The contact hypothesis: from Allport (1954) to the most recent evidence

Francesca Prati
Oxford University

THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

- THE PAST
  - DOES INTERGROUP CONTACT REDUCE INTERGROUP BIAS?
  - WHEN AND HOW?
- THE PRESENT
  - YES! (PETTIGREW & TROPP, 2006: $r = -.22$, $p < .001$)
  - BUT: FOR ALL GROUPS? AND ALSO IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS?
- THE FUTURE
  - THE COMPLEXITY OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: PERSONAL AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

- THE PAST
  - BASIC THEORY
  - MEDIATING FACTORS
  - MODERATING FACTORS
  - FORMS OF INDIRECT CONTACT

- THE PRESENT
  - THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NORMS
  - MINORITIES' POINT OF VIEW
  - INTERGROUP CONFLICT SITUATIONS

- THE FUTURE
  - NOT ALL CONTACTS ARE POSITIVE
  - WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CONTACT WITH INGROUP MEMBERS?
  - WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE WHO BELONG TO MULTIPLE GROUPS?
  - EFFECTS OF INTERGROUP CONTACT ON THE SELF

THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS (ALLPORT, 1954)

Premise: to reduce conflict, bias and hostility between groups is necessary that those groups meet each other.

Intergroup contact alone, however, can be counter-productive!

To be efficient, intergroup contact requires **4 essential conditions**:

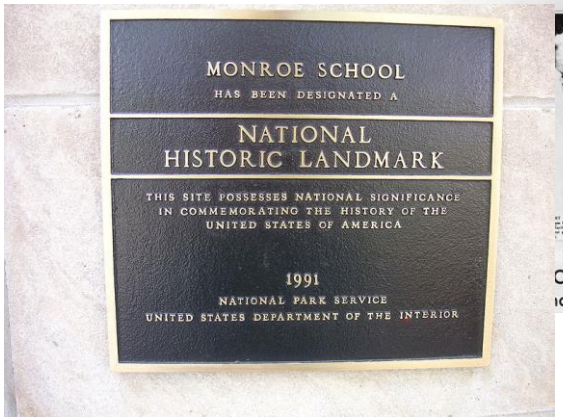
THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS (ALLPORT, 1954)

1) **Positive social climate**: official and institutional support to intergroup contact

- Implementation of Awards/penalties;

- Internalization of behaviors – based on the law – that become attitudes (to avoid cognitive dissonance);

- Impact of collective norms – Intergroup discrimination becomes less acceptable



Tallahassee Democrat

Court Bans Segregation In Public School Cases

Court Ruling Is Unanimous

Cases Directly Involve Only Five States But 17 Others May Be Affected

French Cancel Air Evacuation In Indochina

All Out Attack Will Be Resumed On Rebel Troops

Frank Costello Gets Five Year Prison Term

New US Bomber Test Seen Near

AF Gives Priority To Fastest Plane

Questions Challenging Primary

Secrecy Clamp Put On Talks

McCarthy Calls Order 'Cover Up'

Sober, Careful Thought Urged By Tom Bailey

THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS (ALLPORT, 1954)

3 dicembre 2016

Housing sociale, quando la cultura dell'abitare migliora le relazioni

2) **Intense, frequent and meaningful contact:**

- rewarding relationships, in terms of affect (the issue of generalization…)

-increased knowledge about outgroup members and discovering of similarities (controversial hypothesis)

-acquisition of counter-stereotypic information (ex. Hamilton & Bishop, 1976, on neighborhoods)

THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS (ALLPORT, 1954)

3) Contact should involve **similar status groups** (otherwise low status stereotypes may emerge)

Blanchard et al. (1975). In learning groups, increased interest for the afro-american collaborator when he is considered competent – and when the interaction is successful

THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS (ALLPORT, 1954)

4) **Cooperation between groups to reach a common goal**

Es. Sherif's study

-It is important that the cooperation is successful (Blanchard et al., 1975)

It is difficult to create experimentally a situation where all 4 conditions are met

Es. refugees camp in Ghana (Feuchte et al., 2008)

THE ADVANCEMENTS ON THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

1) Gaertner et al. (1993)

Ri-categorization:

the intergroup differentiation can be reduced by “re-designing” at a cognitive level a super-ordiante group that include both ingroup ed outgroup, leading to a more inclusive social identification (ex., modifying the interdependence structure between groups)

LIMITS OF GAERTNER'S PROPOSAL

It is difficult to create a super-ordinate group outside of the laboratory.

Risk of *assimilation*: minority group members have to conform to mjority group members' norms and values

If cooperative interaction fails, there can be an increased of generalized *negative* intergroup attitudes

Risk of *ingroup projection* (Wenzel, Mummendey e Walduz, 2007) and to extend intergroup conflict to other groups (xenofobia)

THE ADVANCEMENTS ON THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

2) Miller and Brewer (1984):

Decategorization:

Repeated interactions at an interpersonal level lead people to focus on idiosincratic instead of stereotyped information about others.

LIMITS OF MILLER & BREWER' PROPOSAL

Issue of *generalizability* of attitudes

THE ADVANCEMENTS ON THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

3) Hewstone and Brown (1986)

Model of reciprocal differentiation

To improve the generalizability of intergroup contact effect, it is essential to maintain the salience of intergroup differentiation, and to support Allport's intergroup contact conditions

Intergroup contact should help to understand mutual superiorities and inferiorities of each group members in different areas, such as members of each group can maintain ingroup positive distinctiveness without outgroup derogation and thus building new creative social comparisons

THE ADVANCEMENTS ON THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

4) Pettigrew (1998)

Model two-phases

Phase 1: contact at interpersonal level to reduce intergroup anxiety;

Phase 2: intergroup salience to promote generalization of positive social interaction

Dual identity approach (advacement of Gaertner' model): maintain simultaneously salient sub-ordinate different social identities and common inclusive super-ordinate identity (*pluralism*)

MEDIATING FACTORS

Affettive variables

-***Anxiety*** – the fear of inapproriate behavior, the fear of refusal or exploitation is reduced, improving intergroup attitudes and behaviors

-***Empathy***– this emotion facilitates taking the perspective of the other and the attempt to imagine his/her feelings

Empathy also increases intergroup salience facilitating positive attitudes generalization (Vescio et al., 2003)

ANXIETY: THE MAIN MEDIATOR OF INTERGROUP CONTACT EFFECTS

Intergroup contact has shown a reduction of anxiety:

- In segregated schools, vìs-a-vìs contacts between White and Black adolescents (e.g. Noblit & Collins, 1981)
- In Bangladesh, direct contact between Muslims and Hindu people (Islam & Hewstone, 1993)
- In Northern Ireland, direct contact between Catholic and Protestant people (Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2002)
- Anxiety mediates the effect of the quality of contact on intergroup bias (Islam & Hewstone (1993), Greenland & Brown (1999; contact between British and Japanese people; Stephan, Diaz-Loving, & Duran, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 2000)

MEDIATING FACTORS

Cognitive variables

-***Knowledge*** – in the sense of «talking with people of different groups» in the sense of «being informed about outgroup members» reduces the ignorance that elicits anxiety and increases evaluation of similarities (but also differences) in terms of values adn experiences

Compared to affective variables, knowledge is a less strong predictor.

-***Perceived intergroup threat-*** mainly in situation of conflict, the evaluation of outgroup threat may explain the effect of the quality of contact on intergroup attitudes (Tausch et al, 2007)

MODERATING FACTORS

- The **generalization** of intergroup contact effects

- *From interpersonal contact to intergroup attitudes*

The **salience of intergroup boundaries** should be maintained during ingroup-outgroup interaction to promote the generalization of positive attitudes to all members of the outgroup (Hewstone, 1996; Vivian, Hewstone, & Brown, 1997)

The **typicality of members in the intergroup interaction** increases the generalization of the effects of a single interaction to the outgroup overall

MODERATING FACTORS

- The **generalization** of intergroup contact effects

- *From intergroup contact in a specific context to the generalization of consequent attitudes to a different context*

Intergroup contact effects can be generalized to a different contexts (few evidence)

- *Secondary transfert effect* (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006)

The negative association between intergroup contact and outgroup bias can be extended to another outgroup (gay, immigrants). It is a general increase of intergroup tolerance (Tausch et al., 2010)

MODERATING FACTORS

- Group **status**

- Intergroup contact are stronger for the majority than the minority groups (the latter have higher frequency of contact that are sub-ordinated)

- **Individual levels** of intergroup bias and contact

-individual level of bias can be a barrier to contact (Allport, 1954); but intergroup contact is particularly efficient for people with high intergroup bias (Dhont & van Hiel, 2009) except when they are under pressure (Plant & Devine, 2001)

-Intergroup contact is more efficient for people with low previous contacts (Al Ramiah et al., 2013). However, previous contact can increase the effects of further contacts

MODERATING FACTORS

- **Intergroup ideologies**

- For people who endorse ideologies based on intergroup hate, intergroup contact does not reduce outgroup bias
- In conflicting situations, multi-cultural ideology leads to the opposite effect, such as an increased of bias and hostile outcomes

EXTENDED CONTACT (WRIGHT, ARON, MCLAUGHLIN-VOLPE, & ROPP, 1997)

- *Definition*: EC is the knowledge that an ingroup member has a positive and closed relationship with an outgroup member can reduce intergroup bias
- EC have beneficial effects on intergroup attitudes controlling for direct contact
- EC have the *same beneficial effects of direct contact*, such as reduced anxiety and negative attitudes
- EC has *unique effects, such as the increased inclusion of other in the concept of the self* (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991) with consequences on social norms
- EC changes the perception of group norms on the desirability of intergroup friendships
- EC changes the perception of outgroup norms
- The effects of EC (contrary to the ones of direct contact) are equally strong for *majority and minority groups* (Gómez, Tropp, & Fernández, 2011)

VICARIOUS CONTACT

- *Definition*: observing an ingroup member who interact with an outgroup member

- Positive portraits of ingroup-outgroup relationships reported by social *media* (*parasocial contact*; Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005) can change the opinion of the audience

- Paluck (2009): field experiment in Rwanda = radio soap opera about good relationships between Hutu & Tutsi vs. radio documentary. Results showed that experimental groups changed social norms in favour of social integration, increased intergroup cooperation and outgroup trust

IMAGINED CONTACT

- *Definition*: imagining the self in interaction with a member of an outgroup

- IC *reduced bias* towards elderly people and gay people (Turner et al., 2007) and increased the attribution of positive traits towards ethnic minorities (Husnu & Crisp, 2010; Stathi & Crisp, 2008)

- IC *can reduced stereotype threat among* elderly people (Abrams, Crisp, Marques, Fagg, Bedford, & Provias, 2008; see also Abrams, Eller, & Bryant, 2006)

- IC has a weaker effect compared to other forms of contact, but it can be employed as first form of intervention to promote intergroup relationships in situations where there is no possibility of direct contact or where there is high hostility
- Negative IC followed by Positive IC leads to reduced anxiety towards outgroup members to a higher extent compared to 2 Positive IC, based on cognitive behavioral therapies (Birtel & Crisp, 2012)

INTERVENTION IN SCHOOLS (VEZZALI, CAPOZZA, GIOVANNINI & STATHI, 2011)

Ingroup members are substituted by a character (perceived as similar to the self) – Harry Potter – who is in contact with members of stigmatized groups.

Parasocial contact hypothesis

The exposition to social media characters leads to affective and cognitive outcomes that are similar to those of direct contact (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005)

INTERVENTION IN SCHOOLS (VEZZALI, CAPOZZA, GIOVANNINI & STATHI, 2011)

Moderators of the contact-prejudice relationship

-Identification with the main positive character (Harry Potter)

- Distancing from the main negative character (Voldemort)

Extended contact reduces intergroup prejudice, if students identify themselves with the positive character and also if they distance themselves from the negative character.

INTERVENTION IN SCHOOLS (VEZZALI, CAPOZZA, GIOVANNINI & STATHI, 2011)

Mediators of contact-prejudice relationship

-empathy (perspective-taking)

Study 1

Elementary school

Reading HP improves students'attitudes towards immigrant people, if they identify with HP (compared to control group composed by students who read other stories)

INTERVENTION IN SCHOOLS (VEZZALI, CAPOZZA, GIOVANNINI & STATHI, 2011)

Study 2

High School

Reading HP improved students' attitudes towards gay people, only when students identify with HP

Study 3

University students

Reading HP enhanced students' attitudes towards refugees, when students distance themselves from the negative character.

THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

- THE PAST
  - BASIC THEORY
  - MEDIATING FACTORS
  - MODERATING FACTORS
  - FORMS OF INDIRECT CONTACT

- THE PRESENT
  - THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NORMS
  - MINORITIES' POINT OF VIEW
  - INTERGROUP CONFLICT SITUATIONS

- THE FUTURE
  - NOT ALL CONTACTS ARE POSITIVE
  - WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CONTACT WITH INGROUP MEMBERS?
  - WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE WHO BELONG TO MULTIPLE GROUPS?
  - EFFECTS OF INTERGROUP CONTACT ON THE SELF

DIRECT CONTACT MEASURE (ISLAM & HEWSTON, 1993)

- Today we still do not have a validated measure of direct contact.
- The majority of the studies on intergroup contact rely on self-report measures and correlational design.

- *The **quantity** of contact* is measured by asking individuals to rate a) how many outgroup members do they know (1 = none, 5 = a lot); b) how often they have contact with outgroup members (1= *never*, 5 = *very often*).

- *The **quality** of contact* is measured by asking individuals to what extent they think that contact with outgroup members is c) pleasant, d) cooperative, e) superificial on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*).

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CONTEXT AND SOCIAL NORMS

Prejudice is created not only on the basis of personal encounters but also on the basis of the place where people live (Christ et al., 2014)

The frequency of **positive intergroup contact in someone's neighbourhood or region** predicts prejudice reduction to a higher extent than the frequency of personal positive direct contacts with outgroup members

This effect is explained by ingroup social norms

Sociology: in multi-ethnic neighborhoods there is less intergroup trust than in homogeneous neighborhoods (Putnam, 2000)

MAJORITIES' POINT OF VIEW

Majority groups are focused on the management of the interaction in a non-conflictual way and also to be perceived as good and moral from the minority

In terms of *acculturation strategy* (Berry, 1997):

- Majority groups prefer assimilation (tendency to minorities' submission)

- Minority group prefer social integration or multiculturalism (similar to dual identity); but in private contexts often prefer separation

Issue of negotiation to reach a common consensus on interactions between groups

MINORITIES' POINT OF VIEW

Minority groups are motivated to consider not only similarities but also differences from the outgroup to maintain their unicity

Minorities' needs are different from those of the majority and do not correspond to Allports' condition of contact (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015)

The paradox of contact: positive intergroup contact leads minorities to reduce the willingness to engage for social change (es. protests for social rights and intergroup equality; Dixon et al., 2007)

The irony of harmony: positive intergroup contact leads minorities to have *false expectations* of social equality and so to diminish collective action for social change (Saguy et al., 2009)

INTERGROUP CONFLICTING SITUATIONS

- **Northern Ireland**: Catholic and Protestant people who had high frequency of positive intergroup contact showed **increased willingness of forgiveness**, increased outgroup trust and reduced anger compared to thoes who has less intergroup contacts (Tam et al., 2007; Hewstone et al., 2006; Tam et al., 2009).

- **Bosnia-Herzegovina**: Bosnic and Serb people who have experienced positive intergroup contact before the conflict showed **higher willingness to reconciliation** after the war compared to those who did not have preivous contact (Biro et al., 2004; Cehajic et al., 2008)

- **Israel**: Jews and Palestinian people who participated in an intervention of intergroup contact showed higher **willigness to find a compromise** together with the outgroup and a more positive attitude towards intergroup peace compared to those who did not take part to the intervention (Biton & Salomon, 2006)

- **Rwanda**: Hutu e Tutsi people who participated to an intervention based on dialogue about both suffered atrocities as well as perpetrated atrocities showed reduced identification with the ingroup, **increased perception of outgroup variety**, and increased positive ingroup stereotypes (Rimè et al., 2011) compared to the control group

- **Sri Lanka**: Tamil and Sinhalese people who participated to an intervention on intergroup direct contact, after 1 year showed increased **empathy** towards outgroup members and willingness to spend money for disadvantaged children of the outgroup (Malhotra & Liyanage, 2005)

INTERGROUP CONFLICTING SITUATIONS

India: places where there was a higher presence of **inter-ethnic social network** between Hindu and Musulmani (es. Clubs, companies, associations etc...) showed increased intergroup contacts and reduced intergroup violence (Varshney, 2002)

Positive contact can not only reduce and resolve hostilities and conflicts but can also **prevent them**.

This is due to social norms in favour of social integration and the institutional support to this goal.

INTERGROUP CONTACT IN SCHOOL CONTEXTS

Studies on schools de-segregation in the US

Mixed results: in half of the cases, desegregation leads to *increased prejudice*, mainly from the perspective of the majority group (Stephan, 1978), or in any case to low positive effects (Schofield e Eurich-Fulcer, 2001)

Nevertheless, effects in the long-terms seems to be promising

EFFECTS OF DESEGREGATION AT SCHOOL

Brown, Rutland & Watters (2007) – study in UK

Children (of majority and minority) belonging to classess with different level of ethnicity (>20% of minority students) showed:

- increased self-esteem,
- reduced difficulties in peers-social relationships,
- increased pro-social behaviors
- reduced episodes of discriminations

Compared to children who do not have such diverity in their class.

EFFECTS OF DESEGREGATION AT SCHOOLS

Ri-segregration?

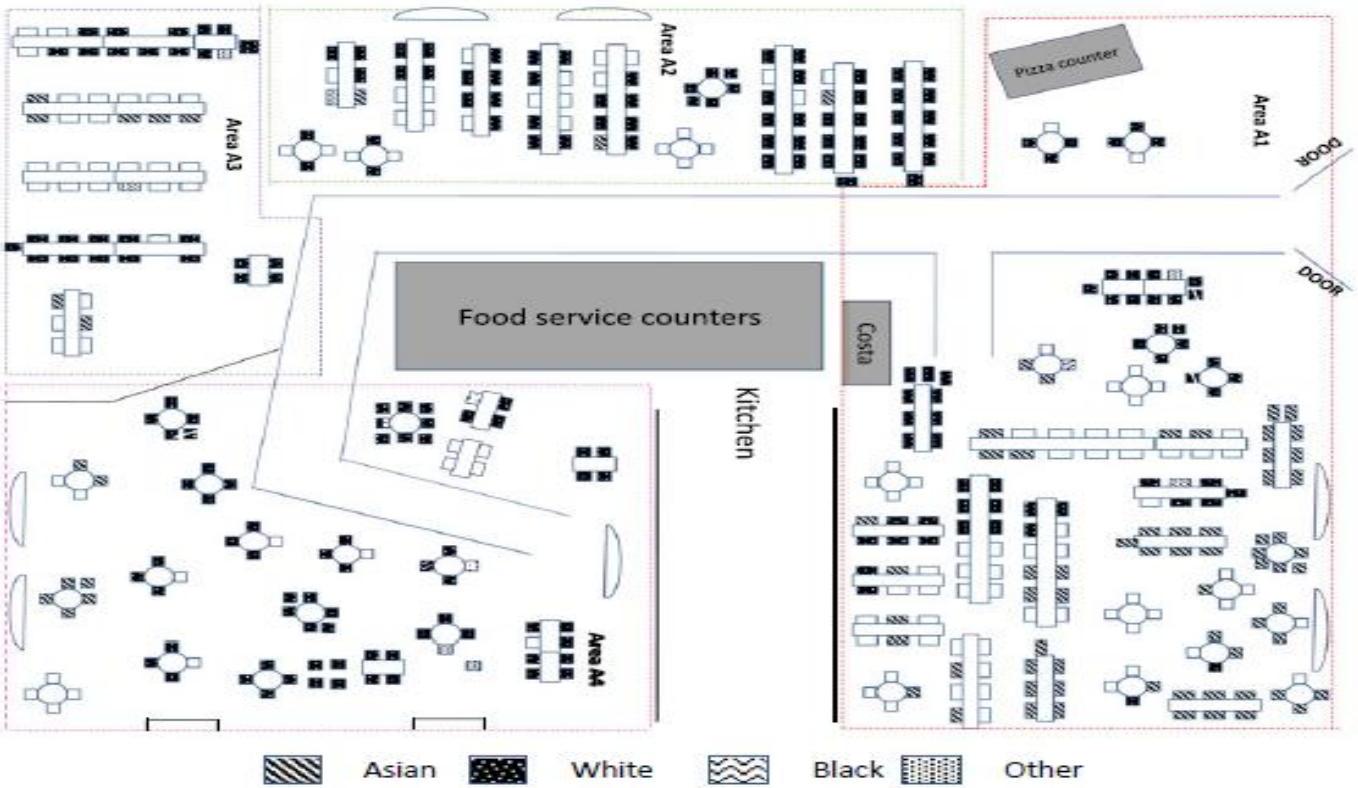


Figure 1. Map of high school cafeteria; snapshot of seating patterns at a particular time interval – on Day 2 at 12.00 to 12.25 p.m. (Study 1).

from Al Ramiah, Schmid, Hewstone, & Floe, 2015

What drives spontaneous ri-segregragation?

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for White and Asian participants at Time 1 (Study 3)

Time 1 constructs	White sample	Asian sample	Difference (*t* value)
Own fear of rejection	2.70 (1.12)	2.59 (1.06)	1.98*
Outgroup's perceived fear of rejection	2.61 (1.14)	2.41 (1.03)	3.50***
Own lack of interest	2.80 (1.13)	2.61 (1.10)	3.33**
Outgroup's perceived lack of interest	2.94 (1.07)	2.75 (1.06)	3.38**
Ingroup norms	2.70 (1.11)	3.06 (1.08)	−6.34***
Outgroup norms	3.39 (1.06)	3.67 (.93)	−5.25***
Number of outgroup friends	1.99 (1.07)	2.76 (1.21)	−13.50***
Outgroup attitude	3.14 (1.02)	3.53 (.87)	−7.65***
Own diversity beliefs	3.19 (1.15)	3.97 (1.00)	−13.57***
Intergroup anxiety	2.69 (1.10)	2.35 (.95)	6.03***
Percentage of outgroup members in school	10.99 (18.05)	38.97 (24.39)	−27.26***
Likelihood of sitting with outgroup members in cafeteria	2.82 (1.08)	3.12 (1.10)	−5.20***

Notes. Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.
***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

Ingroup norms (to what extent parents and closed friends are in favour of intergroup relationships) and **number of friends of the outgroup** are the main predictors for choosing to set with outgroup members

EFFECTS OF DESEGREGATION AT SCHOOLS

Si there efficient integration **in other social contexts**?

It is difficult to meet all Allport (1954) conditions

In particular, **there is the issue of the super-ordinate social climate** (de-segregation is viewed as an obligation)

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Cooperative learning tasks imply the necessity to divide the work among individuals of the group and requires every member's collaboration

CL may involve a small reward

CL facilitates peers interactions, increased knowledge, avoids competitions

Teacher can be an institutional support for contact

Es. Maras & Brown (1996) showed that cooperative learning groups including children with learning disorder

THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

- THE PAST
  - BASIC THEORY
  - MEDIATING FACTORS
  - MODERATING FACTORS
  - FORMS OF INDIRECT CONTACT

- THE PRESENT
  - THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NORMS
  - MINORITIES' POINT OF VIEW
  - INTERGROUP CONFLICT SITUATIONS

- THE FUTURE
  - NOT ALL CONTACTS ARE POSITIVE
  - WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CONTACT WITH INGROUP MEMBERS?
  - WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE WHO BELONG TO MULTIPLE GROUPS?
  - EFFECTS OF INTERGROUP CONTACT ON THE SELF

NOT ALL CONTACTS ARE POSITIVE

The valence-salience effect: negative contact increases intergroup salience and so its effect can be generalized to a higher extent than that of positive contact (Paolini et al., 2010)

Negative contact è is a major predictor of prejudice compared to positive contact (interethnic contact in Australia and USA; Barlow et al., 2012)

Negative contact is stronger but positive contact is more frequent and common than negative contact, so in the long term the quantity of positive contact can compensate the intensity of negative contact (in Europe; Graf, Paolini & Rubin, 2014)

It is important to understand the influence of positive contact on subsequent negative contact and viceversa from the perspective of noth majority and minority groups

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF CONTACT WITH INGROUP MEMBERS?

Hidraulic effect: increased contact with outgroup members leads to reduced contact with ingroup members and vice versa

There is a negative relationship between the number of ingroup and outgroup friends (Levin et al., 2003) and effects on prejudice

Deprovincialization (Pettigrew, 1997): having more friends and contact with outgroup members leads also to reduce the myth of the ingroup

It is important to understand the influence of contact and friends with ingroup members on intergroup contact relationships

WHEN MULTIPLE GROUPS ARE SIMULTANEOUSLY SALIENT?

In modern multi-cultural societies, there is an increased amount of people belonging to more than one group of the same category (migrants of second generation; biculturals)

Contact with bicultural people challenges behaviors towards one or more of their multiple memberships?

Sandwich effect:bicultural people can more easily meet people belonging to different groups and they find themselves to "mediate" between people belonging to different groups suffering to be perceived as different from both of the groups considered

It is important to understand intergroup contact processes of bicultural people

EFFECTS ON THE SELF

Intergroup contact effects in terms of health:
Intergroup bias reduces minorities' wellbeing, leading to bad health conditions (Major et al., in press)

Intergroup bias in the relationship doctor-patient (Penner et al., in press):
-doctors' bias towards ethnic minorities can lead to choose more aggressive treatments and less expensive one for them compared to ingroup patients
-the perception to be treated differently from others reduces minorities members' trust towards doctors

It is important to understand the dynamics at the basis of the relationships doctor-patient to improve health conditions of minority group members

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION!