allport

Allport's Contact Conditions

Studies conducted since Allport's original formulation generally support the importance of his four key conditions for intergroup contact to reduce prejudice. We shall consider each condition in detail.

Equal group status in the situation

Equal status" is often difficult to define and researchers use the term in different ways (Riordan, 1978). What is critical is that both groups perceive equal status in the situation (Cohen, 1982; Riordan & Ruggiero, 1980;

Robinson & Preston, 1976). Some writers emphasize that the groups should be of equal status *coming into* the contact situation (Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Foster & Finchilescu, 1986). But research demonstrates that equal status in the situation is effective in promoting positive intergroup attitudes even when the groups initially differ in status (Patchen, 1982; Schofield & Eurich-Fulcer, 2001).

Common goals

Effective contact usually involves an active effort toward a goal the groups share. Athletic teams furnish a prime example (Chu & Griffey, 1985; Patchen, 1982). In striving to win, teams comprising members of different groups must work together and rely on each other to achieve their shared goals. This consideration leads to the third characteristic of effective intergroup contact.

Intergroup cooperation

Attainment of common goals should be an interdependent effort based on cooperation rather than competition. Sherif et al. (1961) demonstrated this principle in their famous Robbers' Cave field study. These researchers cleverly devised barriers to such common goals as a planned picnic that could only be surmounted with the cooperation of both groups. The intergroup cooperation that then took place encouraged the development of positive relations between the groups.

Intergroup cooperation in schools provides more evidence (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama, 1984; Schofield, 1989; Slavin, 1983). Guided by Allport's contentions, Elliot Aronson's "jigsaw" approach structures classrooms so that diverse groups of students strive cooperatively for common goals (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997; Stephan & Stephan, ch. 26 this volume). This direct application of contact theory has led to positive results for children around the globe, including those in Australia (Walker & Crogan, 1998), Germany (Eppler & Huber, 1990), Japan (Araragi, 1983), and the United States (Aronson & Gonzalez, 1988).

Support of authorities, law, or custom

Intergroup contact will also have more positive effects when it is backed by explicit support from authorities and social institutions. Authority sanction establishes norms of acceptance and guidelines for how members of different groups should interact with each other. Field research has demonstrated the importance of authority sanction in military (Landis, Hope, & Day, 1984), business (Morrison & Herlihy, 1992), and religious settings (Parker, 1968).

More broadly, the passage of civil-rights legislation has been instrumental in establishing antiprejudicial norms in contemporary American society – just as Allport predicted in his chapter 29 ("Ought There to be a Law?").

Incorporating these principles, Allport's formulation has guided research on intergroup contact for the past half-century. And interest in the potential for intergroup contact to reduce prejudice has continued to grow over these years. Researchers have pursued studies of intergroup contact using a wide range of research approaches, including field studies (e.g., Deutsch & Collins, 1951), laboratory experiments (e.g., Cook, 1969), surveys (e.g., Pettigrew, 1997), and archival research (e.g., Fine, 1979). Indeed, the research literature on intergroup contact has expanded substantially over the past half-century, both in the number of contact studies conducted and the range of groups examined.

A Meta-Analysis of Intergroup Contact Effects

We recently completed a meta-analysis of intergroup contact effects to review and evaluate this vast research literature (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2004a).[2] Meta-analysis is a statistical technique for determining the size and consistency of effects across tests of hypotheses. To perform a meta-analysis, researchers first attempt to find every study conducted on a particular topic. Then, they statistically pool the results to examine the overall patterns of effects and to uncover additional variables that moderate those effects (Rosenthal, 1991; Johnson & Eagly, 2000). We applied this technique first to evaluate the overall effects of intergroup contact on prejudice, and then we used this approach to assess support for the specific factors identified by Allport as important for successful contact.

For our meta-analysis, we conducted a 5-year search from which we uncovered 515 studies (including 714 independent samples and 1,365 nonindependent tests) that examined relationships between intergroup contact and prejudice. These cases were gathered from the 1940s through the year 2000, and, together, they represent responses from 250,493 individuals in 38 nations.

Close examination of these cases reveals that contact studies have increased steadily in number over the last several decades. Of the 515 studies, only 35 (7%) were conducted before 1960, 55 (11%) during the 1960s, 106 (21%) during the 1970s, 126 (26%) during the 1980s, and 178 of the studies (35%) were conducted between 1990 and 2000. Given the enormous expansion in published social science research of all types over the past

half-century, this growth in contact studies probably reflects a fairly consistent proportion of published research devoted to the subject.

In our analysis, we used two indicators of effect size (Cohen's *d* and Pearson's *r*), with larger effect sizes signifying stronger relationships between intergroup contact and prejudice. Cohen's *d* represents the difference between the means of the contact and noncontact groups given in standard score units (or *z*-scores). For typical effects found in psychological research, a *d* of 0.25 is a small effect, 0.50 a medium effect, and 0.75 a large effect (Cohen, 1988). Results reported here derive from a fixed-effects model.

We also examined the effects at three distinct levels of analysis. Analyses conducted at the level of *studies* represent the overall effects for all data reported in each paper. Analyses at the level of *samples* represent the overall effects for *each independent sample* reported in each paper; since studies often include multiple samples, analyzing data at the level of samples offers larger numbers of cases for conducting more detailed comparisons of effects. Analyses conducted at the level of *tests* represent effects for *each individual test* of the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice. Analyzing data at the test level offers even more cases for detailed comparisons. But because multiple tests from the same sample violate statistical assumptions of independence, we use tests as our unit of analysis when variables can only be measured at that level.

Overall, results from the meta-analysis reveal that greater levels of intergroup contact are typically associated with lower levels of prejudice across the three levels of analysis: studies (mean $d = -0.43$, mean $r = -0.21$), samples (mean $d = -0.43$, mean $r = -0.21$), and tests (mean $d = -0.42$, mean $r = -0.20$). Additional analyses indicate that these results are unlikely to be due to participant selection or publication biases; also, the more rigorous research studies reveal stronger contact–prejudice relationships. Moreover, these effects typically generalized, such that contact with individual outgroup members contributed to less prejudice toward the entire outgroup – an issue that has been debated extensively in the research literature (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2004a).

Contact studies have also extended far beyond their original focus on racial and ethnic groups to test the effects of contact with groups that differ in terms of age, sexual orientation, disability, and mental illness. The relationships between contact and prejudice vary significantly depending on the specific groups involved. Figure 16.1 provides mean effect sizes for studies and samples across the many types of target groups studied in the contact literature. The largest effects emerge for contact between heterosexuals and gays and lesbians (mean $d = -0.51$, mean $r = -0.25$). Indeed, these effects are significantly larger than those for studies involving racial and ethnic groups (mean $d = -0.45$, mean $r = -0.22$) and young people

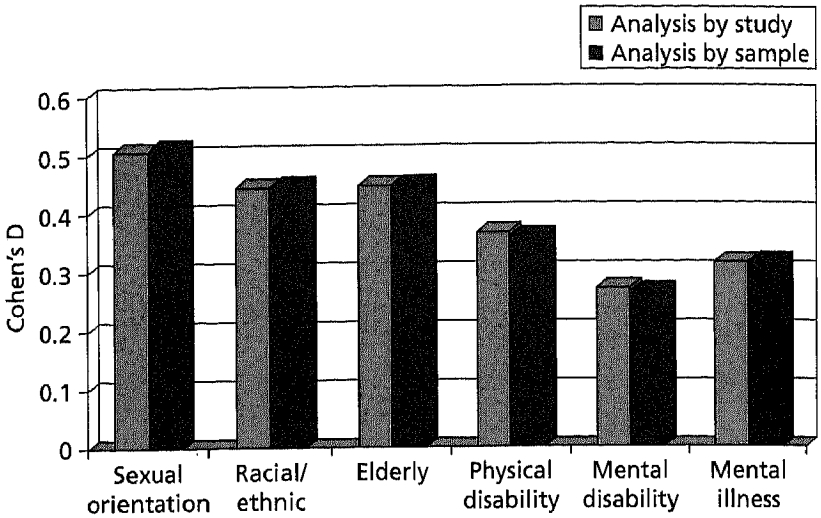

Figure 16.1 Negative mean effect sizes across different target groups by studies and samples

and the elderly (mean $d = -0.45$, mean $r = -0.22$), which show the next largest mean effects.

By contrast, research involving other groups produces much smaller average effects. In particular, studies involving contact between those with and without physical disabilities (mean $d = -0.36$, mean $r = -0.18$), mental disabilities (mean $d = -0.27$, mean $r = -0.13$) and mental illness (mean $d = -0.32$, mean $r = -0.16$) reveal significantly lower mean effect sizes than those of other target groups. Nonetheless, these contact–prejudice relationships for disabled targets remain statistically significant. It may be especially difficult to achieve truly equal status between groups in these intergroup contexts due to an exaggerated focus on the stigma, and the perceptions of unpredictability and dangerousness often associated with these stigmatizing conditions (Hebl & Kleck, 2000; Corrigan et al., 2003).

Has Allport Been Supported?

The primary thrust of our meta-analysis centered on the effectiveness of Allport's conditions for achieving positive intergroup outcomes. We began by attempting to rate each of Allport's four conditions individually for each study, but this approach proved impossible due to limitations in the

information provided in most studies. Consequently, we employed two global indicators of Allport's proposed conditions – intergroup friendship and structured programs for optimal contact. These ratings actually offer more direct tests of the theory than our original approach, since Allport held that his four conditions should be integrated and implemented together, rather than listing them as variables to be considered individually. In addition, these two indices offer a stringent test of Allport's contentions, because they are *negatively* related to each other ($p < 0.001$). Indeed, only 4 of the 134 samples that experienced optimal structured contact used friends as the measure of contact.

The two authors conducted all ratings and achieved high estimates of inter-rater reliability for these two variables (kappas = 0.96 and 0.88, for intergroup friendship and structured programs for optimal contact, respectively). All discrepancies between the raters were then resolved through further discussion.

Intergroup friendship

As our first indicator of Allport's conditions, we compared effects for tests that either did or did not use cross-group friendships as the measure of intergroup contact. Here we assume that friendship requires the operation of conditions that approach Allport's specifications for optimal contact. Intergroup friendship is likely to involve cooperation and common goals, and it is likely to indicate repeated, equal-status interactions in a variety of settings over an extended period of time (Pettigrew, 1997).

The left bars in figure 16.2 present the results. We find that the 149 tests in which friendship was used as the contact measure revealed markedly stronger effects (mean $d = -0.55$, mean $r = -0.27$) than the remaining tests using other indicators of contact (mean $d = -0.37$, mean $r = -0.18$), a statistically significant difference.

Structured programs for optimal contact

Next we rated for all samples whether the contact situations included structured programs designed to approximate all or most of Allport's four optimal conditions. Here, we did not require that the contact situation specifically address each of Allport's conditions. Rather, we rated samples as to whether explicit efforts were made to create a contact situation that generally reflected the conditions outlined by Allport, such that it would maximize the potential for optimal intergroup contact.

The right bars in figure 16.2 present the mean effect sizes for samples that correspond to our ratings of structured contact programs. The 134 samples with contact situations structured to meet Allport's conditions

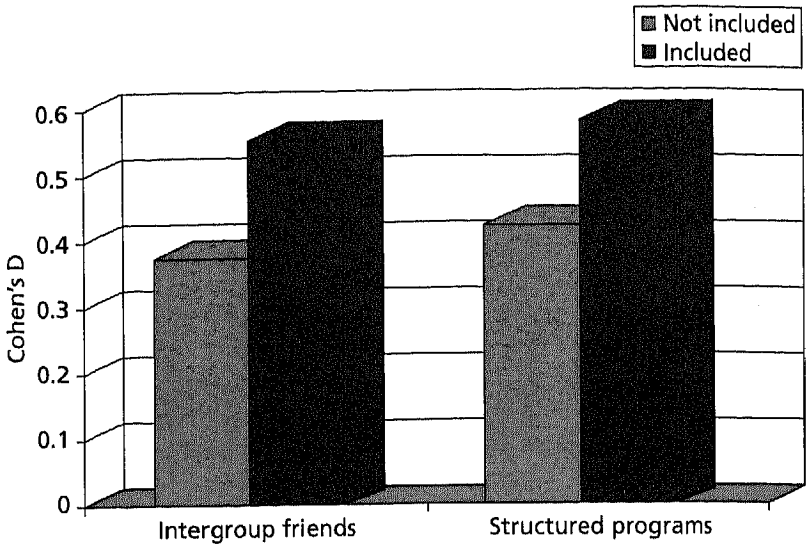

Figure 16.2 Negative mean effect sizes for intergroup friendship (tests) and structured contact programs (samples)

yielded significantly stronger contact–prejudice effects (mean $d = -0.58$, mean $r = -0.28$) than the remaining samples (mean $d = -0.42$, mean $r = -0.21$), a statistically significant difference.[3] Moreover, the samples involving structured contact programs provided relatively consistent effects. Their effect sizes become homogeneous once only 11 outliers (8 percent) are trimmed. And the average effect size for this homogenous subset (mean $d = -0.49$, mean $r = -0.24$) remains significantly larger than that for samples involving contact without structured programs.

In addition, it is important to observe in figure 16.2 that the inverse relationship between contact and prejudice persisted – thought not as strongly – when friendship was *not* the contact measure and when the contact situation was *not* structured to match Allport's key conditions. These findings suggest modifications of Allport's original conceptualization of intergroup contact theory.

Future Directions in Intergroup Contact Theory

Considered together, the meta-analytic results suggest a somewhat different perspective on intergroup contact than the view Allport held when he was

constructing the initial theory. Although he taught sociology as a young man in Turkey (Nicholson, 2003), Allport emphasized proximal, immediate causes and generally disregarded distal, societal causes. So he looked to features of the immediate situation as determinants of intergroup contact's effects on prejudice. Additionally, both he and Williams (1947) before him doubted whether contact would generally reduce prejudice. Thus, they sought to specify the positive conditions that were necessary for intergroup contact to diminish prejudice.

However, a problem with this "positive factors" approach is that it puts forward an open-ended theory – that is, it invites the addition of further situational conditions thought to be crucial. This weakness has allowed subsequent researchers to propose a host of additional conditions needed to achieve positive contact outcomes (e.g., Foster & Finchilescu, 1986; Wagner & Machleit, 1986). But, with an ever-expanding list of necessary conditions, it becomes increasingly unlikely that any contact situations could meet these highly restrictive conditions (Pettigrew, 1986, 1998; Stephan, 1987).

Moreover, Allport's formulation specified neither the processes involved in intergroup contact's effects nor how these effects generalize to other situations, the entire outgroup, and other outgroups not involved in the contact (Pettigrew, 1998). Indeed, these omissions explain why he called it a "hypothesis" and not a "theory."

Instead, our meta-analytic findings suggest a reorientation for future contact research. Several key points illustrate our view of a reformulated approach to intergroup contact theory that builds on Allport's formulation while it exploits the research findings of the last five decades.

First, we noted in figure 16.2 that intergroup contact typically leads to positive outcomes even when no intergroup friendships were reported and in the absence of Allport's proposed conditions. Indeed, 95 percent of the 714 samples included in our meta-analysis reported that greater intergroup contact corresponds with lower intergroup prejudice; but only 10 percent of the contact measures involved intergroup friendship and only 19 percent of the samples reported contact under Allport's conditions. In his formulation, Allport held his optimal factors to be essential conditions for intergroup contact to diminish prejudice. But our results indicate that, while these factors are important, they are not necessary for achieving positive effects from intergroup contact. Instead, Allport's conditions are better thought of as *facilitating*, rather than essential, conditions for positive contact outcomes to occur.

This shift in perspective challenges the original "positive factors" approach taken by Allport in *The Nature of Prejudice*. But this revised view

is consistent with the contentions of other theorists who propose th greater contact and familiarity typically contribute to increased liking (e. Homans, 1950; Zajonc, 1968). And presently, with only a minute numb of contact studies showing contact leading to *greater* prejudice, the "negati factors" that curb reductions in prejudice now appear to be the m problematic theoretically, yet the least understood. Thus, future cont research must grant more attention to the negative factors operating contact situations to enhance understanding of the conditions that n inhibit the development of positive contact outcomes.

In many ways, this stance reverses Allport's approach. It starts with prediction that intergroup contact will generally diminish prejudice, the magnitude of this effect will depend on the presence or absence large array of facilitating factors – not just the four emphasized by Allp In particular, this approach focuses special attention on those nega factors that can subvert contact's typical reduction of prejudice.

Thus, this approach leads to an emphasis on the need for further rese on the moderators and mediators of intergroup contact's effects. emerging emphasis in intergroup contact research addresses directly t questions left unanswered by Allport concerning the generalizatio contact's effects and the processes underlying these effects (Pettigrew, 1 Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003; see also Gaertner & Dovi ch. 5 and Kenworthy, Turner, Hewstone, & Voci's ch. 17 in this volu For instance, increased salience of group representations during interg contact typically leads to greater reductions in prejudice toward the outg as a whole (Brown, Vivian, & Hewstone, 1999). And participants wh not think intergroup contact is important show far less prejudice redu than those who regard it as important (Van Dick et al., 2004).

Emotions such as anxiety and threat are especially important neg factors in the link between contact and prejudice (Blair, Park, & Bacl 2003; Stephan et al., 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 1992; Voci & Hews 2003; see also Stephan & Stephan's ch. 26 in this volume). More reducing anxiety during contact acts as an important mediator for cor effects on prejudice. Examining studies from our meta-analysis that for anxiety, we estimate that the mediation by lowered anxiety ex roughly one-fifth to one-fourth of contact's effects in reducing pre (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2004b). Kenworthy, Turner, Hewstone, and (ch. 17 this volume) consider these important advances in contact in more detail.

Finally, to broaden our understanding of contact's effects, our analytic results indicate the need for greater attention to the specific under study. We noted in figure 16.1 that the outcomes of conta

substantially across different intergroup contexts. In line with this view, emerging intergroup research has begun to examine the ways in which people show different emotional reactions to outgroups, depending on their perceptions of those groups and histories of relations with them (see Mackie & Smith, 2002 and Smith & Mackie, ch. 22 this volume, for recent reviews). These perspectives suggest a need to extend Allport's approach beyond a general conceptualization of contact's effects, to examine distinct points of concern and responses to intergroup contact across different intergroup relationships. As such, future contact research should consider the ways in which contact situations might best be tailored to accommodate the diverse concerns that are likely to be relevant when different groups come into contact.

NOTES

1 As his graduate assistant "go-for" (not for coffee but for books from the library), the first author remembers well that the Deutsch and Collins (1951) volume on interracial contact in public housing made an especially important impact on Allport's thinking about intergroup contact. It also should be noted that Allport himself valued this chapter on contact. When he had to condense by 40 percent *The Nature of Prejudice* for its 1958 abridged paperback edition (Allport, 1958), he reduced chapter 16 on contact only slightly and retained all but three of the original references.

2 A preliminary report of this work, using fewer than half of the studies, appeared in Pettigrew and Tropp (2000).

3 It may seem surprising that only 134 (19 percent) of our samples followed Allport's model. But this result reflects the fact that 70 percent of the samples in our file rely on participants reporting on their contact without information concerning the conditions of the contact.

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