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Peace Institute – Institute for  
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Thomas F. Pettigrew, Linda R. Tropp  
**When Groups Meet:  
The Dynamics of Intergroup  
Contact**

Psychology Press, New York 2011,  
pp. x + 309, USD 49.95  
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In 1954, Harvard psychologist Gordon Allport published his seminal volume *The Nature of Prejudice*, perceived to be the classical study of the roots of discrimination but also representing the original formulation of intergroup contact theory. Intrigued by the potential of such a theory, Thomas F. Pettigrew embarked on a life journey of research in 1955 as Allport's doctoral student. Joined by Linda R. Tropp in 1998, they took on a lengthy 13-year project, first publishing their findings in an article in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* in 2006 that has since become one of the most widely cited. Pettigrew and Tropp's detailed analysis of research that shows how bringing groups together can mitigate prejudice now culminates in the publication of their book *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact*. This is the ninth book published in *Essays in Social Psychology*, a series that seeks to define social psychology in its broadest sense and as such brings us the most timely and well-researched assessment of

current knowledge of, among other things, intergroup relations, group processes and social cognition. Research and theory on intergroup contact have become one of the fastest advancing and most exciting fields in social psychology in recent years and this volume provides an overview of this rapidly progressing area of investigation: its origins and early work, its current status and recent developments, along with criticisms of this work and suggestions for future directions.

Intergroup contact theory holds a central place in the social science discipline of social psychology due to its theoretical importance and its critical implications for many practical and applied issues. Its primary focus can be situated in a vast array of daily situations and prominent historical examples, such as the following example offered by the authors in the opening sections of the book. They describe a recent research on the "rescuers" of Jews in the midst of the Holocaust, where over 600 people were interviewed, focusing on more than 400 rescuers who had saved Jews and comparing them to the "bystanders" who did not get involved. Intergroup contact played a crucial role in their diversified behaviour, extending well beyond a mere reduction of prejudice. More than "bystanders", the rescuers lived in small villages and on farms, where a sense of community was strong and hiding Jews was easier. Research argues that prior to the war they benefited more from

supportive networks and had significantly more contacts than “bystanders” with Jews in a variety of roles (they more frequently had Jews as friends, neighbours and co-workers). Numerous examples confirm that such interpersonal humanity in the face of intergroup strife is far from uncommon and many researchers have hence held optimistic views regarding the potential for intergroup contact to improve intergroup relations. Yet, while intergroup contact does typically decrease intergroup tension, prejudice and hostility, this does not happen always and under all conditions. Recognising what some of the critics have pointed out, Pettigrew and Tropp nevertheless argue that just as it would be incorrect to conclude that more contact between peoples will necessarily result in more prejudice and intergroup conflict, it would be just as fallacious to see contact by itself as some sort of a magical cure for prejudice.

In their extensive, multi-year research that involved sifting through a myriad of research on contact theory, the authors narrowed their focus to 515 studies that test the effects of intergroup contact. They then conducted a meta-analysis that was to enable the drawing of firmer conclusions regarding the nature and direction of intergroup contact's effects. To date, no such comprehensive study has been conducted since Pettigrew and Tropp included all available research literature in total involving more than 250,000 participants in 38 countries. They provide an extensi-

ve debate on analytic procedures, inclusion criteria, methodology and research quality, which convincingly averts possible criticisms regarding publication bias, participant selection, or sampling bias. The authors' renowned research on intergroup contact is extensively supported by this meta-analysis, which at the same time offers a comprehensive overview of the field. In addition, discussions of research extensions and emerging directions for future study are also complemented by considerations of implications of intergroup contact theory for social policy. The book's rigorous methodology convincingly demonstrates that intergroup contact decreases intergroup bias and conflict, rebutting public discussions that regard intergroup contact as a cause of intergroup strife. The basic premise of contact theory is thus well supported by an ever-growing research base.

But when will contact effects occur, how does contact reduce prejudice and how can the positive effects be maximised? Moreover, do intergroup contact effects generalise and are they universal? Surely the societal value of interaction would be of minor significance if the effects of positive intergroup contact do not generalise beyond the contact situation and the immediate participants. Critics of contact theory have claimed that while contact may be effective in improving attitudes between individuals, it is unlikely to be effective in improving inter-groups relations. Processes such as “re-fencing”,

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meaning the exclusion and categorical separation of out-group members we like in the contact situation from our generally negative views of the out-group as a whole, the influence of social norms that oppose changes in attitudes brought by the contact, and other cognitive barriers have been listed as impeding the generalisation of intergroup contact's positive effects to the entire group. *When Groups Meet* convincingly attests that the opposite is true since examples of generalisation can in fact yield positive effects of intergroup contact consistently across different levels of analysis, different situations, and even to out-groups that were not involved in the contact. As an example, positive contact experiences with French Canadians were shown to affect attitudes to French Europeans even without contact, as well as transferring positive attitudes from contact with resident migrants to all Muslims in Germany. This so-called secondary transfer effect is probably one of the most striking phenomena discussed and analysed in the book and even though it has not yet received the research attention it deserves, the authors recognise it as the most theoretically novel and conclude that it exists for both direct and indirect contact. They note that the secondary transfer effect is strongest when cultural similarity or overlap exists between the involved and uninvolved out-groups. And while the most commonly studied targets have been ethnic groups, intergroup contact effects across different target

groups also produce similar effects for sexual orientation, physical and mental disability, or age. Secondary transfer effects are especially important for those who live segregated lives without out-group friends.

The meta-analysis shows that conditions such as equal status between groups, common goals, co-operation and institutional support can all enhance contact's ability to reduce prejudice, though the authors see them as facilitating conditions rather than as essential. Empathy and anxiety reduction are crucially important, while general knowledge of the out-group – contrary to Allport's emphasis and most of 20th century American social psychology – proves to be of only minor significance as a mediator. There are times when personal contact does not defuse tension, usually when threat is involved. Pettigrew and Tropp thus offer an example of Israeli army checkpoints on the occupied Palestinian West Bank as the kind of contact that cannot lead to better relations because both parties feel threatened, and the contact is involuntary and superficial. Using communication and contact techniques to reach across the divides that separate people has hence been assumed as too idealistic by several critics. Yet while the critiques of intergroup contact theory have focused on cognitive concerns, they have tended to ignore the affective processes. In fact, the intergroup contact literature has neither acknowledged nor delineated between the cognitive (e.g. thoughts,

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perceptions), affective (e.g. feelings, evaluations) and behavioural (e.g. intended actions) components of attitudes. In contrast to the previously dominant focus on cognitive processes, much of the recent contact literature emphasises the importance of affective processes in intergroup relationships and tends to be far more optimistic regarding the potential for positive contact experiences to generalise. The roles of affect and motivation have thus gained belated attention in research of prejudice and intergroup relations, exploring the functions of affective ties with out-group members (e.g. feelings of comfort and liking). Friendship is the most important kind, as one might expect, although studies have shown that friends of a friend can also have an effect.

For research specialists, *When Groups Meet* not only serves as a concise sourcebook for research and theory on intergroup contact, it also provides the entire 515-item bibliography from the meta-analysis. A word of caution, nevertheless, to those less familiar with quantitative methodologies; this is a book that will be more appreciated by readers with at least some knowledge of statistics. Yet the clear structure and accessible writing style should appeal to students of psychology and other social sciences, and more widely provide answers for all those interested in the dynamics of intergroup contact.

Damjan MANDELIC, Ana JEŠE  
Faculty of Arts, University of  
Ljubljana

Ksenija Vidmar Horvat

**Zemljevidi vmesnosti:**

**Eseji o evropski kulturi in identiteti  
po koncu hladne vojne**

Založba Sophia, Ljubljana 2009,  
pp. 273 (ISBN: 978-961-6768-10-8)

The book *Zemljevidi vmesnosti* (*The Maps of In-betweenness*) by Ksenija Vidmar Horvat is a collection of essays dealing with questions of European culture and identity from a post-socialist and post-Cold War perspective. Drawing on an array of primary sources, including journals and memoirs, the author develops her argument about European identity through the spectrum of theories of nationalism. As she puts it, conflicts and tensions that arise from the European project are predominantly consequences of conceptualising the policy of integration, which in its “identity core” is a nationalistic one.

Researching media and media memory helps to combine theoretically cultural, media and memory studies with cultural theory and theory of nationalism. For this purpose, the book is composed of theoretical chapters and selected case studies. The study of European identity is placed in the theoretical field of post-socialist (cultural) studies. The position of transitional, post-socialist Slovenia can assist in the rethinking of European perspectives.