

# Contact Theory

Psychology Session II

# Contact Theory

When different social groups make contact with each other, especially when the contact is facilitated and cooperative, prejudice between the groups is reduced.

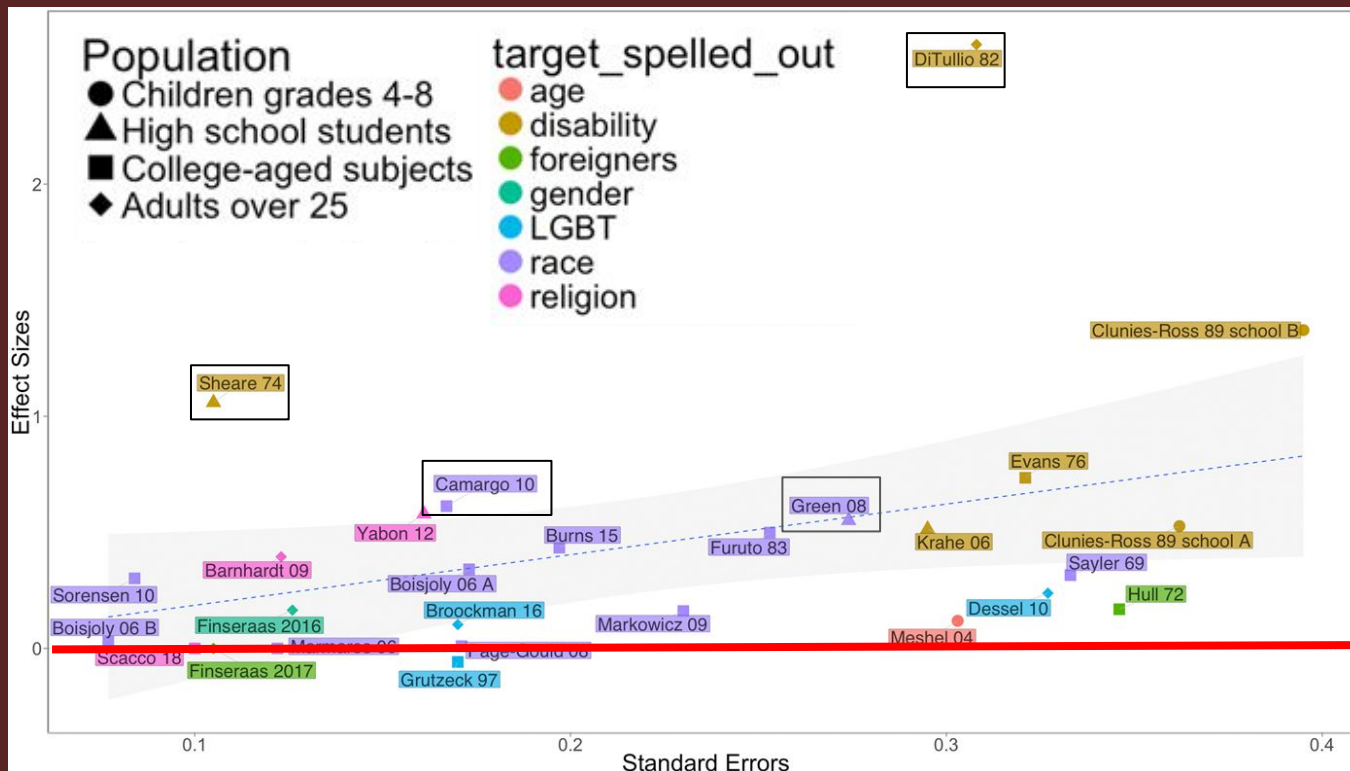


# Contact Theory Overview

- Requires contact with another social group
- Studied for a long time (since 1934)
- Extremely reliable
- Effects are sometimes small



# Samples



# Methods of Implementation

Usually involves long-term contact

Examples:

- Integration of special needs students into other classes
- Interracial college roommates
- Employing a worker with a disability in a school
- Enrolling in a racially heterogeneous course [MW17]



# Experimental Example



- Teenagers participated in 2- to 3-week Outward Bound courses and responded to questions about their tolerance for members of other racial groups [MW17]

Group Composition	Average racial tolerance response (out of 5)
Homogenous	3.4
Heterogeneous	4.3

# Allport's Conditions

Shown to improve effectiveness of contact, but are not necessary.

Conditions:

- Working toward a common goal
- Cooperation between groups
- Equal status among participants
- Support or facilitation from an institution (this is most important) [MW13]

# Other Important Conditions



- Reduction of anxiety
- Empathy
- Taking the perspective of the other  
[MW11]
- Common identity may be fostered  
through contact with another group  
[MW17]



# For Whom Is Contact Effective?

- Contact reduces prejudice for both majority and minority groups [MW15].
- Effects are stronger for majority groups.

Group studied	Average correlation between contact and prejudice
Minority status	-0.18
Majority status	-0.23

# Broader Effects

- Contact with an outgroup may reduce prejudice toward the entire group [MW13].
- Reduced prejudice due to contact may reduce prejudice toward other groups.

Group studied	Average correlation between contact and prejudice
People with whom contact is made	-0.231
Entire social group to which people belong	-0.213
Other social groups	-0.190

# Key Takeaways

- Contact can reliably reduce prejudice between groups
- Contact is best when it makes use of time, goals, cooperation, equality, support, and empathy
- The reduction of prejudice from contact may be generalized outside of the immediately present groups, though the effects are not as strong
- The effectiveness of contact is not as strong for minority group members