

## **ABSTRACT**

MACOMBER, KRISTINE. An Extension of the Intergroup Contact Theory: The Effects of Black-White Contact and Interracial Friendships on Whites' Racial Attitudes. (Under the direction of Thomas Hoban).

Using data from the 1998 General Social Survey, this thesis examines the effects of black-white contact and close interracial friendships on whites' attitudes towards blacks. Intergroup contact theory maintains that contact between people of different groups reduces prejudices and improves attitudes. The majority of previous contact studies have focused on casual black-white contact in neighborhoods and workplaces. Emerging in the current literature is a focus on more personal contact between blacks and whites, as in close friendships. I hypothesize that a positive relationship exists between whites' having a close black friend and their attitudes towards blacks. I also hypothesize a positive relationship between contact and attitudes. I use OLS regression models to test both hypotheses. The results of the analysis support the second hypothesis. The key finding is a statistically significant positive effect of neighborhood contact on whites' attitudes towards blacks. In support of intergroup contact theory, this significant finding suggests that a necessary condition for contact effects on attitudes is equal status between blacks and whites.

**An Extension of the Intergroup Contact Theory:  
The Effects of Black-White Contact and Interracial Friendships  
on Whites' Racial Attitudes**

by

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Kristine Claire Macomber was born in Providence, Rhode Island on September 3, 1979. (By saying Rhode Island, I mean the smallest state in the U.S., not an island in New York). She graduated from Johnston High School in 1997 and then traveled all the way on the other side of the state—a whole 30 minutes away, to attend the University of Rhode Island. She fulfilled her creative flair for the dramatic arts and majored in theatre for two years. Then one day she took a Sex and Gender class that changed the course of her college career and ultimately her life.

In May, 2002 she graduated from URI with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and minors in both women's studies and theatre. Committed to learning as much as she could about sociology, she attended North Carolina State University in the fall of 2002. In June 2004, she received her master's degree. Kristine's future plans are to get her PhD and spark the sociological imagination in others, the way that Helen Mederer did in her.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Although race relations between blacks and whites have improved over the years, physical separation of blacks and whites is still a dominating feature in all spheres of social life: our workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and more intimately our personal lives. The fact that blacks and whites are physically separated from each other is not inherently harmful to blacks as a group. However, the dominant anti-black sentiment in America, resulting in part from isolation, is harmful--socially, politically, and I argue personally. There is truth to the old adage that says, "You don't like what you don't know." If ignorance does breed hostility, does that mean that contact between blacks and whites promotes more positive attitudes? More than fifty years of social science research says "yes" (Allport 1954, Deutsch and Collins 1951, Robinson, Jr. 1980, Pettigrew 1997, 1998, 2000).

### ***"So what, if I Think Black People are Lazy?" The Consequences of Negative Racial Attitudes.***

Research on whites' attitudes towards blacks exposes individual opinions, feelings and thoughts that one group of people have about another. The existence of negative attitudes in the mind of the individual is not inherently harmful. However, negative, racist attitudes do not simply stay in our minds, as numb tenants of our consciousness. Rather, attitudes affect how we feel about others, informing our behavior. If you think black men are violent and dangerous, you will lock your car door when a group of black men approach. Many people would say, "Where is the harm in that? That is just being cautious." However, if an employer thinks that black people are unintelligent and lazy; will she/he hire the black woman who has applied for the new position? This is an important question because, as the dominant social group, whites control access to all



major institutions and economic resources. Therefore, the consequences of negative attitudes are socially, economically and politically harmful.

Racist prejudices and stereotypes are not inherently harmful, but because attitudes motivate actions that reinforce the racial hierarchy, attitudes become harmful (Faegin 2001). Reinforcement, in the interest of whites, secures their position at the *top* of the hierarchy, while keeping blacks on the bottom. In general, blacks have poorer jobs, healthcare, housing, education, and lower incomes than whites. How do prejudiced attitudes motivate and reinforce this racial hierarchy?

As a minority group, blacks have endured centuries of social stigmatization, beginning with the institution of slavery. These early days of overt racism helped define our present day social hierarchy because it is during this time that negative attitudes and racial prejudices developed. Racial prejudices helped whites justify the dehumanizing treatment of African people so that white owners could maintain the profits they were making from the free labor of slaves.

In much the same way today, racial prejudices towards black people enable whites to maintain their social, economic and political dominance over them. Racial prejudices operate through processes of *discrimination*. Discrimination is the process by which individual or group acts in ways that deny another individual or group access to valued resources. Therefore *racial discrimination* is the process by which the members of a more powerful and dominant ethnic subpopulation (whites) deny the members of another, less powerful and dominant ethnic subpopulation full access to valued resources—jobs, income, education, health, housing, prestige, social networks, power, or anything that members of society value (Augirrer and Turner 1998). According to Feagin

(2001) racist prejudices and stereotyped images lie behind much discriminatory action taken by whites against blacks. What begins as individual attitudes develops into systematic inequality in our workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and our social networks.

*Consequences of Exclusion: Networks and Jobs*

As a society supposedly rooted in meritocracy and equal opportunity for all citizens, whites (specifically white men) maintain control and power over the majority of the American workforce. From generation to generation, white men have passed on their privileged legacy to their white sons. Minorities, including white women, have suffered from the exclusive nature of this work structure. In 1980, an analysis of the 7,314 most powerful positions in major economic, political, and educational organizations found that only 20 black men and women, and 318 other white women, comprised less than five percent of the total (Piterse 1992).

Research on workplace segregation suggests that those in position to hire new employees often use the social network approach (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993, Royster 2003.) Basically, employers and privileged workers fill positions with those from their close social groups and because of the overwhelming tendency for whites to form social networks with other whites, access to jobs stays within white circles. White privilege has given many white men and women jobs that they would not have gotten if their skin were black. If those on top of the corporate ladder are white and only whites are in their social networks, white privilege passes around the group reinforcing white access to jobs. According to Bonilla-Silva (2001) as many as 80% of American jobs are obtained through informal networks.

Roysters' (2003) qualitative study of similarly educated and trained men found significant differences in job outcomes for whites and blacks because of differences in their social networks. Royster (2003) found that the black men were excluded from intimate, personal networks of their white peers, which frequently provided the white men with information about contacts and opportunities. The black men were significantly less likely to have access to jobs through their social networks. When black men did have contacts, their contacts had less power and influence than the white men's contacts, who were more often in position to hire.

Controlling for age and education, white men earn higher incomes than blacks in every formal job sector (Bonilla-Silva 2001). Explanations of this financial consequence of racial inequality are not singular. However, Bonilla-Silva (2001) suggests that the most commonly practiced act of inequality occurs "...because most employers rely on informal social networks to advertise their jobs. And because blacks are not part of those networks, they are left out in the cold" (115). Unless whites include blacks in their social networks (or employers switch to formal hiring practices) inequality will permeate through exclusive white networks, which will continue to debilitate blacks in the workplace. Like a true domino effect, inequality in the workplace creates inequalities in access to all other vital resources (income, healthcare, education and housing). Increased awareness about the inadvertent discrimination created by white social networks is a crucial component in reducing racial inequities. If social networks were more racially diverse, blacks' job opportunities and experiences would closer resemble whites. Changing whites' negative attitudes about blacks is a necessary step to combat

exclusionary practices and promote integration in our lives. In doing so we can improve the overall quality of life for millions of black Americans.

### ***The Importance of Contact***

Allport (1954) suggested that prejudice is non-reality based, and people end up hating and fearing what they know the least about. The physical separation and isolation of blacks and whites reinforces racial prejudice because there are no alternative and countering experiences to dispel negative attitudes, prejudgments, and stereotypes (Robinson Jr., 1980). According to Hewstone and Brown (1986) three essential aspects of stereotyping are:

- 1) Individuals are categorized, usually on the basis of easily identifiable characteristics, such as sex or ethnicity.

- 2) A set of attributes is ascribed to all (or most) members of that category.

Individuals belonging to the stereotyped group are assumed to be similar to each other, and different from other groups on the sets of attributes.

- 3) The set of attributes is ascribed to any individual member of that category.

Negative media images of blacks, specifically black men, may be the only evidence some whites have for their beliefs and attitudes (Jackman and Crane 1986, Feagin 2001). Without positive contact with blacks to counter the stereotypes reinforced in the media, whites often demonstrate the three-step stereotyping process described above. If negative attitudes are based on real experiences, then we would expect whites who live closest to blacks, or who have day- to- day contact with blacks at school, or work would have more negative attitudes. However, Robinson (1980) found that racial fear is not based upon real situations, but rather imagined situations which are more

influential. Therefore, intergroup contact is essential for providing alternatives to racial stereotypes.

This study examines the effects of black-white contact and close interracial friendships in predicting white's racial attitudes towards blacks. Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory maintains that interracial contact, under specific conditions, decreases racial prejudices and promotes positive race relations between groups. Based upon this intergroup contact theory, two hypotheses will be tested:

- 1) Whites who have at least one close black friend will have more positive attitudes towards blacks than whites who do not have any close black friends.
- 2) Whites who have frequent contact with blacks will have more positive attitudes about blacks than whites who have no contact or very little or no contact with blacks.

If these hypotheses are supported, there are implications for improvements and increases in racial integration in our daily lives, specifically on more interpersonal levels. This thesis will proceed as follows. First, I will review relevant literature, explaining what social scientists already know about the effects of Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory on attitudes. This preliminary section is followed by Pettigrew's (1997, 1998, 2000) reformulation of the intergroup contact theory to include intergroup friendships. In doing so I will also bring forth some of the methodological and theoretical limitations of previous intergroup contact theory research. Next I will discuss the research methods, the data used to test my two hypothesis and the analytic techniques used in this study. Finally, I report and discuss the results obtained.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory***

In studying intergroup contact and prejudice one theory has proved dominant. Intergroup contact theory maintains that prejudices can be reduced when contact between two groups occurs under three specific conditions (Allport 1954). The three conditions for optimum intergroup contact are: 1) equal status between both groups in the situation; 2) cooperation on a common goal without competition; and 3) a normative climate supporting the contact between groups (Allport 1954, Amir 1976, Pettigrew 1998). A thorough examination of these three conditions of intergroup contact will be provided.

Intergroup contact theory has been applied in many different contact situations including: the elderly, the mentally ill, the physically disabled, and different racial and ethnic groups (Pettigrew 2000). This universality of intergroup contact theory has allowed for its application across several disciplines and many research settings; in schools, hospitals, workplaces, residential neighborhoods, churches, and stores. Intergroup contact theory has been tested by sociologists (Jackman and Crane 1986, Parker 1968, Harding and Hogrefe 1953, Patchen; Davidson; Hofmann and Brown 1977, Sigelman, Bledsoe, Welch and Combs 1996, Powers and Ellison 1995) social psychologists (Pettigrew 1997, 1998 and 2000, Jackson, Hodge, Gerard, Ingram Ervin and Shappard 1996) and psychologists (Amir 1976, Mackie 2002).

Intergroup contact theory was applied extensively throughout the 1960's and 1970's, after the desegregation of American schools, neighborhoods and workplaces. Sociologists and social psychologists wanted to understand the newfound racial diversity in these social spaces. In general, researchers found that whites who had more contact

with blacks, under optimal contact conditions, had more positive attitudes about blacks than whites who did not have any contact with blacks (Allport 1954, Deutsch and Collins 1951, Wilner, Walkley and Cook 1952, Meer and Freedman 1966, Parker 1968, Robinson and Preston 1976, Patchen et al 1977, and Robinson Jr. 1980). Continuing throughout the 1980's and up until today, intergroup contact studies support similar findings (Robinson 1980, Riordan and Ruggiero 1980, Jackman and Crane 1986, Sigelman and Welch 1993, Powers and Ellison 1995, Sigelman et al, 1996, Nesdale and Todd 1998, Pettigrew 1997, 1998, 2000).

### ***The Conditions of Intergroup Contact Theory***

Three conditions for optimal intergroup contact have been found to encourage more positive racial attitudes among whites. To summarize these essential contact conditions, Allport (1954) writes “Prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e. by law, custom or local atmosphere), and if it is of the sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups” (Allport 1954, p.267).

### ***Equal Status***

According to Allport (1954), a necessary condition for prejudice reduction between blacks and whites is that group members are of equal status. Jackman and Crane (1986) found that only when blacks and whites of equal status experienced a wide range of contacts did white hostility towards blacks lessen. It is important that both blacks and whites expect and perceive equal status in the situation (Cohen 1982, Riordan &

Ruggiero 1980, Robinson & Preston 1976). In Meer and Freedman's (1966) neighborhood study, researchers found that without equal status contact, whites' prejudices remained unchanged.

While the majority of contact studies have supported the claim for the importance of equal status between blacks and whites, there have been inconsistencies in the literature. In a study of a racially integrated high school, Patchen (1977 and 1982) found that equal status was not as important for whites' attitude changes as were other factors like favorable norms, common goals, and attitudes of family and peers.

Other researchers have suggested that equal status is difficult to define (Pettigrew 1998, Riordan and Ruggiero 1980). Similarly, in a study of black and white high school teachers, it was reported that whites perceived the situation as equal status, while blacks were not perceiving the situation as equal status (Robinson and Preston 1976). Even after controlling for education, income and age, the stigmatization of blacks as a minority group may limit their perception of equal status contact. Stephan and Stephan (1996) argue that the significant difference in black and whites' socioeconomic status will tend to generate contact situations where whites' are interacting with lower-status blacks.

### ***Cooperation and Common Goals***

Cooperation or working together towards a common goal is the second condition for intergroup contact to reduce prejudices (Allport 1954). According to Stephan and Stephan (1996) cooperative contact between groups has received the most attention by researchers, primarily because it can be measured in a classroom setting. When black and white junior high school students worked together to build a radio, as part of Cohen and Roper's (1972) experimental study, both blacks and whites exhibited a reduction in



prejudices toward those to the other race.

Crucial to this prejudice reduction, however, is that the groups be “treated” before the intergroup contact, as in experimental studies (Cohen and Roper 1972 and Preston and Robinson 1974). For example, in Cohen and Roper’s (1972) study, both the black and white boys watched a video of black boys building a radio before they worked with together to build their own radios. According to researchers, such purposive treatment is necessary for attitude change (Preston and Robinson 1974, Hewstone and Brown 1986).

Blacks and whites playing together on sports teams have also been found to have reduced racial prejudices (Patchen 1982, Miracle 1981). Clearly, without the first contact condition, equal status, working towards a shared common goal would not produce the same results. Think of a white employer and her black employee working together on a project. Although their contact is a goal-oriented effort, their employer/employee working relationship is clearly not of equal status. By stating this we can begin to see how difficult it is for contact situations to meet all three conditions.

For intergroup contact to reduce prejudices there must be equal status and a common goal between people to bind them together. In addition, the attainment of their common goal must be an interdependent effort without competition (Pettigrew 1998, Patchen 1977 and 1982, Stephan and Stephan 1996, Slavin 1985, 1990, 1992) For example, contact studies in integrated schools have provided the strongest support that competition-free and cooperative learning situations reduce prejudice (Hallinan and Williams 1989, Slavin 1985, 1990, 1992).

Sherif’s (1966) famed “Robbers Cave” study illustrated the effects of competition and cooperation on a group of boys at a camp. When the boys arrived at the camp they

were immediately separated into groups and put into competition with each other in activities like sports and tug-of war. Soon after, hostility and ill feelings arose between the two groups. Sheriff and his colleagues then applied cooperative interactions to the groups. This consisted of faking “emergency” situations like a vehicle breaking down (Sherrif 1966). This cooperation between the boys caused the hostility towards one another to subside and soon after the two groups were friends.

Not only have cooperative activity and common goals been found to reduce prejudices but they also increase friendship choices (Slavin 1979, 1992). When individuals interact with others outside their racial group in cooperative settings they have the opportunity to learn information that is contrary to their stereotypes (Stephan and Stephan 1996). According to this condition of contact theory, the whites in this study who work with blacks, live near blacks and have close black friend(s) receive information from black-white contact that disconfirms popular negative stereotypes and they will have more positive attitudes than whites without such contact.

***Supportive/Normative Climate:***

This final condition of the contact theory has received significantly less research attention than equal status and common goals. This contact condition warrants more attention because the impacts of our environments are powerful. Support by authority figures, law or customs have been found to improve the effects of intergroup contacts (Cohen 1980 and Slavin 1985). Supportive climates that encourage positive intergroup relations, are often hard to observe, unless the contact situation is taking place in an experiment. How can we be sure that our bosses and teachers are committed to supporting healthy black-white relations?

In experiments, there is explicit control and manipulation of the other two conditions, thus providing a supportive climate that encourages and manipulates the first two conditions. Without this intentional focus (as in experiments), black-white contact is left to the mercy of: the teacher in the classroom; the racial climate at work and in our neighborhoods; and the racial climate of our families and peer groups. Therefore, if these authority figures are not supportive of positive race relations between blacks and whites, the other two conditions will be more difficult to establish and maintain.

Institutional and societal norms structure the form and effects of the contact situation (Pettigrew 1998). In housing studies in the 1960's and 1970's, whites who lived in neighborhoods that were openly opposed to blacks and who protested racial integration of their neighborhood, were far less likely to change their attitude about blacks than whites who were not vehemently opposed to residential integration (Wilner, Walkley and Cook 1952). A negative racial climate will impede the equal-status of a black family if they move into a hostile white neighborhood, regardless of socioeconomic status. In public housing projects in 1952, white women who lived in racially integrated projects said it was "socially acceptable" to interact with blacks, while the white women in the segregated projects said it was "socially unacceptable" to interact with blacks (Wilner, Walkley and Cook, 1952). White women in the segregated projects held more negative attitudes and stereotypes about blacks than the white women in the racially integrated neighborhoods, who had more contact with blacks (Wilner et al. 1952).

For white students in the integrated classroom, the racial climate and racial attitudes of their family and friends was significantly more important for attitude changes about blacks than equal status contact, prior experience with blacks, common interests

and previous racial attitudes (Patchen, Davidson, Hofmann and Brown 1977). As mentioned, it is hard to determine when authority figures are providing a normative climate supporting black-white contact. In fact, researchers have been hesitant to accept the findings from experimental contact studies because they argue that black-white contact is hardly ever supported to such great lengths as it is in experimental settings. “Alternatively, when a society embraces intergroup harmony, equal-status contact between groups is no longer subversive. Normative support makes attainment of other optimal conditions far easier” (Pettigrew 1998).

Considerably less attention has been paid to the effects of these conditions on black’s racial attitudes about whites. Although the contact theory and its effects on blacks’ attitudes is not the focus of this paper, it is important to acknowledge that the literature suggests that the conditions operate differently for blacks, than for whites. In general, the contact theory has been supported by studies of majority group attitude change, rather than minority group attitude change, because whites are the dominant social group and their negative attitudes can be more consequential.

### ***Contact Studies in Residential Neighborhoods***

Several prominent studies of racial integration were conducted in the newly desegregated 1950’s and carrying through the late 1980’s, most significantly in public housing projects (Deutsch and Collins, 1951, 1965; Wilner, Walkley, and Cook 1952, 1955), as well as in newly integrated neighborhoods (Meer and Freedman 1966, Robinson Jr. 1980, Dubois and Hirsch 1990). Each of these field studies reported positive contact effects on whites’ racial attitudes.

Deutsch and Collins (1951, 1965) compared racially desegregated housing projects in New York City with similar but segregated housing projects in Newark, New Jersey. Major differences were found between white housewives' attitudes living in the desegregated housing and the white housewives attitudes' in the segregated projects (Deutsch and Collins 1951). The results demonstrated that the relationships between black people and the white housewives in the integrated projects were friendly, while in the segregated projects most housewives did not have any relationships with the black people in the project (Deutsch and Collins 1951).

Women from the integrated projects remarked, "We get along beautifully. They're really wonderful" and "They're nice to get along with. They treat me fine. They're the same as everybody else." (Deutsch and Collins 1951) Similarly, the white housewives in the integrated projects used these words to describe their black neighbors more frequently than their white counterparts in the segregated projects: "helpful", "polite", "respectable", and "friendly" (Deutsch and Collins 1951). Whereas, women from the segregated projects had this to say, "They have it in for whites. They've been beaten down and hurt for so long that they're out for their revenge. And, they'll jump down your throat if you even look like you might be prejudiced." (Deutsch and Collins 1951). Also, the white housewives in the segregated projects were more likely than white housewives in the integrated projects to use the following to describe the blacks in their neighborhood: "inferior", "impulsive", "dangerous", "trouble makers." These attitudes were common stereotypes in the 1950's that whites, often those that had little to no contact with blacks, held (Deutsch and Collins 1951).

Similarly, Wilner, Walkley and Cook (1952) found that women living near blacks were more likely than those living farther away to report the races as “equal” to them when asked if blacks were “inferior to” or “equal to” whites in terms of: community property, intelligence, ambition, and trustworthiness. Likewise, they reported that women living far from blacks were, on the average, twice as likely as women living near blacks to be at the more prejudiced end of the scale (Wilner et al, 1952).

More recently Robinson (1980) found that whites living in integrated neighborhoods not only revealed more positive attitudes about blacks but were more likely to spend time with blacks, i.e., having their black neighbors over for dinner. Dubois and Hirsch (1990) also found that whites who live in racially integrated neighborhoods are more likely to develop close friendships with blacks than whites who live in racially segregated neighborhoods. In fact, research on friendship formation has found that proximity is a far more important determinant of friendships than common interests and similarities (Sacerdote 2003). Overall, the contact studies in residential neighborhoods have consistently shown decreases in whites’ anti-blacks attitudes as distance between races becomes smaller. Perhaps, nothing illustrates better the effects of residential contact on whites’ attitudes towards blacks than this, “Living with them, my ideas have changed altogether. They’re just people...they’re not different” (Deutsch and Collins 1951).

### ***Contact Studies in Other Social Settings***

Black-white contact studies in other social settings have yielded comparable results. Research on black-white contact has been conducted in schools (DuBois and Hirsch 1990, Patchen, Davidson, Hofman and Brown 1977), a church (Parker 1968), and workplaces (Harding and Hogrefe 1954 and Robinson and Preston 1976). Each of these studies found that whites who have more contact with blacks, even when the optimal conditions are not met, have more positive attitudes towards blacks than whites who have very little or no contact (Harding and Hogrefe 1954, Kephart 1957, Parker 1968 and Robinson and Preston 1976).

Contact between blacks and whites has not only been found to improve attitudes, but whites and blacks who work together, attend school together and live in the same neighborhood are more likely to become friends than those who work at racially segregated jobs (DuBois and Hirsch 1990, Jackman and Crane 1986, Sigelman, Bledsoe, Welch, and Combs 1996, Patchen et al, 1977, and Pettigrew 1998).

While earlier contact research mainly involved field studies in neighborhoods and housing projects, the more recent work has employed survey research and experiments. Experimental studies have been more supportive of intergroup contact theory than survey research. Experimental studies offer the most causally valid results because researchers manipulate and measure the three contact conditions. In survey research there is no manipulation of environmental factors. The conditions and context of contact are more difficult to measure in survey studies.

### ***Major Limitations of Research***

It needs to be recognized that there are several limitations in the intergroup contact theory and related research. Nesdale and Todd (1998) suggest that much of the supportive research has limited external validity because researchers often manipulated intergroup contact in experimental settings, rather than using natural forming contact settings. Although these studies have contributed to an understanding of contact between blacks and whites, researchers have hesitated to affirm that black-white contact results in positive racial attitudes in the general population (Ford 1986, Powers and Ellison 1995). By use of a national survey, we should be able to overcome this limitation.

Secondly, there are causal sequence problems. Selection bias limits interpretation of many cross-sectional studies of contact (Pettigrew 1998, Jackman and Crane 1986, Stephan and Stephan 1996). Whites with initial positive attitudes about blacks may be more willing to seek out intergroup contact with blacks than whites who are prejudiced against blacks. This potential selection bias operates to promote interaction between whites and blacks who are already relatively unprejudiced toward one another (Powers and Ellison 1995, Pettigrew 1997, 1998, 2000). In most instances we can not know which came first, the contact or the attitude. Did the contact cause the attitude, or did the already positive attitude cause contact? This is perhaps the main weakness of the field based contact studies because it undermines the basic tenet of the intergroup contact theory, which isolates contact as the causal mechanism.

Another fundamental criticism of contact studies is that researchers are more often measuring proximity between blacks and whites, rather than real contact (Schofield and Sagar 1977, Sigelman et al, 1996, Robinson, Jr, 1980, Hewstone and Brown 1986). It



is important to note that proximity and contact are not synonymous. That is, although the opportunity for contact is necessary for intergroup contact to reduce prejudices, opportunity for contact (proximity) and real face-to face contact are different.

Examples of the difference between proximity and real contact were evident in the early days of school desegregation. Many studies of intergroup contact occurred after the desegregation of the American school system in the late 1960's. A consistent finding in these early studies was that racial desegregation was not racial integration (Amir 1969, Schofield and Sagar 1977). That is, black students and white students were, for the first time, sitting next to each other in class, but mere proximity could not replace years of negative racial attitudes, anti-black racism and a mutually hostile racial climate. Desegregation and increased proximity failed to promote real racial integration and real contact between students.

Contact studies have also failed to specify how the effects of black-white contact generalize beyond the immediate situation (Pettigrew 1997, 1998, 2000, Scarberry et al, 1997, Nesdale and Todd 1998, Hewstone and Brown 1986). How far do whites' positive attitudes towards blacks, advanced by the contact experience, generalize to include blacks not present in the contact situation? Some studies have found that although there were significant changes towards actual participants, little attitude change generalized to the participants' group as a whole (Cook 1978, Brewer and Miller 1984, Pettigrew 1971, 1997, 1998, 2000, Scarberry et al, 1997, Hewstone and Brown 1986, Nesdale and Todd 1998).

Hewstone and Brown (1986) discuss how the third condition of intergroup contact theory, a supportive normative climate, can overcome this lack of generalizability outside of the contact experience,

Part of the explanation for this lack of generalizability beyond specific situations has to do with the different kinds of social and institutional support for desegregation available in the different settings (Allport, 1954). In the workplace, the way the work is organized or the existence of trade unions cutting across ethnic divisions may help to redefine the intergroup relationship between blacks and whites. The result is a reduction of discrimination, not just in one or two individuals, but generalized across the whole group. Remove this source of influence and the intergroup relationship reverts to the original conflictual definition deriving from a different set of authorities.

In this passage, Hewstone and Brown (1986) illustrate the potential power of institutional support for improving the entire racial climate from black-white contact, rather than an isolated case of contact between small groups of people.

### ***Recent Contact Studies: The Emerging Importance of Friendships***

The more recent contact studies have expanded upon Allport's original conditions of contact by including more intimate and personal measures of contact (Pettigrew 1997, 1998, 2000 Jackman and Crane 1986, Sigelman and Welch 1993) Most notably is Thomas Pettigrew's contribution to the contact theory and attitude change. In 2000, Pettigrew and Tropp conducted a meta-analytic study and comprised a reformulation of the contact theory. This study explored 515 individual studies with 714 independent samples (Pettigrew and Tropp 2000). A total of 250,493 individuals from 38 nations participated in the various studies. To date, this is the most extensive and thorough study of the intergroup contact theory.

Pettigrew has furthered our understanding of intergroup contact by adding a vital condition to the theory. Pettigrew (1997) found that friendships have significant effects on prejudice reduction, more so than intergroup contact in neighborhoods, schools and work settings. He argues that the opportunity for friendship formation be added to the list of essential conditions of contact facilitating reductions in negative racial attitudes. Friendships add emotion to the process of prejudice reduction, which is a concept lacking in the other three conditions. Emotions, such as sympathy and admiration are more likely to develop out of intimate and personal contact, as in friendships, than in casual contact at work or in the neighborhood (Pettigrew 1998). In a survey study of 3,800 respondents, Pettigrew found that those with intergroup friendships were significantly more positive in their views than those without intergroup friendships.

This addition of friendships to the contact theory contributes to research on intergroup relations in important ways. First, while most studies have only observed short-term effects of contact on attitudes, friendships can help us understand long-term, sustained contact (Pettigrew 1997) In fact, one of the major criticisms of contact studies has been the brief, short-term contact in experimental settings. Secondly, this more intimate, personal contact has been found to be generalizable to entire groups, instead of members of the contact situation alone (Pettigrew 1997, Pettigrew 1998, Sigelman and Welch 1993).

Third, studying intergroup friendships alleviates the concern over proximity versus real contact. That is, we know that with friendship, there is real contact, and not just the opportunity for contact. “Whereas the friends measure guarantees intergroup contact, the measures of neighbors and coworkers do not. These measures tap only

whether the respondent has the opportunity for residential and work contact.” (Pettigrew 1997: 175). Finally, while most black-white contact does not meet all of the conditions of Allport’s theory, contact that occurs between intimate, personal friends appears to meet optimally all the suggested conditions (Jackman and Crane 1986).

Although the addition of friendships to intergroup contact theory is a relatively new formation, early contact studies indicated an attraction to this more personal measure of contact. For example, Wilner et al asserted that “the more intimate the contact, the more favorable the attitude—without exception” (1955:99). Similarly, housing studies found that proximity was a salient factor in reducing negative attitudes, but more important was the ‘quality’ and ‘nature’ of the contact (Wilner et al 1955, Deutsch and Collins 1952, Meer and Freedman 1968). Although not as explicitly argued as Pettigrew, Allport (1954) posited that for prejudices to be reduced, contact must be intimate, rather than casual. Similarly, Cook (1962 ) indicated that “acquaintance potential” was a more salient determinate of attitude change than contact without acquaintance potential. Pettigrew has taken Cook’s work a step further by arguing for “friendship potential.”

The review of this literature demonstrates the evolution of the intergroup contact theory from emphasizing contact in social places towards contact in a more intimate place--our personal friendships. The relative newness of friendship development in the contact literature shows that there is room for improvement in testing the effects of intergroup friendships on attitudes. Consistent with the more recent research on intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew 1997, 1998, and 2000 and Sigelman and Welch 1993), I argue that it is essential for the intergroup contact to include the *nature* and *quality* of contact as part of the essential conditions to reduce negative attitudes.

Therefore, close interracial friendships are included as a measure of contact in this analysis to predict whites' attitudes about blacks. Including close friendships between blacks and whites, in addition to contact in neighborhoods and in the workplace, contributes to the more recent research on intergroup contact theory, which considers it vital to measure more personal and intimate contact situations between blacks and whites in predicting attitudes (Pettigrew 1997, 1998, and 2000) and Sigelman and Welch (1993).

The majority of contact studies have focused on the effects of neighborhood contact on attitudes. These studies have substantial theoretical value because they show how contact improves attitudes on a personal level. Are blacks friendly? Are blacks smart? These personal-level type questions reveal that whites living near blacks come to accept and respect their black neighbors on individual, personal terms. However, such questions do not measure whites' support for governmental policies aimed at improving the overall socioeconomic status and racial equality of blacks as a group (Jackman and Crane 1986).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### ***Data***

The data used for this analysis were collected in the 1998 General Social Survey. The General Social Survey is a probability survey of adults aged 18 and over residing in 48 states in the United States. The GSS is a cross sectional, national survey conducted by The National Opinion Research Center. Researchers conducted personal survey interviews. Data was collected in February, March and April of 1998. Full probability sampling was employed for this survey year. My analysis contains responses for white

respondents only. The size of the working sample is 1,459. These are the respondents with complete data on all variables incorporated in the analysis.

To provide a more thorough understanding of contact effects on attitudes, this analysis includes questions that measure whites' personal attitudes *and* political/ideological attitudes. While most contact studies have focused on contact in neighborhoods, workplaces *or* friendships, this analysis examines the effects of black-white contact in all three social settings. This way we can see if there are differences between the more common types of casual contact and more intimate, personal contact as in close friendships.

### ***Measurement of Variables***

#### *Outcome Variables: Whites' attitudes towards blacks*

Whites' racial attitudes toward blacks were measured by four survey questions. Two questions focused on whites' attitudes of personal characteristics towards blacks. The first question asked, "Do blacks tend to be unintelligent or intelligent? The responses ranged from a scale of 1-7, in which a 1 denoted "unintelligent" and a 7 denoted "intelligent." The second question about personal characteristics of black people asked respondents, "Do blacks tend to be hard-working or lazy?" Similarly, the responses were a scale ranging from 1-7, in which a 1 denoted hardworking and a 7 denoted lazy. I recoded the responses so that a 1 indicated a negative attitude towards blacks (lazy) and a 7 indicated a positive attitude towards blacks (hardworking).

Two other questions focused on whites' attitudes about government policies aimed to elevate the socioeconomic status of blacks. These questions expose more of whites' political attitudes, rather than personal since the questions focus on social

policies. One question asked whites, “Do you “agree strongly”, “somewhat”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree somewhat”, or “disagree strongly” with the following statement: Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.” Those who agreed strongly received a score of 1, indicating a negative attitude about how to deal with blacks’ economic location. Those who agree somewhat received a score of 2 and those who strongly disagreed received a score of 3, indicating a more tolerant racial attitude towards blacks.

The second question stated, “Some people say that because of past discrimination, blacks should be given preferences in hiring and promotion. Others say that such preference in hiring and promotion of blacks is wrong because it discriminates against whites. What about your opinions—are you for or against preferential hiring and promotion of blacks?” If respondents favored preference in hiring and promotion they were asked to indicate, “strongly favor”, or “not strongly favor.” If respondents opposed preference in hiring and promotion they were asked to indicate “strongly oppose”, or “not strongly oppose.” Overall, there were four responses. Whites received a score of 1 if they “strongly opposed” preferential treatment for blacks, and a 2 if they opposed, but “not strongly.” Whites received a 3 if they “not strongly favor” preferential treatment for blacks and a 4 if they “strongly favor” preferential treatment for blacks. These four measures of whites’ attitudes are chosen because they cover critical political, personal and economic-related characteristics.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I included as statistical controls, two similar variables about whites views towards other whites to ensure that the attitudes regressed were about blacks specifically and to eliminate the possibility that the respondents would have replied similarly to other racial groups. Because the GSS does not ask whites the politically oriented question about other whites, I could only include the two personal attitude measures, intelligence and hardworking. The means for

### *Predictor Variables: Measuring Black-White Contact*

Different types of black-white contact constitute the principle independent variables. From the survey I have chosen three indicators of black-white contact. The first indicator of contact measured whites' close friendships with blacks. Respondents were asked to list their five closest friends and were later asked to indicate the race of each of the five friends that they listed. The network approach has been found to be the most accurate method of measuring interracial friendships (Smith 2002). Many studies ask yes-no questions about whether whites know any black person whom they consider a close friend. Respondents have been asked "Are any of your close friends black"? These direct approaches have been found to over report interracial friendships. White respondents are significantly more likely to report having a close black friend(s) when they are asked a yes-no question than if they are asked to list their closest friends first and then later asked to identify the race of the names listed.

Due to this methodological concern, the network approach used in this analysis was included in the 1998 General Social Survey as an experiment which tested the response rates of the different questioning techniques. Smith (2002) found that the network approach, which this analysis uses, collects the lowest number of close friendships between blacks and whites. This technique was explicitly chosen for this analysis because it has been found to collect the most accurate rates of interracial friendships. To see if this analysis yields differential responses in the number of whites

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these two questions are displayed in table 1. I regressed these attitudes about whites and the coefficients were significantly higher for whites than for blacks. Whites in this sample gave other whites higher scores on both the intelligence measure and the hardworking measure than they did blacks. Therefore, I am confident that the coefficients in my models are specific to blacks and are not representative of whites' attitudes towards all people in general.



who have close black friends by the techniques used, I examined a model with the direct 'yes-no' technique as well.

In addition, white respondents answered a question about the racial composition of their workplace. The question asked, "Are the people where you work all white, mostly white, about half and half, mostly black or all black?" A score of 1 indicates an all white workplace and a score of 5 indicated an all black workplace. I created dummy variables for this measure of contact. Whites who worked in workplaces with a few blacks, in half white and half black workplaces, in mostly black workplaces and all black workplaces were recoded 1, and whites who worked in workplaces that are all white were recoded 0.

Respondents were also asked a yes-no question about their neighborhood racial composition. "Are there any blacks living in your neighborhood now?" A score of 1 designated that blacks are currently living in their neighborhood, and a score of 2 indicated that there were no blacks living in their neighborhood. I recoded responses on this item so that scores of 0 denoted that there were no blacks living in their neighborhood and scores of 1 designated that there were blacks living in their neighborhood. Whites with black-white contact received higher scores on all three items than whites with little or no contact with blacks.

### *The Influence of Personal Attributes*

Whether or not whites have extensive contact with blacks or no contact at all, personal attributes are likely to impact racial attitudes as well. Therefore, I can not argue that whites' attitudes towards blacks result *only* from contact between black and whites. To estimate the independent impact of black-white contact on whites' attitudes towards blacks, this analysis includes a range of whites' characteristics as statistical controls.

Previous research has found that demographic characteristics such as sex, age, education, income and political orientation effect whites' attitudes towards blacks. Women, younger people, the well educated and political liberals tend to hold more favorable and sympathetic views of blacks than do their male, older, less educated, and conservative counterparts (Deutsch and Collins 1951, Hewstone and Brown 1986, Sigelman and Welch 1993, Pettigrew 1997 and 1998).

Sex, age, education (# of years) and respondents' personal income were included as control variables. In addition, ideological/political influences on racial attitudes are measured with a seven-point political liberalism/conservatism scale, ranging from "extremely liberal (low) to "extremely conservative" (high). I recoded this scale so that a score of 1 indicated "extremely conservative" and a score of 7 indicated "extremely liberal."

The interest lies in the linkages between black-white contact and the effect of this contact on whites' attitudes towards blacks. Therefore this analysis assumes that black-white contact affects racial attitudes, not vice versa. It is important to recognize that, at least to some extent, the causal relationship could move in the exact opposite direction. That is, whites with favorable attitudes about blacks may actually seek out contact with black people and purposefully choose to live, work and develop friendships with blacks; while other whites could make no effort to develop close friendships with blacks or completely avoid contact with blacks.

### ***Analytic Technique***

To test the three hypotheses of this analysis effect of black-white contact on white's attitudes towards blacks, OLS regression models were used. I begin with a model that includes the individual-level predictors. In the second model the first contact variable (one close black friend) is added. In Model two, I test the first hypothesis of this study. Hypothesis 1 predicts a positive relationship between having at least one close black friend and white's racial attitudes. I test this by adding the close friend variable into the first model with the individual –level controls. To test the second hypothesis I added the other two contact variables (neighborhood and workplace) into model three. This second hypothesis predicts a positive relationship between black-white contact and whites' attitudes about blacks. I test this by adding the two contact variables into a model with the individual- level controls and the close friend contact variable. Model three is a model predicting white's attitudes about blacks with all three measures of contact and the individual-level controls.<sup>2</sup>

While the first hypothesis tests contact by including intimate and personal black-white contact, as in a close friendship. The second hypothesis tests the more common measure of black-white contact in previous contact studies, which is essentially proximity, i.e. living *near* blacks and working in the same place as blacks. In short, in the second model, contact is guaranteed and in this third model contact is assumed. I will also explore the potential interaction between the three contact measures and racial attitudes.

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<sup>2</sup> I also examined a model with neighborhood contact added in separately and then workplace contact added in separately. Again, only neighborhood contact provided positive significant results, while workplace contact did not provide any significant results.

## **RESULTS**

### ***Descriptive Statistics***

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for each of the variables in the analysis. The mean scores for each of the four dependent variables are described here. The first two dependent variables are measures of personal characteristics of blacks. The mean score for the question asking if blacks are “unintelligent or intelligent” is 4.20 (standard deviation = 1.00). The mean score for the question asking if blacks are “lazy or hardworking” is 3.75 (standard deviation = 1.07). The next two dependent variables are measures of white’s political attitudes towards blacks. The mean score for “favoring affirmative action” is 1.51 (standard deviation = .83). The mean score for the question that asked if blacks should “work their way up without special favors” is 1.93 (standard deviation = 1.13). Possible scores on the first set of personal questions ranged from 1-7, with higher numbers indicating more positive attitudes toward blacks. Possible scores for the second set of political attitudes ranged from 1-5, also with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes towards blacks.

Forty-five percent of the white respondents are male and fifty-five percent are female. The mean age for whites in the sample is 46.85 years (standard deviation 17.24). The mean individual income for the respondents, in thousands of dollars, is 19.880 (or \$19,880) (standard deviation = 5.0). The mean education, in years of schooling is 14.23 (standard deviation of 2.18). The mean for political liberalism vs. conservatism is 4.15 (standard deviation = 1.40). Possible scores ranged from 1-7, with higher scores indicating liberal identification.

Concerning the contact variables, the mean for whites' who work with blacks is .16 (standard deviation = .37), from scores ranging 0-1. The mean for whites who currently have blacks living in their neighborhood is .62 (standard deviation = .48), from scores ranging 0-1. The mean for whites' who have one close friend is .06 (standard deviation = .24). Only 65 whites out of the 1,296 who answered this question reported having a close black friend. Therefore, this analysis shows that whites have more contact with blacks in neighborhoods than workplaces and very rarely have close interracial friendships with blacks.

#### TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

#### ***Bivariate Regressions***

Table 2, the first column displays the estimations of the bivariate regression coefficients. Concerning the individual-level control variables, four of them are significant on at least one of the four measures of attitudes towards blacks. Sex (females) education, political liberalism, and education have significant positive effects. For the contact variables, only neighborhood contact has a significant effect on their personal attitudes towards blacks. Whites who lived in the same neighborhood with blacks had more positive attitudes towards blacks than whites who do not have any blacks living in their neighborhood. Both the workplace and friendship measures failed to yield statistically significant effects on whites' attitudes. It is the case, however, that of twelve coefficients estimated, eleven are positive as hypothesized. the one negative coefficient describes the relationship between workplace racial composition and political efforts to help blacks work their way up.

## *Multivariate Regressions*

Three regression models are estimated for this analysis. Table 2 displays the results. Model 1 contains the five individual-level controls. For the dependent variable measuring attitudes about blacks' intelligence, only sex was statistically significant. The effect of being female positively effects attitudes towards blacks' intelligence. For the dependent variable measuring attitudes about black's as hardworking, age has a negative effect. As the age of whites' increased they were less likely to view blacks as hardworking. There was also a significant positive effect of education. As the education of the white respondents increased, they were more likely to view blacks as hardworking. For the dependent variable measuring whites' views that blacks should work their way up without assistance, female, education and political views have significant positive effects. For the dependent variables measuring the support of affirmative action to elevate the status of blacks, political views and education have positive significant effects.

In model 2, I tested the first hypothesis by adding close blacks friends. There were no significant effects of having a close black friend on any of the attitudes.<sup>3</sup> Sex, political views and education remained significant. Model 3, the full model, includes the two other measures of black-white contact: neighborhoods and workplaces. Again, neighborhood contact is found to be statistically significant and in the predicted direction, while workplace contact<sup>4</sup> and friendships are not found to be statistically significant. The

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<sup>3</sup> A secondary analysis also included the direct approach to asking whites about their close friendships with blacks. Although the number increased from 65 whites to 117 (who had a close black friend), this number was still too small a number to make a comparison to the much larger number of whites who do not have any close blacks friends. Jackman and Crane (1986) found that having one close black friend did not help predict whites' racial attitudes, but rather multiple black friends did. They argue that one black friend creates the "token effect", which means that having only one close black friend is insufficient in creating positive generalizations cast towards the entire racial group.

<sup>4</sup> To explore the effects of workplace contact further, I also created dummy variables that measured racial composition of workplaces alternatively. The initial coding took whites with few blacks at work, along with whites who worked

individual level controls remained significant.<sup>5</sup> For the dependent variable measuring whites' attitudes about blacks' intelligence, both sex and neighborhood have significant effects. For the dependent variable measuring white's attitudes about blacks as hardworking, female and education have significant positive effects. For the dependent variable measuring whites' agreement that blacks should work their way up without help, education, political views and neighborhood contact have positive significant effects. For the last variable, whites' support of affirmative action policies to elevate the status of blacks, education and political views have significant positive effects.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results from this analysis confirm the second hypothesis. Neighborhood contact is found to have a positive effect on attitudes towards blacks. This finding is

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with many blacks and all black and created only one group of work contact. However, According to Blalock (1956, 1967), increasing minority population produces threat (based on access to economic resources) among members of the dominant group. Blalock found that feelings of threat on the part of the majority group lead to prejudice and discrimination against the minority group. Although contact theory emphasizes quality of contact rather than quantity of contact between intergroup members, I wanted to see if workplace contact had varying effects on attitudes as the population of blacks changed because, according to Blalock, a reversal of the direction of the effects of contact on attitudes would occur, thus speaking to the effects of contact on attitudes for the contact theory. If Blalock's theory of group position is operating for the whites in my sample, then I would expect to find a negative effect of workplace contact on attitudes as the population of blacks at workplaces increased. I recoded whites with only a few blacks at their workplace as 0 and whites with contact at half and half workplaces, mostly black, and all black workplaces as 1. The results changed little when this second coding strategy was used. Although some of the slope coefficients were negative, as they were in the models with the initial coding, workplace contact again failed to have a statistically significant effect on all four measures of whites' attitudes. However, the considerably small number of whites who work in mostly black (N= 20) and all black (N=4) workplaces (total N=24) may have constrained the reliability of the results so that the only reliable comparison group were the whites who work in racially mixed settings.

<sup>5</sup> To explore the possibilities of interaction effects between the contact variables I included another model. I tested three interaction effects: friendship and workplace contact, friendship and neighborhood contact and friendship, workplace contact and neighborhood contact. I did not find a statistically significant interaction effect on any of the dependent variables for friendship and workplace contact. I also did not find a significant effect for the interaction of friendship, workplace contact and neighborhood contact. There was a significant interaction effect of friendship and neighborhood contact. However, there was only an effect on one of my four dependent variables (intelligence). The three other variables remained unaffected by this interaction effect. It would be an overestimation to assume that friendship and neighborhood contact interact to effect whites' attitudes towards blacks in general. I suggest future studies that include a wider range of attitude measurements to test for interaction effects between variables.

consistent with previous neighborhood contact studies that have found positive effects of contact in racially integrated neighborhoods (Wilner, Walkley, and Cook 1952 and 1955, Deutsch and Collins 1955, Meer and Freedman 1966, Robinson Jr. 1980, Dubois and Hirsch 1990).

This analysis found that neighborhood contact is a better predictor of white's attitudes towards blacks than workplace contact. There were no significant effects of workplace contact on whites' attitudes. Yet, there are significant positive effects of neighborhood contact on attitudes. How is this explained? This is where the *context of* the contact may matter. In support of the *equal status* component of contact theory, a white family who lives in the same neighborhood with a black family shares similar socioeconomic status. Neighborhood housing costs suggest similar income, and therefore equal status between whites and their black neighbors, at least on an economic level.

However, for whites in this sample that had contact with blacks at work, I was unable to measure the employment status of the whites in comparison to their black coworkers. Therefore, I could not account for the equal status context of work contact. The workplace intergroup contact of the whites in this sample could consist of whites as the bosses of the black people at their work in which case there is no equal status. Or, on the contrary whites could share job titles, positions, pay and authority at work with their black counterparts which would create equal status. Failure to measure the context of this work contact significantly weakened this measure of black-white contact on attitudes.



The results of this study do not confirm the first hypothesis. Having a close black friend did not have significant effects on whites' attitudes towards blacks. I argue that the lack of a close friendship effect is attributable to the small number of whites who actually have a close black friend, which is only 65 out of 1,459 in the sample. Rather than abandoning friendships as a measure of contact because the number of close friendships between blacks and whites is so low, future contact studies should more carefully explore such personal levels of contact.

Finding such a low number of close interracial friendships for the whites in the sample reinforced the severity of isolation between blacks and whites, more reason to retain it as a measure of contact. A larger group of whites with close black friends may have yielded results more consistent with Pettigrew's findings of positive friendship effects on attitudes (1997 and 1998).

This analysis suggests that to some extent, individual-level factors influence attitudes. I found that females had more positive attitudes than males. This is consistent with the previous studies reviewed in the previous part of this thesis that have found differences between men and women's attitudes.

Consistent with previous findings, political ideology has significant effects on whites' attitudes (Jackman and Crane 1986, Sigelman and Welch 1993). Whites who identified as "politically liberal" have more positive attitudes than whites who identified themselves as "politically conservative."

The limitations of this survey data made it difficult to measure all of the conditions of the intergroup contact theory. As mentioned, the measure of workplace contact suffered most from the failure to measure the context of contact. In addition to

neglecting the equal status component, a measurement of supportive normative climates at workplaces was also absent from this analysis. I recommend future studies focus on the normative climate condition of the theory, as it has been significantly neglected. Our environment shapes our interactions and positive racial environments can reduce prejudices and improve attitudes between group members.

Most studies that have examined the effects of intergroup contact on attitudes has isolated one social space to explore, such as schools, neighborhoods *or* workplaces. This study expanded upon the literature and included all three areas of social life to explore: friendships, neighborhoods *and* workplaces. In doing so, I included the more casual types of black-white contact (work and neighborhood) with more personal and intimate contact that takes place between close friends.

Although it is argued that racial segregation in our public lives (neighborhoods and workplaces) creates segregation in our private lives (friendships), I prefer to conceptualize this isolation as a tautological problem and can only be remedied with contact in both areas. That is, isolation in our personal lives leads to isolation in our public lives and vice versa.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

This study focused on the effects of contact on attitudes. Attitudes are important outcomes of social interaction. It is crucial to understand which social factors influence racial attitudes so that we work to improve race relations. Contact studies have found that contact, under optimal conditions, decreases racial prejudices and improve racial attitudes. The contact theory also emphasizes that contacts with intimacy, as in

friendships, encourages this effect. This analysis did not find strong evidence to support this expectation, although I suspect this reflects the rarity of such contacts.

This analysis did, however, support the importance of equal status contact, as evident of the positive effects of neighborhood contact on whites' attitudes towards blacks. Although this is an optimistic finding, equal status among blacks and whites is rare in our society. The continuing high levels of residential segregation pose majors obstacles to further integration and friendship development. Efforts should be extended to improve fair housing policies aimed at increasing integration. The consequences of white's negative attitudes have profound effects on the quality of lives of African Americans. Although a full erasure of race inequality can not rest on attitudes alone, it is an important place to start.

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