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INTERGROUP CONFLICT

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Sunni-Shiite violence, political acrimony between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians, prejudice, discrimination, religious differences, labor-management disputes, and the different moral universes of pro-choice and pro-life groups in the United States are all the subject matter of intergroup conflict. Intergroup conflict is a subset of the more general study of intergroup relations, which has its origins in social psychology. Intergroup relations, as defined by Taylor and Moghaddam (1994), is the study of "any aspect of human interaction that involves individuals perceiving themselves as members of a social category, or being perceived by others as belonging to a social category" (p. 6). Interaction predicated on *social category* membership is central to this definition. One research tradition in communication focuses on personal interactions that involve perceiving and treating another person as an individual with a unique identity and set of traits. Another tradition, the one most pertinent to intergroup relations, concerns *social identity* or the fact that as group members, individuals are defined by all of the perceptions and associations relevant to those groups. The most common group category identities are ethnicity, religion, gender, nationality, and categories of sexual orientation, political sensibilities, and various cultural identities. The study of intergroup relations is a vast topic with an

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entire journal devoted to its development (i.e., *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*). Almost every study of Black–White relations, diversity, political conflict, discrimination, stereotypes, minority-majority relations, ethnic or religious bias, or bullying on the playground is related to intergroup conflict. It would be impossible to review such an array of literature; thus, only a subset of issues will be covered. The following review focuses on the social scientific and empirical literature addressing key issues in communication, psychology, and intergroup conflict.

SOME DEFINITIONAL DISTINCTIONS

Although the distinction between *intergroup relations* and *intergroup conflict* is relatively minor, it is defensible nonetheless. Groups can relate to one another in a nonconflictual manner, thus establishing intergroup conflict as a special subprocess of intergroup relations. Moreover, the cognitive processes subserving intergroup relations such as categorizing, stereotyping, attitudes, and attributions have different implications for conflict. And most important, issues in intergroup conflict—including their causes, management, and resolution—are practical and relevant. However, a few additional qualifiers are necessary.

First, not all social actors are required to be actively aware of the intergroup nature of the communication. This fact poses complex perceptual and methodological problems but does not obviate those instances when interaction is informed by social categories that are outside the awareness of the participants. Minority group members regularly report being treated as members of a social category even if others are unaware of it. For example, African Americans who have strong racial identification are more likely to hold negative attitudes toward Whites than are those who do not show strong

identification with their race (Stephan et al., 2002). African Americans who have strong racial identification are more likely to view Whites as a realistic threat to their well-being as well as a symbolic threat to the value systems they believe that African Americans hold than are those who do not strongly identify with their race (Stephan et al., 2002). Minorities who have strong racial identification are more likely to believe that discrimination occurs in their own life than are those who do not strongly identify with their race (Operario & Fiske, 2001). Individuals with strong racial identification are more likely to believe that discrimination will prevent them from succeeding than are individuals who less strongly identify with their race (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002).

Moreover, the perpetrator of a group prejudicial comment might be completely ignorant of its social effects or, in turn, the recipient could be accused of excessive sensitivity or misinterpretation. Another important point is illustrated in a study of racially mixed health care work teams (Dreachslin, Hunt, & Sprainer, 2000). Results demonstrated that some African Americans viewed team conflict and miscommunication through a frame that attributed such problems to race, whereas other African Americans and Whites attributed the same difficulties to status differences and team roles. Dreachslin et al. (2000) note that group processes played a significant role in maintaining the frames; specifically, they assert, "Social isolation by race reinforces both overarching themes, i.e., different perspectives and alternative realities, because perceptual filters, shared beliefs and social reality are reinforced through interaction in social networks" (p. 1409). And individuals with strong ethnic identity are more likely to attribute ambiguous actions by out-group members toward in-group members to race than are those who identify less strongly (Operario & Fiske, 2001).

Second, intergroup conflict interactions are most characterized by cognitive and

linguistic attributes evocative of category membership and not mutual attitudes among individual members of a group. It is not necessary for all members of a group to be acquainted or express mutual attraction. It is, for example, possible to be a member of an ethnic group (e.g., Italian, African American, Arab) and have very few personal relations with other group members, share little in common other than category membership, and have a personal category identity that ranges from low to high.

Third, the relationship between interpersonal and intergroup interactions is a continuum. Harwood and Giles (2005) explain that interactions can be high or low on either dimension, thus yielding a 2 × 2 space defined by interpersonal and intergroup interactions. An interracial couple facing problems resulting from public stereotypes would be an example of interaction high on both dimensions. Even though the couple's interpersonal relationship is highly salient, they must deal with each individual's racial category membership. Purely interpersonal communication (low on the intergroup dimension) might take place between friends or acquaintances while chatting about something in their past or their personal relationship. The opposite quadrant—or the one predominately intergroup in nature— would involve encounters between two or more people defined solely on the basis of group membership such as gender or ethnicity. These interactions might entail expressions of group biases and stereotypes or involve dialogue sessions devoted to exploring or solving problems between groups. Finally, routine service encounters during commercial exchanges would be typical of interactions low on both dimensions.

Although this scheme is a useful heuristic for categorizing interactions, the research literature is most concerned with interactions that have high intergroup salience. Clearly, one type of interaction rarely occurs to the exclusion of the other, and "real" interactions display a complex fluctuation between interpersonal and intergroup

exchanges. And personal relations in the form of cross-group friendships facilitate intergroup contact and help individuals generalize more positively to a target out-group (N. Miller, 2002; Wright & Tropp, 2005); moreover, everyday encounters with out-groups can form strong negative attitudes toward them (Stephan et al., 2002).

Intergroup researchers' practical concerns direct their attention to contact between competing groups that is structured to enhance positive group outcomes (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). Moreover, the salience of various group identities is so ubiquitous that most interactions cannot escape intergroup perceptions. Some scholars have argued that in-group identity and intergroup conflict is evolutionarily based (cf. Gil-White, 2001) and impossible to circumvent. As will become apparent, longitudinal (Levin, van Laar, & Sidanius, 2003) and meta-analytic (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000, 2006) studies provide converging and convincing evidence that controlled communicative contact between conflicting groups influences a variety of cognitive, linguistic, and emotional processes that reduces prejudice. After considering theoretical issues in intergroup relations, literature concerning the causes, consequences, and resolution of conflict between identity groups will be presented.

◆ History and Theory of Intergroup Conflict

Muzafer Sherif is credited with pioneering work in intergroup conflict (Sherif, 1951; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961; cf. Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). In Sherif's classic study (Learnpeace, n.d.), a group of boys was unwittingly cast in an experiment conducted at a summer camp in the 1950s. Although they were unaware of it, Sherif had divided them into two groups and arranged experiences that would

amplify and then resolve destructive conflict between them. The groups quickly came into conflict, displaying in-group and out-group biases, prejudicial evaluations, and distorted decision making. The experimenters then induced cooperation by creating shared goals that required their working together. For example, they had to join forces to start a truck that had broken down and repair a faulty water pipe. By the end of the camp, the boys had become reconciled and even asked to return to the city on the same bus. Significantly, it was not enough merely to bring people together to talk; rather, positive interdependence and controlled interaction were necessary to ameliorate group conflict.

Sherif's experiment prompted decades of research examining the role of intergroup contact in reducing prejudice. Most of the research has been informed by efforts to identify the consequences of intergroup conflict and find ways to reduce prejudice and judgmental distortions. The bulk of this research supports the conclusion that contact reduces prejudice and encourages other positive group outcomes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000, 2006; Tropp, 2003). Taylor and Moghaddam (1994) describe five broad theories of intergroup relations (realistic conflict theory, equity theory, social identity theory, relative deprivation, and a five-stage model of intergroup relations), and Harwood and Giles (2005) pose a perspective on intergroup communication. Of the five broad theories, social identity theory is most pertinent to intergroup conflict and how psychological and communication processes are influenced. Realistic conflict theory capitalizes on the assumptions of economic models and assumes that conflict is the result of incompatible group interests. Real conflicts of interest are the cause of group hostility, and engendering compatible goals that induce cooperation, as in the Sherif (1951) studies, is the solution to conflict. Equity theory is based on principles of justice and finds group conflict in situations where

there is the perception of unfairness (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). It argues that the restoration of equity (e.g., affirmative action) between advantaged and disadvantaged groups restores psychological balance and is an antidote to group retaliation. The key issue in relative deprivation theory is that conflict is signaled when one group feels "relatively" disadvantaged, even if objective circumstances suggest otherwise (cf. Crosby, 1976). Finally, the five-stage model describes stages of intergroup behavior and locates conflict in the antagonism between high- and low-status groups (Taylor & McKirnan, 1984). Social identity theory is considered below in detail because it is a major theory of intergroup conflict.

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985) make an important distinction for intergroup conflict between personal identity and group identity (Hogg & Reid, 2006). This distinction is based on principles of categorization. Evolutionary psychologists (cf. Gil-White, 2001) have claimed that the human species evolved to process ethnic groups as distinct species because it was adaptive in the ancestral environment. Humans needed to distinguish between their own and dangerous others; consequently, the human brain evolved the capacity to sort and classify people and objects. Moreover, this was not simple learning: If humans were required in evolutionary history to approach other species (e.g., lions) and "test" whether they were truly dangerous, they would not have survived the testing period. This is related to the research noted earlier that negative everyday experiences with another group leads to anxiety about interacting with them and avoidance. Accordingly, the ability to categorize evolved as the result of cognitive (not physical) machinery selected for processing information about species. All

species develop processes that make possible the recognition and preference for their own group to facilitate reproduction, security, and need fulfillment. This recognition results in the perception of norm boundaries that assist in recognizing one's own group as distinct from others. Thus, visual symbols of physical differences and interactional norms become important information for group membership. Humans are evolutionarily endowed with the ability to identify differences based on descent and inclusion in a group whose members have physiological, interactional, and normative properties in common. This is not an essentialist argument. The argument is not that we are composed of "essential" ethnic properties but that there is a psychological tendency to essentialize others (Haslam, Bastian, Bain, & Kashima, 2006). Some of the most vicious intergroup conflict is the result of one group essentializing what it considers to be the dangerous characteristics of another group. These processes evolved in a particularly salient way for "ethnic" groups but apply to groups in general. Still, the depth and legitimacy of in-group bias vary as a function of the centrality of the group identity. Not all social groups are the same. People do not fight and die for their management group at work or their book club because such groups are not related to species survival.

Thus, identities are crucially shaped by group membership—that is, their social identity. And the drive to enhance positive self-concept and maintain status motivates people to view their own in-group more favorably than out-groups. When the distinctiveness of the in-group is not apparent or fades in comparison to other groups, then group members will seek comparisons that favor their own group to regain distinctiveness. This can take the form of increasing negative attitudes toward other groups, enhancing allegiance to one's own group (ethnocentrism), distorting one's perceptions of in-groups and out-groups, or directly attacking out-groups to gain advantage. In their analysis

of lay attributions about conflict, Cargile, Bradac, and Cole (2006) found that social identity corresponded with explanations for group conflict.

Theories of intergroup conflict have sought to tease out the differences between personal and group identity. Self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) makes this fundamental distinction and focuses on the variety of cognitive processes underlying intergroup conflict. When personal identity is salient, an individual is motivated by his or her own needs, beliefs, and standards; by contrast, when a social identity is activated, individuals see themselves as group members, even interchangeable with other members, and not as unique individuals. Activated social identity elevates collective needs and interests over individual ones. This dynamic implies very different predictions about the causes and reasons for certain behaviors hostile to intergroup cooperation. When a social (group) identity is salient, it intensifies cues about the typicality or atypicality of other groups and potentiates unfavorable comparisons that can stimulate conflict (Miller, 2002). Also, in-group stereotypes about out-groups are used to make judgments about them. When individual identities are salient, out-group perceptions and judgments are dependent solely on individual cognitive variations. The various lines of research discussed below will demonstrate how this distinction between individual and group identity plays an important role in intergroup conflict and its resolution.

PREJUDICE AND INTERGROUP CONFLICT

Prejudice in the classic sense is an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization (Allport, 1954). It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group or an individual of that group. With respect to intergroup conflict, prejudice refers to a negative or hostile

attitude toward another social group. It is a distorted, biased, or inaccurate attitude toward a group based on defective or incomplete interpretations of information acquired through either direct or indirect experience with a group. This leads naturally to the question of how to reverse or eliminate the processes of prejudice and in-group/out-group conflict. One, deceptively simple answer is that people must assemble under favorable conditions and communicate in such a way as to facilitate cooperation, reconciliation, mutual understanding, or whatever serves the goals of conflict resolution (Allport, 1954).

Before the past decade, research on prejudice and intergroup conflict sought to explain how and why groups held biases toward one another. Researchers looked for situational factors that caused bias. However, recent research has focused on processes that mediate the relationship between groups and intergroup bias (Molina, Wittig, & Giang, 2004). Situations are moderators of intergroup bias, and cognitive processes are mediators between contact conditions and bias (Wittig & Molina, 2000). People *assimilate* into their own group by assigning the same characteristics to themselves as they do the groups to which they belong (Clement & Krueger, 2000). Cognitive representations of one's own group and groups to which one does *not* belong are theoretically and empirically foundational to the study of prejudice and intergroup conflict. Consistent with both social categorization theory and evolutionary psychology, these cognitive representations promote in-group/out-group contrasts, and these contrasts affect bias and judgments about conflict.

In-group/out-group contrasts can be explained by different theories. Cadinu and Rothbart's (1996) differentiation model assumes that as a result of ascribing in-group characteristics to themselves, individuals will ascribe the opposite to the out-group. This is understood as an exaggeration of categories designed to assist with the task of "understanding" the other group. A second theory (Greenwald et al., 2002) uses balance theory predictions to explain that in-groups resist forming links with out-groups to remain cognitively consistent. Thus, there is additional motivation to "balance" the in-group/out-group relationship with ascribing different characteristics to the two groups. Yet a third theory, termed *optimal distinctiveness theory* (Brewer, 1991), argues that people seek a balance between interpersonal affiliation and uniqueness. During intergroup conflict, they satisfy affiliation needs by assimilation to the in-group and uniqueness needs by contrasting with the out-group, thereby aggravating conflict. Although somewhat different, these theories all predict ascription of positive self and in-group characteristics and different (often negative) characteristics to out-groups.

Intergroup conflict intensifies out-group contrasts. The conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians, for example, has exaggerated and intensified the stereotypes that each group holds about the other. One explanation is that individuals selectively choose information about the other group that is indicative of dissimilarities (Blanton, 2001). Moreover, consistent with optimal distinctiveness theory described above, conflict with an out-group is an attractive opportunity for distinctiveness. Israeli-Jews continue to see themselves as democratic and peaceful in contrast to their images of Palestinian terrorism. Conversely, harmony between groups causes group members to see out-groups as more similar to themselves to achieve cognitive balance. In the absence of conflict, assimilation is the default cognitive process that is overruled by contrast during conflict. One mediating variable is the strength of group identification (Spears & Manstead, 1990). High group identification makes contrasts easier and more natural. Riketta (2005) finds strong support for these relationships between conflict and the intensity of in-group/out-group contrasts. The tendency to

essentialize other groups is one of the particularly pernicious consequences of intergroup conflict.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ESSENTIALISM

An important line of intergroup conflict research concerns lay theories of group perception (Cargile et al., 2006; Demoulin, Leyens, & Yzerbyt, 2006; Levy, Stroessner, & Dweck, 1998). Lay theories refer to informal, commonsense explanations that people have for individual and group behavior. In the intergroup conflict literature, *subjective essentialism* is one of the most important lay beliefs. Subjective essentialism is the notion that members of a group have numerous surface similarities, but all share a belief in the deep underlying features that describe themselves and differentiate them from others. These deep underlying features are assumed to capture the "essence" of individuals and groups and their underlying nature. Individuals who score high on lay principles of essentialism can be characterized as racist, sexist, or homophobic. Psychological essentialism is common and begins at a young age (Gelman & Wellman, 1991).

Essentialism influences relations between groups that are in conflict in numerous ways. Demoulin et al. (2006) explain how essentialist theories affect prejudice and accentuate contrast effects because people with strong essentialist beliefs uphold the immutability of categories such as race, ethnicity, and gender. Traditionally stigmatized groups such as homosexuals, Jews, or Africans are assumed to represent a social category equivalent to a biological species. Essentialism also leads to infrahumanization or the tendency to see out-groups as less human than a comparative in-group (Demoulin et al., 2006). This makes intergroup forgiveness more difficult and exacerbates conflict. Finally, essentialism promotes dispositional attributions to justify

differences and inequalities between groups rather than situational or historical ones. This again confounds conflict resolution because solutions to conflict are unavailable; to wit, individuals are responsible for the conflict and cannot change their nature. From another perspective, the more a group is considered an "entity"—that is, perceived as a coherent unit with clear boundaries—the more observers attribute stable dispositions to the group (Yzerbyt, Rogier, & Fiske, 1998) and the more observers are likely to essentialize the group. Again, this process thwarts conflict resolution.

EMOTIONS AND INTERGROUP CONFLICT

The study of emotions is increasingly influencing accounts of prejudice and intergroup conflict. Intergroup emotion theory extends the idea that group membership is an important part of the self-concept (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). When individuals categorize themselves as group members, they may feel deep comradeship with the other group members. Consequently, the group takes on emotional attachments and characteristics such that individuals react emotionally to in-groups and out-groups. For example, when an out-group is judged to be threatening, intergroup emotions such as anger or hostility are aroused. And the converse is true; positive judgments for the out-group garner positive intergroup emotions (Miller, Smith, & Mackie, 2004).

One practical consequence of this line of theorizing is that dominant groups (e.g., White Americans) often report that they avoid contact with minority groups (e.g., African Americans) not because they dislike them or because they hold aggressive stereotypes but because interaction produces discomfort or anxiety. They are uncertain about how to act, conversational topics, and the possibility of unintentional offense. Contact with an out-group can reduce

prejudice by reducing anxiety with no attendant change in beliefs or attitudes (Voci & Hewstone, 2003). D. A. Miller et al. (2004) found no improvement of intergroup relations when working with stereotype reduction but considerable success when trying to instill positive emotions. Emotions apparently overrode cognitive factors when changing attitudes on the basis of group contact. And there is some research that suggests contact is exhausting to in-group members (Richeson & Shelton, 2003).

Anger and infrahumanization, which involves the attribution of more human emotions to the in-group, have been shown to play important roles in the intergroup conflict processes. Tam et al. (2007) note the importance of community forgiveness in permitting groups formerly in conflict to move forward in a positive way. Forgiveness means changing feelings toward the other group and adopting prosocial behaviors. They found clear evidence that anger has impeded forgiveness in the Northern Ireland conflict. Moreover, forgiveness requires that one group see the humanity in the other; seeing the out-group as less human is very detrimental to forgiveness (Tam et al., 2007). It is very common and easy to infrahumanize a group during violent conflict, and these emotions linger long after the violence has stopped. Later in the chapter, we consider how "contact" or interaction can help manage these emotions and increase forgiveness.

What perceptual and symbolic distortions result from intergroup conflict? In addressing this question, Maoz, Ward, Katz, and Ross (2002) found that peace proposals were devalued when they were thought to have originated from the other side. Among Jewish respondents, an Israeli peace proposal was devalued when it was attributed to a Palestinian author. Even "hawkish" Jews were critical of a proposal they thought came from "dovish" Jews. Another relevant line of research recognizes the perceptual distinction between individual

attitudes and attitudes about one's own group (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003). In other words, group members (say, Israeli-Jews) may not feel personally vulnerable but believe that their in-group (the collective of Israeli-Jews) is vulnerable. This research has documented how beliefs concerning vulnerability, injustice, distrust, superiority, and helplessness operate at the group level and as important individual difference variables. The perception that one's group is threatened by any of these variables predicts attitudes and policy positions. One study found that stronger beliefs about in-group vulnerability, injustice, distrust, and superiority were associated with greater support for the coercive and morally problematic policy decisions in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Maoz & Eidelson, 2007). The study shows how shared cultural beliefs create an ethos of conflict, influence decision making, and mobilize ethnocentric agenda. In a similar vein, some have argued that fear of harm to one's group is more related to willingness to compromise than is personal fear (Maoz & McCauley, 2005). Understanding the development of group-level norms and cultural beliefs as apart from individual beliefs is becoming increasingly important in intergroup conflict research. Future research should examine how political leaders and ethnic entrepreneurs use rhetorical appeals to vulnerability, mistrust, injustice, superiority, and helplessness to arouse passion and justify violence.

◆ Communication Issues and Intergroup Conflict

Communication issues have received scant attention in the academic study of intergroup conflict. Some have observed that communication scholars have been "slower to address intergroup issues" (Harwood & Giles, 2005, p. 1) than social psychologists. Ellis (2006) has organized some literature

around social psychology, communication, and ethnopolitical conflict. He locates and describes communication and media issues that are germane to intergroup conflict. But much of the work in communication that refers to itself as "intergroup" avoids direct engagement with intergroup "conflict" issues. Although communication scholars make many references to identity and social categorization, their analysis of *actual* communication is sometimes highly attenuated. Communication scholars often focus on social construction and symbolic interaction explanations of how group members negotiate and acquire identities but do little to explain how those identities are implicated in actual intergroup conflicts. For example, communication scholars easily embrace identity as "fluid" and "socially constructed" (cf. Hajek, Abrams, & Murachver, 2005) but have failed to confront realistic concepts such as essentialism and the intractability of identities in actual conflicts. Identities are indeed socially constructed, but identity groups do not behave as if their identity were a flimsy concept capable of easy manipulation. Below I review the various strands of research in the area of communication and intergroup conflict. The special issue of *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* (2005), edited by Reid and Giles, provides a useful presentation of communication issues and intergroup relations with some articles emphasizing conflict more than others. A special issue of *Journal of Social Issues* also contains an excellent overview of social psychological issues in intergroup conflict (Nagda, Tropp, & Paluck, 2006).

COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION THEORY

Clearly, the most significant communication development related to intergroup relations is communication accommodation theory (CAT). This work has been described in numerous places (cf. Gallois, Ogay, &

Giles, 2004; Harwood & Giles, 2005, for reviews). CAT built on social categorization theory to include how language is used to establish social identities. It is less cognitively oriented than most of the social psychology research reviewed above. For example, individuals use accents or lexical choices to signal their group membership and stress particular identities (Giles & Powesland, 1975). Low-status English might evoke group solidarity and camaraderie for one group and social stigma for another, but both mark the individuals as members of a group with all the attendant traits, attributes, and biases of that group. How linguistic and stylistic choices shift and promote identity convergence and divergence between groups is also an important area of inquiry for CAT. CAT's claim is that social identity theory speaks to identity maintenance and in-group/out-group contrasts, but CAT explains how this works during the communication process. By using language to demonstrate group distinctiveness or similarity, individuals either encourage or discourage intergroup relations.

The majority of the research literature focuses on the development and recognition of various group identities. It refers to tensions, difference, and in-group/out-group dichotomies, but direct and galvanized conflict is relatively absent from the work in CAT. Social groups are identified along with the language that assimilates or contrasts groups. For example, Hajek and Giles (2002) examine identities between different groups of gay men (e.g., younger men and older men) and how they (younger gay men) make reference to such topics as physical attractiveness to distinguish themselves as a group. This is a form of intragroup discrimination. The core research concern is prejudice and discrimination. Communication research foci include health (Harwood & Sparks, 2003), age (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001), disability (Ryan, Bajorek, Beaman, & Anas, 2005), and others (see Harwood & Giles, 2005). Communication accommodation theory

suffers, along with intergroup relations research in general, from the composition fallacy or drawing conclusions at the macro level from individual data (Pettigrew, 2006). Groups and social systems have properties of their own and are constituted by an assembly effect that is different than the sum of their parts. Group norms are more influential than most researchers recognize. A minority group's experience in school is different from that of the majority. The norms that these groups develop have different impacts on the groups. Intergroup contact has positive effects, but these effects are significantly diminished for minority groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000), probably because minority groups develop norms that counteract normal contact effects.

Social identity theory originally described macro-patterns of group differences to explain intergroup conflict on the basis of power, status, and competition for resources. To that end, it was more narrowly focused on intergroup conflict. But CAT and other theories in communication have broadened the work to a more encompassing social identity perspective.

MESSAGE VARIABLES

Recent research has examined message variables and their role in categorization and moderation of attitudes. One important message attribute is language abstractness. Some researchers have suggested that minorities are more influential if they are communicatively consistent (Sigall, Mucchi-Faina, & Mosso, 2006). These researchers found that abstract language enhances the perception of consistency for minorities; however, this was not true for majorities. It may be that audiences listening to majority messages direct their attention to other things. Researchers have examined how stereotypes are communicatively passed from one person to another (Wigboldus, Spears, & Semin, 2005). They propose that categorization processes activate stereotypes

that are brought to the foreground of consciousness. Stereotypes must then be made salient on the basis of the situation and the audience. This research showed that stereotype-consistent information is communicated at a higher level of linguistic abstraction. Stereotypes are not fixed images in people's minds but dependent on both communicative contexts and perceivers. Abstract language allows stereotypes to be activated and thus reproduced in a more socially sensitive manner. Abstract language is assumed to be more consistently true than concrete language.

Findings from Maass, Cadinu, Boni, and Borini (2005) nicely parallel the Wigboldus et al. (2005) work and the linguistic expectancy bias. Maass et al. (2005) found that when individuals communicate in a stereotypically expected manner, that information is communicated abstractly. The concrete qualities of another person are transformed into traits, especially when they are consistent with stereotypes. This cognitive mechanism is responsible for the maintenance of stereotypes and suggests that stereotypes and language abstraction are linked by cognitive processes and interpersonal communication. Clarifying the relationship between stereotypes and interpersonal relations, Ruscher, Cralley, and O'Farrell (2005) found a relationship between initial interactions in an inter-personal relationship and stereotypes. Close dyads that were especially inclined to get along shared more common stereotypes. Apparently, the transmission of out-group stereotypes is facilitated by friendship formation.

The effect of audiences on the inter-pretation of messages is apparent in a study by Elder, Sutton, and Douglas (2005). They reported that group members make strategic considerations, on the basis of in-group/out-group membership, with respect to how certain communications will be understood. Self-esteem is maintained by retaining a distinction between in-group and out-group members. Thus, when

negative information is communicated to an out-group, it elicits greater in-group sensitivity. The in-group is aware of the potential threat of giving critical information to an out-group. Moreover, taking the criticism public was equally objectionable whether the criticism came from an in-group or out-group member. An in-group critic speaking to an in-group audience is acceptable, but the same critic speaking to an out-group is perceived to be embarrassing the group. The strategic use of communication and its group identity consequences should be a focal point for future research.

◆ Communication, the Contact Hypothesis, and the Resolution of Intergroup Conflict

Both the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) and conflict resolution are more naturally aligned with issues in communication. The contact hypothesis holds that assembling people from different identity groups to talk about issues can reduce stereotypes and increase friendliness. At some point in the intergroup conflict process, contact is inevitable; there is simply no escaping the importance of communication. It is communication that manages incommensurability. The idea of contact seems simple but in actuality is not. Contrasting group identities are a powerful basis for conflict, and reducing the effects of group identity and social categorization is very difficult; nevertheless, contact works. Meta-analytic evidence convincingly demonstrates that contact reduces prejudice for ethnic and racial groups as well as elderly groups, the disabled, and those with different sexual orientations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). But there are also some who question the way such research has been conducted (Dixson, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005).

However, contact is not effective unless structured under certain conditions; in fact, uncontrolled contact can exacerbate stereotypes and prejudice. The contact hypothesis recognizes the importance of communicative context for encounter experiences between conflicting groups by insisting on situational conditions that optimize controlled communication designed to maximize successful outcomes (Pettigrew, 1998). The most critical ingredients of successful communicative contact are (a) an environment of equality and diminished status differences, (b) cooperative interdependence and pursuit of common goals, and (c) social norms supporting intergroup contact and affiliative relations (cf. Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). Ellis (2006) explains that the contact hypothesis and its general implications form a conceptual basis for the role of communication in managing and ameliorating difficult conflicts. The formal theory of contact has been amended, with authors proposing nuanced distinctions among situations and arrangements. Moreover, timing is important. When two groups have communicative contact, it is related to successful conflict resolution (Zartman, 1989). Forbes (2004) warns against the tendency to think of communicative contact in the naive, liberal sense of the term, where the magic elixir of friendly personal relations will somehow dissolve deeply ingrained prejudices. Unstructured contact between individuals often does improve particular relationships but little beyond that. Moreover, contact between conflicting group members can exacerbate conflict as the groups compete even more because each is trying to avoid adaptation costs (Forbes, 2004).

The communication that characterizes conflicting groups is highly disfigured, consisting of blame, accusation, stereotypes, delegitimation, prejudice, and various biases. Nonetheless, groups must have contact to overcome these patterns; how-ever, it is the type of communication during contact that matters. Currently, the world can be characterized by the seeming paradox of increased contact via new technologies, such as the Internet, migration, and increased

cultural contact, yet substantial group conflict. Indeed, there was considerable contact between Blacks and Whites in the southern United States before 1960 but with a great deal of prejudice and discrimination. Contact involving focused and goal-oriented intergroup conflict resolution requires beginning with encounters between the two groups designed to reduce prejudices and improve interpersonal relations, followed by macro-strategies involving linguistic, commercial, and structural interdependence. Three lines of research that address core issues in communication, contact, and the resolution of intergroup conflict will now be considered.

In the first of these, Tropp and Pettigrew (2005) note that while some research concludes that intergroup contact leads to reductions in prejudice, other research finds no effect on prejudice reduction. In reconciling these disjunctions, they begin with the distinction between the affective and cognitive dimensions of prejudice. Affective ties such as intercultural friendships, liking, and feelings of closeness are inversely correlated with prejudice. Moreover, measures of prejudice based on affective issues such as sympathy, admiration, and intimacy were particularly influenced by positive interpersonal contact. In contrast, cognitive aspects of prejudice (e.g., stereotypes) are more resistant to change through positive contact. Tropp and Pettigrew (2005) found that contact can produce positive results, but this is principally true for the affective dimension. Most early work on contact focused on the cognitive dimension of prejudice, that is, stereotype reduction and realignments of attitudes and beliefs. But more recent thinking concludes that developing closer friendships, intimate relationships, and trust is most effective in reducing prejudice. These findings are consistent with previously cited work by Voci and Hewstone (2003) on the importance of contact in anxiety reduction.

This research underscores the importance of interpersonal communication to the entire experience of contact and resolution of intergroup conflict. It suggests a different orientation to improving the likelihood of positive contact outcomes. Out-group members who are confronted on the basis of cognitive differences in judgments, beliefs, or ideological positions are treated more objectively. This tendency creates distance between the groups that makes assimilation even more difficult. Orienting toward the other on the basis of affect and quality interpersonal relations makes emotions and feelings more relevant and increases the potential for moving closer interpersonally. Indeed, research has shown that emotions and empathy are particularly effective at reducing prejudice (Finlay & Stephan, 2000). Narratives have also been shown to increase positive relations for intractable conflicts and peace education (Sunwolf & Frey, 2000). In all likelihood, as affective ties between in-group members and out-groups increase, the motivation to reduce stereotypes and to confront cognitive prejudices increases. Generalizing from individuals to groups is enhanced when group membership is salient. Consequently, the type of interaction that is high on both the interpersonal and group dimensions will most likely promote generalization from individuals to out-groups.

The second line of research concerns the importance of the communication process in explaining how the effectiveness of intergroup contact varies (Nagda, 2006). Within this purview, intergroup contact experience can be meaningful and enriching, leading to significant relational improvement, or characterized by resentment and judgmentalism that fuels estrangement. The question becomes one of how meaningful encounters are sustained. The answer lies in the intergroup dialogue experience, which allows for the collective exploration of identities in a context that promotes respect and change (cf. Ellis, 2006; Maoz & Ellis, 2001, 2005). The key communication issues in intergroup contact designed to manage conflict are (a) alliance building or

a willingness to work through problems; (b) engaging the self or a willingness to bring one's own ideas and practices to the encounter through a willingness to work, share, and inquire; (c) critical self-reflection, which requires an examination of one's own ideas; and (d) appreciating differences in others, including hearing their personal histories and points of view. Not only do these dimensions not differ across racial and ethnic groups, but these communication processes lead to increased motivation to reduce differences. They are highly implicated in a sequence that begins with the appreciation of difference and leads to critical analysis and alliance building. Intergroup conflict theorists must continue to explore not only the affective and interpersonal dimensions of contact but the cognitive and realistic dimensions as well. Nagda (2006) makes the distinction between friendship and alliances. Friendship implies personal interest and liking, and alliances are more practical and problem oriented. They are about conjoint commitment to change and solutions. Friendships and alliances reflect the dual track of conflict resolution, that is, the necessity of change and development on personal and pragmatic levels. This is mirrored in work on dialogue groups versus problem-solving groups. Dialogue groups engage people to learn about others, widen identities, develop visions of justice, and promote democratic sensibilities. Dialogue is a means of public deliberation for critical engagement and mobilization for change (McCoy & Scully, 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 2001). Problem-solving groups concentrate on realistic political policy and solutions to material problems (Kelman, 1997). Together, these two tracks represent a commitment to alliances that solve problems and undo prejudice in the process. The dialogic experience has to be purposeful and connected to pragmatic issues. The concept of "dialogue" is not an ethereal process inculcated with abstractions and spirituality; rather, dialogue is the

practice of working through difficult issues together. Democracies, in particular, construct common ground; hence, the goal of dialogue is not so much to manage or control conflict by jointly producing policies and solutions as it is to work through problems and differences that foster new realities and relationships. These new relationships can then form a foundation for future efforts to resolve differences.

The third research program has applied close analysis of communication methods to contact experiences between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians (Ellis & Maoz, 2002, 2003, 2007; Maoz & Ellis, 2001, 2005). Although traditional work in social psychology reviewed previously retains a rigorous variable-analytic research tradition, there is very little work that focuses on the actual communication processes that characterize intergroup contact. Ellis and Maoz (2003) have developed such a communication perspective in their work on patterns of communication and argument between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. Within this perspective, conflict, by definition, is interactive and results from interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals. Interdependence cannot be separated from communication. All behavior in an interactive situation has message value and is therefore communicative. A communicative relationship is a frame that defines how the parties perceive each other (e.g., friend or foe; dominant or subordinate; friendly or unfriendly) and defines what can be said within the frame. Certain moves or messages can be considered appropriate or inappropriate because of the nature of the relationship.

Interactional approaches to conflict postulate that messages form sequences and patterns of exchange. Communication exists through time. Patterns of message exchanges over time constitute the defining characteristics of the conflicting parties. To describe an individual, group, or culture as having a communication style (e.g., competitive, accommodating, democratic, integrative) is to say that they engage in a

recurring communication pattern. Interaction between conflicting groups takes the form of "He said A and he said B and she said C and so on"—a series of moves and countermoves. Every message in a sequence is both a response to something previous and a stimulus for something in the future. These ongoing interchanges constitute a chain of overlapping links.

The Ellis and Maoz studies revealed that the arguments during political dialogues between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians were not necessarily consistent with expectations from work on cultural speech codes (Katriel, 1986; Philipsen, 1997). In other words, the Israeli-Jews do not necessarily use more assertive arguments, and the Arabs are not necessarily less overtly aggressive. It appears that the dialogue context of communication does provide an environment for more equal status discussion and thus alters speech codes. Palestinians are more assertive during these dialogues than speech code theory, but not theories based on minority relations, would suggest. They speak more and engage in more reasoning and elaboration. This means that they state propositions and then support them with evidence in the classic tradition of argument. This dialogue context may also strengthen the sense of unity for groups with minority status. And the communication patterns reflect this. More recent studies that extend the analysis of argument to the Internet (Ellis & Maoz, 2007) further explore contexts for intergroup contact. Analysis of communication characteristics during intergroup contact is one of the best ways to uncover the context-depen-dent group norms that become meaningful prototypes for similarities and differences between groups (Hogg & Reid, 2006). If groups develop their own norms, and individuals categorize and define themselves on that basis, then these context-dependent norms become standards for perceptions, attitudes, and feelings that must be understood.

◆ Conclusion

Much theoretical work must be done to integrate communication studies with the tradition of intergroup relations in general. Hogg and Reid (2006) have made a very good start at this by locating the social identity perspective within communication research. Their primary insight is that group norms are context dependent but, more important, group norms are pro-duced, reproduced, maintained, and changed through communication. Group norms, or collective cognitive images that represent the group, rely on communication to reduce uncertainty and regulate percep-tions. Two lines of research should be pur-sued. One is to integrate further the social categorization work with persuasion. Influentials and opinion leaders in groups probably attend most to the group norms and encourage their endorsement. Persuading someone to behave in accor-dance with group prototypes is a matter of internalizing relevant in-group properties. Some work has begun (cf. Lapinski & Rimal, 2005) in this area, but there seems to be much potential for effective applica-tions. Common category membership pro-vides the semantic intersubjectivity that persuaders seek. How this might work in the political, health, advertising, or business arena suggests an interesting research agenda. A second line of future research pertaining to media effects is suggested by Reid and Hogg (2005). The studies by Eidelson and Eidelson (2003) dovetail nicely with third-person media effects (Reid & Hogg, 2005) by attending to the distinc-tion between first-person and third-person perceptions. Self-categorization theory helps explain third-person effects by noting that people make judgments about the extent to which media are normative for in-groups and out-groups. Normative media for out-groups produce third-person effects; that is, out-groups are more influenced by such media than are in-groups. There are

many implications for media effects by recognizing the group-specific, differential impact of media. The contact hypothesis is fundamentally democratic and provides a public space and safe environment for critical engagement. There is strong evidence that programs of intergroup conflict reduction show positive results in the educational and political arenas and need to be promoted continuously.

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