

Contact Theory (Allport) – October 2022

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This summary is prepared for the three-month trial of the Forward Project of the Social Change Lab - Susilo Wibisono & Winnifred R. Louis – details of the methodology and all summaries available here: <http://www.socialchangelab.net/forward.html> and via subscription/email at <https://socialchangelab.substack.com/>. Feedback welcome, to w.louis@psy.uq.edu.au.

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Month/Year	October 2022
Key term	“contact theory” Allport AND contact theory Allport AND contact theory
Database	Google Scholar
Link to database	https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/17p2fFHcyHQ0-hhlzNb2ZV-nzAUPxBPYs1fXsVC1_IRY/edit?usp=sharing

Overall, 18 publications were found for the several variations of the keywords to represent “contact theory” by Allport. Out of the 18, four of the publications were classified as relevant, one was partially relevant, and 12 were not relevant. As for the types of literature for relevant or partially relevant documents, three were journal articles (Lee, 2022; Lotun et al., 2022; Sokolić, 2022), one was a conference proceeding (Carlà, 2022), and one was a book chapter (Rukuni, 2022).

Overall, the empirical studies reported data from Zimbabwe (Rukuni, 2022), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sokolić, 2022), and Hong Kong (Lee, 2022). The age range was somewhat restrictive, with 18-36 as the most common age range in the publications. There seemed to be a relatively even spread of male and female participants if all studies are taken into account, but there was no mention of non-binary or transgender participants. Study sizes ranged from 41 to 457 with both native-English speaking and non-English speaking participants surveyed.

In terms of methodology, of the three empirical papers, two of them were quantitative while the one was qualitative study using Facebook data combined with interviews.

Findings

There were two main variables studied across the publications: exposure and cooperation. Exposure can include education, direct interaction, or online interaction with outgroup members. It is an essential component of Allport's (1954) contact theory. Exposure was found to reduce intergroup prejudice (Lotun et al., 2022) and intergroup anxiety (Lotun et al., 2022; Sokolić, 2022). However, negative interparty contact can have the opposite effect, increasing anxiety and reducing empathy (Lee, 2022). If negative intergroup experiences occur, individuals may be less likely to focus on their shared aspirations or participate in interpersonal discussion (Lee, 2022; Sokolić, 2022). This is supported by the finding that lower prejudice levels were mediated by the strength of parasocial bonds (Lotun et al., 2022). When exposure is successful and lower prejudice occurs, this is likely to be sustained long-term and lead to cooperative participation in dialogues (Lotun et al., 2022; Rukuni, 2022).

In terms of cooperation, empirical results showed that when participants held a common goal in mind, they are more likely to overcome normative frameworks that might encourage segregation, political conflict, or prejudice (Lotun et al., 2022; Rukuni, 2022; Sokolić, 2022). Cooperation can assist to overcome obstacles and to include formerly perceived outgroup members as new ingroup members (Sokolić, 2022). It also encourages communication and open-mindedness, which in turn lowers inter-group fear, suspicion, and anxiety (Lotun et al., 2022; Rukuni, 2022). Additionally, when ego-network difference is high (i.e., when one's political views are seen as very different to another's), interpersonal political discussion tends to be lower (Lee, 2022) which suggests that if individuals focus on the differences between themselves and others, they may be less willing to communicate and relate than if they find and focus on similarities, such as common goals.

Selected References – Contact theory (Allport) – October 2022

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Lotun, S., Lamarche, V. M., Samothrakis, S., Sandstrom, G. M., & Matran-Fernandez, A. (2022). Parasocial relationships on YouTube reduce prejudice towards mental health issues. *Scientific Reports*, *12*(1), 1-13.

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