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Teaching & Learning Guide for: The role of individual differences in understanding and enhancing intergroup contact

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Turner, R., Hodson, G., & Dhont, K. (in press). The role of individual differences in understanding and enhancing intergroup contact. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*. DOI: 10.1111/spc3.12533

Author's Introduction

Intergroup contact, the direct or extended (or virtual/imagined) interaction with members of other groups, has enjoyed a long history in social psychology. Allport (1954) introduced the “Contact Hypothesis”, which has since evolved into a full and complex “Contact Theory” (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; see also Hodson & Hewstone, 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2001; Turner, Hewstone, Voci, Vonofakou, & Christ, 2007). Across different types of groups, different types of contact, and different methodologies, researchers find that having more encounters with specific outgroup members tends to reduce prejudice toward that group as a whole (see meta-analyses by Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2014; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Lemmer & Wagner, 2015). Importantly, contact works more reliably at reducing prejudice relative to other interventions (e.g., Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014). Yet researchers historically felt that individual differences in prejudice-proneness (e.g., authoritarianism) were either irrelevant to, or were obstacles to, contact-based prejudice reduction (see Hodson, Costello, & MacInnis, 2013). More recently, interest in individual differences in contact settings has grown steadily. This article serves as an education tool to not only teach students about intergroup contact and personality (among other individual differences), but to encourage them to consider the possibilities for learning and prejudice reduction when these two topics are conceptually integrated.

Author Recommends:

Asbrock, F., Christ, O., Duckitt, J., & Sibley, C. G. (2012). Differential effects of intergroup contact for authoritarians and social dominators: A Dual Process Model perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(4), 477-490. doi:10.1177/0146167211429747.

This ambitious paper uses both cross sectional and longitudinal (i.e., effects over time) nationally representative German datasets to examine the roles of right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) in moderating the benefits of contact. Conceptually the authors also draw on Dual Process Theory in a

unique and beneficial way. Asbrock and colleagues find that contact works best for those higher in RWA (but not necessarily SDO).

Dhont, K., & Van Hiel, A. (2011). Direct contact and authoritarianism as moderators between extended contact and reduced prejudice: Lower threat and greater trust as mediators. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 14, 223-237. DOI: 10.1177/1368430210391121

These researchers examined direct and extended contact (i.e., knowing other ingroup members experiencing outgroup contact) in a representative sample of Dutch adults. The authors found that extended contact effects (on reduced prejudice) were pronounced among those higher (vs. lower) in RWA, and among those with little (vs. much) direct outgroup contact. Importantly, the authors found that increased trust and lowered threat explained or mediated these findings.

Graf, S., & Sczesny, S. (2019). Intergroup contact with migrants is linked to support for migrants through attitudes, especially in people who are politically right wing. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 73, 102-106.

In a large sample of Swiss university students, these authors examined reactions to recent refugee influxes in Europe. They found that positive contact increased favorable attitudes toward and support for migrants, whereas negative contact had the reverse effect. Interestingly, these effects, both positive and negative, were significantly stronger among those politically right- (vs. left-) leaning.

Hodson, G. (2011). Do ideologically intolerant people benefit from intergroup contact? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20, 154-159. DOI: 10.1177/0963721411409025

This paper reviews early findings showing that those prone to prejudice can benefit most from contact's effects on lowering prejudice. The author explains why it is important that contact works (and often best) among those predisposed to be prejudicial, given that other types of interventions typically work primarily among low prejudice people and/or backfire and thus worsen the attitudes of prejudicial people.

Hodson, G., Costello, K., & MacInnis, C. C. (2013). Is intergroup contact beneficial among intolerant people? Exploring individual differences in the benefits of contact on attitudes. In G. Hodson & M. Hewstone (Eds.), *Advances in intergroup contact* (pp. 49-80). London, UK: Psychology Press.

A comprehensive review explaining how and why contact researchers largely ignored the potential role of individual differences in the effectiveness of intergroup contact. In doing so, the authors help researchers how to think about and conceptualize contact as a psychological construct, and about how variables become characterized as being "social" or "personal" in nature.

Hodson, G., & Dhont, K. (2015). The person-based nature of prejudice: Individual difference predictors of intergroup negativity. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 26, 1-42. DOI: 10.1080/10463283.2015.1070018

With social psychology seemingly torn between explanations for prejudice that focus on the person *or* the situation, this paper details the importance of person-based factors, particularly in the context of intergroup contact. The authors stress that the Person X Situation approach, which has borne fruit in other psychological domains,

powerfully contextualizes personal contact with outgroup members as both personal and social phenomena.

Kteily, N. S., Hodson, G., Dhont, K., & Ho, A. K. (2019). Predisposed to prejudice but responsive to intergroup contact? Testing the unique benefits of intergroup contact across different types of individual differences. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 22, 3-25. DOI: 10.1177/1368430217716750

This paper pits multiple individual difference variables (e.g., RWA, SDO, ingroup identification, need for closure) against each other in order to test the relative importance of each in moderating contact-prejudice effects. In a large sample of Americans, the authors discover that several individual difference variables uniquely matter, and that contact works well among those higher in prejudice regardless of the basis of their prejudicial orientations.

Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2011). *Essays in social psychology. When groups meet: The dynamics of intergroup contact*. New York, NY, US: Psychology Press. This book represents the culmination of 15+ years of contact research by the Pettigrew and Tropp team, who have systematically synthesized when and why contact reduces prejudice across multiple meta-analyses. This comprehensive book provides valuable insights into the overall domain of intergroup contact.

Turner, R. N., Dhont, K., Hewstone, M., Prestwich, A., & Vonofakou, C. (2014). The role of personality factors in the reduction of intergroup anxiety and amelioration of outgroup attitudes via intergroup contact. *European Journal of Personality*, 28, 180-192. DOI: 10.1002/per.1927

Across two studies in the UK the authors test how basic personality traits predict prejudice through (or via) contact or contact-relevant variables. They find that Extraversion predicts lower prejudice via greater cross-group friendship, whereas Openness to Experience and Agreeableness predict lower prejudice via lower intergroup anxiety (a variable also associated with greater contact). Critically, cross group friendships reduced prejudice among those lower (vs. higher) in Agreeableness or Extraversion.

Van Assche, J., Roets, A., Van Hiel, A., & Dhont, K. (2019). Diverse reactions to ethnic diversity: The role of individual differences in authoritarianism. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 28(6), 523-527. DOI: 10.1177/0963721419857769

This recent review reflects on recent debates and mixed findings regarding reactions to cultural diversity, a topic related to but distinct from contact. In contrast to the findings with contact, the authors demonstrate that diversity exacerbates negativity among those predisposed to prejudice (e.g., authoritarians). Recognizing that contact is not the same as living in a diverse neighbourhood, the authors synthesize the Person x Situation research findings relevant to contact and diversity.

White, F.A., Maunder, R., & Verrelli, S. (in press). Text-based E-contact: Harnessing cooperative internet interactions to bridge the social and psychological divide. *European Review of Social Psychology*. DOI: 10.1080/10463283.2020.1753459

Very recent comprehensive review of the benefits of e-contact, that is, contact online. Given that highly prejudicial people typically avoid face-to-face contact in general, such use of technology opens up avenues to initiate contact among such people.

Online Materials:

You can follow intergroup contact researchers on Twitter (and other social media) to learn of their latest research. For example, you can follow us (@GordonHodsonPhD; @rhiannon_turner; @kristof_dhont), or you can follow others who are similarly active online (@cara_macinnis; @page_gould; @lindatropp; @Arne_Roets; @MarkHoffarth; @fasbrock; @ProfRichCrisp; @fionaw0000; @reimthyme; @PolPsychKent; @Dominic_Abrams; @DrKeonWest; @Shelley_McKeown; @DurrheimKevin; @evagtgreen). You can also follow journals, publishers, and societies who regularly publish on or otherwise discuss intergroup contact (@GPIR_SAGE; @SPSSI; @easpinfo; @SPSPnews).

<https://hexaco.org/>

This website is a great resource to better understand the HEXACO personality space, assessing Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, eXtraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience, the six basic personality factors. Learn about the history of the scale/constructs, access the questionnaire (in multiple languages; long and short versions), and take the test to learn more about your own personality (i.e. results are provided for respondents to later view).

<http://www.intergroupresources.com/>

This website concerns intergroup relations generally, with the self-expressed goal of "Sharing tools to strengthen intergroup relations at the grassroots. It provides comprehensive coverage of prejudice generally, focusing mostly on racism and immigration but applicable to a wide range of prejudices. Includes ideas for curricula, dialogue ideas etc. This resource is very applicable to the domain of intergroup contact.

<https://secure.understandingprejudice.org/>

This excellent resource provides media content, teaching and instruction ideas and activities, with links to syllabi and curricula, all on the topic of prejudice.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQ04pfYcwk-PreX0r2t88bw/featured>
SPSSI-SASP VIDEOLIBRARY from SASP-SPSSI Group Meeting: Advances in Intergroup Contact Research: Showcasing, Consolidating, Deconstructing and Innovating the Science of Social Integration (29th April- 1st May, 2019 Newcastle, NSW Australia). Excellent survey of the most recent developments on intergroup contact, as presented some of the world's contact experts, on YouTube.

<https://www.in-mind.org/article/intergroup-contact-theory-past-present-and-future>
Accessible resource on intergroup contact, including a table highlighting solutions (e.g., equal group status), complete with examples and references.

<http://spsp.org/resources/multimedia/experts/diversity#political>

Brief video interviews (5-10 mins) on YouTube, featuring prominent prejudice researchers talking about direct and imagined intergroup contact (Susan Fiske; Kerry Kawakami; Eva Peitri), diversity in intergroup relations (Sylvia Perry), and group behaviour as it pertains to individual differences in ideology (Nour Kteily).

Sample Syllabus:

Textbook: Hodson, G., & Hewstone, M. (Eds.) (2013). *Advances in intergroup contact*. London, UK: Psychology Press.

Week I: Understanding Contact As A Prejudice Reduction Tool

Pettigrew, T.F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49, 65-85.

Pettigrew, T.F., & Tropp, L.R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 751-783. DOI: 10.1037/0022-3514.90.5.751

Week II: Understanding Personality and Individual Differences

Funder, D.C. (2008). Persons, situations, and person-situation interactions. In O.P. John, R.W. Robins, & L.A. Pervin (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (pp. 568-580). New York: Guilford.

Lee, K., & Ashton, M. C. (2008). The HEXACO personality factors in the indigenous personality lexicons of English and 11 other languages. *Journal of Personality*, 76, 1001-1053. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-6494.2008.00512.x

Week III: Integration of Person and Situation in Prejudice and Contact Research

Hodson, G., & Dhont, K. (2015). The person-based nature of prejudice: Individual difference predictors of intergroup negativity. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 26, 1-42. DOI: 10.1080/10463283.2015.1070018

Week IV: Alternatives to Direct Contact

Crisp, R. J., & Turner, R. N. (2009). Can imagined interactions produce positive perceptions? Reducing prejudice through simulated social contact. *American Psychologist*, 64, 231-240. doi:10.1037/a0014718

Vezzali, L., Hewstone, M., Capozza, D., Giovannini, D., & Wölfer, R. (2014). Improving intergroup relations with extended and vicarious forms of indirect contact. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 25, 314-389. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10463283.2014.982948>

Week V: Moving Beyond the Personal: Higher-level Contact (e.g., Societal)

Christ, O., Schmid, K., Lolliot, S., Swart, H., Stolle, D., Tausch, N., Al Ramiah, A., Wagner, U., Vertovec, S., & Hewstone, M. (2014). Contextual effect of positive intergroup contact on outgroup prejudice. *PNAS*, 111, 3996-4000. doi 10.1073/pnas.132090

Week VI: Methodological Considerations: Capturing Both Person and Situation

Christ, O. & Wagner, U. (2013). Methodological issues in the study of intergroup contact: Towards a new wave of research. In G. Hodson & M. Hewstone (Eds.), *Advances in Intergroup Contact* (pp. 233-261). London, UK: Psychology Press.

Week VII: Challenges to Studying & Implementing Contact

Dixon, J., Durrheim, K., & Tredoux, C. (2005). Beyond the optimal contact strategy: A reality check for the contact hypothesis. *American Psychologist*, 60, 697–711. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.60.7.697

Wright, S., & Lubensky, M. (2009). The struggle for social equality: Collective action vs. prejudice reduction. In S. Demoulin, J. P. Leyens, & J. F. Dovidio (Eds.), *Intergroup misunderstandings: Impact of divergent social realities* (pp. 291–310). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Focus Questions

1. What is meant by “intergroup contact”? Does contact always involve face-to-face interaction, and if not, what other forms can it take?
2. How does contact compare in its effectiveness to other prejudice interventions?
3. Consider whether contact reduces prejudice, or whether those with lower prejudice simply seek more contact. How might one go about addressing this question empirically?
4. Can contact change and shape personality? Likewise, can personality shape intergroup contact interactions?
5. Does contact work equally well across different types of outgroups (e.g., racial, age-based, national)? What considerations might one have to keep in mind when “translating” research findings from one domain (e.g., contact with a sexual orientation outgroup) to another (e.g., contact with racial outgroups)?

Seminar/Project Idea:

Personal Intergroup Contact Assessment (Early in Course)

Working independently, first have students complete the HEXACO-60 personality inventory (www.hexaco.org). Then ask students to list up to 10 of their best friends. Next ask them to rate the degree to which they like, trust, and feel close to each friend on a scale from 1 (*very little*) to 7 (*very much*). Repeat the exercise but with regard to classmates that the students know but do not consider a friend. Next ask them to, as best they can, write the racial identity that each friend or acquaintance would likely ascribe themselves, in addition to their sexual orientation. Ask students to then examine their own list: are most of their friends, especially their closest friends, within their own racial and sexual orientation groups? Is this more the case for friends than for acquaintances? Finally, have them examine their personality scores. Do they

find their scores surprising or congruent with expectations? How does their personality relate to their friendship ratings? If they scored higher in Openness to Experience, for instance, did they list a relatively high percentage of cross-group friendships? Conclude by informing students that during the semester they will be learning about contact and how it reduces intergroup tensions as a function of personality (and other individual differences such as political ideology).

Post-COVID-19 Contact (Conclusion of Course)

Based on their knowledge from the course and readings, students form into groups (approximately 5-6) to discuss how the future of intergroup contact research in a post-pandemic (e.g., COVID-19) world. Encourage students to discuss how social isolation made them feel during the 2020 pandemic, with particular focus on any group or intergroup aspects of being isolated. Encourage them to develop a list of concerns or barriers to effective intergroup contact during pandemics, plus a list of potential solutions. These points can include technology (e.g., video-chatting), but also encourage students to contemplate ideas about face-to-face contact. Ask students how they, as consultants, might advise their government on the advantages and disadvantages of contact during pandemics. Dissolve the groups and have a leader from each group discuss their themes to the wider class. Conclude with a full-class discussion of whether students plan to maintain or increase any ingroup contact during the next pandemic. Encourage students to keep a diary of their feelings both during and after future pandemics, and consider creating a Facebook or other social media forum where students can share their contact-relevant pandemic concerns and plans with other classrooms engaged on this topic.

References

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doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2013.11.002
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