

THE ROLE OF INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY IN INTERRACIAL INTERACTIONS: RECONCEPTUALIZING STUDENTS' INTERACTIONS WITH DIVERSE OTHERS

2016 ASHE Conference
November 10, 2016
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PRESENTATION AGENDA

- Introduction and Limitations of Current Literature
- Research Questions
- Conceptualization of Interracial Interactions in the Literature
- Critique of the Study Design
- A Holistic Model to Examine Interracial Interactions
- Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

Why is it important to study interracial interactions?

- Conversations on interactions across race have been fueled by recent Supreme Court cases
- College serves as an ideal time to teach young adults about the democratic principles of a diverse society
- Research in the higher education setting has supported the hypothesis that interactions are beneficial for college students across a number of outcomes

LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT LITERATURE

- Assumes that the exchange of ideas across various groups and that these exchanges will always lead to positive outcomes
 - “Balkanization” and tense racial environments
- Addresses the “what,” but not the “how” or the “why”
 - Why does dining with a diverse peer lead to positive outcomes?
 - Are there circumstances where this might not happen?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How has the literature on interracial interactions in higher education conceptualized the variables included in their statistical models?
2. What do these studies offer for generalizable conclusions?
3. What might an ideal model to investigate interracial interactions in the higher education setting look like?

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF INTERRACIAL INTERACTIONS IN THE LITERATURE

How does one measure interracial interactions?

- “Cross-racial interaction”
 - Socialization with someone of a different racial or ethnic group, include studying, dining, dating, and interacting
- Friendship groups
 - Race/ethnicity and closeness of peers
- Diversity across different elements
 - Religious beliefs, political opinion, or personal values

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF INTERRACIAL INTERACTIONS IN THE LITERATURE

Limitations

- Getting the full picture is inherently difficult with all of these different measures
- We still don't understand the "how" or the "why"
 - If students benefit from dining with others from a different race/ethnicity, should we just build more dining halls?
 - More focused on behaviors than the underlying cognitive and affective mechanisms of these interactions.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF INTERRACIAL INTERACTIONS IN THE LITERATURE

Recommendations

- Provide some consistency in the measures being used to examine interracial interactions.
- Include affective and cognitive elements in the analysis, rather than just focusing on the behaviors (more on this later).

CRITIQUE OF THE STUDY DESIGN

- Majority of the studies look solely at experiences in college, rather than including pre-/post-college experiences
 - Astin's IEO Model
- We know much about the relationships between activities and outcomes (correlation), but little about what causes this (causation)
 - Limitations of cross-sectional design, or year-end analysis

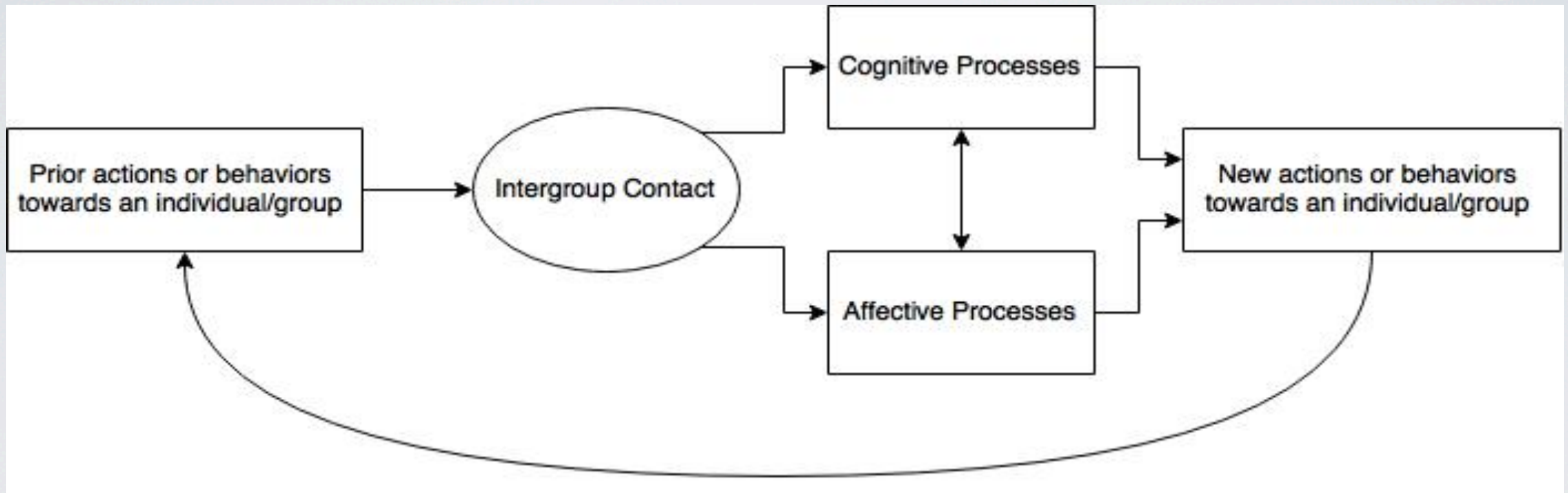
INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY

- Allport (1954) found several factors that were important predictors of positive effects in intergroup contact:
 - Equal group status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and the support of authorities, laws, and/or customs.
- Allport's (1954) theory hypothesizes the conditions under which prejudices might be successfully reduced; however, it does not explain the developmental process of intergroup contact, and why these prejudices are reduced from the resulting contact (Pettigrew, 1998).

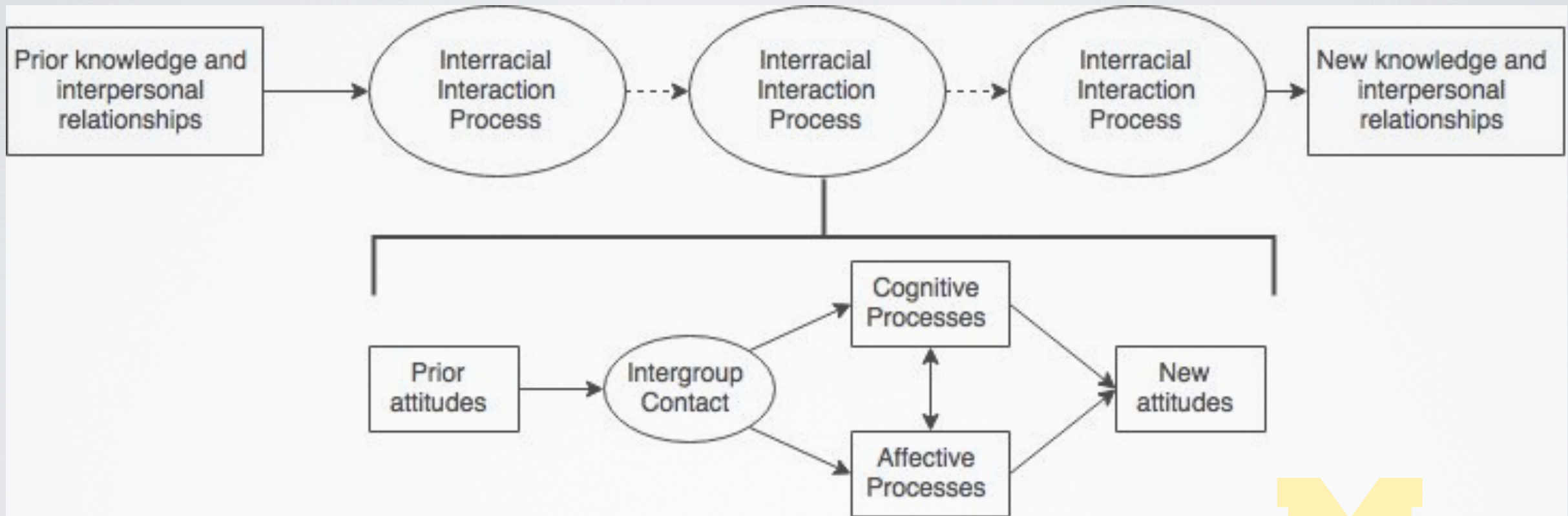
INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY

- The social psychology literature has recommended reviewing the process of interracial interactions from the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions:
 - Cognitive: Thoughts or beliefs about different others
 - Affective: Feelings and emotions towards different others
 - Behavioral: Associations with past or future experiences with different others

INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY



A HOLISTIC MODEL



CONCLUSIONS

- This certainly be an intensive undertaking, but could help scholars uncover the benefits of these interactions.
- Addresses gaps in interracial/intergroup interactions literature
 - Further uncover the importance of emotional qualities of intergroup contact, especially negative ones
 - Longitudinal, multilevel, and causal-based context
 - Can be applied to broader social policies on affirmative action or the benefits of cross-racial interactions

THANK YOU!

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