

# Crossing to safety: Attachment processes in intergroup contact

Linda R. Tropp 

University of Massachusetts Amherst,  
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA

## Correspondence

Linda R. Tropp, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA 01003, USA.

Email: [tropp@umass.edu](mailto:tropp@umass.edu)

## Abstract

Inspired by reviews written by Kauff, Marinucci, and their colleagues, this commentary considers our basic human needs for safety and security, and how intergroup contact research may be usefully informed by theoretical perspectives on attachment. First, I summarize early psychological perspectives on safety and security and discuss factors that may undermine people's feelings of being safe and secure. I then introduce some basic principles of attachment theory and describe ways in which intergroup contact research may be viewed through an attachment lens. I conclude with a discussion of emerging research linking attachment processes to the realm of intergroup contact, and how theoretical perspectives on attachment may usefully be applied to future contact research.

“Nothing is so safe as habit.” Wallace Stegner, *Crossing to Safety*

Stegner's (1987) semi-autobiographical novel, *Crossing to Safety*, charts the development and progression of friendships between two young men and their pregnant wives, from their early beginnings as young faculty who landed in the same academic department in the 1930s, and following the course of their friendship over several decades as their lives and careers unfold. One of the couples comes from a relatively poor and humble background, whereas the other couple comes from an expansive world of social connections, wealth, and privilege. Presumably, the expression “crossing to safety” is intended to refer to the faculty members' prospects of receiving tenured positions. Yet, as undercurrents to this narrative, Stegner plays with the sense of safety and security these couples feel with each other, and how their feelings of safety and security wax

and wane over time and across chapters of their lives—bearing witness to their joys and sorrows, and revealing both deep connections and points of tension and conflict.

I found myself reflecting on this narrative in preparing this commentary, as I strive to link insights from Kauff et al. (2021) on drivers of contact-seeking with those offered by Marinucci et al. (2021) on the role of intimacy in intergroup contact. Kauff et al. deftly summarize research on predictors of intergroup contact, highlighting the point that not all individuals are willing to engage in contact with other groups, and some may attempt to avoid contact altogether (see also McKeown & Dixon, 2017; Paolini et al., 2018). Marinucci et al. discuss the importance of intimacy in cross-group relationships, and how it is through intimate contact that trust can build between groups and begin to break down psychological barriers and shift intergroup attitudes (see also Davies & Aron, 2016; Fuochi et al., 2020; Grütter & Tropp, 2019). Reading these two papers together compelled me to think about intergroup contact theory and research within a broader frame of human motivation, beyond what we usually consider when designing contact studies. *Ultimately, at the most basic level and within their innermost selves, what do people want and need?*

These contemplations have culminated in the present commentary, in which I ponder our basic human needs for safety and security, and how intergroup contact research may usefully be informed by theoretical perspectives on attachment. I first review some early theorizing on safety and security within psychology (e.g., Maslow, 1943; Newcomb, 1943) and discuss factors that may undermine human feelings of being safe and secure. I then introduce some basic principles of attachment theory (see Bowlby, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) and describe ways in which findings from the intergroup contact literature may be viewed through an attachment lens. I conclude with a discussion of emerging research linking attachment processes to intergroup contact, along with an exploration of how theoretical perspectives on attachment may usefully be applied to intergroup contact research.

## **Early psychological perspectives on safety and security**

Early models of human motivation identify feelings of safety and security as core psychological needs. Maslow (1943) suggested that humans are guided by a “safety-seeking mechanism” that leads to a “preference for familiar rather than unfamiliar... or for the known rather than the unknown” (p. 349). While we experience a sense of safety and security with the familiar, we tend to regard the unfamiliar and unknown as potentially threatening (Newcomb, 1943). The more we encounter threatening situations, the more provoked we are to satisfy our needs for security (Arkin et al., 2010). Yet once our needs for safety and security are met, we become more motivated to satisfy higher-order needs associated with growth, feeling connected to others, and exploring the world beyond ourselves (Maslow, 1962; Murphy, 1958; see also Green & Campbell, 2000; Molden et al., 2008).

## **Traditional perspectives on attachment theory**

Corresponding with this understanding of basic human needs, attachment theorists emphasize how—from their earliest years of existence—humans readily seek “comforting contact” with others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, p. 151). In the presence of comforting contact, or with knowledge that we could access comforting contact when needed, we experience feelings of safety and security (i.e., secure attachment), and a greater propensity to be optimistic and curious about the world around us. Yet, when comforting contact is absent or not readily available to us, we

may feel unsafe and/or threatened by what we encounter in the world (i.e., insecure attachment; see Bowlby, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Insecure attachment in the absence of comforting contact may foster attachment-related anxiety, where we fear being rejected or abandoned, or attachment-related avoidance, where we distrust others' goodwill and seek to maintain emotional distance from others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2011).

Although we may be accustomed to thinking about attachment processes as being most relevant to infants and children in relation to their primary caregivers (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1988), considerable research indicates that attachment processes continue to shape social relations across the human lifespan, from early childhood throughout adulthood (Collins & Read, 1994; Gillath et al., 2006; Waters & Cummings, 2000). We continue to desire a "secure base" (Bowlby, 1988) or "safe haven" (Collins & Feeney, 2000) from which we can emerge into the world, reassured in the knowledge that there are others ready to support us if and when we feel the need to retreat or seek comfort. Moreover, our earlier life experiences serve as scaffolding for what we expect to experience in future social interactions and relationships, as well as how effectively we navigate those future interactions and relationships (Simpson et al., 2008; Waters & Cummings, 2000).

## VIEWING INTERGROUP CONTACT RESEARCH THROUGH THE LENS OF ATTACHMENT

These research perspectives on basic human needs and attachment provide fertile ground for linkages with intergroup contact theory and research. Indeed, much of the intergroup research literature contends with similar themes—particularly as they pertain to our sense of attachment to social groups, our perceptions and experiences of threat, and our responses to interactions with members of groups to which we do not belong.

### Attachment to groups

Belonging to social groups is commonly regarded as a basic human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and one that is considered to be just as closely tied to our evolutionary past and healthy development as our attachment to parents and caregivers (Caporael & Baron, 1997; Smith et al., 1999). Our identities as members of social groups are critical components contributing to our sense of psychological security (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1981). As Allport (1960) stated, "security is found only within the ingroups – within the family, the church, the tribe, the nation. All else appears hazardous and unknown" (p. 344). In line with this perspective, Hogg (2003, 2010) proposes that reducing uncertainty is an important motivating force underlying our identities as members of social groups, as we seek to establish a greater sense of security and belonging within our social worlds.

Upon seeing ourselves as members of social groups, we strive to be good representatives of those groups and act according to group norms and standards (Hogg, 2003; Hogg & Abrams, 1988); correspondingly, we also fear being excluded or regarded as deviant from established group norms or standards, and particularly when we identify strongly with our groups (Castano et al., 2002; Hutchison et al., 2008). Scholars have also specified different dimensions of our affiliations with social groups (see, e.g., de Zavala & Lantos, 2020; Roccas & Elster, 2012), such that we may feel a close emotional bond to a group (attachment), and this may or may not be coupled with defensive beliefs that our group is superior to and more worthy than other groups (glorification; see Roccas et al., 2006; Roccas & Elster, 2012).

## **Intergroup threat: Manifesting intergroup anxiety and avoidance**

Along with considering how a sense of security frames our social identities and identification with social groups, we can also consider how lacking a sense of security is likely to shape our expectations for and relations with members of other groups (see O'Brien & Tropp, 2015). Our psychological needs for security are typically heightened when we encounter threats (Arkin et al., 2010; Carroll et al., 2006). As we seek to protect ourselves from potential threats, we are especially likely to attend and react to people and situations that could conceivably pose a threat to our well-being or that of our groups (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). Thus, people often approach intergroup contact with a certain degree of suspicion or vigilance, as they may feel insecure or unsure about how members of other groups will regard or treat them (Kramer & Messick, 1998; Kramer & Wei, 1999; Vorauer, 2006); this vigilance may, in turn, compel people to engage in defensive behaviors that could potentially challenge or worsen their intergroup relationships (Bar-Tal, 2009; Stephan et al., 2009).

A number of factors may lead people to feel insecure about or threatened by the prospect of having contact with members of other groups. Lack of familiarity or limited prior experience with outgroup members can be stress-provoking and may lead people to feel unsure about how to behave during intergroup contact (e.g., Trawalter et al., 2009); indeed, prior intergroup contact experience has been shown correspond with lower stress responses and less reported anxiety during intergroup contact (e.g., Blascovich et al., 2001; Page-Gould et al., 2008). Long-standing conflicts or tensions between groups may also foster negative expectations for how one will be regarded and treated by members of other groups (e.g., Kramer & Wei, 1999; Vorauer, 2006). Moreover, prior negative experiences during contact with outgroup members may inhibit people's willingness to engage in further contact across group lines (e.g., Paolini et al., 2018; Tropp, 2003). Taken together, these trends suggest that the more we perceive or anticipate threat from outgroup members, the more likely we are to trigger psychological needs for security, and the greater the potential for us to become defensive and protective during intergroup encounters.

From these perspectives, it is easy to see how varied forms of intergroup threat would amplify people's tendencies toward intergroup anxiety and avoidance. Ample research indicates that people often experience a great deal of anxiety during intergroup contact (see Stephan, 2014), and intergroup anxiety tends to be associated with greater contact avoidance (Plant & Devine, 2008; Trawalter et al., 2009). Negative expectations for intergroup encounters—such as expecting to be rejected, or for cross-group interactions to go poorly—also tend to fuel greater intergroup anxiety and contact avoidance (Barlow et al., 2009; Plant & Devine, 2003, 2008; Shelton & Richeson, 2005).

## **Intergroup openness: Alternatives to threat responses**

At the same time as tendencies toward intergroup anxiety and avoidance are common, the research literature also reveals that people often express interest in and willingly choose to engage in contact with members of other groups. In these cases, uncertainty about intergroup contact or lack of familiarity with outgroup members may be viewed as a source of excitement, as people actively seek out new intergroup experiences (Dys-Steenbergen et al., 2016; Paolini et al., 2016; Wright et al., 2002). The tendency to seek out new contact experiences is likely bolstered by a history of prior positive contact experiences and greater confidence in one's ability to navigate cross-group interactions successfully (e.g., Kauff et al., 2021; Turner & Cameron, 2016), as well as

a greater orientation toward learning and growth as one prepares for contact with other groups (e.g., Migacheva & Tropp, 2013; Rattan & Georgeac, 2017). Yet for such enthusiasm and interest in intergroup contact to emerge, key concerns associated with intergroup threat and anxiety would first need to be abated, in order to set the stage for people to become more open to intergroup contact, and to reap contact's potential benefits (see Paolini et al., 2016; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Tropp & Molina, 2019).

Providing an illustrative example, Page-Gould et al. (2008) conducted an experimental study in which they randomly paired ethnic minority (Latina) and ethnic majority (White) undergraduates with either a same-group or cross-group partner for a series of three "friendship-building" meetings. Prior to these meetings, participants completed a measure of implicit racial prejudice (IAT; see Greenwald et al., 2003) as well as a measure of sensitivity to being rejected on the basis of one's racial or ethnic group membership (see Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002). A physiological indicator of stress (cortisol reactivity) was also included to assess participants' stress responses both before (baseline) and immediately following each of the friendship-building meetings. The authors observed that, among participants highly sensitive to group-based rejection, those paired with a cross-group partner peaked in cortisol reactivity following the first friendship meeting, indicating greater stress responses at the initial stages of contact. But their stress responses attenuated by the third friendship meeting, such that they showed comparable levels of anxiety to participants less sensitive to group-based rejection and to participants paired with a same-group partner. After the three friendship-building meetings, Page-Gould et al. (2008) then asked participants to keep a daily diary for 10 days, in which they recorded each day their levels of anxiety and how often they initiated cross-group interactions. Participants who were paired with a cross-group partner for the friendship-building meetings reported less anxiety in the daily diaries that did participants who were paired with a same-group partner. Moreover, and especially among those initially high in implicit racial prejudice, participants recorded greater initiation of cross-group interactions in their daily diaries than did participants who were paired with a same-group partner. Overall, then, findings from this study suggest that engaging in friendship-building activities with an outgroup member may initially be stress-provoking, but over time, positive contact experiences may lessen stress and anxiety associated with cross-group interactions and may even encourage greater interest in future intergroup contact.

## LINKING ATTACHMENT PROCESSES TO INTERGROUP CONTACT RESEARCH

From this brief review of research studies (see also Kauff et al., 2021; Marinucci et al., 2021), there appear to be strong parallels between the basic processes associated with secure and insecure forms of attachment, and factors that propel intergroup anxiety and avoidance, on the one hand, and openness to intergroup contact, on the other. In both cases, we seek some form of "comforting contact" (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) that helps us to feel secure and safe as we explore uncharted territory and pursue new experiences or relationships with others who are relatively unfamiliar to us. In both cases, our prior life experiences also serve as a foundation for our expectations and "working models" (Bowlby, 1988) regarding what we are likely to encounter and experience in the social world, and how we might approach and navigate future social relationships.

Such parallels are clearly recognized by a number of attachment scholars, who have begun to conduct studies that link attachment processes to intergroup research more directly. Most notably, Mikulincer and Shaver (2007; 2011) have proposed that insecure attachment should exacerbate

prejudiced and hostile responses toward outgroup members, whereas the security-enhancing effects of available and reliable attachment figures should curb intergroup prejudice and hostility. To test these ideas, Mikulincer and Shaver (2001, Study 1) asked Jewish Israeli participants to complete a computerized word-relation task with subliminal primes, after which they were randomly assigned to evaluate either an ingroup target (Jewish Israeli) or an outgroup target (Arab Palestinian), based on background information ostensibly provided by the target person. Participants were exposed to subliminal primes consisting of words that either signified security and closeness to others (e.g., *love, hug, support*) or were unrelated to attachment (e.g., *office, table, boat*). While participants' evaluations of the ingroup target did not differ across the experimental conditions, Mikulincer and Shaver (2001) observed that participants offered significantly more positive evaluations of the outgroup target when primed with words signifying security, as compared to when they were primed with neutral words.

Subsequent studies have focused more precisely on connecting attachment processes to one's willingness to engage in cross-group interaction. For instance, Mikulincer and Shaver (2001, Study 2) asked participants to complete a self-report measure of attachment style, designed to assess both attachment anxiety and avoidance (see Brennan et al., 1998). A week later, participants were then randomly assigned either to visualize themselves in a security-enhancing situation (e.g., being surrounded by people who are sensitive to your distress, who want to help you because they love you), or in a neutral situation (e.g., being in a grocery store comparing and buying different products). After the visualization task, participants received background information about either an ingroup target, or an outgroup target, using the same procedures as in the first study, and then participants were asked to indicate their willingness to interact with the target person. Participants' willingness to interact with the ingroup target did not differ across experimental conditions; however, participants who visualized the security-enhancing situation were significantly more willing to interact with the outgroup target than those who envisioned a neutral situation—showing mean scores comparable to participants' willingness to interact with the ingroup target. Furthermore, Mikulincer and Shaver (2001) also found that participants' greater self-reported attachment anxiety corresponded with significantly less willingness to interact with the outgroup target.

Beyond the research presented by Mikulincer and Shaver (2001), some other recent studies have begun to examine possible links between attachment processes and intergroup contact. For example, using self-report measures of attachment styles (see Wei et al., 2007) and with mostly white participant samples in the United States, Han (2017) showed that greater attachment anxiety and avoidance were both associated with less comfort in and less appreciation for interaction with people from other racial groups. Relatedly, Boccato et al. (2015, Study 1) asked Italian participants to complete a self-report measure of attachment security (see Feeney et al., 1994), as well as self-reported measures of the quantity and quality of their contact with immigrants. The authors observed that more secure attachment was associated with significantly greater frequency and quality of contact with immigrants. In a subsequent study, Boccato et al. (2015, Study 2) asked participants to complete the same measure of attachment security used in their first study, and to complete a computerized implicit task that required participants to make associations between people who represent immigrant groups in Italy (e.g., Africans, Indians, Asians, and Arabs) and words that signify either approach-related tendencies (e.g., *contact, closeness*) or avoidance-related tendencies (e.g., *avoidance, distance*). Complementing findings from their first study, Boccato et al. (2015) found that greater self-reports of attachment security were associated with stronger tendencies to associate immigrants with approach-related words, and weaker tendencies to associate immigrants with avoidance-related words.

## RE-CONCEPTUALIZING INTERGROUP CONTACT AS A QUESTION OF ATTACHMENT

Though still in a nascent stage of development, the research cited above suggests new and intriguing connections that merge theoretical perspectives on attachment with intergroup contact. Thus far, attachment scholars have considered how secure attachment—conceptualized either as an enduring characteristic of the individual, or as a temporarily activated state—may foster greater openness to interactions with outgroup members. Secure attachment is understood to encourage greater openness to intergroup contact because it reinforces one's feelings of having a "secure base" from which to pursue interactions with unknown, or less familiar, others (see Bowlby, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001), thereby enhancing a person's capacity to cope with potential threats that may be associated with cross-group interactions (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001; Trawalter et al., 2009). As summarized by Mikulincer and Shaver (2007), "people who are either dispositionally secure or induced to feel more secure in a particular context are better able than their insecure counterparts to tolerate intergroup diversity" (p. 150). It is also worth noting that, in these cases, secure attachment is not merely framed as an individual's disposition or state, but the *source* of secure attachment presumably grows from people's prior life experiences with key caregivers and close others. That is, some combination of close, supportive others are regarded as central "attachment figures" with whom people feel secure, and attachment to these others bolsters their sense of security as they explore and navigate other, potentially more challenging, relationships in the social world (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2011).

Though not stated explicitly, according to this line of reasoning, one has the sense that those key attachment figures are likely envisioned as fellow members of the individual's own group, such that attachment to them provides a "secure base" from which people may then safely reach across group boundaries. This approach is entirely reasonable, especially given that the theoretical origins of attachment theory are rooted in feelings of security and insecurity in close relationships originating in early childhood, and maintained across the life span (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1988; Waters & Cummings, 2000). Yet such an approach may be insufficient to account for feelings of security or insecurity during cross-group interactions when taken from the perspective of scholars in the intergroup contact tradition.

Indeed, upon reflection, it appears that many of the trends we observe in the intergroup contact literature may be readily understood and made more coherent by adopting an alternate perspective—one in which we regard *intergroup contact itself as a question of attachment*. What if, for example, we were to think about the outgroup members with whom we come into contact as the "attachment figures" and in relation to whom we seek to feel secure? How might such a perspective lend insights into common dynamics we observe in the intergroup contact research literature? Might it help to elucidate the processes by which people may experience anxiety, avoidance, and/or a sense of security in intergroup contact? Several lines of research suggest that it could prove useful to view intergroup contact through the lens of attachment, to account for both the challenges and rewards that may be associated with people's intergroup experiences.

## **Greater intergroup experience is associated with greater sense of security**

Considerable research indicates that greater intimate intergroup experience is associated with a greater sense of security. In this work, intimate intergroup experiences are typically defined as cross-group friendships (see Davies et al., 2011; Marinucci et al., 2021), and one's sense of security is typically operationalized as anxiety or stress associated with cross-group interactions (MacInnis & Page-Gould, 2015; Trawalter et al., 2009).<sup>1</sup> Longitudinal surveys show that greater numbers of cross-group friendships are typically associated with lower levels of intergroup anxiety over time (Binder et al., 2009; Levin et al., 2003; Swart et al., 2011), an effect that is corroborated by meta-analytic findings (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Experimental research also shows that repeated interactions with outgroup strangers can breed greater closeness, and that increasingly close and intimate relations with outgroup members can lower intergroup anxiety (Page-Gould et al., 2008; Shook & Fazio, 2008).

## **Greater security is associated with greater intergroup openness and exploration**

Research also suggests that the more secure people feel in relations with outgroup members, the more they express openness toward outgroup members and interest in further intergroup contact. Greater feelings of connectedness to outgroup members have been found to predict greater interest in the outgroup's culture and greater support for the outgroup's maintenance of their heritage culture (Brannon & Walton, 2013; Hässler et al., 2019), as well as being associated with a greater orientation toward learning from outgroup members (Migacheva & Tropp, 2013). People who experienced greater intergroup contact during childhood have also been shown to hold less intergroup prejudice as adults (Wood & Sonleitner, 1996), and to have more diverse friendship networks as adults (Merlino et al., 2019). The experimental study by Page-Gould et al. (2008) summarized previously also shows that being paired with an outgroup member for a series of "friendship-building" meetings can lead to lower anxiety and greater initiation of cross-group interactions. In addition, when people learned that having contact may help to ease their future anxiety about cross-group interactions, they reported being more willing to interact with an outgroup member, and they exhibited fewer anxious behaviors during an actual interaction with an outgroup partner (Schultz et al., 2015).

## **Reminders of a "secure base" improve responses to cross-group interaction**

In line with the contention that prior intergroup experience shapes the intergroup attitudes and behaviors that people carry into the future (see Aboud et al., 2003; Killen et al., 2007; Merlino et al., 2019; Wood & Sonleitner, 1996), research by Page-Gould et al. (2010) indicates that reminders of a "secure base" rooted in prior relations with outgroup members can enhance people's responses to

---

<sup>1</sup> Related research also shows that greater intergroup contact typically corresponds with greater feelings of security when defined in terms of lowered threat to one's livelihood as posed by other groups (e.g., Pettigrew et al., 2010; Wagner et al., 2006).



cross-group interactions. After ensuring that their participants had both same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friends, the authors randomly assigned participants to reflect on their relationship with either a same-ethnic friend or a cross-ethnic friend. In one study (Study 2), participants across both conditions were then asked to visualize and imagine an interaction with an unknown person from another ethnicity, and to report how they felt in response to that interaction; participants who reflected on a cross-ethnic friendship reported significantly more positive expectations for the interaction than did participants who reflected on a same-ethnic friendship. In a subsequent study (Study 3), participants were once again primed to reflect on their relationship with either a same-ethnic friend or a cross-ethnic friend before interacting with an unknown cross-ethnic partner, during which participants' hormonal stress responses to the novel cross-ethnic interaction were monitored. Extending findings from their previous study, Page-Gould et al. (2010) observed more adaptive stress responses during the novel cross-ethnic interaction among participants primed to reflect on a cross-ethnic friendship, as compared to those primed to reflect on a same-ethnic friendship. Page Gould (2012) also found that people who report cross-ethnic friendships show less adverse responses to conflict during encounters with other ethnic outgroup members, such that they remain more willing to initiate cross-ethnic interactions following those conflict encounters than people who report having few or no close cross-ethnic friends.

### **Security cues from outgroup members support greater intergroup openness, whereas lack of security cues provoke intergroup anxiety and avoidance**

Research also suggests that cues connoting a sense of security may encourage us to engage in interaction across group lines, while the absence of such cues correspond with greater anxiety about cross-group interactions, or the desire to avoid them completely. For instance, learning that outgroup members have expressed interest in interacting with members of one's group—or learning that an outgroup member has a diverse network of friends that includes members of one's group—can foster positive expectations for and openness to cross-group interaction (Tropp & Bianchi, 2006; Wout et al., 2010). Relatedly, engaging with outgroup members who have significant prior contact experience can help to alleviate our stress during cross-group interaction (Page-Gould et al., 2008). In the absence of such security-enhancing cues, however, we tend to be hesitant and avoidant about engaging in cross-group interaction, as the prospect of doing so leads us to feel apprehensive and concerned about rejection (Barlow et al., 2009; Shelton & Richeson, 2005).

### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Granted, the linkages proposed here between perspectives on attachment and intergroup contact are preliminary, and much more conceptual and empirical work would be needed to flesh out their possible connections in more detail. In particular, any future efforts should be mindful that relations between groups tend to be more adversarial than relations between individuals (Wildschut et al., 2003), such that assumptions underlying interpersonal processes may break down when applied to intergroup processes (Frey & Tropp, 2006). More attention to the transactional nature and developmental trajectory of cross-group relationships is also warranted (see Davies et al., 2011; Kauff et al., 2021; Shelton et al., 2010), so that we can learn more about how

cross-group intimacy may build as intergroup anxiety and avoidance retreat over time (see MacInnis & Page-Gould, 2015; Marinucci et al., 2021). Beyond these points, a few more key issues must also be considered.

## **How we frame the research questions we ask**

Since its early beginnings (Allport, 1954; Williams, 1947; see also Pettigrew, 1998), most of the contact research literature has been focused on the question of prejudice reduction, and the strategies we might use to improve intergroup attitudes. However, if viewed through the lens of attachment, we may seek to reframe the questions we ask, to investigate what it takes for people to feel more secure—and less anxious and avoidant—in intergroup contexts, toward broader societal goals of social cohesion and integration, as compared to the more traditional goal of prejudice reduction (see also Hewstone, 2015; Tropp, 2019).

## **How we measure relevant concepts of interest**

Should we decide to pursue research questions pertaining to “intergroup security” then we must also specify measures and dimensions that could effectively tap this concept. Much of the existing intergroup literature has focused on assessment of attitudes in terms of valence—that is, the degree to which we hold positive or negative attitudes toward members of other groups (see, e.g., Tropp & Molina, 2019 for a review). A related, yet distinct, question concerns the extent to which we feel a sense of security in our relations with other groups—for example, do we feel accepted or rejected? welcome or unwelcome? understood or misunderstood? safe or unsure? trust or suspicion?

Recent work suggests that our collective thinking about intergroup relations is headed in this direction (see, e.g., Barlow et al., 2009; Bergsieker et al., 2010; Kauff et al., 2021; Livingstone et al., 2020; Tropp et al., 2018). Yet more systematic work is needed to understand how feelings of intergroup security may or may not correspond to intergroup attitudes, as well as to define what a sense of security would actually look like in relation to our groups and other groups. Social identity research has long emphasized the human tendency to favor our own groups over other groups (e.g., Tajfel, 1981), while also distinguishing between motivations for ingroup love and outgroup hate (e.g., Brewer, 1999). By contrast, research on acculturation suggests that people often desire to maintain their own group identity while seeking out contact and becoming more integrated across group lines (e.g., Brown & Zagefka, 2011; see also Paolini et al., 2016; Wright et al., 2002). A greater focus on intergroup security, in relation to these and other research traditions, may help us to gain clarity regarding what we seek, expect, and experience in relation to other groups.

## **How we design research studies**

Conceptualizing intergroup contact in terms of security also raises important considerations for the types of research methods we use, and what we can expect to learn when using different methods to investigate contact between groups. For instance, close cross-group friendships develop through ongoing and sustained interactions with outgroup members over time, and they have been shown to be particularly beneficial for reducing anxiety and prejudice between groups (see

Davies et al., 2011; Levin et al., 2003; Page-Gould et al., 2010; Pettigrew, 1997). It is unlikely that the deep levels of engagement and self-disclosure typifying close cross-group friendships that develop naturally could realistically be captured or approximated through experimental manipulation. Indeed, at the same time as they may reveal significant effects, experimental studies designed to create cross-group friendships indicate fairly low levels of manufactured closeness, and weaker contact effects, relative to studies of naturally occurring cross-group friendships (see Davies et al., 2011; Page-Gould et al., 2008). Thus, while experimental studies may prove useful for examining intergroup contact experiences and effects during their earliest stages, other longitudinal approaches will likely be more fruitful for studying contact experiences and effects associated with enduring cross-group relationships (see also Marinucci et al., 2021).

## **How group differences in status shape intergroup security, anxiety, and avoidance**

Greater research attention is also needed to address ways in which intergroup security, anxiety, and avoidance function in relations between members of historically privileged and minoritized groups. Posing challenges to our basic human needs for safety and security (Maslow, 1943; Newcomb, 1943), there is research evidence to suggest that group members on both sides may experience forms of intergroup anxiety and avoidance (Plant & Devine, 2008; Shelton & Richeson, 2005). Generally, prior negative intergroup experiences tend to curb our interest in further contact, and enhance our feelings of anxiety and desires to avoid future cross-group interactions (Hayward et al., 2017; Meleady & Forder, 2019; Tropp, 2003). Yet these anxious and avoidant tendencies likely manifest in varied ways given groups' different status positions in the larger society (see Bobo, 1999). Members of minoritized groups regularly encounter threats to their sense of security and belonging in contexts where they have been historically underrepresented (Brewer et al., 1999; Purdie Vaughns et al., 2008), such that they often anticipate becoming the target of prejudice and discrimination (Shelton et al., 2005). By contrast, members of historically privileged groups tend to anticipate being perceived as prejudiced (Devine & Vazquez, 1998), while also seeking to avoid discussions of issues that highlight group differences in power or status (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Saguy et al., 2013). These divergent forces underlying intergroup anxiety and avoidance suggest that there may be different routes for minoritized and privileged groups to achieve a greater sense of intergroup security, such as being respected and empowered for the former, and being liked and reassured of moral integrity for the latter (Bergsieker et al., 2010; Shnabel et al., 2009).

## **How group segregation perpetuates intergroup anxiety and avoidance**

As a final point, more work is needed to specify how patterns of group segregation and their reinforcing structures perpetuate intergroup anxiety and avoidance, while undermining the potential for a greater sense of security to grow through intergroup contact. In many countries, racial, ethnic, and religious groups remain largely segregated from each other in most facets of their lives (e.g., Bobo & Zubrinsky, 1996; Dixon & Durrheim, 2003; Hewstone et al., 2005), and physical structures may further demarcate neighborhoods corresponding to the boundaries of distinct communities (e.g., AbuZayyad & Bar-Tal, 2002; McKeown & Cairns, 2012). Patterns of group segregation may also be strengthened by families and local communities, who have grown accustomed

to viewing members of other groups through the lens of suspicion and distrust (e.g., Bekerman, 2009; Merrilees et al., 2014).

Given these trends, it is perhaps not surprising that large numbers of people—and particularly members of more privileged groups—have relatively few, if any, friendships or meaningful relationships with members of other groups (see Ingraham, 2014). Moreover, even when contact across group lines may be possible, members of different groups may still choose to self-segregate (e.g., Al Ramiah et al., 2015; Dixon et al., 2019; McKeown et al., 2016), or to prefer living in areas where other groups are scarcely present (e.g., Anicich et al., in press; Schlüter et al., 2018). Nonetheless, despite all these challenges, studies from a range of conflict-ridden contexts indicate that when people from different racial, ethnic, or religious groups engage in close intergroup contact, improved intergroup attitudes and support for greater social integration are likely to result (e.g., Al Ramiah et al., 2013; McKeown & Taylor, 2017; Schroeder & Risen, 2016; Swart et al., 2011). Furthermore, even if individuals themselves may have limited contact experience, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward other groups if they live in areas where their neighbors frequently engage in intergroup contact (Christ et al., 2014). Thus, issues of intergroup security, anxiety, and avoidance are relevant not only to contact between individual members of different groups, but they carry broader implications for how we structure communities, in ways that facilitate or inhibit contact between groups.

## CONCLUSIONS

The themes of this commentary suggest that, as intergroup contexts become more filled with group divisions, segregation, and inequality, it is likely to become more challenging for people on all sides to feel the sense of security we desire as human beings, and which is needed to develop greater intimacy and enduring trust across group lines. Merging perspectives on attachment and intergroup contact reveals that—at a fundamental level—we all have needs for security both as individuals and as members of our social groups, and we are likely to respond with anxiety and/or avoidance in intergroup contexts when our basic needs for security are not met. However, to the extent that we are able to alleviate potential threats and anxieties associated with intergroup encounters, we may become more open to pursuing and forging relationships with members of other groups.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank Katherine (KC) Haydon and Christina Rucinski for conversations and feedback that advanced the ideas presented in this commentary.

## ORCID

Linda R. Tropp  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0203-7846>

## REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, M.D.S. (1973). The development of infant-mother attachment. In (B. M. Caldwell & H. N. Ricciuti Eds.), *Review of child development research*. (Vol., 3, pp. 1–94) Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Aboud, F.E., Mendelson, M.J. & Purdy, K.T. (2003). Cross-race peer relations and friendship quality. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 27, 165–173. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01650250244000164>
- Abuzayyad, Z. & Bar-Tal, D. (2002). Separation or conciliation. *Palestine-Israel Journal*, 9(3). Available from: <https://pij.org/articles/117/separation-or-conciliation>

- Allport, G.W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley.
- Allport, G.W. (1960). The ego in contemporary psychology. In *Personality and social encounter: Selected essays*. (pp. 71–93) Boston: Beacon Press.
- Al Ramiah, A., Hewstone, M., Voci, A., Cairns, E. & Hughes, J. (2013). It's never too late for "us" to meet "them": Prior intergroup friendship moderates the impact of later intergroup friendship in educational settings. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83, 57–75. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8279.2011.02054.x>
- Al Ramiah, A., Schmid, K. & Hewstone, M. (2015). Why are all the White (Asian) kids sitting together in the cafeteria? Resegregation and the role of intergroup attributions and norms. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 54(1), 100–124. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12064>
- Apfelbaum, E.P., Pauker, K., Ambady, N., Sommers, S.R. & Norton, M.I. (2008). Learning (not) to talk about race: When older children underperform in social categorization. *Developmental Psychology*, 44(5), 1513. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012835>
- Anicich, E., Jachimowicz, J.M., Osborne, M. & Phillips, L.T. (in press) Structuring local environments to avoid diversity: Anxiety drives Whites' geographical and institutional self-segregation practices. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*.
- Arkin, R.M., Carroll, P.J. & Oleson, K.C. (2010). Commentary: The end of the beginning. In (R. M. Arkin, K. C. Oleson & P. J. Carroll Eds.), *Handbook of the uncertain self*. (pp. 444–448) New York: Psychology Press. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203848753.ch24>
- Barlow, F., Louis, W.R. & Hewstone, M. (2009). Rejected! Cognitions of rejection and intergroup anxiety as mediators of the impact of cross-group friendships on prejudice. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 48(3), 389–405. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466608X387089>
- Bar-Tal, D. (2009). Reconciliation as a foundation of culture of peace. In (J. de Rivera Ed.), *Handbook on building cultures of peace*. (pp. 363–377) New York: Springer. Available from: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-09575-2\\_25](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-09575-2_25)
- Baumeister, R.F. & Leary, M.R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497–529. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
- Bergsieker, H.B., Shelton, J.N. & Richeson, J.A. (2010). To be liked versus respected: Divergent goals in interracial interactions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99, 248–264. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018474>
- Bekerman, Z. (2009). Identity versus peace: Identity wins. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(1), 74–83. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.1.m30672027u72x633>
- Binder, J., Zagefka, H., Brown, R., Funke, F., Kessler, T., Mummendey, A., et al. (2009). Does contact reduce prejudice or does prejudice reduce contact? A longitudinal test of the contact hypothesis amongst majority and minority groups in three European countries. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96, 843–856. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013470>
- Blascovich, J., Mendes, W.B., Hunter, S.B., Lickel, B. & Kowai-Bell, N. (2001). Perceiver threat in social interactions with stigmatized others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80(2), 253–267. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.80.2.253>
- Boccatto, G., Capozza, D., Trifiletti, E. & Di Bernardo, G.A. (2015). Attachment security and intergroup contact. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 45, 629–647. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12325>
- Bobo, L. (1999). Prejudice as group position: Microfoundations of a sociological approach to racism and race relations. *Journal of Social Issues*, 55, 445–472. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00127>
- Bobo, L. & Zubrinsky, C.L. (1996). Attitudes on residential integration: Perceived status differences, mere ingroup preference, or racial prejudice? *Social Forces*, 74, 883–909. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2580385>
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Clinical applications of attachment theory*. London: Routledge.
- Brannon, T.N. & Walton, G.M. (2013). Enacting cultural interests: How intergroup contact reduces prejudice by sparking interest in an outgroup's culture. *Psychological Science*, 24, 1947–1957. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613481607>
- Brennan, K.A., Clark, C.L. & Shaver, P.R. (1998). Self-report measurement of adult romantic attachment: An integrative overview. In (J. A. Simpson & W. S. Rholes Eds.), *Attachment theory and close relationships*. (pp. 46–76) New York: Guilford Press.
- Brewer, M.B. (1999). The psychology of prejudice: Ingroup love or outgroup hate? *Journal of Social Issues*, 55(3), 429–444. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00126>

- Brewer, M.B., von Hippel, W. & Gooden, M.P. (1999). Diversity and organizational identity: The problem of entrée after entry. In (D. A. Prentice, D. T. Miller Eds.), *Cultural divides: Understanding and overcoming group conflict*. (pp. 337–363) New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Brown, R. & Zagefka, H. (2011). The dynamics of acculturation: An intergroup perspective. In (J. M. Olson & M. P. Zanna Eds.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. (pp. 129–184) San Diego: Academic Press. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-385522-0.00003-2>
- Caporael, L. & Baron, R.M. (1997). Groups as the mind's natural environment. In (J. Simpson & D. T. Kenrick Eds.), *Evolutionary social psychology*. (pp. 317–344) Erlbaum.
- Carroll, P.J., Wichman, A.L. & Arkin, R.M. (2006). Security in the aftermath of 9/11. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 28, 289–290. Available from: [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp2804\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp2804_1)
- Castano, E., Paladino, M.P., Coull, A. & Yzerbyt, V.Y. (2002). Protecting the ingroup stereotype: Intergroup identification and the management of deviant ingroup members. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 41, 365–385. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466602760344269>
- Christ, O., Schmid, K., Lolliot, S., Swart, H., Stolle, D., Tausch, N., et al. (2014). Contextual effect of positive intergroup contact on outgroup prejudice. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111, 3996–4000. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1320901111>
- Collins, N.L. & Feeney, B.C. (2000). A safe haven: An attachment theory perspective on support seeking and caregiving in intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 1053–1073. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.6.1053>
- Collins, N.L. & Read, S.J. (1994). Cognitive representations of attachment: The structure and function of working models. In (K. Bartholomew & D. Perlman Eds.), *Attachment processes in adulthood*. (pp. 53–90) London: Kingsley.
- Davies, K. & Aron, A. (2016). Friendship development and intergroup attitudes: The role of interpersonal and intergroup friendship processes. *Journal of Social Issues*, 72, 489–510. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12178>
- Davies, K., Tropp, L.R., Aron, A., Pettigrew, T.F. & Wright, S.C. (2011). Cross-group friendships and intergroup attitudes: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15, 332–351. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868311411103>
- Devine, P.G. & Vasquez, K.A. (1998). The rocky road to positive intergroup relations. In (J. Eberhardt & S. T. Fiske Eds.), *Confronting racism: The problem and the response*. (pp. 234–262) Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- de Zavala, A. & Lantos, D. (2020). Collective narcissism and its social consequences: The bad and the ugly. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 29, 273–278. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721420917703>
- Dixon, J. & Durrheim, K. (2003). Contact and the ecology of racial division: Some varieties of informal segregation. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 42(1), 1–23. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466603763276090>
- Dixon, J., Tredoux, C., Davies, G., Huck, J., Hocking, B., Sturgeon, B., et al. (2019). Parallel lives: Intergroup contact, threat, and the segregation of everyday activity spaces. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 118(3), 457–480. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000191>
- Dys-Steenbergen, O., Wright, S.C. & Aron, A. (2016). Self-expansion motivation improves cross-group interactions and enhances self-growth. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 19(1), 60–71. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430215583517>
- Feeney, J.A., Noller, P. & Hanrahan, M. (1994). Assessing adult attachment: Developments in the conceptualization of security and insecurity. In (M. B. Sperling & W. H. Berman Eds.), *Attachment in adults: Theory, assessment and treatment*. (pp. 128–152) New York: Guilford.
- Fiske, S.T. & Taylor, S.E. (2013). *Social cognition: From brains to culture*. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Frey, F.E. & Tropp, L.R. (2006). Being seen as individuals versus as group members: Extending research on metaperception to intergroup contexts. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10, 265–280. Available from: [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1003\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1003_5)
- Fuochi, G., Voci, A., Boin, J. & Hewstone, M. (2020). Close to me: The importance of closeness versus superficiality in explaining the positive-negative contact asymmetry. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 50, 766–782. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2667>
- Gillath, O., Mikulincer, M., Fittsimons, G.M., Shaver, P.R., Schachner, D.A. & Bargh, J.A. (2006). Automatic activation of attachment-related goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32, 1375–1388. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167206290339>

- Green, J.D. & Campbell, W.K. (2000). Attachment and exploration in adults: Chronic and contextual accessibility. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(4), 452–461. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167200266004>
- Greenwald, A.G., Nosek, B.A. & Banaji, M.R. (2003). Understanding and using the Implicit Association Test: An improved scoring algorithm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(2), 197–216. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.2.197>
- Grütter, J. & Tropp, L.R. (2019). How friendship is defined matters for predicting intergroup attitudes: Shared activities and mutual trust with cross-ethnic peers during late childhood and early adolescence. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 43, 128–135. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025418802471>
- Han, S. (2017). Attachment insecurity and openness to diversity: The roles of self-esteem and trust. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 111, 291–296. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.02.033>
- Hässler, T., González, R., Lay, S., Lickel, B., Zagefka, H., Brown, R., et al. (2019). With a little help from our friends: The impact of cross-group friendship on acculturation preferences. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 49, 366–384. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2383>
- Hayward, L.E., Tropp, L.R., Hornsey, M.J. & Barlow, F.K. (2017). Toward a comprehensive understanding of intergroup contact: Descriptions and mediators of positive and negative contact among majority and minority groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 43(3), 347–364. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167216685291>
- Hewstone, M. (2015). Consequences of diversity for social cohesion and prejudice: The missing dimension of intergroup contact. *Journal of Social Issues*, 71, 417–438. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12120>
- Hewstone, M., Cairns, E., Voci, A., Paolini, S., McLernon, F., Crisp, R.J., et al. (2005). Intergroup contact in a divided society: Challenging segregation in Northern Ireland. In (D. Abrams, M. A. Hogg & J. M. Marques Eds.), *The social psychology of inclusion and exclusion*. (pp. 265–292) New York; Hove: Psychology Press.
- Hogg, M.A. (2003). Social identity. In (M. Leary & J. P. Tangey Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity*. (pp. 462–479) New York; London: Guilford.
- Hogg, M.A. (2010). Human groups, social categories, and collective self: Social identity and the management of self-uncertainty. In (R. M. Arkin, K. C. Oleson & P. J. Carroll Eds.), *Handbook of the uncertain self*. (pp. 401–420) New York: Psychology Press.
- Hogg, M.A. & Abrams, D. (1988). *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes*. London: Routledge.
- Hutchison, P., Abrams, D., Gutierrez, R. & Viki, G. (2008). Getting rid of the bad ones: The relationship between group identification, deviant derogation, and identity maintenance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44, 874–881. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2007.09.001>
- Ingraham, C. (2014 August 25). Three-quarters of whites don't have any non-white friends. Washington Post. Available from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/08/25/three-quarters-of-whites-dont-have-any-non-white-friends/>
- Kauff, M., Beneda, M., Paolini, S., Bilewicz, M., Kotzur, P., O'Donnell, A. W., Stevenson, C., Wagner, U., & Christ, O. (2021). How do we get people into contact? Predictors of intergroup contact and drivers of contact seeking. *Journal of Social Issues*, <http://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12398>
- Killen, M., Crystal, D. & Ruck, M. (2007). The social developmental benefits of intergroup contact for children and adolescents. In (E. Frankenberg & G. Orfield Eds.), *Realizing the promise of diversity in American schools*. (pp. 57–73) Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Kramer, R.M. & Messick, D.M. (1998). Getting by with a little help from our enemies: Collective paranoia and its role in intergroup relations. In (C. Sedikides, J. Schopler & C. A. Insko Eds.), *Intergroup cognition and intergroup behavior*. (pp. 233–255) Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Kramer, R.M. & Wei, J. (1999). Social uncertainty and the problem of trust in social groups: The social self in doubt. In (T. Tyler, R. M. Kramer & O. P. John Eds.), *The psychology of the social self*. (pp. 145–168) Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Levin, S., Van Laar, C. & Sidanius, J. (2003). The effects of in-group and out-group friendships on ethnic attitudes in college: A longitudinal study. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 6, 76–92. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430203006001013>
- Livingstone, A.G., Fernandez Rodriguez, L. & Rothers, A. (2020). ‘They just don’t understand us’: The role of felt understanding in intergroup relations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 119, 633–656. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000221>

- MacInnis, C.C. & Page-Gould, E. (2015). How can intergroup interaction be bad if intergroup contact is good? Exploring and reconciling an apparent paradox in the science of intergroup relations. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(3), 307–327. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691614568482>
- Marinucci M., Maunder R., Sanchez K., Thai M., McKeown S., Turner R. N., Stevenson C. (2021). Intimate intergroup contact across the lifespan. *Journal of Social Issues*, <http://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12399>
- Maslow, A.H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370–396.
- Maslow, A.H. (1962). *Toward a psychology of being*. Princeton: Van Nostrand.
- McKeown, S. & Cairns, E. (2012). Peacemaking youth programmes in Northern Ireland. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 4(2), 69–75. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1108/17596591211208274>
- McKeown, S. & Dixon, J. (2017). The ‘contact hypothesis’: Critical reflections and future directions. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 11, e12295. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12295>
- McKeown, S., Stringer, M. & Cairns, E. (2016). Classroom segregation: Where do students sit and how is this related to group relations? *British Educational Research Journal*, 42, 40–55. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3200>
- McKeown, S. & Taylor, L.K. (2017). Intergroup contact and peacebuilding: Promoting youth civic engagement in Northern Ireland. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 5, 415–434. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.5964/jssp.v5i2.769>
- Meleady, R. & Forder, L. (2019). When contact goes wrong: Negative intergroup contact promotes generalized outgroup avoidance. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 22, 688–707. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430218761568>
- Mendoza-Denton, R., Downey, G., Purdie, V.J., Davis, A. & Pietrzak, J. (2002). Sensitivity to status-based rejection: Implications for African American students’ college experience. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 896–918. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.83.4.896>
- Merlino, L.P., Steinhardt, M.F. & Wren-Lewis, L. (2019). More than just friends? School peers and adult interracial relationships. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 37(3), 663–713.
- Merrilees, C.E., Taylor, L.K., Goeke-Morey, M.C., Shirlow, P., Cummings, E.M. & Cairns, E. (2014). The protective role of group identity: Sectarian antisocial behavior and adolescent emotion problems. *Child Development*, 85(2), 412–420. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12125>
- Migacheva, K. & Tropp, L.R. (2013). Learning orientation as a predictor of positive intergroup contact. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 16, 426–444. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430212455854>
- Mikulincer, M. & Shaver, P.R. (2001). Attachment theory and intergroup bias: Evidence that priming the secure base schema attenuates negative reactions to out-groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81, 97–115. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.81.1.97>
- Mikulincer, M. & Shaver, P.R. (2007). Boosting attachment security to promote mental health, prosocial values, and inter-group tolerance. *Psychological Inquiry*, 18, 139–156. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10478400701512646>
- Mikulincer, M. & Shaver, P. (2011). An attachment perspective on interpersonal and intergroup conflict. In (J. P. Forgas, A. W. Kruglanski & K. D. Williams Eds.), *The psychology of social conflict and aggression*. (pp. 19–35) New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Molden, D.C., Lee, A.Y. & Higgins, E. (2008). Motivations for promotion and prevention. In (J. Y. Shah & W. L. Gardner Eds.), *Handbook of motivation science*. (pp. 169–187) New York: Guilford.
- Murphy, G. (1958). *Human potentialities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Newcomb, T.M. (1943). *Personality and social change*. New York: Dryden.
- O’Brien, T.C. & Tropp, L.R. (2015). Psychology: The phenomenology of human security. In (P. Bourbeau Ed.), *Security: Dialogue across disciplines*. (pp. 137–155) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316227671.007>
- Page-Gould, E. (2012). To whom can I turn? Maintenance of positive intergroup relations in the face of intergroup conflict. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 3(4), 462–470. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550611426937>
- Page-Gould, E., Mendoza-Denton, R., Alegre, J.M. & Siy, J.O. (2010). Understanding the impact of cross-group friendship on interactions with novel outgroup members. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98(5), 775–793. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017880>



- Page-Gould, E., Mendoza-Denton, R. & Tropp, L.R. (2008). With a little help from my cross-group friend: Reducing anxiety in intergroup contexts through cross-group friendship. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95, 1080–1094. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.95.5.1080>
- Paolini, S., Wright, S.C., Dys-Steenbergen, O. & Favara, I. (2016). Self-expansion and intergroup contact: Expectancies and motives to self-expand lead to greater interest in outgroup contact and more positive intergroup relations. *Journal of Social Issues*, 72(3), 450–471. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12176>
- Paolini, S., Harwood, J., Hewstone, M. & Neumann, D.L. (2018). Seeking and avoiding intergroup contact: Future frontiers of research on building social integration. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 12(12), e12422. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12422>
- Pettigrew, T.F. (1997). Generalized intergroup contact effects on prejudice. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23, 173–185. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167297232006>
- Pettigrew, T.F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49, 65–85. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.49.1.65>
- Pettigrew, T.F. & Tropp, L.R. (2008). How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic tests of three mediators. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38, 922–934. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.504>
- Pettigrew, T.F., Wagner, U. & Christ, O. (2010). Population ratios and prejudice: Modeling both contact and threat effects. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36, 635–650. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830903516034>
- Plant, E.A. & Devine, P.G. (2003). The antecedents and implications of interracial anxiety. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29, 790–801. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167203029006011>
- Plant, E.A. & Devine, P.G. (2008). Interracial interactions: Approach and avoidance. In (A. J. Elliot Ed.), *Handbook of approach and avoidance motivation*. (pp. 571–584) New York: Psychology Press.
- Purdie-Vaughns, V., Steele, C.M., Davies, P.G., Dittmann, R. & Crosby, J. (2008). Social identity contingencies: How diversity cues signal threat or safety for African Americans in mainstream institutions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 94(4), 615–630. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.94.4.615>
- Rattan, A. & Georgeac, O.A.M. (2017). Understanding intergroup relations through the lens of implicit theories (mindsets) of malleability. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 11(4), e12305. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12305>
- Roccas, S. & Elster, A. (2012). Group identities. In (L. R. Tropp Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of intergroup conflict*. (pp. 106–122) New York: Oxford University Press.
- Roccas, S., Klar, Y. & Liviatan, I. (2006). The paradox of group-based guilt: Modes of national identification, conflict vehemence, and reactions to the in-group's moral violations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91(4), 698–711. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.91.4.698>
- Saguy, T., Tropp, L.R. & Hawi, D.R. (2013). The role of group power in intergroup contact. In (G. Hodson & M. Hewstone Eds.), *Advances in intergroup contact*. (pp. 113–131) Hove, East Sussex: Psychology Press.
- Schlüter, E., Ullrich, J., Glenz, A. & Schmidt, P. (2018). From segregation to intergroup contact and back: Using experiments and simulation to understand the bidirectional link. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 48, 17–32. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2284>
- Schultz, J.R., Gaither, S.E., Urry, H.L. & Maddox, K.B. (2015). Reframing anxiety to encourage interracial interactions. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, 1(4), 392–400. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/tps0000048>
- Schroeder, J. & Risen, J.L. (2016). Befriending the enemy: Outgroup friendship longitudinally predicts intergroup attitudes in a coexistence program for Israelis and Palestinians. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 19(1), 72–93. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430214542257>
- Shelton, J.N., Richeson, J.A. & Salvatore, J. (2005). Expecting to be the target of prejudice: Implications for interethnic interactions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31, 1189–1202. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167205274894>
- Shelton, J.N. & Richeson, J.A. (2005). Intergroup contact and pluralistic ignorance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88, 91–107. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.1.91>
- Shelton, J.N., Trail, T.E., West, T.V. & Bergseiker, H.B. (2010). From strangers to friends: The interpersonal process of intimacy in developing interracial friendships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27, 71–90. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407509346422>

- Shnabel, N., Nadler, A., Ullrich, J., Dovidio, J.F. & Carmi, D. (2009). Promoting reconciliation through the satisfaction of the emotional needs of victimized and perpetrating group members: The needs-based model of reconciliation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35(8), 1021–1030. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167209336610>
- Shook, N.J. & Fazio, R.H. (2008). Interracial roommate relationships: An experimental field test of the contact hypothesis. *Psychological Science*, 19(7), 717–723. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02147.x>
- Simpson, J.A., Collins, W.A., Tran, S. & Haydon, K.C. (2008). Developmental antecedents of emotion in romantic relationships. In (J. Forgas & J. Fitness Eds.), *Social relationships: Cognitive, affective, and motivational processes*. (pp. 185–202) New York: Psychology Press. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.2.355>
- Smith, E.R., Murphy, J. & Coats, S. (1999). Attachment to groups: Theory and measurement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77, 94–110. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.1.94>
- Stegner, W. (1987). *Crossing to safety*. Random House.
- Stephan, W.G., Ybarra, O. & Morrison, K. (2009). Intergroup threat theory. In (T. D. Nelson Ed.), *Handbook of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination*. (pp. 43–59) New York: Psychology Press.
- Stephan, W.G. (2014). Intergroup anxiety: Theory, research, and practice. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 18(3), 239–255. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868314530518>
- Swart, H., Hewstone, M., Christ, O. & Voci, A. (2011). Affective mediators of intergroup contact: A longitudinal analysis in South Africa. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101, 1221–1238. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024450>
- Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trawalter, S., Richeson, J.A. & Shelton, J.N. (2009). Predicting behavior during interracial interactions: A stress and coping approach. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 13, 243–268. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868309345850>
- Tropp, L.R. (2003). The psychological impact of prejudice: Implications for intergroup contact. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 6(2), 131–149. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430203006002001>
- Tropp, L.R. (2019). Adaptation to diversity: Individual and societal processes. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(25), 12131–12133. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1907380116>
- Tropp, L.R. & Bianchi, R.A. (2006). Valuing diversity and interest in intergroup contact. *Journal of Social Issues*, 62(3), 533–551. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2006.00472.x>
- Tropp, L.R. & Molina, L. (2019). Intergroup processes: From prejudice to positive relations between groups. In (K. Deaux & M. Snyder Eds.), *Oxford handbook of personality and social psychology*. (2nd ed., pp. 621–643) New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tropp, L.R., Okamoto, D.G., Marrow, H.B. & Jones-Correa, M. (2018). How contact experiences shape welcoming: Perspectives from U.S.-born and immigrant groups. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 81, 23–47. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272517747265>
- Turner, R.N. & Cameron, L. (2016). Confidence in contact: A new perspective on promoting cross-group friendship among children and adolescents. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 10(1), 212–246. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12023>
- Vorauer, J.D. (2006). An information search model of evaluative concerns in intergroup interaction. *Psychological Review*, 113(4), 862–886. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.113.4.862>
- Wagner, U., Christ, O., Pettigrew, T.F., Stellmacher, J. & Wolf, H. (2006). Prejudice and minority proportion: Contact instead of threat effects. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 69(4), 380–390. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/019027250606900406>
- Waters, E. & Cummings, E.M. (2000). A secure base from which to explore close relationships. *Child Development*, 71(1), 164–172. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00130>
- Wei, M., Russell, D.W., Mallinckrodt, B. & Vogel, D.L. (2007). The experiences in close relationship scale (ECR)-short form: Reliability, validity, and factor structure. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 88, 187–204. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223890701268041>
- Wildschut, T., Pinter, B., Vevea, J.L., Insko, C.A. & Schopler, J. (2003). Beyond the group mind: A quantitative review of the interindividual-intergroup discontinuity effect. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 698–722. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.698>
- Williams, R.M. Jr. (1947). The reduction of intergroup tensions: A survey of research on problems of ethnic, racial, and religious group relations. *Social Science Research Council Bulletin*, 57, xi, 153.

- Wood, P.B. & Sonleitner, N. (1996). The effect of childhood interracial contact on adult antiblack prejudice. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 20, 1–17.
- Wout, D.A., Murphy, M.C. & Steele, C.M. (2010). When your friends matter: The effect of white students' racial friendship networks on meta-perceptions and perceived identity contingencies. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 46, 1035–1041. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2010.06.003>
- Wright, S.C., Aron, A. & Tropp, L.R. (2002). Including others (and groups) in the self. In (J. P. Forgas & K. D. Williams Eds.), *The social self: Cognitive, interpersonal, and intergroup perspectives*. (pp. 343–364) New York; London: Psychology Press.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Linda R. Tropp.** Linda R. Tropp is Professor of Social Psychology and Faculty Associate in the School of Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (USA). For more than two decades she has studied how members of different groups experience contact with each other, and how group differences in status affect cross-group relations. Her work seeks to foster the dual goals of promoting positive relations between groups while achieving ever-greater levels of societal equality and justice. She has worked on national initiatives relevant to racial integration and equity, and with nongovernmental organizations to evaluate interventions designed to bridge group differences in divided societies around the globe. A Fellow of the American Psychological Association, Tropp has received distinguished research and teaching awards from the Society of Experimental Social Psychology, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues and the International Society of Political Psychology. Dr. Tropp is coauthor of *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact* (2011) and editor of several books, including *Moving Beyond Prejudice Reduction: Pathways to Positive Intergroup Relations* (2011), the *Oxford Handbook of Intergroup Conflict* (2012), and *Making Research Matter: A Psychologist's Guide to Public Engagement* (2018).

**How to cite this article:** Tropp LR. Crossing to safety: Attachment processes in intergroup contact. *Journal of Social Issues*. 2021;77:86–104.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12426>