



Moving Beyond Prejudice Reduction

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UNDERSTANDING THE INTERGROUP FORECASTING ERROR

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Negative expectations based on social class nearly derailed one of literature's greatest love stories. In *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 1813/2002), outward appearances and unconfirmed hearsay initially led Elizabeth Bennet to believe that Mr. Darcy was an elitist aristocrat who would not deign to mingle with a woman of lesser social standing. It was not until the situation forced her into his company that he revealed his gracious and welcoming manner and she discovered that they shared much in common. As a result, the two overcame their negative first impressions and fell deeply in love.

Many people make the same mistake as Ms. Bennet made when imagining what it would be like to interact with someone from a different social group. In general, people are not very accurate when predicting their future feelings because they misconstrue the nature of upcoming events, apply inaccurate theories, overproject from their current feelings, and fail to anticipate the extent to which they have the psychological resources to cope with negative events (Wilson & Gilbert, 2003). All of these mistakes contribute to the discrepancy between our expectations of what it would feel like to interact with someone from a different social group and our actual experiences. The tendency to expect the worst from intergroup interactions, even though

they often turn out better than anticipated, is termed the *intergroup forecasting error* (Mallett, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008).

Mallett et al. (2008) tested the extent to which expectations about future intergroup interactions differed from reports of actual intergroup experiences. In a daily diary study, they found that both majority and minority group members expected more negative intergroup interactions than they actually experienced (Study 1). This was true across several social groups (e.g., race, age, gender, mental or physical disability, social status, sexual orientation, weight) and in a variety of domains (e.g., at school, shopping, socializing). In subsequent studies, they introduced participants to a person of a different race and randomly assigned half of the participants to report their expectations of what it would be like to have an 8-min getting-acquainted conversation with that person. The other half of the participants did not report expectations but instead actually engaged in the 8-min conversation and reported how they felt. Expectations of intergroup interactions were consistently more negative (and less accurate) than both expectations of same-race interactions in the same situation and actual experiences. Interestingly, although people expected intergroup interactions to go poorly, they tended to go quite well. In fact, Whites reported that interactions with a Black partner went just as well as interactions with a White partner.

One reason for the intergroup forecasting error is that when it comes to imagining how a stranger from a different social group will think, feel, and behave, people typically rely on stereotypes (Hebl, Tickle, & Heatherton, 2000). Stereotypes tend to be negative and contribute to negative expectations of intergroup relations. To be sure, there are times when minority and majority group members accurately pick up on cues that an intergroup interaction will not go well. Often, however, stereotypes create a negative expectation that undermines the quality of an interaction (Tropp, 2003; Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974). For example, when minority group members expect to be the target of prejudice, they report feeling a host of negative emotions (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). Likewise, when majority group members believe their partner sees them as prejudiced, they leave intergroup interactions unhappy and cognitively drained (Butz & Plant, 2006; Plant & Butz, 2006; Richeson & Trawalter, 2005). Negative expectations and experiences reduce willingness to initiate contact with members of different social groups (Frey & Tropp, 2006; Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002; Pinel, 1999; Plant & Devine, 2003; Shelton & Richeson, 2005; Shelton, Richeson & Salvatore, 2005).

We know that contact between different social groups reduces prejudice, especially when it creates the potential for friendship (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). Having interracial roommates and friends in college is typically associated with less bias and intergroup anxiety for Whites, Blacks, Asians, and

Latinos (Levin, Van Laar, & Sidanius, 2000; Shook & Fazio, 2008). Even people who are biased and fear rejection experience more comfort and less stress when they bond with someone from a different social group (Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton, & Tropp, 2008). There is, however, a barrier to intergroup contact in everyday life. People fear being rejected or that the interaction will go poorly (Plant & Devine, 2003; Shelton & Richeson, 2005). We can potentially remove that barrier to intergroup contact if we discover ways to reduce the intergroup forecasting error.

Several factors impede accurate intergroup forecasts, including the reliance on stereotypes of one's partner, individual differences in sensitivity to group membership, and a failure to appreciate how the situation constrains one's experience (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; Frey & Tropp, 2006; Pinel, 1999). If one person goes into an interaction expecting the worst while the other person approaches the same interaction hoping for the best, then the quality of the interaction can easily be compromised unless the individual with positive expectations can withstand some resistance from an initially negative partner. Next, we consider how addressing factors related to the partner, the self, and the situation can reduce the intergroup forecasting error.

THE INTERACTION PARTNER

Both majority and minority group members commit the intergroup forecasting error, but only when imagining what it would be like to interact with a partner from a different social group—predictions about what it would be like to interact with someone from the same social group are unaffected (Mallett et al., 2008). Simply being in the presence of an outgroup member increases categorization based on group membership, which leads people to perceive greater similarities between the self and people from their own social group and greater differences between the self and people from a different social group (Jones, 1990; Wilder, 1986). Every social group possesses attributes that influence the nature and intensity of how people expect to feel when interacting with a member of that group. In general, people expect to feel negatively toward a group that is perceived as capable of acting out negative intentions that threaten their safety or resources (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). The type of threat that one perceives determines the nature of one's emotional expectation. For example, the rich might expect to feel angry about requests from the poor if they perceive them as demands that threaten their resources, religious fundamentalists might expect to feel disgust if they thought moral contamination would result from interacting with atheists, and Whites

would expect to feel afraid if they thought that Blacks wanted to threaten their physical safety.

Expectations are further shaped by *metastereotypes*, or what we think outgroup members believe about our group. Many times, metastereotypes lead people to overestimate the amount of tension and awkwardness they will experience during an intergroup interaction. Metastereotypes are activated when we anticipate being evaluated or perceive the potential for conflict with someone from a different social group (Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). Majority group members worry that the interaction will not go well because their interaction partner will expect them to be racist, even if they behave in a nonbiased, friendly manner (Butz & Plant, 2006). Believing that someone from a different social group holds a negative stereotype of their group makes both minority and majority group members feel anxious, believe the other person is not interested in contact, and report little desire for contact (Mendez, Gomez, & Tropp, 2007). People do not report the same concerns when they expect the other person to hold a positive stereotype or when interacting with someone from their same social group (Mendez et al., 2007; Vorauer et al., 1998).

The intergroup forecasting error should be particularly likely to occur when one's interaction partner looks like a prototypical group member. People expect African Americans with strong Afrocentric features to possess more stereotypic traits and to behave more aggressively than those with weak Afrocentric features (Blair, Chapleau, & Judd, 2005). Therefore, cues such as facial features (e.g., shape of eyes, width of nose), clothing (e.g., Malcolm X shirt, rainbow pin), or mannerisms (e.g., dialect, gait) that highlight group membership activate stereotypes and trigger negative expectations. Yet because we are all members of multiple social groups, the category that initially captures our interaction partner's attention might not be the category that is accessible during the majority of the interaction (Macrae, Bodenhausen, & Milne, 1995). For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy was a prototypical member of the aristocracy—exemplified in his mannerisms, dress, and speech. Accordingly, Ms. Bennet expected him to be aloof and reject her on the basis of her somewhat lower social standing. Contrary to expectations, gender, not social class, was the salient social category in many of their interactions. Given the fact that they were both single heterosexuals, the emphasis on gender led to an unexpectedly positive outcome.

Therefore, one way to reduce the intergroup forecasting error and increase the positivity of emotional expectations is to override the tendency to focus on group membership when imagining an intergroup interaction. In almost every case, two people interact for a reason—they are colleagues at work or they have mutual friends, similar interests, or a shared goal. Relying too heavily on stereotypes based on group membership can lead a person to overlook

these commonalities and expect to share fewer similarities with a partner from a different social group, compared to a partner from the same social group. In reality, similarities often arise and smooth the social interaction. For example, both highly and less prejudiced Whites respond positively to a Black stranger when they believe they share similar attitudes with the person (Byrne & McGraw, 1964). Mallett and colleagues (2008) found support for this route to reducing the intergroup forecasting error when they encouraged people to consider small ways in which they were similar to someone from a different social group. As a result of considering, for example, a mutual preference for hardwood floors over carpet, their expectations changed to match their positive experiences. Of interest is that expectations were considerably more positive and more closely matched actual experiences after considering even trivial similarities—participants did not have to think about important ideological overlaps to override the influence of group membership.

THE SELF

Some people are especially attuned to group membership during social interactions and two individual differences likely enhance the intergroup forecasting error by highlighting cues of threat in the environment and potentially changing behavior during intergroup interactions. Specifically, sensitivity to race-based rejection and stigma consciousness increase attention to subliminal signs of threat in the environment, including facial expressions of contempt (Inzlicht, Kaiser, & Major, 2008) and evidence of rejection in the other person's behavior (Downey, Mougios, Ayduk, London, & Shoda, 2004). The fear of being viewed through a stereotypic lens also increases perceptions of subtle and overt discrimination (Pinel, 2004) and leads people to avoid outgroup members and stereotyped domains (Pinel, 1999). If intergroup interactions are unavoidable, sensitivity is associated with aggressive and inappropriate behavior, including devaluing the partner's contributions and dosing the partner with a large serving of hot sauce (Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerssen, 2008). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Ms. Bennet's sensitivity to rejection on the basis of her social class and Mr. Darcy's unchecked bias against that class contributed to their rocky start. Their relationship could have permanently stalled if one or both parties had been unmotivated or unable to overcome that sensitivity and control their preexisting bias (see Butz & Plant, 2006; Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002; Pinel, 1999).

Mr. Darcy's initially judgmental reaction to Ms. Bennet's social standing illustrates how prejudice also enhances negative expectations and harms the quality of intergroup interactions. People who are highly prejudiced believe their partner will view them according to the group stereotype, and,

as a result, they expect to feel anxious and wish to avoid intergroup contact (Ashburn-Nardo, Knowles, & Monteith, 2003; Dasgupta & Rivera, 2008; Vorauer et al., 1998). Bias is also related to less friendly (i.e., less smiling, eye contact) and more uncomfortable and biased behavior (i.e., asking racially stereotypic interview questions) toward outgroup members (Dovidio et al., 2002; Fazio et al., 1995). If the interaction partner responds in kind to these negative behaviors, then both parties will likely have an unpleasant encounter. Over time, greater expectations of being treated according to stereotypes are associated with lesser intergroup trust and fewer intergroup friendships (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002; Shelton et al., 2005). In comparison, people who are low in prejudice tend to see more similarities between themselves and a person from a different social group, and this perception reduces the extent to which they expect to be seen through the lens of the negative stereotype of their group (Vorauer et al., 1998). Moreover, if those low in prejudice do not believe they conform to the group stereotype, they may avoid being influenced by the metastereotype of their group and anticipate positive emotions (Frey & Tropp, 2006).

Two individual differences, optimism and the internal motivation and ability to control prejudice, should reduce the intergroup forecasting error. Both of these individual differences increase the positivity of intergroup expectations as well as confidence in one's ability to have a successful intergroup interaction. Optimism broadens attention to positive cues in the environment and increases the perception that one is capable of dealing with a challenging situation (Segerstrom, 2001). Optimistic women and men exposed to sexism believe that they have sufficient resources to cope with the threat of discrimination, which allows them to protect their self-esteem and emotional well-being (Kaiser, Major, & McCoy, 2004). Positive expectations reduce anxiety and encourage contact, thereby increasing experience with intergroup interactions (Plant & Butz, 2006). Experience interacting with people from different social groups reduces the uncertainty surrounding future interactions by increasing knowledge about the other group and establishing norms and expectations for future interactions (Blair, Park, & Bachelor, 2003). As a result, one builds confidence in the ability to perform well during an intergroup encounter (Hyers & Swim, 1998; Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

People who are personally committed to upholding egalitarian values have an internal motivation to control biased behavior during intergroup interactions (Plant & Devine, 2003). Having an internal motivation to control prejudice, and believing that one can do so, is associated with positive intergroup expectations for both Whites and Blacks (Plant, 2004). Those who are internally motivated and practiced at controlling their nonverbal behavior do not exhibit biased behavior, even during threatening intergroup interactions (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2006; Fazio, 1990; Maddux, Barden, Brewer, &

Petty, 2005). Moreover, those who are internally motivated to control prejudice are dedicated to overcoming awkwardness and view even negative intergroup interactions as a feasible challenge. Those who are highly internally motivated succeed at intergroup interactions because they set positive, approach-related goals, spend more time interacting, and are friendlier with intergroup partners compared to those who lack this motivation (see Butz & Plant, this volume). Not only does this behavior enable the individual to express egalitarian values, it also results in a positive experience for the interaction partner.

Although many people are motivated to understand, belong, or present a nonprejudiced image during an intergroup interaction (Baumeister, 1998; Swim & Thomas, 2006), they often fail to anticipate the influence these goals exert on behavior. For example, if a majority group member wishes to present a nonprejudiced image, she may go out of her way to create a positive interaction by smiling and approaching a minority group member despite even a perceived reluctance on the other person's part. Similarly, if a minority group member wishes to be accepted by a majority group member, he may shift his attitudes and beliefs to align with those of his interaction partner (Sinclair, Huntsinger, Skorinko, & Hardin, 2005). Attempting to put one's best face forward during an interaction with a stranger improves the quality of the interaction for both parties; the person who is compensating feels good and the use of compensation increases perceptions of likeability, competence, and intelligence (Dunn, Biesanz, Human, & Finn, 2007; Mallett & Swim, 2005). Yet if one does not account for the fact that one's self or one's interaction partner might engage in these behaviors during the interaction, then one's expectations will likely be more negative than one's actual experiences.

THE SITUATION

Expectations of negative emotions are especially high in situations that highlight differences in group membership because they suggest the possibility of awkwardness or negative consequences for the self (Esses & Dovidio, 2002; Hebl et al., 2000; Mackie & Smith, 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Some situations clearly indicate that one will be perceived in terms of group membership and treated as either a perpetrator or target of prejudice. For example, contexts like jail, a ghetto, and a dark alley are perceived as more threatening than contexts like church, a classroom, or even a tornado, because they pair a stereotyped individual with a threatening situation (Maddux et al., 2005). Other contexts are more ambiguous, making it unclear whether one will be treated according to group membership (Crocker & Major, 1989).

When facing an ambiguous situation, factors such as demographics and personal base rates communicate the likelihood that the average person versus the self would have a negative experience (Marti, Bobier, & Baron, 2000). Expecting to be the only member of one's social group in a situation increases the amount of attention people expect to receive that is due to group membership, thereby increasing the negativity of expectations (Lord & Saenz, 1985). Perceiving that one has personally been the target of discrimination in the past increases the likelihood of expecting a similar outcome in the future (Stangor et al., 2003). Minority group members view certain behaviors as discriminatory, and observing these behaviors triggers negative expectations. For instance, African Americans report racism in the form of subtle behaviors, such as being stared or glared at, being the target of racial slurs, and receiving poor service in a store or restaurant (Swim et al., 2003), whereas women report sexism in the form of remarks regarding traditional social roles and sexually objectifying comments or behavior (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). Some everyday experiences with discrimination are also seen as more prototypical than others. For example, women believe that the use of patronizing language is more likely a sign of prejudice than sexually objectifying comments (Swim, Mallett, Russo-Devosa, & Stangor, 2005). Although prototypical situations and behaviors provide a useful heuristic when developing expectations in an ambiguous situation, they can also create false positives whereby one inaccurately expects a negative experience.

One or both parties may also form inaccurate expectations if they fail to correctly estimate how much ability or effort is required to engage in compensation in that situation. *Compensation* is defined in many ways throughout the literature, but it can range from using a single simple strategy (e.g., smiling) to a more elaborately orchestrated effort (e.g., monitoring the direction of the conversation, inserting counterstereotypical comments, or asserting positive aspects of the self while smiling; Mallett & Swim, 2005). At times, one might anticipate having to work extremely hard to obtain a positive outcome but then be pleasantly surprised to find the interaction was relatively easy to negotiate. Alternatively, one could be caught off-guard by the awkwardness of an encounter and have to initiate a more elaborate form of compensation in the middle of the interaction. In both cases, expectations would diverge from one's actual experience. Interacting with a larger number of outgroup members in a variety of situations should provide a better basis on which to create expectations of what it will take to successfully compensate. Therefore, we expect that as both minority and majority group members increase their experience with intergroup contact, the accuracy of estimations regarding ability and effort needed to compensate should also increase.

Finally, intergroup expectations can diverge from experience because people cannot easily anticipate the complexity of future situations. The failure to

account for situational constraints often causes people to overestimate dispositional and underestimate situational influences on their future experience (Wilson & Gilbert, 2003). Underestimating the positive influence of a situational feature such as task demands or social norms for politeness and overestimating the negative influence of a person's disposition can be especially dangerous because people assume that individuals from different social groups have more negative dispositions than individuals from one's own group (Jones, 1990). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Ms. Bennet spends a considerable amount of time with Mr. Darcy at the home of a mutual acquaintance while her sister Jane, also a guest, recovers there from a novelistically convenient illness. Mr. Darcy plays the role of a gracious and concerned host, ensuring that his previously aloof disposition will exert little influence on their interactions (see Mischel, 1984). After some initial resistance, Ms. Bennet reciprocates his pleasant demeanor. The two begin to discover commonalities and formed a lasting bond. It is unlikely that either character could have foreseen the positive outcome of their interaction because they initially failed to look beyond category membership and expected to feel more negatively toward each other than they actually did.

Reminding people that social situations are multifaceted and often constrain their behavior could lead them to form more accurate expectations of how they will feel in a future intergroup interaction. Such a reminder could work by encouraging people to focus on the self as an individual, rather than a group member, thereby reducing the salience of group membership. Thinking about the self as an individual increases expectations that the interaction partner will share one's view of the self, increases thoughts of similarity, and reduces reliance on stereotypes—all factors that increase the positivity of expectations (Frey & Tropp, 2006). Ms. Bennet expected to feel uncomfortable because the situation highlighted Mr. Darcy's social class, reminding her of their group differences and suggesting the potential for conflict. However, the situation at their friend's estate enforced norms for politeness that smoothed any impending awkwardness and led to the discovery of their similarities (i.e., a shared love of intellectual pursuits), allowing them both to overcome their initial misgivings. Thus, encouraging people to adopt a different focus, either by stepping forward to search for similarity or stepping back to appreciate the power of social norms, may adjust both expectations and experience. Doing so should reduce the tendency to avoid intergroup contact.

BRINGING EXPECTATIONS IN LINE WITH EXPERIENCE

Even if an interracial interaction goes better than expected, it can still produce anxiety, which reduces willingness to engage in future intergroup contact (Plant & Devine, 2003). Therefore, we must also consider ways of smoothing

intergroup interaction along with improving expectations. Although Mallett and colleagues' (2008) "focusing on similarities" manipulation increased the positivity of intergroup expectations, it did not change the pleasantness of Whites' actual intergroup interactions. Thus, Mallett and Wilson (2010) investigated whether an intervention that increased people's expectations about the pleasantness of an interracial interaction would make an actual interaction more pleasant and less cognitively draining, thereby increasing willingness to form interracial friendships.

Research demonstrating an extended contact effect shows that simply observing a positive interaction between an ingroup and outgroup member can improve attitudes toward the outgroup (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997). But seeing a positive intergroup interaction might not be sufficient to improve the pleasantness of a future intergroup interaction because people could see the positive example as an exception to the more general rule that intergroup friendships are difficult (Kunda & Oleson, 1995). Building on this research, Mallett and Wilson (2010) showed White college students a videotaped interview of two students at their university—one White, one Black—who had become friends despite having low expectations about the friendship to begin with. To reduce suspicion that the study was about race, the first two videos depicted White students talking about their 1st-year experiences (e.g., favorite class, toughest part of the transition to college) and friendships. The next two videos depicted one Black and one White student who were described as good friends. Both students mentioned that they did not expect to become friends and did not think they had much in common at first (e.g., the White student said, "I wasn't sure how much we would have in common . . . he didn't really seem like any of my old friends from home"). Both students also said that, to their surprise, they discovered that they had things in common, such as the same taste in books and similar senses of humor.

Mallett and Wilson (2010) went a step further by having some participants connect this story to their own experience, either by writing about a time when an interaction went "better than expected" (i.e., a time when "you didn't think that you could become friends with a person, but you were wrong for some reason") or a time when an interaction went "just as expected" (i.e., "you didn't think they could become friends with someone and were correct") or not writing. They predicted that the combination of seeing evidence of an intergroup friendship and connecting it to a time one's own experience was better than expected would improve White students' expectations about an interracial interaction, make them less nervous during that interaction, and make them more open to interracial friendships in the coming weeks. Participants who applied the "better than expected" story to their own lives not only had more accurate expectations of an interracial interaction, they also had a more positive interaction with a Black student they had never met.

Mallett and Wilson (2010) explored a potential mediator of these effects in the form of cognitive resources available to devote to the interaction. Positive expectations about the interactions should lead participants to feel relaxed and have more cognitive resources to devote to making the interaction go smoothly (Richeson & Trawalter, 2005). In support of this hypothesis, participants in the "better than expected" condition, who wrote about a time when their expectations were wrong, reported more accurate expectations about the interview and less nervousness during the interview than did participants in the other two conditions. Participant expectations also mediated the effects of writing on a measure of cognitive depletion, supporting the idea that writing about a personal experience similar to one seen in the interracial friendship videos improved expectations about an intergroup interaction, thereby freeing up cognitive resources.

A second study showed that changing people's expectations, beliefs, and attributions (e.g., Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006; Wilson & Linville, 1982) gave them confidence about an interaction in the laboratory, and once this went well, people become even more confident and were more willing to initiate intergroup friendship outside of the laboratory. Specifically, participants who saw the interracial friendship videos and were in the "better than expected" writing condition showed a dramatic increase in the number of interracial friendships they formed in the next week. Self-reports of interracial friendships were confirmed by checking new friends added to the participant's Facebook profiles 2 weeks after the study. Thus, not only did the intervention increase the short-term positivity of an interracial interaction in the laboratory, it had long-term beneficial effects in people's everyday lives.

CONCLUSION

The novel *Pride and Prejudice* was originally titled *First Impressions*, Austen's theme being that the characters—like real people—often operated on uninformed assumptions about each other. Their reliance on stereotypes, their bias against people from a different social class, and their failure to appreciate the way that situations often constrain behavior created substantial barriers to developing a relationship. People commonly commit the same type of intergroup forecasting error today—anticipating the worst from intergroup interactions, even though they often turn out better than expected (Mallett et al., 2008). That is not to say that all intergroup contact goes well. Extreme prejudice against a group makes some people unwilling to engage in intergroup contact. Furthermore, a lack of motivation to create a positive interaction and an unwillingness to seek shared similarities can result in an awkward and unpleasant interaction. Many times, however, intergroup interactions go

better than expected because our everyday interactions center on shared interests (e.g., work, sports, friends) and occur in highly scripted contexts (e.g., the office, a game, a party). Plus, many people truly desire more intergroup contact and, in many cases, the only thing holding them back is the potential sting of rejection.

Focusing on factors that contribute to more positive—and more accurate—expectations of intergroup contact signals a shift in the traditional approach of understanding the origin and nature of negative expectations. It is critical to continue identifying the roots of awkward intergroup experiences because doing so reveals opportunities for change. Yet, researchers often do not take the necessary steps to move from a problem focus to a solution focus. Research that investigates phenomena such as the intergroup forecasting error helps us to develop strategies that combat negative expectations and increase the frequency of positive intergroup contact. Considering how we can create positive expectations of challenging and worthwhile intergroup interactions has the potential to reveal relatively simple ways to put people on a more positive course to developing intergroup friendship.

Knowing that one was mistaken in the past about negative intergroup expectations should reduce the often-held belief that people from different social groups are simply uninterested in intergroup contact, thereby reducing one's fear of being rejected by members of such groups (Shelton & Richeson, 2005). Moreover, past success at negotiating interracial interactions should bolster people's confidence, thereby reducing the experience of anxiety during future interactions (Hyers & Swim, 1998). As a result, both majority and minority group members should be more willing to approach opportunities for intergroup contact and be more eager to attempt the formation of new intergroup friendships.

We know that under the right conditions intergroup contact decreases prejudice, yet little research attention has been devoted to uncovering ways to increase people's willingness to establish contact in the first place and, when such interactions do occur, to make them go smoothly. One way to promote intergroup contact is to convince people that their overly negative expectations about such interactions are often incorrect. We have isolated several ways to target these negative expectations: (a) reducing reliance on stereotypes of one's partner, (b) understanding individual differences in sensitivity to group membership, and (c) increasing the appreciation of how the situation constrains one's experience. Considering a time when interracial contact went better than expected was shown to smooth upcoming instances of interracial contact and pave the way for formation of future interracial friendships. Because each successful intergroup interaction builds on the previous one, it is imperative to strengthen people's confidence in their ability to present a positive image during intergroup interactions, and that confidence

should then produce an increased willingness to form new friendships with members of other social groups in everyday life.

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