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# Intergroup contact research in the 21st century: Lessons learned and forward progress if we remain open

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## Abstract

This article presents the 2021 *JSI* special issue on intergroup contact, which we designed to offer a fresh outlook on a rapidly expanding literature on the antecedents, dynamics, and consequences of interactions between members of opposing groups in society—or intergroup contact. We start by discussing the results of a bibliographic search of intergroup contact research between 1937 and 2021 and organizing our analysis around two distinct phases of this research, as they are demarcated in volume and quality by Pettigrew and Tropp's landmark meta-analysis in 2006. We then turn our attention to an overview of the 12 review and commentary articles contributing to the special issue, which reflect advancements in themes, methodologies, and analytics of the last 15 years of research. We argue that this second generation of research has effectively addressed influential and legitimate critiques of the literature and, as a result, led to a more complex and nuanced understanding of intergroup contact that can now be readily harnessed by social cohesion practitioners and policy makers to increase the efficacy of contact-based interventions in society. We conclude by calling on a third generation of research on intergroup contact that fully harnesses diversity of ideas, peoples, and minds and keeps in close check unproductive

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The search terms and logical operands for the focal Psycinfo search were: intergroup contact OR cross?group contact OR intergroup interaction\$ OR cross?group interaction\* OR intergroup friend\* OR cross?group friend\* OR contact hypothesis OR intergroup contact theory OR indirect contact OR extended contact OR negative contact. Those for the benchmark PsycInfo search were: intergroup OR cross?group. For both searches, field terms had to appear in keywords, abstracts, or titles in peer-reviewed journals. The search period was set to 1937–2021 inclusive

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dynamics that stifle scientific progress, and pose a threat to healthy and safe research communities. Together with the 50 diverse contributors of this special issue, we commit to making the intergroup contact research community, like the topic of intergroup contact itself, diverse and inclusive.

### KEYWORDS

diversity in science, diversity science, intergroup contact, intergroup interactions, intergroup relations, prejudice reduction, science innovation

“The scientist, by the very nature of [their] commitment, creates more and more questions, never fewer. Indeed the measure of our intellectual maturity [...] is our capacity to feel less and less satisfied with our answers to better problems.” (Allport, 1954).

In the last 70 years, Gordon Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis has inspired integration policies and shaped peace and reconciliation intervention programs around the world. Similarly, social psychological investigations on intergroup contact have thrived and continue to thrive. This *JSI* special issue on intergroup contact showcases research developments in this area during the last 15 years and sets the trajectories for future research that is relevant to the work of practitioners and policy makers who seek to promote social cohesion and social integration in their societies.

The topic of this special issue is relevant and timely. Intergroup contact is at the core of social psychological contributions to the science of social integration and is central to the interests and mission of the Society for the *Psychological Study of Social Issues* (SPSSI) and the *Society for Australasian Social Psychologists* (SASP), who sponsored the Newcastle group meeting on this topic that we organized in Australia in 2019, offering a foundation to this compilation. *SPSSI* co-sponsored with the *European Association of Social Psychology* (EASP) a meeting on the topic of intergroup contact in 2008 and a meeting on seeking and maintaining positive intergroup interactions in 2012. Because research on intergroup contact and intergroup interaction has progressed significantly in recent years, we have designed this special issue to offer a fresh outlook

on this rapidly expanding literature. In turn, we believe this compilation will help to forge the forthcoming research agenda and promote greater communication and collaboration with policy makers and community stakeholders.

This special issue triumphs the success of intergroup contact research. Over more than 70 years of empirical scholarship, we have built a wealth of knowledge regarding the consistency and robustness of relations between intergroup contact and intergroup outcomes (see also Pettigrew, 2021, in this issue), while we have also actively pursued and interrogated meaningful and theory-driven variations of contact's effects. It is with pride that we say that intergroup contact theory has allowed and still allows for complex, nuanced, and at times mixed findings. It has encouraged many interesting scholarly debates and new research directions to be explored.

Over its history, many vexing problem areas in the intergroup contact literature have been illuminated and generated significant advances, which increase our confidence in the benefits of intergroup contact. Throughout this special issue, it will also be evident that the research questions instigated by this work are not placated by this manifest progress, rather new and more pressing questions remain. We are energized by this continued examination of new questions because, in Gordon Allport's (1964) own words, our ability to "create more and more questions" is the very "measure of our intellectual maturity."

Importantly, this special issue harnesses the knowledge and passion of both junior scholars and senior leading experts in the intergroup contact research community. It advances a critical review of contemporary research on the antecedents, dynamics, and consequences of intergroup contact, with an emphasis on recent progress and research in the pipeline. The research captured reflects the work of a very diverse group of scholars and researchers from multiple research laboratories from around the world, using diverse research paradigms and methods, investigating a variety of intergroup settings, participant populations, and societies. As such, we believe it will offer an exciting platform to consolidate our understanding and interpretation of key findings, to discuss emerging research trends and methodologies, and forge new research perspectives and future generations of contact research.

This compilation includes a significant breadth of emerging research themes. In five sections it organizes seven core review articles, four commentaries, and this Introduction. Following this article, a section on contact's functions and processes includes a review article by Kauff et al. (2021) that discusses predictors of intergroup contact and drivers of intergroup contact seeking. Marinucci et al. (2021) then review contemporary research on intimacy-building in intergroup contact across the lifespan. Next, a section on breadth and expansiveness of intergroup contact effects includes an analysis by Boin et al. (2021) about contact's generalization processes, while White et al. (2021) critically review the effectiveness of existing and emerging indirect contact strategies and discuss the independent role of indirect contact, compared to direct contact, in improving intergroup relations. The following section on theoretical and empirical advances includes a review by O'Donnell et al. (2021) about recent technological and analytical advancements in intergroup contact research. Schäfer et al. (2021) summarize recent developments in the study of negative intergroup contact and contact valence asymmetries. Hässler et al. (2021) offer an overview of contemporary research on contact and collective action and advance an integrative model.

At regular points in this compilation, senior scholars including Linda Tropp, Jake Harwood, John Dixon, Shelley McKeown, and Tom Pettigrew have been invited to comment on the nature, relevance, and contribution of these topics within the broader historical landscape of intergroup research, policies, and practices. Their articles provide an attentive and insightful appraisal of progress in specific thematic areas, as well as advance novel integrative ideas capable of guiding future research efforts. By capitalizing on recent theoretical, methodological, and empirical

progress, we hope this *JSI* special issue on intergroup contact will serve as a springboard for further research developments and collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers.

This introductory article contextualizes these research advancements in their historical and scholarly context. We start by displaying the results of a bibliographic search of intergroup contact research over its lifespan and organizing our summative evaluation of this work around two distinct phases of this research tradition (see also Pettigrew's, 2021 in this issue). We argue that the first phase finds its closure and the second phase finds its productive opening in the landmark meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp in 2006.

As the contributions to this special issue reflect recent advancements, this introduction article will pay greater attention to the second generation of intergroup contact research. We will argue that, during in this period, the intergroup contact literature has shown great signs of vitality in both the volume of research produced and in the responsiveness to fruitful scholarly debates and critiques of extant research. We will provide a brief summary of these influential critiques and show how they have given impetus to original and generative new perspectives, which are in turn captured by the special issue's core articles.

Each core article will also include a discussion of the practical translation of each theme into social interventions and policy. It is our belief that each article's in-depth analyses of the translational value and broader impact of intergroup contact research will show that intergroup contact researchers are not shy of tackling modern social challenges on a global scale.

## **TWO GENERATIONS OF RESEARCH MARKED BY DEBATES, ELEGANT SYNTHESSES, AND NEW DEBATES**

This is an exciting time for research on intergroup contact: Allport's (1954) formulation of intergroup contact theory has inspired integration policies, peacebuilding and social cohesion programs, and research around the world for many decades, and it continues to do so. Intergroup contact theory has attracted the attention of social psychologists over the generations, but it is this current generation of contact researchers, including the many contributors to this special issue, who are enjoying a particularly generative phase for research in this area.

We carried out a bibliographic search of the PsycInfo database to gauge increases in the volume of psychological research on intergroup contact from their beginnings (prior to the formalization by Allport) to the present—covering the period 1937 to 2021. To identify intergroup contact articles, we used combinations of keywords (e.g., intergroup and cross-group contact, interaction, and friend) and common derivatives (e.g., indirect, extended, negative contact, contact hypothesis, and intergroup contact theory) as appearing in each publication's title, abstract, or keyword lists. To achieve adequate sensitivity and reduce noise, we then parceled hits into 5-year segments, and limited our search to peer-reviewed articles. We benchmarked our main search against peer-reviewed articles from the same period, including the (more frequent and less restrictive) “intergroup” keyword, so that our appraisal of the volume of intergroup contact research could be assessed against general and broader increases in the volume of *any* publication focused on intergroup relations.

The results of our bibliographic search are displayed in Figure 1. The line curve represents the broader intergroup literature between 1937 and 2021; the bar graph underneath represents the intergroup contact literature within. We graphically organized the results for the intergroup contact literature as comprising two distinct periods or generations of research. The first includes the period from the earliest publications, prefacing Gordon Allport's formalization of the contact hypothesis in his landmark book *The Nature of Prejudice* in 1954, and ending with Pettigrew

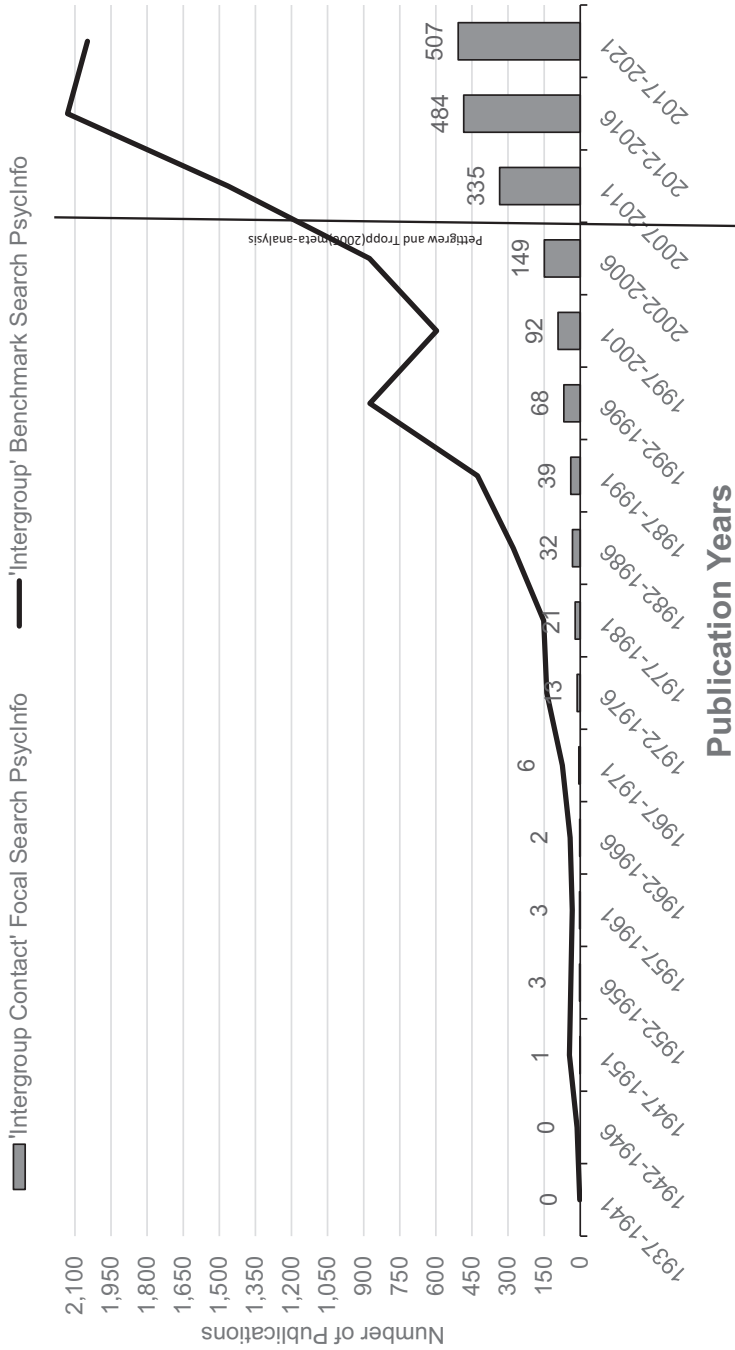


FIGURE 1 Growth in volume of intergroup contact research (1937–2021)

and Tropp's (2006) influential meta-analysis in 2006 (see light grey bars on the left-hand side). The second generation of research includes the period immediately following the publication of Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis to the present (see dark grey bars on the right-hand side). This special issue's contributions reflect research advancements in this second generation of research.

Below, we argue that these two periods reflect two quantitatively and qualitatively distinct generations of research on intergroup contact, centered on different research questions and fueled by separate, but equally generative, scholarly debates, all contributing to taking this area of inquiry to where the state of our scientific knowledge currently stands.

## A first generation of research: Establishing the value of intergroup contact

The first generation of intergroup contact research spanned over 50 years. Notwithstanding earlier discussions of key principles in intergroup contact theory by Williams (1947), the first empirical intergroup contact article meeting our inclusion criteria dates from 1951 and was published in *Public Opinion Quarterly* by Guttman and Foa (1951) with the title "social contact and an intergroup attitude." Their abstract indicates that "numerous studies have indicated that changes in the direction of intergroup attitudes are positively related to changes in the extent of intergroup contact" (p. 43, emphasis in original), suggesting the existence of even earlier empirical work on the theme.

Based on our bibliographic search, the body of work from the first generation of research represents 24% of the whole intergroup contact literature (415 hits against a total of 1741 over its history) and 12% of the intergroup psychology literature during that period (415 hits against a total of 3494 hits; see left side of Figure 1). This first generation of research focused on establishing the value of intergroup contact for improving intergroup relations and supporting efforts to promote social integration and social cohesion (Pettigrew, 1998), against a backdrop of significant group segregation in society, scholarly skepticism, and a more general refutation of the potential benefits of contact (see Baker, 1934; Forbes, 1997; Ford, 1986; McClendon, 1974). As we note later, this period found its natural closure in empirical and theoretical syntheses published early in the 2000s.

This early literature on intergroup contact is tempered with mixed findings and heated debates. A fundamental problem noted by Allport (1954), but left significantly underexplored in this first phase (see Paolini et al., 2010; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), is that intergroup contact can be either positive or negative. Negative contact is liable to exacerbate intergroup bias and conflict through similar, as well as distinct routes, just as positive contact reduces them (Amir, 1976; Stephan, 1987). Pioneering studies clearly showed these contrasting outcomes of contact (cf. Deutsch & Collins, 1951; Wilner et al., 1952; Works, 1961), which led to reviews with divergent conclusions (cf. Amir, 1969; Cook, 1985; Forbes, 1997; Pettigrew, 1986; Rothbart & John, 1985).

While contact scholars were debating about the most accurate conclusions to draw regarding contact's merits and weaknesses, intergroup contact theory was being used outside of academia to address significant social issues, including informing the racial desegregation of schools (Pettigrew & Mack, 1971), mainstreaming children with disabilities and with behavioral and mental health issues in educational systems (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1981; Naor & Milgram, 1980), helping to resolve ethno-political conflicts (Chirof & Seligman, 2001), and explaining geographical variations in prejudice (Wagner et al., 2003).



A second contentious issue during this first generation of contact research concerned how to achieve and maximize individual-to-group generalization (McIntyre et al., 2016)—that is, how to make contact effects generalize from attitudes towards the specific outgroup members involved in the contact encounter to attitudes towards the outgroup as a whole. Past research documented improvements in attitudes toward individual contact partners, but was often limited in achieving generalized changes in group attitudes (Amir, 1969; Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Some questioned the magnitude of these generalization effects (McClendon, 1974), whereas some wondered about the capacity of individual-level effects to translate into group-level or context-level effects (Forbes, 1997). If changes due to intergroup contact were to be limited to the specific contact partners who met, this would be highly problematic, because intergroup contact can only influence intergroup relations more broadly if attitude change (Pettigrew, 1998) and behavioral change (Paluck et al., 2021) extend to new, previously unknown outgroup members or the outgroup as a whole (Brown & Hewstone, 2005), and possibly even to other outgroups (Pettigrew, 2009).

Two highly influential review articles published about 15 years ago (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), marked the closing of this first generation of intergroup contact research and the beginning of a new phase of inquiry (see vertical line in Figure 1). Their significant and updated syntheses of the evidence on intergroup contact at that point in time offered an empirical and theoretical resolution to the two historically troublesome areas (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Pettigrew, 1998).

On the empirical front, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) published a comprehensive meta-analysis of over 500 intergroup studies and 700 independent samples demonstrating irrefutably that intergroup contact typically (aka on average) improves attitudes toward the contact partners and generalizes to whole outgroups. These effects are modest ( $r = -.22$  and  $-.21$ , respectively) and are significantly heterogeneous, exactly as intergroup contact theory would predict. However, importantly for application, they appeared (again on average) to be quite consistent and to hold reliably across varied participant populations and contact experiences, and across varied intergroup settings. Pettigrew and Tropp's meta-analysis was also instrumental in establishing that Allport's original conditions for "optimal contact" (equal status between groups in contact, common goals and intergroup cooperation, and institutional support) correspond with larger contact effects, yet are not necessarily essential to achieve significant prejudice reduction. Close contact with outgroup partners, such as with friends from other groups, also correspond with larger contact effects ( $r$ 's =  $-.25$  vs.  $.21$ ), relative to the effects of more superficial forms of contact (see also Davies et al., 2011).

On the theoretical front, Brown and Hewstone's (2005) narrative review was successful at integrating distinct solutions to the problem of generalization. Brewer and Miller's (1984) decategorization model, Hewstone and Brown's (1986) categorization model, Gaertner et al.'s (1993) common ingroup identity model, and Pettigrew's (2008) longitudinal reformulation all contribute to our understanding of how salience of social categories may shape contact's effects. Specifically, Brown and Hewstone (2005) provided an insightful synthesis of a significant body of field and experimental evidence confirming that individual-to-group generalization is most likely achieved when the individuals engaged in contact appraise their contact experience positively, while being aware of their respective group memberships. In contrast, intergroup attitudes on the whole will improve little if the group memberships are not salient in the minds of contact partners and they attend exclusively to their individuating characteristics.

Such theoretical integration by Brown and Hewstone (2005) was attained by recognizing that positive appraisals, under conditions of high category salience, could be achieved in varied ways: through the intimacy-building qualities of close contact (decategorization), through encouraging a shared group membership (recategorization) or the progressive introduction of group



differences so as to minimize potential perceptions of threat (longitudinal reformulation). According to Brown and Hewstone's analysis, under any of these scenarios, high category salience would still be essential to generalize outcomes from intergroup contact. It would ensure that the contact partners see themselves and each other as representatives of their groups, rather than merely seeing themselves and others as individuals (e.g., "nice people"), thus allowing changes in attitudes (and/or behaviors) stemming from those positive appraisals from specific individuals to their social categories.

These two review articles together provided convincing closure to the focal debates characterizing the first generation of intergroup contact research, which concerned the value of intergroup contact and its capacity to generalize. For this reason, their significance cannot be underestimated. About 15 years since their publication, Brown and Hewstone's (2005) article has received over 1700 Google Scholar citations and Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis has surpassed the 8000 citation mark. The meta-analysis in particular is rightly cherished by all contact researchers as "the landmark publication" on intergroup contact, after Allport's (1954) seminal book. Part of its special status, in our view, lies exactly in marking the closure of a first generation of research and the opening of a qualitatively different phase in this area.

## **A second generation of research: Mechanisms, variances, and boundary conditions**

The empirical and theoretical syntheses by Pettigrew and Tropp and Brown and Hewstone increased overall confidence in the value and benefits of intergroup contact. Over the past 15 years, there has been a reinvigorated enthusiasm to examine intergroup contact in an increasingly diverse and technologically connected world. These extensions have spurred more advanced analyses of the mechanisms and processes through which contact effects emerge (see Tropp, 2021), greater understanding of potential psychological, social, and structural obstacles that may hinder the presentation of contact effects (for novel insights, see Harwood, 2021), and greater appreciation of the many and diverse faces of intergroup contact and the multilevel nature of its effects (Dixon & McKweon, 2021).

Our bibliographic search demonstrates that contact research has significantly grown in volume. Figure 2 replots the numbers of peer-reviewed articles on intergroup contact in Figure 1 as percentages of the total number of peer-reviewed articles on intergroup relations at any point in time. While Figure 1 shows that both intergroup contact research and intergroup research more generally increased in volume after 2006, Figure 2 helps appreciate that intergroup contact research has grown at a relatively steeper rate within the intergroup research literature, following Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) publication. Relatedly, the second generation of intergroup contact research represents 76% of the whole intergroup contact literature (1326 hits against a total of 1741) and 24% of the whole intergroup research literature in psychology during that period (1326 hits against a total of 5643; see Figure 2).

Besides this increase in volume of contact research since 2006, a clear sign of the stimulating nature of this second phase of intergroup contact research is that it has promoted (and as a result has been characterized by) many scholarly debates. Novel critiques of the burgeoning intergroup contact literature have emerged in recent years, requiring fresh attention and calling for significant new research advancements.

In this Introduction and throughout this *JSI* special issue, we show how these well-founded critiques and considerations have been instrumental in advancing our understanding of intergroup

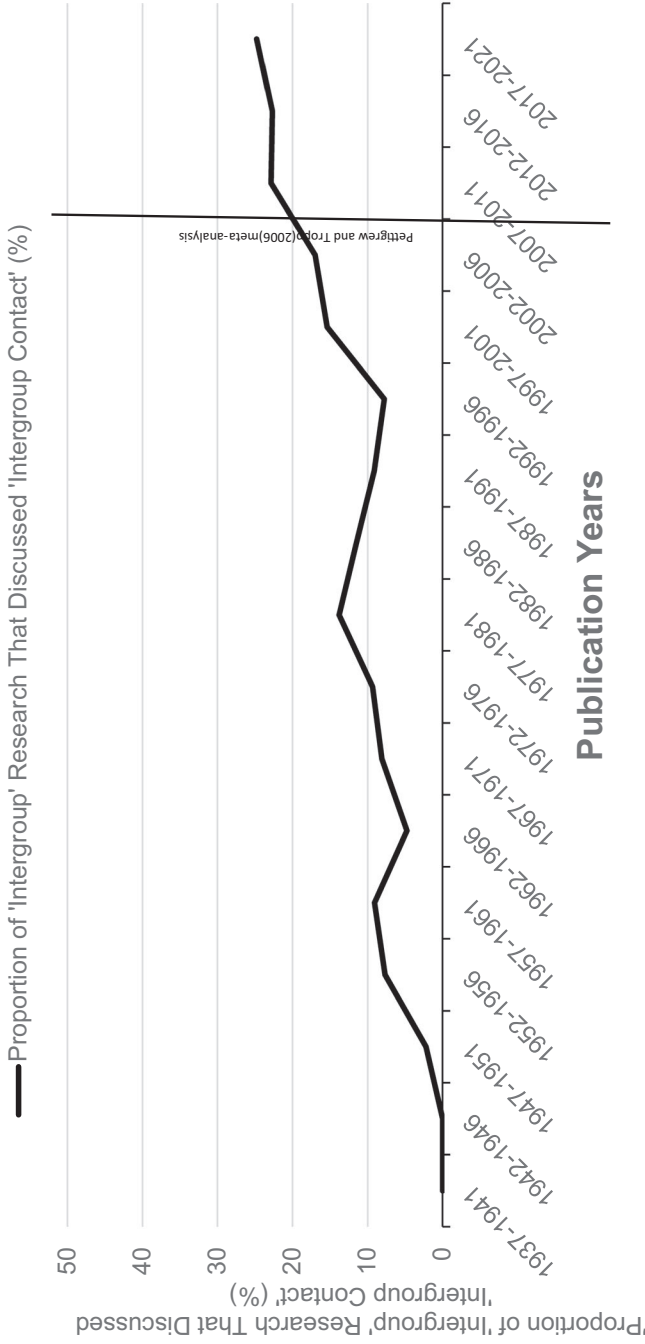


FIGURE 2 Growth in volume of intergroup contact research relative to intergroup research (1937–2021)

contact dynamics, its complexities, and ultimately its potential. They have encouraged contact researchers to engage more deeply with the multifaceted and dynamic social realities with which practitioners and policy makers must contend. The articles in this special issue are a testimony to the generative nature of this phase of intergroup contact research, the diversity of topics and themes that have characterized this research period, and researchers' thoughtful responses to these critiques.

In showing the links between scholarly debates and research advancements, we hope this *JSI* special issue will help scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and the broader public appreciate the theoretical, methodological, and analytic sophistication of contemporary intergroup contact research. These debates and advancements allow for a complex, dynamic, and translational outlook on intergroup contact that practitioners and policy makers can readily use.

## **THE GENERATIVE POWER OF HEALTHY SCHOLARLY DEBATES AND THIS SPECIAL ISSUE**

In this section, we provide a brief overview of influential critiques of intergroup contact research over the last 15 years, and the many ways in which the present collection of papers addresses these critiques.

In 2005, Dixon et al. advanced an insightful, sophisticated, and powerful suite of critiques of the first generation of contact research (see also McKeown & Dixon, 2017). Intergroup contact research was criticized for its historical emphasis on difficult-to-achieve optimal contact conditions and its neglect of more ordinary contact experiences in unstructured settings, most likely leading to informal practices of group resegregation and the subtle reproduction of privilege and disadvantage. Their analysis shed light on contact research's heavy reliance on self-reports and the more pernicious ideological implications of its focus on individual-level prejudice as primary proof of success, perhaps at the expense of more important group-level outcomes (e.g., tackling social inequalities).

More recently, as leading contributors to the contact literature, Pettigrew and Hewstone (2017) have reflected on this body of work and argued that some intergroup contact research is afflicted by a so-called "single factor fallacy." According to these authors, scholarship affected by the "single factor fallacy" falls short of incorporating appropriately nuanced considerations of the complex multivariate and multilevel nature of intergroup contact effects.

Most recently, Paluck et al. (2019) have claimed that intergroup contact research is "non-policy-ready," because a considerable amount of work in the contact tradition does not meet the strictest methodological criteria of randomized control trials. These authors also argue that, as a whole, the contact literature is scant on data from adult (non-college) samples and field settings, and that contact studies often do not assess delayed post-intervention changes resulting from the contact (see also Paluck et al., 2021).

The core articles in this special issue speak directly to these criticisms by highlighting new developments in the contact literature that have been borne from earlier critiques and generated new, important, and vigorous lines of research. These articles include reviews of emerging research on the experience and prevalence of negative contact (Schäfer et al., 2021), links between intergroup contact and social change (Hässler et al., 2021), and technological and analytical advancements that allow us to examine the dynamic and complex nature of intergroup contact as it is subjectively experienced (O'Donnell et al., 2021). Furthering our insights into how contact is experienced (see McKeown & Dixon, 2017), other core articles adopt multilevel and

multivariate approaches to specifying factors that may drive people to seek out and initiate contact (Kauff et al., 2021), and factors that may enhance intimacy in contact as cross-group relationships grow over time (Marinucci et al., 2021). Core articles also speak to the implementation of contact-based strategies as bridge-building interventions, by highlighting the importance of maximizing the potential for generalizing positive contact outcomes (Boin et al., 2021) and designing indirect contact interventions for communities with few opportunities for direct contact (White et al., 2021). We elaborate upon the contributions of these core articles in the paragraphs that follow.

## Schäfer et al.'s article on negative contact

Ordinary contact in naturalistic (vs. intervention) settings varies widely in valence, formality, structure, and intimacy-building potential (Graf et al., 2018). There is growing evidence that positive contact is far more prevalent than negative contact, in both peaceful and post-conflict societies (Barlow et al., 2012; Dhont & Van Hiel, 2009; Graf et al., 2014; Hayward et al., 2017; Pettigrew, 2008). Yet negative contact can still exacerbate intergroup bias and erode social cohesion—at the same time, but not necessarily by the same route—as positive and intimate contact reduces it (Hayward et al., 2017; Laurence et al., 2017).

Schäfer et al. (2021) provide an updated review of recent and in-progress research on these topics that builds on early reviews by Graf and Paolini (2017) and Paolini and McIntyre (2019). Focusing on current evidence of direct, face-to-face contact, they note that findings are presently mixed in terms of relative magnitude of downstream consequences of positive versus negative contact. In this context, they discuss emerging research on factors that moderate the size and direction of these contact valence asymmetries. In particular, they refer to theoretical and empirical temporal analyses of these effects (MacInnis & Page-Gould, 2015; Paolini et al., 2016), placing an emphasis on the modulating influence of past contact experience in shaping the effects of discrete contact experiences in the present (e.g., Paolini et al., 2014; for an intergenerational angle, see Bagci & Gungor, 2019). They also provide a first and fresh overview of novel investigations on the interaction between positive and negative contact (e.g., Árnadóttir et al., 2018). These investigations are responsive to the concerns of policy makers on the ground that intergroup contact might—at times and under specific circumstances—worsen rather than improve intergroup dynamics. Hence, they call (see also Dixon & McKweon, 2021) for more empirical work that ascertains when, where, and among what people, negative contact might be more frequent and more influential for intergroup responding.

Schäfer et al. (2021) demonstrate that published and still in-the-pipeline research is turning its attention to in-depth, qualitative analyses of lay people's appraisals of daily intergroup contact experiences (e.g., Keil & Koschate, 2020), exactly as Dixon and colleagues had recommended (Dixon et al., 2005; McKeown & Dixon, 2017). They show how this work sheds new light on the relevance of unstructured, public places (e.g., shopping centers) and the workplace (see also Dixon et al., 2020) and on the high prevalence of contact that is casual (vs. formal or intimate; Graf et al., 2018). Hence, Schäfer et al. call for concerted efforts to continue to address diversity in the workplace in the form of more diverse settings and structured diversity interventions and of fresh attempts at designing contact-based interventions for unstructured public places. These places offer unprecedented opportunities to the practitioner and policy maker to reach individuals who typically elude more traditional intervention sites.

Importantly, these scholars also draw attention to the fact that, as our analyses of valenced contact become more frequent, more studies show that a large proportion of the surveyed

participants reports no prior or very infrequent negative direct contact with the outgroup. Together, this emerging data increases optimism in intergroup contact's overall capacity to keep the detrimental impact of negative contact under check and progressively curb prejudice in society over time (however see some notes of caution by Dixon & McKewon, 2021). In providing an up-to-date assessment of the fast growing literature on negative intergroup contact, Schäfer et al. are of the view that the nascent nature of these lines of work, combined with growing evidence (e.g., Paolini et al., 2014) and theorizing (MacInnis & Page-Gould, 2015; Paolini et al., 2016) of buffering effects of past contact, should still keep us squarely committed to consider intergroup contact as one of the most promising tools to increase social cohesion of increasingly diverse societies over time.

## Hässler et al.'s article on contact and collective action

When Dixon et al. (2005) advanced their critique, individual-level prejudice was the main outcome measure for most intergroup contact research (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; see also Paluck et al., 2021). These scholars rightly noted that a meta-theoretical assumption underpinning this practice was that improved intergroup relations could be achieved by reducing prejudice within individuals. They called for a more expansive and less individualistic outlook that considers a broader constellation of political and social change outcomes relevant to perceptions of, and responses to, illegitimate systemic inequality. Dixon et al.'s (2005) critical appraisal highlighted a potential sedative effect of intergroup contact (e.g., Dixon et al., 2010; Wright & Lubensky, 2009), such that for members of disadvantaged groups, positive interactions with advantaged group members can lead them to expect fair treatment (that may never come), and consequently disengage from collective efforts to dismantle inequality. Sitting alongside this finding, is the fact that the very same contact is associated with reduced racism amongst advantaged group members, who may eventually come to support and participate in social change movements to promote equality (Tropp & Barlow, 2018).

The article by Hässler et al. (2021) examines the unique role that contact between members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups can play in encouraging, or conversely, stifling, support for social movements to create change. In their paper, Hässler et al. comprehensively evaluate both effects, to advance a new model that identifies when contact will lead to participation in social movements for both advantaged and disadvantaged group members. They provide concrete and well-delineated suggestions for contact-based interventions that meet the needs of both advantaged and disadvantaged group members.

Hässler et al.'s (2021) Integrated Contact-Collective Action Model synthesizes the literature on contact and collective action for both advantaged and disadvantaged groups to propose that the type of contact, the type of support, perceived legitimacy of inequality, system justification, satisfaction of group-based needs, identification, and ideology will each serve as core moderators of the association between contact and collective action. In doing so, they engage with thorny problems of disengagement with social movements, and the conflicting goals and needs of advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Hence, their analysis will be useful in guiding the next wave of research on how interpersonal, and yet intergroup, interactions can shape group-based collective action (for a similar balance, Dixon & McKeown, 2021). The article will most likely serve as an invaluable tool for researchers interested in how contact can be leveraged to encourage collective action, and for those on the ground working to create contact-based interventions that encourage (rather than stifle) concerted efforts for social change.

## **O'Donnell et al.'s article on technological and analytical advancements**

Dixon et al. (2005) originally, and McKweon and Dixon (2017) more recently, pointed out how traditional self-reports of contact often fail to capture the subjective interpretations and meanings associated with contact, and the dynamics and nuances of people's ordinary contact experiences. O'Donnell et al. (2021) address these concerns by reviewing methodological and technological advances that enrich researchers' ability to capture people's subjective experiences during contact, such as by employing daily diary and experience sampling approaches. In particular, these authors emphasize how mobile devices can enhance our insights regarding people's everyday contact experiences, and how this technology can help to assess people's subjective responses to contact across a broad array of intergroup settings and contexts. They also argue that these ecological analyses can be enhanced with greater use of virtual reality tools, to address concerns about the limited range of contexts in which contact studies are typically conducted (see Dixon et al., 2005).

O'Donnell and colleagues also usefully extend their review to discuss how analytical advancements can also increase our capacity to understand complex and dynamic social processes often involved in contact between members of different groups, speaking to concerns raised by Pettigrew and Hewstone (2017). To track the effects of contact over time, these authors stress the importance of accounting for within-person change, which may be accomplished using sophisticated analytic techniques based on repeated measurements from individuals over time in longitudinal panel designs. Analyzing media framing and social networks can also usefully inform researchers and practitioners about key contextual factors that may shape people's opportunities for and experiences during intergroup contact (for more on this, see also Dixon & McKewon, 2021; Harwood, 2021).

In turn, O'Donnell and colleagues discuss the significance of these technological and analytical advances for policy and practice, in light of critiques by Paluck et al. (2019). The authors argue that emerging technologies and statistical advancements can provide both researchers and practitioners with greater knowledge of how contact is likely to be experienced across contexts, which may ultimately inform how programs are implemented within actual communities and what kinds of outcomes we should endeavor to achieve from them.

## **Kauff et al.'s article on drivers of contact seeking and predictors of contact**

Due to its traditional emphasis on consequences and mediators of contact, past contact research has failed short of addressing what has been referred to as "the leading-the-horses-to-water problem" (Pettigrew et al., 2011, p. 278). At this point, there is considerable evidence for the benefits of contact and its associated processes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2013; Turner et al., 2020), but much less is known about how we can bring members of different groups together in a way that will facilitate positive, meaningful contact experiences (Paolini et al., 2018).

In their article, Kauff et al. (2021) discuss a broad range of factors, at multiple levels of analysis, that may drive people to initiate contact. This encompassing perspective is important and timely: as Dixon et al. (2005, 2020) eloquently noted, although in increasingly diverse societies opportunities for intergroup contact are abundant, mounting evidence suggests that people often fail to take up those opportunities, in part due to feelings of anxiety and existing prejudice.



Understanding the factors that drive interest and motivation to engage in contact is crucial if the potential benefits of such contact are to be capitalized upon.

Kauff et al. (2021) also make a novel contribution to the contact literature by providing a nuanced, multilevel understanding of how contact might be initiated (see also Paolini et al., 2018; Ron et al., 2017). On the micro-level, a range of personal and interpersonal qualities of individuals are considered. On the meso-level, the units of analysis are social groups, where the authors discuss factors related to both intergroup and intragroup processes. Finally, when focusing on the macro-level, Kauff et al. center their analysis on the contributions of Christ et al. (2014), who highlight the crucial role of normative context; individuals with limited contact experience are more likely to hold positive intergroup attitudes if they live in a neighborhood in which neighbors frequently engage in intergroup contact, compared to individuals who live in neighborhoods where contact was limited.

By examining a diverse range of factors on multiple levels that may help to promote contact, Kauff et al. (2021) provide a roadmap for researchers and practitioners keen to address the problem identified by Pettigrew and colleagues. At each level, Kauff et al. also review the practical implications of each approach, and in particular, how research findings might be applied to promote greater interest and engagement in intergroup contact in real-world settings.

## Marinucci et al.'s article on intimacy building across the lifespan

As noted earlier, Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) comprehensive meta-analysis, along with subsequent work (e.g., Davies et al., 2011) has clarified that intimate contact, like direct experiences of cross-group friendship, is particularly effective at shifting intergroup attitudes. This trend is likely due to intimate relationships between members of different groups being more impactful than casual cross-group associations. In their review, Marinucci et al. (2021) evaluate the literature on intimate contact, which they expansively define as "a close and meaningful relationship or interaction *with either an ingroup or outgroup member*" that is "likely to involve repeated contact and be characterized by reciprocal self-disclosure and trust" (p. 2; emphasis added). It is because of these unique qualities—Marinucci and colleagues argue—that intimate contact would have the potential for unlocking social processes of trust-building, helping, and cooperation (Jetten et al., 2017; Wakefield et al., 2019).

A significant contribution of the Marinucci et al. article is its adoption of a lifespan developmental lens (see also Tropp, 2021). In so doing, the authors directly address some of the central criticisms raised by Paluck et al. (2019), who express concern that few contact studies have been conducted with non-college aged adult samples. As Marinucci et al. note, more than any other developmental time period, adulthood is a time when contact researchers have the best opportunity to examine intergroup intimacy and closeness over time, from low levels of intimacy (e.g., becoming acquainted with an outgroup member) to high levels of intimacy (e.g., developing romantic relationships with an outgroup member).

In bringing greater attention to this critical area for improvement, Marinucci et al. provide a strong foundation upon which future contact researchers can build more robust empirical designs, and thus help practitioners achieve greater success in improving intergroup relations. For example, the authors call for researchers to improve the measurement of intimate contact, by moving beyond the use of subjective self-report measures and adopting more innovative methodological approaches (i.e., non-verbal behaviors, social spacing behaviors, social media, and social networks, etc.) that embrace complexity and behavior in intergroup relations (Dixon et al., 2005;



McKeown & Dixon, 2017; Paluck et al., 2019). The authors also call on researchers to carefully consider how greater intimate contact across group lines may affect members of historically advantaged and minority groups in both similar and different ways, both at any given moment in time, and particularly across the life span.

## **Boin et al.'s article on generalizations to primary and secondary outgroups**

Boin et al.'s (2021) article explores why and when intergroup contact effects generalize, both in terms of attitudes toward groups with whom one has had contact (primary outgroups) and toward groups with whom contact may not have occurred (secondary outgroups). As such, the authors address concerns noted by McKeown and Dixon (2017) that, all too often, prior contact studies have been limited by focusing on relations between only two groups at a time, in a dichotomous fashion. This article integrates the existing research literature on generalization into a coherent model, allowing for the needs of future research to become apparent.

Boin et al. (2021) also take into account the broader social context in which contact programs are implemented, pointing out that the question of generalization is particularly important to consider for social groups who live in homogenous areas. The authors recommend that policy makers and practitioners consider intervention strategies that maximize generalization of contact effects, especially when designing interventions for communities with low daily opportunity for contact. In so doing, Boin and colleagues also echo Paluck et al.'s (2021) and Hodson et al.'s (2018) call for considering how contact outcomes may have impacts beyond improving relations between members of the groups in question.

Boin et al. (2021) describe large contact-based interventions conducted in recent years, including in countries where contact is traditionally understudied like Iraq (Mousa, 2020) and Nigeria (Scacco & Warren, 2018), and how emerging work from under-studied contexts may further inform intervention strategies. By emphasizing the importance of generalization processes, these authors also encourage researchers and practitioners to consider the downstream consequences of intergroup contact for enhancing diversity and inclusivity in organizational settings.

## **White et al.'s article on indirect contact**

In the last 15 years, intergroup contact has progressively become a generative umbrella term for the investigation of a broad “contact continuum” (Crisp & Turner, 2012) and “contact space” (Harwood, 2010), where direct and indirect contact experiences—including observational or vicarious contact (Mazziotta et al., 2011), parasocial or contact through the media (Harwood et al., 2016; Joyce & Harwood, 2012), intergroup storytelling (Vezzali et al., 2014), imagined contact (Crisp & Turner, 2012), and synchronous intergroup e-contact (White & Abu-Rayya, 2012)—coexist and interact in a complex way to shape intergroup responses for individuals and groups (e.g., Christ et al., 2010; Paolini et al., 2007; see also Harwood, 2021).

The article by White et al. (2021) focuses on indirect contact strategies, which have been shown to be especially effective in reducing prejudice and promoting interest in face-to-face intergroup contact. The authors point out that many of the benefits and some of the psychological underpinnings of indirect contact strategies are shared with those involving direct, face-to-face contact (Paolini et al., 2004; Turner et al., 2007; Zhou et al., 2018). White et al. also discuss the ways in

which direct and indirect contact strategies are related to one another. Indirect contact strategies have traditionally been considered a practical response to the difficulties associated with implementing direct contact opportunities in segregated contexts and organizational settings (Crisp & Turner, 2012; Paluck & Green, 2009; Vezzali et al., 2014; White & Abu-Rayya, 2012; White et al., 2021). White and colleagues posit that, rather than being a simple alternative or replacement to direct contact, each of the different forms of indirect contact have their own advantages (see also Harwood, 2021) that are distinctive not only from direct contact, but also from the other indirect forms of contact.

In addition to offering useful suggestions for future research, White et al. (2021) also provide a unique perspective on how indirect contact relates to the public discourse, and in so doing address Paluck et al.'s (2019) call for more policy-relevant research. The authors organize varied indirect contact strategies along two orthogonal dimensions: activity/passivity versus medium of indirect contact. Such a framework can help researchers and practitioners better understand the distinctive features of each strategy (see Harwood, 2010), thereby creating a foundation for new waves of research and enhancing the usefulness of indirect contact strategies in relation to social policies and use in public community programs.

Looking at the *JSI* special issue compilation and the large body of intergroup contact research that underpins it, we hope the reader appreciates how contemporary intergroup contact research has continually addressed legitimate and constructive critiques that have emerged in the last 15 years, while helping to move these areas of enquiry forward. As such, these emerging perspectives in intergroup contact theory and research offer a greater understanding of contact mechanisms and processes and are equipped to inform intervention strategies and relevant policy for the complex and ever-changing social world in which we live.

## **PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF! MOVING FORWARD TOWARD A FUTURE INCLUSIVE OF DIVERSE IDEAS AND DIVERSE MINDS**

“What the world needs most is openness: Open hearts, open doors, open eyes, open minds, open ears, open souls” (Robert Muller, 1923–2010)

We believe that intergroup contact research has contributed and has the potential to contribute further to keeping our increasingly diverse societies oriented towards prosperous, peaceful, and equitable intergroup relations at all levels of human living. In this final section, we endeavor to share our thoughts about what we regard as essential conditions for intergroup contact research to continue assisting with these advancements. We call for a scientific research community that is inclusive of ideas and inclusive of diverse people and minds.

### **Diversity of ideas**

We place great importance on the need for our scientific research community to remain open to newer and more nuanced research questions—as per Gordon Allport's quote at the beginning of this article. Throughout the special issue, including this Introduction, we seek to demonstrate that healthy, robust, continuous scholarly debates, and peer scrutiny can lead to better science and

have ensured that intergroup contact research remains relevant to understanding and addressing critical societal issues.

For this openness to diverse ideas to be possible, and thus for the intergroup contact research community to continue on the current trajectory of growth, we have been required to counteract the very forces that stifle openness and possibly compromise intellectual autonomy and collective creativity. There is evidence of intrinsic inertia in science: highly novel ideas, for example, inherently suffer a higher risk of rejection than incremental, “normal science” contributions (Trapido, 2015). This dynamic will inevitably slow down progress.

But there are also darker social forces that can hinder our progress. These forces include, but are not restricted to, conformity pressures and insider/outsider dynamics within the research community, unequal power relationships between investigators (e.g., along gender, seniority, etc.), laboratories and institutions (e.g., based on resources, geography, etc.), disciplinary silos (including specialist/discipline-centered ways to look at phenomena vs. solving problems; see Loye, 2007, for the notion of “evolutionary motivation”). We cannot achieve true diversity of ideas if we do not keep these social psychological pressures under check.

## Diversity of people

Investigators’ diversity makes greater innovation (Bell et al., 2011) and science stemming from diversity makes for a better science (e.g., Medin & Lee, 2012; Nielsen et al., 2017). Yet research has identified a “diversity paradox,” whereby diversity breeds innovation but minorities who innovate enjoy less successful careers, across a variety of settings. Sadly, but somewhat predictably, these patterns are reproduced in academia, as signaled by counter-intuitive relationships between degree of individuals’ scientific innovation and career trajectories (see data about approximately 1.2M US PhD recipients between 1977 and 2015 in Hoftra et al., 2020) and much more research before (e.g., Clauset et al., 2015; Moss-Racusin et al., 2012).

We are aware that aiming for a more diverse science, while desirable, is not an easy challenge. But this does not diminish our responsibility in working towards it and developing appropriate antidotes against predictable push backs. As we state in the *Preface* to this special issue (which we invite our colleagues to endorse here), we should seek to include research by and for individuals of varied backgrounds, identities, resources, ability, and health statuses. The diversity literature shows that representational diversity is important but is not sufficient (Smith-Doerr et al., 2017); genuine integration of scholars of diverse backgrounds in the actual making of science is needed. Hence, we should also strive for scholars at many different stages of career and geographic backgrounds to participate fully in the scholarly activities of our discipline.

We saw this special issue as an opportunity to take a step towards advancing these goals to advance theory and practice and to ensure that intergroup contact research will be generative for decades to come. We still have some way to go, yet we are committed to making the intergroup contact research community (like the topic of intergroup contact itself) diverse and inclusive.

We are delighted that this special issue could be a vehicle to welcome and invite newer generations of scholars to expand this area of research. Together, across generations of intergroup scholars, we call for a more inclusive and collaborative multinational approach to conducting future research on intergroup contact. In this spirit, below we share some details of our experience. We are far from arguing that we have “got it right.” Still, we think there are lessons to be learned that might benefit others embarking on similar projects in the future. We are pleased of what we have

achieved thus far and the process we have used to get here; we look forward to seeing more such examples of “intergroup contact in action” in the future.

## Intergroup contact “in action” in the making of this special issue

We have endeavored to design and coordinate the compilation of this *JSI* special issue on intergroup contact as much as possible away from the social psychological dynamics we know stifle innovation, inclusion, and progress. We humbly attempted to model ways of working together, collaboratively, as free as possible from unproductive dynamics. This special issue continues the work we did organizing the *SPSSI*- and *SASP*-sponsored international conference on intergroup contact and social cohesion in Newcastle, Australia in April 2019 (to learn more: <https://sasp.org.au/2018/09/sasp-spssi-group-meeting-2019/>).

The Newcastle meeting enjoyed a strong delegation of international and domestic delegates of varied seniority and backgrounds (18 countries from all continents but Antarctica). Over a 3-day period, a total of 77 conference delegates networked and discussed research across seven (at times painfully jam-packed) conference sessions. Early career researchers (ECRs) were encouraged to facilitate stimulating and collegial round-table discussions on selected themes and reported back to the larger group. Most delegates pitched in, including 20+ non-presenting conference participants from university staff, research students, and representatives of industry stakeholders in the social cohesion space from around Australia.

Through an ECR-led mentorship scheme, the group meeting has also provided invaluable research support across delegates’ generations. It has served as a semi-structured platform for 20+ mentor-mentee pairs to connect prior to coming to Newcastle and meet up again at a mentor-mentee breakfast, sharing pleasures, and tribulations of their academic journey. We will endeavor to keep the scheme going and its participants connected into the future.

With so much goodness at hand, we wanted the legacy of the Newcastle meeting to live long and produce fruits beyond Newcastle. We have captured it in a video-library of conference presentations that is now accessible on YouTube and via the conference website for the wider community’s consumption and enjoyment.

We hope that the impact of the Newcastle group meeting will also reverberate to the broader community of scientists, policy makers, and practitioners through this *JSI* special issue. We saw the special issue as a productive basis to harness the energy of the Newcastle group meeting towards the forging of new collaborations between junior and senior scholars and thus continue supporting our meeting’s networking and mentoring efforts.

To achieve these objectives, we approached all conference presenters and encouraged them to work collaboratively with the other presenters of their specific conference stream towards an outline of a collaborative/joint article on their conference stream’s topic that fit the overall vision and proposed structure for the *JSI* issue and individual core articles. Through this process, we encouraged brand new research collaborations between individuals and laboratories with shared interests who had not worked together before. We recommended representation and first authorship of juniors, women, and individuals from often marginalized geographies and smaller research laboratories, working from the premise that diversity of people would lead to diversity of creative ideas. At the same time, we left the prospective contributors free to decide their exact article’s contents, relative contributions and resulting authorship list/order. As a result of our deliberate efforts to be more inclusive of diverse ideas and minds, we believe this special issue is now capable of showcasing, consolidating, deconstructing, and innovating the science of social integration.

In the process, it has also provided critical and top-quality research training and mentorship to junior researchers and research students engaged in varied dimensions of research in the science of harmonious and equitable intergroup relations.

We expect the readers of this *JSI* special issue to understand that we are far from having all the answers. We have tried hard to offer a platform for scholars of varied seniority, backgrounds and geographical origins, and theoretical and methodological affiliations to network, discuss, and disseminate emerging research findings and identify new research developments in the area of intergroup contact and intergroup interactions. We have strived to harness fresh energy from brand new collaborative links with the expectation that this would best equip us to respond and address ongoing scholarly debates and legitimate critical appraisals of intergroup contact research, and ultimately demonstrate that intergroup contact research is open and equipped to address the societal challenges ahead of us, and show that this research is engaged and ready to be used by practitioners and policymakers.

This special issue's ultimate message will rest in Gordon Allport's and Robert Muller's own words: Our ability to "create more and more questions" is the very "measure of our intellectual maturity"; the best we can offer is to resolve to "stay open."

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**Stefania Paolini** is Associate Professor of Social and Intercultural Psychology at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Stefania has expertise in intergroup relations and she is best known for her research on intergroup friendship, intergroup anxiety, stereotype change, and contact valence asymmetry. Her research has investigated ‘when’ and ‘why’ experiences with members of stigmatized groups affect for the better or for the worse responses to whole stigmatized groups and new outgroup members. For instance, she has studied the impact of having intergroup friends across the sectarian divider in Northern Ireland on intergroup anxiety and attitudes. She has applied conditioning methods to investigate the learning mechanisms of intergroup anxiety and categorization. Her most recent work has compared the psychological consequences of positive and negative intergroup contact and unveiled the existence of a negativity bias. Her current main focus is on the social psychological bases of people’s interest (vs. disinterest) in engaging with diversity. Her research aims to contribute to the understanding of intergroup friction towards increased social cohesion.

**Fiona A. White** is a Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Sydney, Australia, and Director of the *Sydney University Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (SUPIR) Lab. Fiona is internationally recognized as the developer of the E-contact intervention, a synchronous online tool that has been found to reduce anxiety, prejudice and stigma. A fieldwork version of the E-contact intervention has been tested in the short (immediate post-intervention) and long-term (2-weeks, 6-months, 12-months post-intervention), whereas longer term effects of the lab-based version are currently under investigation. Most importantly, E-contact is theoretically underpinned by Allport’s facilitating conditions for contact and has been found to successfully improve intergroup relations between: Muslims and Christians in Australia; Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland; Turkish and Kurdish peoples; people who identify as homosexual vs heterosexual; people who identify as transgender vs cisgender; and mentally healthy people and people with schizophrenia. In our technological age, and especially during a time of COVID-19 induced social distancing, Fiona’s E-contact interventions will play an increasingly significant role in advancing intergroup relations research, especially in situations where outgroup anxiety is high and/or there is continued physical intergroup separation.

Her prejudice reduction research has a strong ‘intergroup’ focus, where the voices from *both* groups are encouraged to be expressed in an equal, cooperative interaction, that works toward achieving a common goal. Fiona has also received a National Teaching Excellence Award, two Vice Chancellor’s awards for Excellence in Teaching and Mentoring, and is currently on the Editorial Board for the *European Review of Social Psychology*. In 2020, Fiona was one of seven international scholars invited to Washington DC to contribute to the Society for Research in Child Development’s (SRCD) state of the science report on *Improving Intergroup Attitudes and Interactions among Youth*.

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

**Rhiannon N. Turner** is Professor of Social Psychology and Director of the Centre of Intergroup Relations at Queen’s University Belfast, UK. Rhiannon’s research looks at which forms of intergroup contact best reduce prejudice, how and why they do so, and what consequences they have for intergroup relations. Specifically, she studies predictors and outcomes of different forms of intergroup contact in reducing prejudice, including cross-group friendship, extended contact, imagined contact, online and blended contact, parasocial contact, and virtual reality contact. She is also interested in the role of personality and nostalgia in the study of intergroup relations, the impact of contact beyond improved intergroup relations, and perceptions of cross-group romantic relationships. Rhiannon is currently working on a British Academy project looking at how children talk about race, an ERC project examining virtual reality contact in promoting cross-community relations in Northern Ireland, an EPSRC project on changing perceptions of gender equality initiatives via virtual reality and perspective taking, and a longitudinal evaluation of the the impact of the PEACE IV good relations programme in Northern Ireland on outcomes for young people, including academic and cross-group friendships self-efficacy, psychology resilience, and cross-community attitudes. Rhiannon is a past recipient of the BPS Award for Outstanding Doctoral Research Contributions to Psychology (2007), the Society for Personality and Social Psychology’s Robert B. Cialdini Award for excellence in field research (2008), and the Gordon Allport Intergroup Relations Prize (2011). She

is also part of a team working on Shared Education in Northern Ireland which was recently Awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize (2020), and delivered the British Academy - British Psychological Society Annual Lecture at the Royal Society in London in September 2019. Most recently she received the 2020 Vice Chancellor's Prize for Research Engagement, following her work on the Channel 4 documentary 'The School That Tried to End Racism'. From 2019–2022 she is editor-in-chief of the *European Review of Social Psychology*. She is also on the editorial board of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes*, the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, and the *European Journal of Social Psychology*. In 2020, she was appointed as an Output Assessor for the UoA4 (Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience) sub-panel for REF2021.

**Elizabeth Page-Gould** is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto, Canada, and the Canada Research Chair in Social Psychophysiology. She researches how social interactions with friends and strangers shape our understanding of and thriving in diverse societies and theorizes how these social interactions constitute both intergroup contact and cross-group relationships. Elizabeth's research employs multiple methodological approaches, both in the lab and in the field. Her research on intergroup contact integrates across physiological, behavioural, and subjective (self-reported) data collected from multiple people at once to develop a rich picture of social interactions. Moreover, she has developed open-source tools that enable other researchers to use methods such as "experience sampling" (Thai & Page-Gould, 2018) or specialized statistical analyses that would otherwise have been inaccessible to them. Elizabeth's research received the Gordon Allport Intergroup Relations Prize in 2016 and was named a Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science and the Society for Experimental Social Psychology. Many years ago, she was also named a "Rising Star" by the Association for Psychological Science. She has served as an Associate Editor for *Collabra, Comprehensive Results in Social Psychology, the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, and the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and on numerous Editorial Boards. Elizabeth also serves on the Board of Directors for the Society for Psychophysiological Research, on the Publications Committee for the Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science, and is the Past Chair of the Social/Personality Section of the Canadian Psychological Association.

**Fiona K. Barlow** is an Associate Professor at the School of Psychology at the University of Queensland. Fiona's work primarily focuses on understanding how intergroup conflict and animosity develops, and conversely, what factors bring members of different groups together. Fiona also focuses on applied impact; for example providing science translation in the recent (and successful) campaign for Marriage Equality in Australia. Fiona is a past Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Award and Future Fellowship recipient.

**Ángel Gómez** is Professor of Social Psychology and the director of the research group *Social Psychology of inter and intragroup relations. Strategies for improvement* at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, UNED, Madrid, Spain, and member of ARTIS International. Angel has expertise on intergroup relations, and on the development and empirical test of theoretical models exploring the nature of violent extremism and radicalization. On the one hand, Ángel has investigated the effects of different strategies for improving intergroup



relations as direct, extended, vicarious and depersonalized contact, and recategorization. On the other hand, Ángel is internationally recognized by being one of the firsts social psychologists presenting a comprehensive theory to predict extreme behaviors on behalf of the group, identity fusion, and his work combining online experiments and field studies created a new path to the study of radicalization leading to violence. Identity fusion theory has been so influential that two of the most successful and current models developed afterwards are based on and include identity fusion on their fundament: the devoted actor model and the 3N model of radicalization. Angel has received awards as the leader of the best research group of the Spanish Open University, as Editor of the best manuscript for distance-learning students, for “Good Teaching and Research Practices”, a research dissemination honour. Most recently, he received the bronze medal for penitentiary social merit (2020). He is Associate Editor at Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, member of the Editorial Board of Social Psychological and Personality Science, and member of the Executive Committee of the International Society for Self and Identity (ISSI).

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