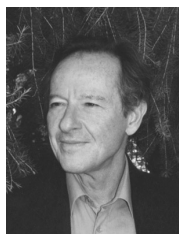


## Personalization and the Promise of Contact Theory



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*The article discusses theoretical issues regarding the generalization of positive intergroup contact. It contrasts the models of Brewer and Miller (1984), Hewstone and Brown (1986), and Gaertner and Dovidio (2000). It elaborates the conceptual meaning of key concepts: intergroup salience, typicality of an outgroup member, decategorization, differentiation, and personalization. In particular, the article argues for the conceptual independence of differentiation (individuation) among social category members and personalized interaction (self-disclosure and self/other comparison) with category members. A hypothetical experiment is presented to illustrate the independent operationalization of the two constructs. Stronger benefits are expected for the latter. Whereas the benefits of differentiation primarily rest on cognitive effects, personalization also has motivational consequences: justifying one's self-disclosure and inducing increased trust.*

Whatever makes for . . . more intimate acquaintance is likely to make for increased tolerance.  
. . . [T]rue acquaintance lessens prejudice.

—Allport, 1954, pp. 489, 264

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Only if a psychological linkage is made between the image of a specific individual and the stereotype of a certain group . . . is the experience with individuals likely to affect the stereotype.

—Lewin and Grabbe, 1945, p. 58

The quotes that begin this article raise major points about intergroup contact that are to be discussed in the article. The first alleges that intimate contact plays an important role in reducing prejudice. The second concerns the issue of generalization. Following an enjoyable interaction with a member of an outgroup social category, will that episode have some positive bearing on attitudes and behavior toward that social group? Social interventionists hope, and sometimes just assume, that any benefit from contact with outgroup members will not be constrained to the person(s) with whom there was contact. In focusing on the issues raised by the opening quotes, this article examines in particular the role of personal, somewhat intimate contact on intergroup attitudes and behavior. More specifically, it considers the consequences of such contact with respect to the generalization of benefit.

The meaning of “generalization of benefit” is more complex than it may appear on first thought. Pettigrew (1998) organizes this issue into three levels of intergroup contact. Specifically, he considers whether the experience with the outgroup member will generalize to future contacts (a) with that same individual in other new contact settings, (b) with other persons who are members of the same social category of the person with whom there was contact, and (c) with members of other outgroup categories. The levels appear to differ with respect to the ease or likelihood of generalization, with the first being most likely and the third least. And with respect to the second level, one must consider whether “other persons” refers to the actor’s contacts with other new individuals who are members of the social category, or instead, whether the actor is responding to the social category label. Note that if the second level refers to responses to the social category label, one is asking whether beliefs about the attributes of the social category have been altered. Thus, it asks whether the contact experience affects group stereotypes, by contrast with beliefs about a particular outgroup individual, or subset of individual outgroup category members.

In an alternative organization of the issue (Brewer & Miller, 1988), we discussed the generalization of (a) category-based responding, (b) differentiated perceptions, and (c) personalization. By contrast with Pettigrew’s analysis, which considers generalization of a single (positive) response to one of three levels of abstraction, the Brewer and Miller typology distinguishes three types of generalization. The generalization of category-based responding results in further consolidation of stereotypes about the outgroup. It also solidifies self-serving positive stereotypes of the ingroup. Generalization of decategorized responding—the generalization of differentiated perceptions of outgroup members—results in increased perception of subgroups and subtypes (Richards & Hewstone, 2001) and thus, less outgroup homogeneity. Finally, with the generalization of

personalization, interactions with new members of the outgroup are open to more intimate levels of communication. In this conceptualization, the organization is primarily focused at Pettigrew's second level, although it can in principle be extended to his other levels as well.

The battleground in most theory and research concerned with the issue of generalization of beneficial intergroup contact is at Pettigrew's second level. And as hinted above, a major aspect of that battle concerns whether any generalization with respect to attitudes and behavior merely extends toward new individuals, or instead, will generalize to the category label or the group as a whole.

### **Generalization of Reduced Intergroup Bias**

A failure to find evidence that positive attitudes that are established toward an outgroup member will then generalize to others who are members of that outgroup is a critical weakness in traditional contact theory (Hewstone & Brown, 1986, p. 18). Although some studies show that intergroup contact will normally elicit more positive attitudes toward the other group as a whole (e.g., Desforges et al., 1991; Desforges et al., 1997; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Van Oudenhoven, Groenewoud, & Hewstone, 1996; Wilder, 1984a), others have only found specific attitude change without a corresponding generalization effect (e.g., Blaney, Stephan, Rosenfield, Aronson, & Sikes, 1977; Johnson & Johnson, 1981; Slavin, 1979). Studies that measure attitudes toward the outgroup as an abstract social category more often fail to obtain any generalization effect (Bond, DiCandia, & MacKinnon, 1988; Weigel, Wiser, & Cook, 1975; Wilder & Thompson, 1980). Students who studied cooperatively with students of other races increased the number of their cross-racial friendships by becoming friends with those specific interaction partners but did not change their racial attitudes in general (Weigel et al., 1975). Similarly, students who cooperated with students from a rival college changed their opinions about those with whom they interacted but did not change their attitude about those at the rival college (Wilder & Thompson, 1980).

### **Three Models of Intergroup Contact**

Three influential theoretical organizations of the processes underlying beneficial contact are those of Brewer and Miller (1984), Hewstone and Brown (1986), and Gaertner and Dovidio (2000). The Brewer and Miller and the Gaertner and Dovidio models, as depicted in their respective figures (see Figures 1 and 3), do not explicitly consider the issues of generalization, whereas the Hewstone and Brown model clearly does (see Figure 2). These are not the only models that bear on intergroup dynamics. Others include Subjective Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Hogg & Mullin, 1999), Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), Terror Management Theory (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon,

1986), and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (Brewer, 1991). These three are useful here, however, because they stimulate thought about the issue of generalization and how key variables contribute to or detract from it.

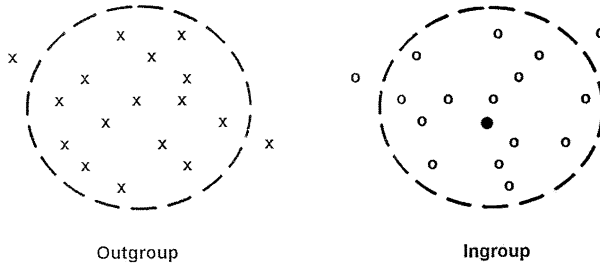
*The Personalization Model*

Brewer and Miller (1984) presented three types of intergroup contact. In category-based responding (see panel A of Figure 1), the outgroup is seen as

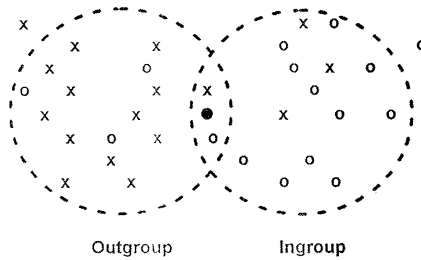
(A) *Category - Based Model*



(B) *Differentiated Model*



(C) *Personalized Model*



● Denotes Self

**Fig. 1.** Brewer and Miller's (1984) three models of intergroup contact.

relatively undifferentiated, tightly bounded, and distinct from the ingroup, which (as represented by the bigger circle with more space between the dots representing its members) is seen instead as somewhat more differentiated. The self, the solid dot in the ingroup, is seen as relatively prototypical of the ingroup, being positioned near the center of the circle.

Panel B of Figure 1 reflects differentiated perceptions of ingroup and outgroup members. Differences among group members are noted. Thus, some members of each group are seen as atypical (and consequently are depicted as lying outside of the group boundary). When group members are differentiated or decategorized, perceptions of group variability increase (depicted as larger circles), and group boundaries are more permeable (broken group boundary lines).

In personalized interaction (Panel C), group membership is relatively unimportant. Instead, persons are categorized primarily in terms of their similarity or dissimilarity to self. Thus, in personalized interaction, some outgroup members are (correctly) seen as being as similar to self as are ingroup members; others are seen as being as dissimilar to the outgroup prototype as are some ingroup members; and some ingroup members are seen as highly dissimilar to both self and the ingroup prototype.

Is the Brewer and Miller model (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Miller & Harrington, 1990; Harrington & Miller, 1992) to be viewed as a continuum that organizes social interaction along a dimension of category-based to category-irrelevant responding? As Brewer (1988) argues in her dual-process model of impression formation, differentiated responding differs from personalized responding in terms of the context in which information is encoded. In differentiated responding, information about a given category member is processed in terms of a prototype of the category. When processing information in this mode one assesses whether the individual fits the prototype well or poorly. Thus, stereotypes, representing as they do one's ideas about key attributes of the social category, form the backdrop against which the attributes of an individual member of that outgroup are noted.

Personalized responding contrasts with the top-down processing mode that characterizes decategorized interaction. It is a bottom-up mode of encoding information. Thus, in personalized interaction the key comparison process involved in noting the important attributes of another person is not made with respect to the groups to which that other and oneself respectively belong. Instead, attributes of that other are noted primarily in terms of a self-other comparison process.

### *The Mutual Intergroup Differentiation Model*

In the Mutual Intergroup Differentiation Model of Hewstone and Brown (1986; see Figure 2), interpersonal and intergroup contact have different effects on attitudes and reactions toward outgroup members. Positive interpersonal

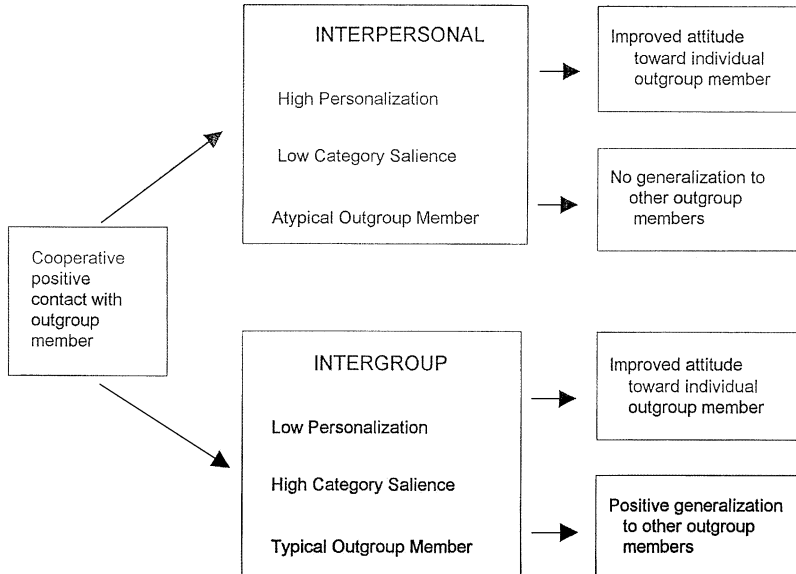


Fig. 2. Hewstone and Brown's (1986) contact model of generalization effects.

contact with individual outgroup members is expected to result in positive behavior and reactions toward individuals, but not toward other members of their group in general. The effects of positive contact at an interpersonal level are thought not to generalize to the rest of the outgroup because an individual outgroup person is likely to be subtyped as somehow different from the rest of the group in question. Therefore, interventions or tactics to improve intergroup attitudes and behaviors must be intergroup rather than interpersonal in nature.

The model also argues that group membership must be salient during intergroup contact for positive effects to generalize to other members of an outgroup. This may lead, however, to threatened group identities and subsequently to intergroup bias. In consequence, Hewstone and Brown advocate that, in cooperative settings, for instance, labor be divided in ways that provide a sense of successful task accomplishment to each of the independent groups in the setting, allowing each to experience success (a) at the group level and (b) to the same degree.

In sum, then, generalization of positive intergroup contact occurs when contact occurs with outgroup members who are perceived as representative of that particular outgroup. This may include contact with several outgroup members or with a single person who is perceived as a typical member of his or her group. Thus, implicit here is that the group identities of those interacting must be salient

and that each of the interacting persons must be perceived by the other as a typical member of his or her respective social category.

*The Common Ingroup Identity Model*

The Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; see Figure 3) argues that bias toward outgroup members is reduced by changing a person’s perceptions of an intergroup context from one that involves members of different groups to one that involves members of a single common or superordinate group. Former outgroup members are recategorized as ingroup members within a superordinate category that they respectively share with one another. For example, males who previously categorized females as outgroup members can, in the context of an experimental manipulation or in response to situational demands of real-world settings, recategorize the females as being ingroup members with respect to another dimension, such as racial/ethnic identity (e.g., both the males and females are Hispanics).

With a superordinate recategorization, the evaluations of former outgroup members improve as the cognitions and motivations involved in the expression of intergroup conflict and bias change to those of a more inclusively accepting nature. The positive attitudes that are associated with the ingroup are extended

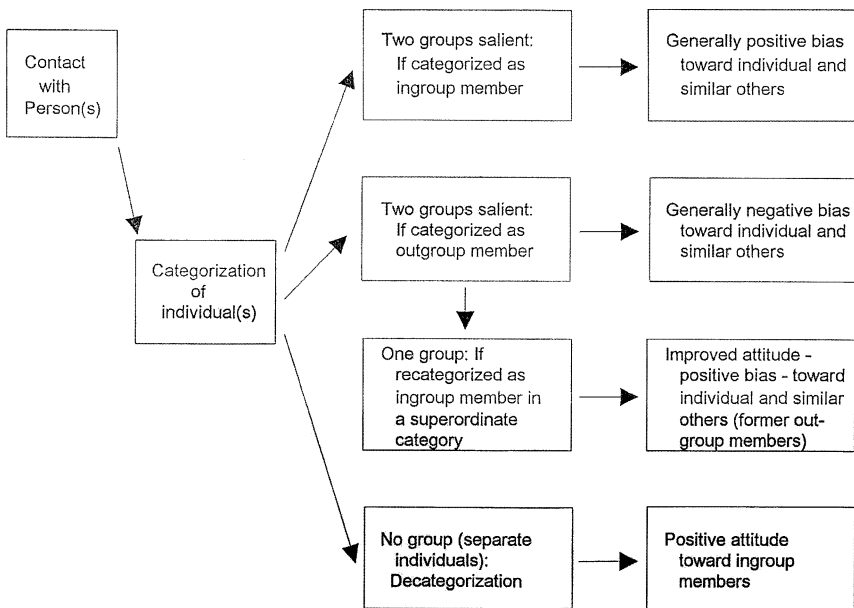


Fig. 3. The Common Ingroup Identity Model of Gaertner and Dovidio (2000).

to the “new” ingroup members (who were formerly outgroup members). It is the change in cognitions that mediate the effect of recategorization on attitudes toward members of an outgroup.

### **Salience, Differentiation, and Personalization**

The key concepts that enter the models bear more discussion. They include category salience, decategorization, and personalization. It is also necessary to introduce the concept of typicality. To discuss any of the three models in detail, to make comparisons among them, and to consider their implications for generalization, it is important to clarify the meaning of the concepts and the distinctions between them.

#### *Salience of the Intergroup Aspects of the Social Interaction or the Setting*

Turner and colleagues defined a salient group membership as “[o]ne that is functioning psychologically to increase the influence of one’s membership in that group on perception and behavior, and/or the influence of another person’s identity as a group member on one’s impression of and hence behavior towards that person” (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherall, 1987, p. 118). By the principle of metacontrast (Bruner, 1957), a given categorization is likely to form or become salient (activated, cognitively prepotent, operative) to the extent that differences within categories are less than differences between those categories in the comparative context (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). Thus, the salience of a social category can be increased by drawing attention to intergroup differences (Turner et al., 1987), by increasing awareness of group membership (Tajfel, 1978), and by associating group membership with positive or negative evaluations (Tajfel, 1978). Increased salience makes individuals more likely to engage in group-oriented behaviors (Tajfel, 1978). And as previously discussed with respect to the contact model of Hewstone and Brown (1986; Hewstone, 1996), to be successful in changing outgroup evaluations, favorable contact with an outgroup member must be defined as an intergroup encounter. Thus, in this view, beneficial effects of contact are more likely to generalize to the group as a whole when there are more cues during the contact that indicate the group memberships of the interacting persons (Ashmore, 1970; Brown, Vivian, & Hewstone, 1999; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Van Oudenhoven et al., 1996; Vivian, Hewstone, & Brown, 1997).

Salience can be induced by using “vivid reminders” of group membership (Charters & Newcomb, 1952). This varies the situation-specific relative accessibility of the categorization of concern (Turner et al., 1987). Thus, when an Anglo American and a Black American interact, although they will not fail to notice their respective racial/ethnic identities, nevertheless, the salience of their category identities can be increased if each provides cues that refer to her category throughout



the interaction, that is, if each frequently reminds the other that she is an outgroup member. Alternatively, the topic, the setting, or the context of the interaction may provide such cues—as when the two persons are engaged in a discussion of the comparative prison sentences respectively meted out to Black and White cocaine users. In sum, salience can be increased by a more frequent evocation or display of category cues during an intergroup encounter.

By contrast, if cues indicating a shared group membership or a superordinate identity are frequently introduced, in accord with the Common Ingroup Identity Model, the salience of intergroup aspects of the interaction or setting will be reduced.

### *Decategorization*

In the Brewer and Miller (1984) model, decategorized responding referred to an awareness of the distinctiveness of individual members. In decategorized responding one notes intracategory differences, and consequently, decategorized responding is associated with an increase in perceived intracategory variability. Such differentiation may also involve subtyping (Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981). That too can increase perceptions of variability within the superordinate category. Receiving information about the multiple other category memberships of an outgroup member will further add to a perception that differentiates that individual from the outgroup prototype. Thus, when decategorization is achieved by differentiating outgroup members, it allows an initial categorization to be overridden by a more complex perception of them. In turn, this permits group members to be evaluated more readily on their personal merit, unbiased by stereotypical categorical responding (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Krueger & Rothbart, 1988; Miller & Harrington, 1992). Nevertheless, it does not necessarily imply a perceptual elimination of the category boundaries that differentiate the ingroup from the outgroup.

Note, however, that decategorization can also be achieved by applying, or making salient, a superordinate identity—as in the Gaertner and Dovidio (2000) Common Ingroup Identity Model. Thus, decategorization is a broader concept than individuation of or differentiation among group members. The arguments of Hewstone and Brown (1986; Hewstone, 1996) concerning the need to maintain the salience of category cues in order for contact experiences to generalize beneficially seem to eschew decategorization achieved by a superordinate identity. Seemingly, as the strength of the latter increases, the salience of the category distinctions will diminish. In turn, any diminution of category salience, with its concomitant threat to ingroup identity, will interfere with generalization.

A third approach to decategorization, one not considered by any of the three models, is to present counterstereotypical information about the outgroup, not with respect to individual members, but instead with respect to the category as a whole. In this approach, the perceiver receives (positive) information at the category level

that can expand her view of the outgroup, creating a more differentiated picture of members of it. For instance, the stereotypical view held by Spaniards toward Germans is that they are hardworking (Armas, 2001). Notwithstanding the extraordinary contributions of Germans to classical music and science, creativity is not part of their stereotypical view of Germans. Presumably, then, were (factually true) unique nonstereotypical positive attributes or accomplishments of an outgroup to be presented to the ingroup, a less simplified, undifferentiated view of the outgroup would emerge. This approach to decategorization, though seemingly sensible, fails to have a positive effect (Locksley, Borgida, Brekke, & Hepburn, 1980). Correctly encoded information about the creativity of Germans, as a group, failed to affect attitudes about them (Armas, 2001). Such information, being presented as characteristic of the group as a whole, constitutes base-rate information about that group, and people underuse base-rate information (Kahneman & Tversky, 1983). Perhaps this accounts for the poor showing of group-based information in reducing bias.

### *Personalization*

Allport (1954) applauded a technique introduced by Rachel DuBois: “It brings together people of diverse ethnic background for a ‘neighborhood festival.’ The leader induces a participant to tell about memories of autumn, holidays, or food enjoyed as a child. The report reminds other participants of equally nostalgic memories. The distance of the memories, their warmth and frequent humor, lead to a vivid sense of commonality. Group customs are seen to be remarkably alike” (p. 489). What we see here is not just disclosure, but also social comparison. In processing the information about others in the setting, it is compared to self. Importantly, in the context in which this occurs, there is clearly information on and an awareness of category distinctions.

Personalization involves either or both of two components. As initially discussed (Brewer & Miller, 1984, p. 287) in personalized interaction one responds to other individuals in terms of their relationship to self. Thus, in an intergroup context, personalization necessarily involves making direct self-other interpersonal comparisons that cross category boundaries. One attends to information about others that is self-relevant and not merely that which is correlated with category membership. As a consequence, personalized interaction—like decategorization, too—increases the perception of intracategory variability.

A second important component of personalized interaction, however, and one we did not initially emphasize, is self-disclosure. Self-disclosure refers to the voluntary provision of information to another that is of an intimate or personal nature. Acts of self-disclosure promote trust. Presumably, the discloser would not provide the information if he or she believed that it would be interpreted or used in a manner harmful to self. Thus, when disclosing positive information, one trusts that

it will not be interpreted as boastful. And when disclosing negative information, one assumes that it will be kept confidential.

A number of interrelated, bidirectional causal processes and effects are induced by personalized interaction. By promoting familiarity, it permits better processing of individuating information of persons irrespective of their social category (Rothbart & John, 1985; Sears, 1983; Whitley, Schofield, & Snyder, 1984; Wilder, 1986). Its affective impact also is important. Anxiety and discomfort often characterizes intergroup settings (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Anxiety, and its attendant potential for creating cognitive overload, impair information processing. The trust implicit in personalized communication reduces anxiety and discomfort on the part of the person with whom the discloser is interacting. Consequently, self-disclosure not only increases the perceived similarity and familiarity associated with both interpersonal attraction (Derlega, Harris, & Chaiken, 1973) and positive affect (Lazowski & Anderson, 1990; Zajonc, 1980), but by reducing negative affect it also independently functions to promote better processing of information about others. Simultaneously, these processes provide an opportunity to disconfirm negative stereotypes of disliked outgroups and thereby break down the monolithic perception of the outgroup as a homogeneous unit (Cook, 1978; Wilder, 1978).

In addition, when personalized interaction occurs during cooperative contact, it directs attention toward outgroup members and in turn emphasizes their individuating features (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). For example, a Black interviewee disclosed more information and expressed greater liking for a White interviewer who disclosed intimate information than one who was nonintimate (Berg & Wright-Buckley, 1988). Similarly, when group members were instructed to adopt an interpersonal focus during a cooperative self-disclosure task, ingroup favoritism was reduced by comparison with group members who instead were instructed to adopt a task focus (Bettencourt, Brewer, Croak, & Miller, 1992).

Another interpretation of the ameliorative effects of personalized interaction points to the perceived scarcity of that which is self-disclosed (Petty & Mirels, 1981). Intimate information is more rarely discussed and thus less available than nonintimate information. People generally reveal intimate information to fewer people. Therefore, when revealed, it is valued more (Petty & Mirels, 1981; Taylor, DeSoto, & Lieb, 1979). It is also more rewarding, because such information usually is shared only with friends (Lynn, 1978). Hence, when it is disclosed it implies interpersonal attraction, which in turn induces a stronger reciprocation effect (*viz.*, I like those who like me).

Personalized interaction may also promote empathy, which may generalize to the group as a whole (Batson et al., 1997; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). The empathy created by a personalized interaction may reduce, or be incompatible with, apprehension about interacting with other outgroup members.

Finally, it is important to note that personalization is not isomorphic with individuation (differentiation). Knowledge of the unique and individuating attributes that distinguish one person from another does not necessarily have to be acquired via direct interaction and/or self-disclosure. One can learn of them from a third party. Likewise, knowledge of such information need not necessarily elicit self/other comparisons.

### *Typicality*

Another principle related to the contact situation is the notion that pleasant interaction among ingroup and outgroup members can be effective in reducing intergroup bias only if the outgroup members typify their group (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Hewstone & Lord, 1998; Wilder, Simon, & Faith, 1996). A person is perceived as a typical group member if s/he looks, speaks, or acts in the ways that the perceiver stereotypically assumes to be characteristic of the group. According to the Hewstone and Brown model, an outgroup member must behave in accord with the stereotypical norms that define the category in order for a positive attitude toward the specific outgroup individuals with whom one has had contact to generalize to new members of that social group (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Hewstone & Lord, 1998). In the absence of such clear evidence of typicality, the outgroup person will be seen as an exception, and intergroup attributional bias will remain intact (e.g., Bond et al., 1988; Rothbart & John, 1985; Weigel et al., 1975; Wilder, 1984a, 1984b).

For instance, students who had a pleasant interaction with a student from a disliked rival college adopted more positive attitudes regarding the quality of the students at the other school only when the specific student with whom they had positive contact dressed and acted in a manner consistent with the stereotype of students at the rival college (Wilder, 1984a). Similarly, increased category salience, rather than decategorized interaction, facilitated the transfer of Dutch students' favorable attitudes toward a Turkish partner to Turks in general (Van Oudenhoven et al., 1996). Further supporting this principle, stereotypes about certain occupational groups changed more when people were presented with counterstereotypic information about representative group members than when the same information was associated with atypical members of the category (Weber & Crocker, 1983). And when initially prejudiced students engaged in cooperative contact with a typical rather than an atypical former mental patient, they adopted more positive attitudes toward that group (Desforges et al., 1991). Finally, in a cooperative work situation, the most positive ratings of the outgroup (Germans) as a whole were obtained only when the German confederate was typical of his national group (Brown et al., 1999).

One interpretation of these effects is that generalization occurs in order to maintain balance between the positive evaluations of the typical outgroup member with whom contact occurred and the evaluations of the social group to which

that specific outgroup member belongs (Heider, 1958; Newcomb, 1981; Werth & Lord, 1992). Alternatively, positive contact with a typical outgroup member may change an individual's views about what constitutes a typical member of a negatively stereotyped outgroup, which in turn leads to more positive attitudes toward the outgroup as a whole (Werth & Lord, 1992). Whatever the case, typicality is characteristically viewed as a necessary component of contact in order for ameliorative effects to generalize to the outgroup as a whole.

### **The Interrelations Among Salience, Typicality, Decategorization, and Personalization**

The preceding discussion implies that the four variables—salience, differentiation, personalization, and typicality—are conceptually independent. Yet literally no research attempts to manipulate orthogonally all four, or even three, of these factors within a single experiment. Moreover, in real-world settings, some pairs among them seem to be naturally associated, raising a question about their conceptual independence. Next, I discuss selected instances in which such interdependence seems problematic. Space precludes consideration of all potential pairings.

#### **Salience and Personalization**

Hewstone and Brown (1986) correctly note that if personalized information processing means that information concerning social category membership lacks any salience during the course of social interaction, whatever information and/or affect was acquired cannot generalize to other members of the category. Clearly, this is an empirically testable inference. At a more fundamental level, however, it is a logical conclusion. With no category awareness, it is *logically* the case that information cannot generalize to other category members. The only form of generalization that can occur is that of Pettigrew's first level—generalization to that same person when interacting in other settings. As can readily be seen, the eventual consequence of this latter type of generalization is an inference about the actor's personality. That is, this form of generalization simply amounts to the making of a dispositional inference: that the displayed attribute is not situationally determined, but instead a stable attribute of that actor.

A key point, however, is that in most of the contact situations that are of interest to those concerned with intergroup relations, cues providing information about the category identity of the interacting persons are constantly present. Skin color, hair texture and pigmentation, and facial features make the racial/ethnic identity of Black and Anglo Americans clear to members of both categories when they interact. Linguistic cues identify northerners and southerners to each other. Secondary sex traits, such as facial hair and pitch of voice, make sexual identity manifest when male and females interact. With less consistency, habitually worn religious

emblems (a cross versus a Star of David and a skull cap) identify Palestinian Christians and Jews, and modes of dress identify blue- and white-collar workers in the United States. For most groups between whom there is strife, any contact at the interpersonal level occurs in the presence of category-identifying information. In developing the model of Figure 1, we were concerned more with these types of instances than with intergroup contacts in which no category membership information is automatically provided by the contact. Nevertheless, interactions between Democrats and Republicans or University of Southern California and Arizona State University students provide instances wherein social interaction can often occur with a complete absence of any cues about category identity with respect to these dimensions.

In implementing our own research, however, the logical principle was clear to us. If interaction with outgroup members occurs in the complete absence of category information, no generalization can occur. Consequently, in research that used artificial groups, participants were routinely required to wear category-identifying badges or sweat shirts (e.g., Bettencourt et al., 1992). We even used distinctively colored response forms for the measurement of dependent variables concerning ingroup and outgroup target persons (e.g., Harrington, 1988). Thus, although we had never explicitly emphasized the logical necessity of salient category cues for the generalization of positive contact, we did not disagree with Hewstone and Brown's emphasis on the need for it. Instead, we fully concur with them. Our point of departure is with their view that personalized contact necessarily detracts from generalization. By contrast, we argue that under moderate or higher levels of category salience, it promotes generalization.

### **Salience and Decategorization**

As previously noted, decategorization and intergroup salience manifestly appear to be inversely related. The distinctions previously drawn with respect to different ways of inducing decategorization, however, suggest that this is an oversimplified view. This will be elaborated further with respect to individuation/differentiation, personalization, and salience in a subsequent section. Yet even when decategorization is achieved by applying a superordinate identity, subgroup salience can be made to vary independently. Thus, within the context of an overarching identity as Hispanics, the salience of a male/female category distinction may be retained as highly salient or instead, obscured (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000).

### **Salience and Typicality**

One instance of expected naturally occurring interdependence involves typicality and intergroup salience. It appears likely that when intergroup cues are highly salient, perceptions of typicality/atypicality will become more extreme,

with the typicality of a more prototypical group member being exaggerated and an atypical group member being seen as even more atypical.

It seems likely, however, that such effects will not occur symmetrically for perceptions of ingroup and outgroup members. The characteristic main effect finding represented by the outgroup homogeneity effect suggests that this interaction between typicality and group salience will be stronger for the outgroup, especially with respect to atypical group members. Why? Because if the intergroup aspects of the setting are made salient, intergroup processes will be strengthened. And once intergroup processes are made salient, atypicality differentially becomes more noticeable.

As the intergroup aspects of the setting become heightened, social identity concerns also act to increase perceptions of ingroup as well as outgroup homogeneity. By contrast with the expected effects for the outgroup, such an interactive effect between group salience and perceived typicality of individual group members is likely to be generally weaker for the ingroup. Even an atypical ingroup member is likely to be assimilated to the ingroup prototype.

In the preceding discussion, the perception of typicality was viewed as varying as a consequence of the salience of the intergroup aspects of the setting. Thus, it was discussed as a dependent consequence of salience. From an experimental perspective, however, the issue of concern is the consequence of simultaneous variation or manipulation of each variable—salience and typicality. The implication of the preceding discussion, however, is that manipulation of the typicality of particular target persons will have more impact (or will produce stronger effects on manipulation checks of typicality/atypicality) on those target persons when the intergroup aspects of the setting have been made salient. Thus, for any given level of typicality, perceptions of that level will be affected by salience.

### **Decategorization and Personalization**

Although other pairings of these concepts may also display real-world or naturally occurring interdependencies, the most problematic among them is that between personalization and differentiation. One might readily question whether the two concepts are distinct, or whether instead, differentiation merely represents an intermediate or less extreme instance of personalization. In an earlier section of this article, the conceptual distinction between the two was linked to differences in processing modes: top-down for differentiation (and decategorization) and bottom-up for personalization. This too, however, can be viewed as a continuous dimension, with increasing amounts of bottom-up processing and decreasing amounts of top-down processing as one moves from differentiation to personalization. Thus, it becomes important to consider whether it indeed is possible to operationalize them as independent constructs (to concoct orthogonal experimental manipulations of them). Specifically, is it possible to (a) have a personalized interaction with an

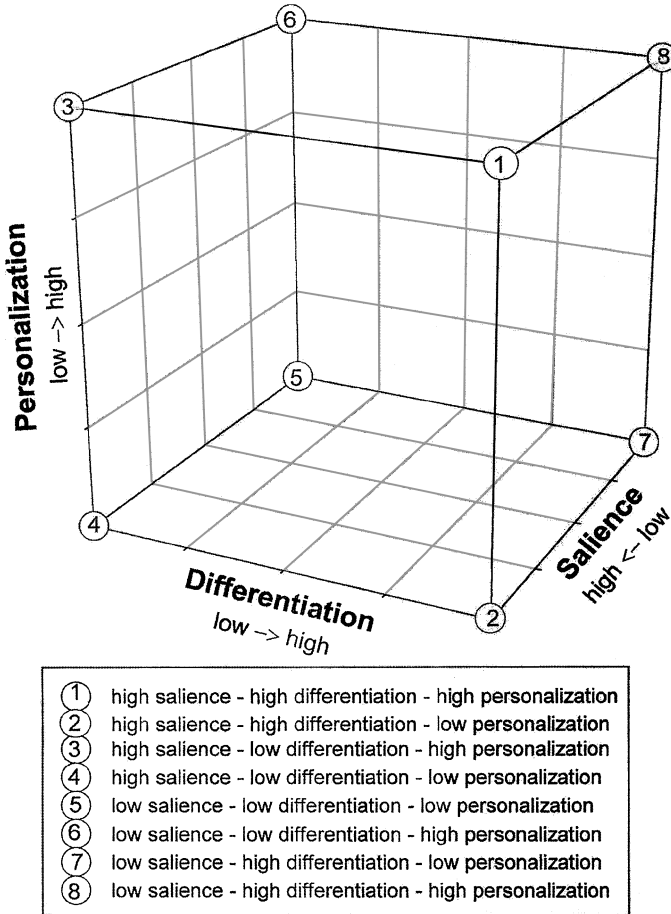


Fig. 4. Conceptualizing salience, differentiation, and personalization as independent constructs.

outgroup member (one in which the outgroup member self-discloses and also prompts the target person to engage in self-other interpersonal comparisons with that outgroup member) yet at the same time (b) have that interaction provide little or no information that differentiates that outgroup person from other members of that outgroup (no decategorization)? On first thought it is hard to imagine such an experience.

The cube depicted in Figure 4 presents all combinations of high and low levels of (a) salience of cues regarding the intergroup aspects of a social interaction, (b) the degree to which the interaction produces decategorized responding—by providing individuating information about outgroup members, and (c) the degree



to which the interaction provides opportunity for personalized interaction with an outgroup member—self-disclosure and instigation of self-other comparisons. Four of the numbered combinations among these three factors provide challenging interest. They are the ones involving opposing levels of differentiation (decategorization) and personalization: high salience, high differentiation, and low personalization (number 2 in the figure, lower right front); low salience, high differentiation, and low personalization (7, lower right back); high salience, low differentiation, and high personalization (3, upper left front); and low salience, low differentiation, and high personalization (6, upper left back). They provide challenging interest because they are cases that embody the conceptual possibility that these two variables, differentiation and personalization, can be independent.

A presentation of potential experimental operationalizations of the four combinations of conditions described above as the “interesting challenges” will substantiate the contention that the two concepts can be conceptually distinct and experimentally made to vary independently. The proposed study induces only two levels of category salience, very low and high, in anticipation of showing no generalization under the very low level. A design with three or more levels of category salience would be of interest, however, in that it would provide an opportunity for showing the potential benefit of personalization even under relatively moderate levels of category salience.

#### *Operationally Distinguishing Decategorization From Personalization Under High Versus Low Salience of Intergroup Cues*

This section presents procedures for implementing a hypothetical experiment. Its purpose is to illustrate how decategorization and personalization can be manipulated independently. The  $2 \times 2$  design of the study, as described below, manipulates the salience of social category membership as one factor. The two conditions of the second factor are high differentiation/low personalization and low differentiation/high personalization. (Of course, a more complete design would independently vary each of the two components of this complex latter manipulation, creating a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  design that added the low/low and high/high combinations of personalization and differentiation that are missing from the more simple experiment.)

Twenty participants (interviewers) are randomly assigned to each of the four cells of this  $2 \times 2$  between-participants design. The experiment might be one of several projects to be implemented in a large advanced communications class. On a premeasure administered at the beginning of the semester, the marital status and political preference of each class member has been identified. Selection of participants for this study is constrained to those males who consider themselves Democrats, who have at least moderately strong political party preference, and

who have identified themselves as married (or engaged 6 months or longer in a steady relationship). They are not informed of these selection criteria. When the project is introduced to each qualifying participant, he is told that later in the semester, he will participate as an interviewer in a field study concerned with the relation between *political ideology* and *style of interpersonal interaction*. For this purpose he will conduct interviews with a subset of 10 Republicans who have been selected from a random sample of local registered Republican voters and who have indicated their willingness to be interviewed about aspects of marriage. (Unmarried respondents will be replaced.)

Several weeks later, when the project is to be implemented, each participant is given a list of 15 phone numbers to call, along with an interview schedule containing the key interview question: "What is the major interpersonal problem that you face in your marriage?" (The five extra phone numbers are included "in case some respondents are not home or are unmarried"). They also receive instructions on approaches to be used for effectively probing their respondents if they fail to be sufficiently responsive to the interview question. The participants in the high salience condition are instructed to first verify the political party preference of each interviewee. By contrast, those in the low salience condition are not reminded again that their interviewees all have been selected as persons who are registered Republicans. Nor are there other cues on the interview schedule referring to the political ideology aspect of the study or to the fact that their list of interviewees only includes Republicans.

All 15 phone numbers given to each participant (interviewer) are those of experimental confederates. When called, they first respond to routine interview schedule questions about age, marital status, etc. When eventually asked the key question, they then, as part of their previous training as confederates, all give evasive, uninformative answers. In response to the interviewer's probes, however, 8 of the 10 (using slight differences in language and style) disclose that the major troublesome issue is difficulty on their own part in communicating with their wife about important personal problems, doubts, and fears that they have—that they tend not to share their problems and concerns with her and that this makes her feel isolated and hurt. (To augment the credibility of the procedures, two simply fail to respond to the probes for more self-disclosure, two state that they are unmarried, and three are never home).

In this experimental implementation, persons who are outgroup members with respect to political party affiliation remain basically undifferentiated. The 10 interviewees have provided no distinctive information that might lead the interviewer to a perception of members of the political outgroup as being less homogeneous with respect to attitudes, background, interests, and so on than he had previously thought. Yet a substantial majority of those interviewed eventually have self-disclosed a somewhat intimate piece of information. And although the confederates have each been trained to express it in slightly different ways, the

intimate information that each disclosed can only further solidify perceptions of outgroup homogeneity. Eight of ten, the substantial majority, will have disclosed the same problem—with the other two providing no information that contradicts the stereotype created about married Republican males. Moreover, because all interviewers have been preselected to be married men (or ones in a stable relationship), the content revealed in the interview explicitly invites self-other comparison. Finally, for the half whose interview schedule contains probes about political preference, party identification has been made salient. By contrast, for the other half it is not—resting as it does upon recall of the single piece of information concerning party affiliation that was embedded within the other instructional material that was orally presented earlier in the semester.

For the other two conditions of the study, the interview schedules are identical to those described above. By contrast, however, the interviewers are given a biographical sketch of each of their 15 interviewees, to be read just prior to conducting that interview under the guise that it will help them when they probe each respondent for more information. Collectively the information provided in the biographical sketches, as answers to specific questions, will have been tailored via pretesting to simultaneously do two things: First, by indicating a preference for the Republican candidate in the last three presidential elections, it will suggest a Republican identity (without explicitly mentioning Republican party membership); second, when considered across the 10 interviewees, the responses to the biographical sketch questions will to some degree counter stereotypes concerning the range of attitudes, beliefs, activities, social background, and racial/ethnic identity of Republicans, giving a far more differentiated picture of Republicans than that which the interviewer might have previously held. Yet in these conditions, when later responding to the key interview question—“What is the major interpersonal problem that you face in your marriage?”—all of the interviewees stonewall and give uninformative answers, denying any marital problem. Again, as above, for half of the interviewer-participants the category membership of their interviewees will have been made salient.

In these latter two conditions decategorization has been implemented by having received, via the biographical sketches, an array of differentiating information about Republicans. Yet there has been no self-disclosure. The differentiating information came from a third party and was essentially nonintimate, and none of the respondents engaged in interpersonal self-disclosure with respect to the key marital-problem question. Yes, there is opportunity for some self-other comparison with respect to the information in the biographical sketch, but still, this pair of conditions differs substantially from the preceding pair, being very considerably lower in its level of personalization. Thus, these latter two conditions impose high differentiation but no (or low) personalization on interviewers' perception of Republicans.

Does it make sense to consider these latter two conditions as implementations of decategorization? In the condition of high category salience it clearly does. In

the condition in which the Republican category identity of the respondents is not reinstated at the time of the interview, however, it does not. In this latter instance the respondents have been individuated, but with the low salience incurred by having made their category identity nonfocal in the attention of the perceiver, the effect of the individuating information cannot generalize. This is Hewstone and Brown's well-taken point.

The measurement of effects will be disconnected from the interview study. Following completion of all interviews over a single weekend, an attitude measure alleged to be part of a different study is distributed during the next class session. Its questions pertain to numerous social groups, among which are Republicans. Its items ask evaluative questions, as well as assessing perceptions of homogeneity/variability with respect to each group. Also, as part of yet a third study, behaviorally oriented evaluations at the individual level are obtained. All class members, including the interviewers, are asked to evaluate the qualification of job applicants. Among them are applicants whose job files contain information that clearly reveals their Republican political party preference. Whereas the evaluations solicited on the first measure were at the category level, those of the second measure are at the individual level.

### *Predictions*

What outcomes are to be expected from such an experiment? For simplification, potential differences in outcome as a function of group-level versus individual-level response measures will be ignored. Although correlations among various measures of intergroup bias typically are low ( $r = +.25$ ), they are positive (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1996). Parenthetically, against this backdrop, exceptions showing inverse relations do arise when, for instance, voluntarily controlled measures that allow politically correct responding are contrasted with outcomes on psychophysiological measures of uncontrolled affect (e.g., Vanman, Paul, Ito, & Miller, 1997).

From a conceptual perspective, I have argued that personalization elicits strong motivational and cognitive effects and that these have more impact than do the effects of differentiation per se, which are primarily constrained to cognitive changes. Consequently, within the context of a salience main effect showing greater generalization under high salience, stronger generalization is expected for the high personalization/low differentiation condition than for its opposite—low personalization/high differentiation. And were the full  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  design used, thereby adding both the high personalization/high differentiation and low personalization/low differentiation cells, the mixed levels of personalization and differentiation would show positive effects by comparison with the low/low cell. Thus, although my expectation for the effect of increased category salience concurs with that of Hewstone and Brown, my expectation regarding personalization

and differentiation is antithetical to theirs because they see the latter as inevitably decreasing the beneficial effects of category salience.

These expectations, however, are conceptual. The problem for any experiment comparing the relative impact of categorically distinct variables is the issue of implementation strength. Specifically, we cannot know whether personalization is indeed more effective than differentiation, or instead, whether the particular obtained outcome merely reflects the fact that the differentiation treatment was not implemented as strongly, effectively, or characteristically as was the personalization manipulation. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution to this problem. One approach, however, is to compare their effects under asymptotically strong implementations of each variable.

### Summary

Intergroup relations pose intractable problems, as evidenced by the long, drawn, and continuing attempts to reduce conflict in the Middle East, in what was once Yugoslavia, in Ireland, and also in numerous other places throughout the world that receive less media coverage. The points, distinctions, and issues raised in this article will not provide comprehensive solutions. They primarily underline the complexities of the problem. Moreover, the discussion, centered as it was at a social psychological level of analysis, was parochial—omitting, for instance, consideration of the more molar political, historical, and geographical variables that are important for real-world intergroup relations. Nevertheless, this discussion may succeed in adding useful or constructive nuances to one small portion of the palette from which intergroup research and interventions are drawn.

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