

# Prejudice

# 7

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# Prejudice

## Text Box 7.1

### Account of a Racist Murder

One night in July 2005, an 18-year-old college student, Anthony Walker, was spending the evening at his Huyton home with girlfriend Louise Thompson. They were babysitting his two-year-old nephew, Reuben.

At around 11pm, Mr Walker and his cousin Marcus Binns offered to walk Louise to her bus stop, close to the Huyton Park pub. Standing outside the pub was Michael Barton, dressed in a hooded top with a scarf or ski mask covering his face. He began hurling racist abuse at Mr Walker and Mr Binns, telling them: 'Walk, nigger, walk'.

Mr Walker, a devout Christian, walked away. He intended to take a short-cut to a different bus stop through McGoldrick Park.

As they walked away, Barton told his friend Paul Taylor that he had 'lost face' during a row.

They got into a car, drove to the entrance to the park and hid in bushes before ambushing Mr Walker and his friends. Ms Thompson and Mr Binns escaped but Mr Walker was trapped. Taylor drove a mountaineering axe into the teenager's head with such force that the adze end was embedded 6cm into his skull.

While their victim lay unconscious on the ground, Barton desperately tried to retrieve the weapon, but it was stuck fast in Mr Walker's skull. Even doctors struggled later to remove it.

Barton fled with his hands covered in Mr Walker's blood. By the time Mr Binns returned with help, there was little anybody could do. Mr Walker was taken to Whiston hospital, then transferred to Walton neurological centre.

Mr Walker died at 5.25am, with his family at his bedside.

Source: *The Guardian*, 30 November 2005

Text Box 7.1 gives an account of the racially-motivated murder of college student Anthony Walker by four white men in Merseyside in July 2005. This was a shocking, tragic event that vividly illustrates the very worst consequences of racial prejudice. Such acts are not representative of attitudes held by the general population, but simple statistics show us that less savage, but nonetheless highly divisive, forms of prejudice persist. In the 20th British Social Attitudes report (Park et al., 2003), the percentage of respondents who openly admitted being racially prejudiced was 31 per cent (a figure that has generally stayed the same since 1987). Prejudice is a fundamental social problem, and one that remains so even in the light of apparent widespread egalitarian beliefs. Social psychologists have therefore been very much concerned with understanding the psychological processes that can explain such pervasive, destructive human tendencies. This chapter is about what psychologists have learned about the nature of prejudice, and what we can do to fight against it.

## PREJUDICE: OLD AND NEW

### Prejudice, Discrimination and Intergroup Bias

This chapter introduces what social psychologists have learned about prejudice, intergroup discrimination and social conflict. We will be talking about *ingroups* and *outgroups*. Ingroups are social categories (see Chapter 3) to which you belong. Other people who share your category membership are ingroup members. Outgroups are social categories to which you do not belong. People who are members of categories that don't include you are outgroup members. While not terms typically used in common language, we make reference to ingroups and outgroups all the time. Generically speaking, whenever we refer to 'us' or 'we', 'they' or 'them', all of these terms denote shared versus non-shared category membership (and this fundamental role that group referents have in everyday language suggests some of the psychological causes of prejudice that we discuss later on). We are going to be talking about people seeing their ingroup as more positive than their outgroup, something we call **ingroup bias** (sometimes also referred to as *ingroup favouritism* or *intergroup bias*). Intergroup bias is an umbrella term that includes different manifestations of bias in favour of one's own social category. This brings us to prejudice, which is defined as a negative *attitude* or *feeling* held towards members of an outgroup. Intergroup discrimination is the *behavioural* manifestation of prejudice. That is, people who hold prejudiced attitudes might be those more likely to show discriminatory behaviour. We will refer to experiments that measure prejudice or discrimination, and for the purposes of this chapter we can treat them both as manifestations of the same intergroup bias. However, it is important to remember that attitudes do not *always* predict behaviour (see Chapter 4 and the discussion of the attitude-behaviour relationship).

Given these basic definitions, how can we start trying to understand the nature of prejudice? In Chapter 3 we talked about how people use social categories to make the world easier to understand; they are heuristics that help people make cognitively efficient judgements and better understand the world by providing information in the form of norms and stereotypes. It is this tendency to use categories to define our worlds that belies the most talked about forms of prejudice – racism and sexism. Racism is prejudice against someone based on their race; sexism is prejudice against someone on the basis of their sex. We saw in Chapter 3 that people appear to use categories such as race and sex chronically; that is, they spontaneously categorize others along these dimensions without even realizing it. This tendency to use race and sex in defining others is a problem because membership of these categories can come with stigma attached (Crocker et al., 1998). **Stigmatization** is when a person's social category puts them at a lower status than a dominant group and ascribes to them negative characteristics (or *stereotypes*). In this chapter we chart psychologists' understanding of racism and sexism, how the expression of these most common forms of prejudice have developed over time, how the development of societies' egalitarian norms have had a key defining role, and how new technologies have helped identify contemporary and more subtle forms of prejudice.

## Racism

There are two types of racism: *old-fashioned* racism and *aversive* racism. Old-fashioned racism is the blatant expression of negative and unfair stereotypes of others based on their category membership. For instance, African Americans have been seen as aggressive (Devine, 1989) and of low intelligence (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Although we periodically read about racially-motivated violence in our newspapers, we may regard these as acts carried out by a small criminal minority. You may think that because blatant racist attitudes are rarely expressed, and only by a small minority of people, that prejudice is decreasing. To some extent this is true; we now have societal norms that largely prohibit the blatant expression of prejudiced beliefs. However, psychologists have identified a second, more pervasive, manifestation of racism that people do not admit to, and which is therefore much more difficult to detect: *aversive* racism.

**Aversive racism** describes the type of racism that is defined by having *both* egalitarian attitudes and negative emotions towards members of different groups. Gaertner and Dovidio (1986) argue that modern racism is best described by this conflict between modern egalitarian values (such as equal treatment of all people and sympathy for victims of racial prejudice) and the more explicit forms of prejudice that are perpetuated by images of minority groups as conforming to negative stereotypes. The result of this conflict is the experience of negative emotions such as uneasiness, fear and discomfort. Because egalitarianism is important to many people, these negative emotions arouse feelings of shame and guilt in those who

experience them, leading them to avoid publicly acknowledging these feelings, and to avoid intergroup encounters that might mean having to face up to this conflict. The consequences of aversive racism are clearly demonstrated in a study reported in Text Box 7.2 which shows that while people may report holding egalitarian attitudes, their behaviour towards the ingroup and the outgroup can vary dramatically. These implicit prejudiced attitudes can also be understood in terms of the automatic stereotyping processes which we discussed in Chapter 3. We return to consider these processes in more detail later in this chapter.

## Text Box 7.2

### The Effect of Race on Helping Behaviour

The majority of studies on racism and discrimination involve participants directly reporting their outgroup attitudes. However, people may not always be completely honest when reporting such attitudes, because of a fear of violating the egalitarian norms of modern society. Gaertner and Bickman (1971) used a subtle measure of discrimination, investigating whether people are more likely to help ingroup members than outgroup members.

#### Method

1,109 residents of Brooklyn, New York (approximately half of whom were black and half of whom were white) were called by either a Black or a White confederate. To ensure that their ethnicity was obvious to the caller, the confederates used an accent that was typically associated with their ethnic group. When a participant answered the phone, each confederate used the following script:

Caller:	Hello ... Ralph's Garage? This is George Williams ... listen, I'm stuck out here on the parkway ... and I'm wondering if you'd be able to come out here and take a look at my car?
Expected response:	This isn't Ralph's Garage ... you have the wrong number.
Caller:	This isn't Ralph's Garage! Listen, I'm terribly sorry to have disturbed you, but listen ... I'm stuck out here on the highway ... and that was the last dime I had! I have

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bills in my pocket but no more change to make another phone call ... Now I'm really stuck out here. What am I going to do now? ... Listen ... do you think you could do me the favour of calling the garage and letting them know where I am? I'll give you the number ... They know me over there.

If the participant agreed to help, the caller gave him the telephone number of the garage. Calls were actually received by a research assistant, posing as a garage attendant, who logged the calls.

### Results

- White participants showed ingroup bias; they were more likely to help a White caller than a Black caller
- Black participants were actually more likely to help a White caller than a Black caller, although this difference was not statistically significant

### Interpreting the Findings

People have a general tendency to help those in need, because we hold a 'social responsibility norm'; we feel we should help others even if it is of no personal benefit. For White people, however, this norm was violated more frequently when the person in need of help was in the outgroup; White people were more likely to help ingroup members than outgroup members.

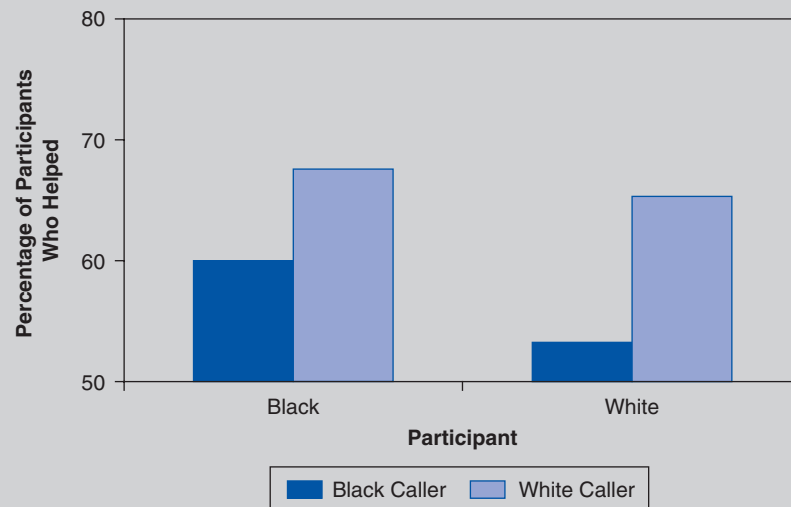


Figure TB 7.2

One can conceptualize a society's progression towards **egalitarianism** as moving through stages defined by these different types of racism, from old-fashioned blatant racism, through to aversive racism, where both egalitarian and prejudiced attitudes co-exist, through to full egalitarianism, where there is no longer any conflict (Kleinpenning & Hagendoorn, 1993). Where is our society on this continuum? Many commentators believe that western societies are at stage two: aversive racism. We have a society that acknowledges the importance of egalitarian values, but there are still pervasive biases evident in all strata of social life, from the sort of violent racist murder described at the beginning of this chapter through to less obvious, but still destructive, forms of prejudice such as institutional racism. In the second half of this chapter we talk about how social psychologists are developing interventions to help us move to stage three, total egalitarianism. Next, however, we discuss another type of prejudice that has proved difficult to eradicate: sexism.

## Sexism

Sexism is the subordination of someone on the basis of their sex. Typically this is defined as male domination of females, and can be exemplified in sexual harassment through to institutional discrimination and the 'glass ceiling' effect (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). Like racism, sexism can be divided into two components: *hostile sexism* and *benevolent sexism*. Hostile sexism is what we typically think of as sexist attitudes towards women, the view that women are inferior, irrational, and weak. However, there is also a less blatant, more benevolent side to sexism. Benevolent sexist attitudes are positive in valence and are characterized by idealizing women in traditional female roles such as 'homemaker' or 'mother'. Although these are positive stereotypes they restrict women to specific roles, justifying male social dominance (Sidanius, Pratto, & Brief, 1995). Modern forms of sexism, just like modern racism, can be characterized by the conflict between positive (egalitarian) and negative (prejudiced) attitudes.

Interestingly, it seems possible for sexist men to possess both hostile and benevolent attitudes towards women. Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, and Zhu (1997) found that men high in ambivalent sexism had polarized views of women that fell into the two types of sexism. Men high in ambivalent sexism who were asked to think about a woman transcending traditional roles (e.g. a career woman) reported negative feelings such as fear and envy. These negative feelings were correlated with hostile sexism, but *not* with benevolent sexism. Men high in ambivalent sexism who thought about a woman in a traditional role (e.g. a homemaker) reported positive feelings (warmth, trust, etc.) which were correlated with a measure of benevolent sexism but *not* hostile sexism. These findings suggest that ambivalent sexist men can hold simultaneously positive and negative attitudes about different subcategories

of women, which may help to explain why sexism has been hard to counteract. It is harder to show someone that their negative stereotype is unjustifiable when they can counter with the argument that they do have a positive view of women (albeit along restrictive and inherently biased dimensions).

## Explicit and Implicit Prejudice

Until quite recently, research on prejudice focused on people's explicit attitude towards members of other groups. Explicit attitudes are conscious, deliberative and controllable and are usually captured by getting participants to report in a questionnaire how positive or negative their attitudes, feelings, or stereotypes are towards members of another group. Although these measures have been used widely in investigations of prejudice, they have a notable limitation: they are influenced by *social desirability*. We have a general desire to be perceived positively by others. At the same time, there is a strong contemporary norm for equality and intergroup tolerance. It may therefore be the case that people do not report their true intergroup attitudes because they fear that those attitudes are not socially desirable. To some extent, this problem has been dealt with by getting participants to complete questionnaires anonymously. However, it may be that people do not want to admit the extent of their prejudices, even to themselves.

Recently, however, the development of millisecond reaction time methodology (measuring how long respondents take to answer questions relating to prejudice) has allowed us to measure implicit attitudes. **Implicit attitudes** are attitudes that are unintentionally activated by the mere presence of an attitude object, whether actual or symbolic. So implicit intergroup attitudes may be triggered by seeing someone from another group, or even simply seeing something that we associate with that group, such as a religious icon or symbol.

One of the most frequently used measures of implicit attitude is the **implicit association test** (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee & Schwartz, 1998). This is a task that identifies the speed with which participants can categorize positive or negative stimuli (e.g. positive or negative words) alongside ingroup or outgroup stimuli (e.g. names or faces). It typically demonstrates that people show an implicit intergroup bias. Specifically, people find it easier to associate their own group (compared to the outgroup) with positive stimuli, and the outgroup (compared to the ingroup) with negative stimuli, indicating implicit bias in favour of one's own group. The IAT has been used to measure a whole range of different types of ingroup favouring bias, including male-female, Black-White, and Christian-Muslim bias, to name just a few. For a demonstration of this test, you can visit the website [implicit.harvard.edu](http://implicit.harvard.edu) and try it out for yourself. Initially, psychologists believed that while explicit attitudes change relatively easily, implicit attitudes were like old habits which are much more difficult to change (e.g. Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000). However,



recent evidence suggests that current events can have a powerful effect on implicit attitudes (see Text Box 7.3)

So why is it important to measure implicit, as well as explicit, prejudice? Well, first of all implicit measures like the IAT do not require participants to report their attitudes directly, which means they are less likely to be influenced by social desirability than are explicit measures. They are therefore particularly interesting to study in the context of prejudice towards social groups towards whom it is no longer socially acceptable to express negative attitudes. Second, there is evidence that although explicit and implicit prejudices both influence behaviour, they do so in different ways. While explicit prejudice might lead to conscious and deliberative behaviours, for example being blatantly unpleasant to outgroup members, implicit prejudice is more likely to lead to subtle, indirect and spontaneous biased non-verbal behaviours, such as avoiding eye contact, increasing physical distance from outgroup members, and hesitating during speech (e.g. Fazio et al., 1995; McConnell & Leibold, 2001). These subtle behaviours can damage interactions between members of different groups without the participants even realizing it.

### Text Box 7.3

#### The Obama Effect:

Does exposure to a counter-stereotypical political figure reduce implicit prejudice?

Research conducted over the last decade has shown that the majority (75–85%) of White people show a bias in favour of White people over Black people on the implicit attitude measure, the IAT. In 2008, however, Barack Obama ran a high profile campaign which resulted in his election as the 44th president of the United States on 20 January 2009. During this time, Americans had an unprecedented level of exposure to Obama, whose qualities – well educated, motivated, and articulate – contradict the negative stereotypes that typically exist towards African Americans. Plant and colleagues (2009) investigated whether this exposure had changed the implicit attitudes of White Americans towards African Americans, and if so, what might be causing this change.

#### Method

Two hundred and twenty-nine predominately White American students completed a Black–White version of the IAT during the 2008 election campaign.

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Participants then listed the first five thoughts that came to mind when they thought of Black people. The researchers recorded how many positive examples of Black people were mentioned (e.g. Barack Obama, Martin Luther King).

### Results

In stark contrast to the previous finding of consistent anti-Black implicit bias, there was no evidence of anti-Black bias on the IAT. In fact, a considerable proportion of participants actually showed a pro-Black bias. These findings were replicated in a follow-up study. Moreover, when asked what thoughts came to mind when thinking about Black people, participants who listed a positive exemplar (such as Barack Obama) were less likely to respond with anti-Black bias.

### Summary

These findings suggest that media coverage of the election of Barack Obama may have led to a general change in White participant's implicit responses to Blacks by repeatedly exposing them to a counter-stereotypical Black exemplar. While Obama's election has positive implications for intergroup relations in the United States, Plant and colleagues acknowledge that it is not clear how long this effect will last. If Obama's term of office continues to be perceived as a success, levels of implicit bias may remain low, but should his presidency prove less successful, there could be a backlash, resulting in an increase in anti-Black bias.

### Summary

In this section we have seen how, at first glance, racism and sexism appear to be in decline. This may be because we live in societies that encourage egalitarianism as a universal value and where there are now laws against the expression of extreme racist and sexist views. However, when we take a closer look we can see how such prejudices have adapted and live on in different forms. *Aversive racism* and *ambivalent sexism* show us that prejudice still exists and can have a profound negative impact on people's lives (from experiencing racist taunts in the street through to gender discrimination at work). There is, of course, also prejudice apparent against many other groups, including gay men and women, immigrants and asylum seekers, Muslims, Jews and other religious groups. Social psychologists have sought to understand why these prejudices occur, and why they prove so pervasive. There is

also an *implicit*, as well as an *explicit*, component of prejudice. While implicit prejudice was initially believed to be very difficult to change, recent research suggests that exposure to positive outgroup exemplars may help to eliminate it. The research we discuss above on ambivalent sexism suggests that, at least to some extent, prejudice might be the result of individual differences. In other words, some people may simply have personalities that lend them to possessing prejudiced views. We discuss this possibility in the next section.

## INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN PREJUDICE

### The Authoritarian Personality

An obvious place to begin any examination of the causes of prejudice is to ask the question: are some people more prejudiced than others? Perhaps understanding prejudice is simply a matter of personality. Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, and Stanford (1950) thought just this, and put forward a theory of prejudice as a personality type. They argued that some people were more prejudiced than others because of the way they had been brought up. According to their theory, which was heavily influenced by the writings of Freud, an **authoritarian personality** arises as a defensive reaction against over-strict parenting methods. Having over-strict parents means the child is unable to express any natural hostility towards their parents, and as such transfers this aggression elsewhere (to weaker, easier targets). This displaced aggression is thus targeted towards minority or low status groups. These tendencies are then said to continue into adulthood, along with other, associated characteristics, like an overly-deferential attitude towards authority figures (who represent the parents).

Although intuitively appealing, this explanation of prejudice can be criticized in two major ways. First, it did not receive unequivocal empirical support. The F-scale, the measure devised by Adorno et al. (1950) to measure if someone had an authoritarian personality, did not predict racism in South African in the 1950s (Pettigrew, 1958), but this is a social setting where prejudice was self-evident. Second was the bigger, conceptual, problem. Personality theories, by definition, explain individual variation in attitudes and behaviours. As such, they have difficulty as explanations of widespread and uniform prejudice. For example, in the 1990s there was clear prejudice in former Yugoslavia, evident in an extreme and brutal form, ethnic cleansing. Is one to conclude that a whole generation of people in this context were raised in the same way by authoritarian parents, and thus ended up all with the same prejudiced tendencies?

We can therefore question the specific Freudian basis for research on the authoritarian personality. But does this mean people do not vary in the level of prejudice

they are likely to express? Common observation would tell us that there is significant variation across different people in terms of how willing people are to express prejudiced views. If this is the case, then how can we explain these individual differences? An idea that has been the subject of much recent attention by social psychologists is that the extent to which people hold broad ideologies about the nature of society can predict differences in prejudice.

## Social Dominance Orientation

Sidanius (1993) argued that people vary according to something called **social dominance orientation**. This is the idea that our societies are defined in part by implicit ideologies that either promote or attenuate intergroup status hierarchies, and that people can vary in the extent to which they either accept or reject these ideas that are ingrained in society. According to Sidanius, people who are high in social dominance orientation favour intergroup hierarchies – this means that people who are in high *or* low status groups should favour the high status group (i.e. it can explain both ingroup and outgroup favouritism). Empirical evidence is more supportive of social dominance orientation than it was for the authoritarian personality. Social dominance orientation has, for example, been found to predict sexism, nationalism, and ethnic prejudice against a range of different minority groups and among samples from a range of countries including the US, Canada, Mexico, Israel, Taiwan, China and New Zealand. There is also evidence that people high in social dominance orientation support suspension of civil liberties, and are opposed to immigration and gay rights (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The effect of social dominance orientation on prejudice remains even after controlling for a wide range of other individual difference factors including self-esteem, need for structure, neuroticism, psychoticism, traditionalism, and several demographic factors.

Overall, then, there does seem to be something in the idea that the extent to which people endorse authoritarian beliefs, the extent to which they agree with prevailing status hierarchies, and a general tendency towards accepting the dominance of some groups over others, provides some basis for individual differences in the expression of prejudice. When we discussed aversive racism above we noted how modern racism is defined by the internal struggle between the desire to conform to positive egalitarian norms and negative prejudiced attitudes. Social dominance orientation explains why we might observe individual differences in tendencies to express prejudiced attitudes, but what about the opposite perspective: do people differ in the extent to which they are motivated to go along with egalitarian social norms? Below we examine the psychological processes that can predict how some people come to question prejudiced attitudes, and modify their own behaviour accordingly.

## Prejudice and Self-Regulation

We discussed how people can be more or less sexist or racist in the earlier sections of this chapter, and it is evident from this research that people do vary from one another in terms of how racist or sexist they are. But since the end of World War II, there has been increasing opposition to the expression of such prejudiced attitudes (Condor et al., 2006). Accordingly, there is evidence that people can develop a motivation to control prejudice (e.g. Fazio, 1990). When someone becomes aware that they may have acted in a prejudiced way, they may feel guilty about this because it violates other beliefs based on shared egalitarian values (see the discussion of aversive racism above). We know this kind of discrepancy between attitudes and behaviours can motivate people to change their attitudes (this is *cognitive dissonance*; see the discussion in Chapter 4). Devine and Monteith have suggested that a similar desire to deal with this dissonance in terms of prejudiced attitudes and behaviours can result in attitude change, and individuals ultimately becoming less prejudiced. They argue that people who detect such discrepancies (and who are motivated to control their prejudices) then engage in a deliberate *self-regulation* process, to monitor and consistently inhibit prejudice-related thoughts (Devine & Monteith, 1999), replacing them with a low prejudiced response (Plant & Devine, 1998) until ultimately they no longer think prejudiced thoughts or behave in prejudiced ways. On an individual level this idea that people can choose to self-regulate to avoid prejudiced thoughts shows us how people can become less prejudiced (Monteith, 1993). This theory describes how individuals, once they decide to become less biased, can achieve that goal.

## Regulation of prejudice through socially interactive dialogue

Condor and colleagues (2006) have argued that societal regulation of prejudice does not only happen at an individual level, but is a dialogic process that involves two or more people. By carefully analyzing dialogues taken from a number of data sources, including academic interviews and television debates, Condor and colleagues found that people do not regulate prejudice in isolation. Instead, there are at least two types of *interactive* prejudice suppression. First, it emerged that in addition to denying their own prejudice, people often defend absent others who are being accused of prejudice. In one example, a woman argued that her mother was subject to prejudice because of her nationality, but her interaction partner argued that the woman might be being over-sensitive, and that the supposed protagonist might not have even realized that the alleged victim belonged to a different national group. Second, the researchers found that we have a tendency to act on the behalf of other individuals present in order to ensure that they do not come across as prejudiced. For example, when an older man stated in an interview that 'we already have enough low-life here without importing other peoples', his wife quickly interrupted to say

‘He’s not xenophobic’ (p. 452). In another interview, an older woman was talking about her hip replacement operation and says of her doctor that he was ‘a big black man’, and her daughter exclaims, ‘Oh Mum, you can’t say that!’ (p. 454). Condor and colleagues argue that while research typically focuses on strategies adopted by individual actors, these findings suggest that prejudice suppression may occur in a collaborative, interactive manner.

## REDUCING PREJUDICE

### The Contact Hypothesis

According to the **contact hypothesis**, contact between members of different social groups, under appropriate conditions, can lead to reductions in intergroup bias. Allport (1954) argued that a number of conditions were necessary for contact to be successful at reducing intergroup bias. First, social norms favouring equality must be in place. In other words, the social conditions (government policy, schools, and laws) should all promote integration. We can make a link here with cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) which we discussed in Chapter 4 on attitudes. When attitudes are not in line with behaviour this causes an unpleasant internal state. People are motivated to avoid this dissonance. So they change their attitudes to be in line with behaviour. It follows that laws which prevent discriminatory behaviour can therefore eventually lead to changes in attitudes. Second, contact must occur under conditions of equal social status. If the minority group has contact with the majority group as a subordinate then this is likely to perpetuate negative stereotypes of inferiority. Third, contact must involve cooperation to achieve a common goal. Sherif (1966) showed that cooperation and common goals were necessary for reductions in bias. However, Blanchard et al. (1975) found that cooperation worked best when the outcome of the superordinate goal is successful.

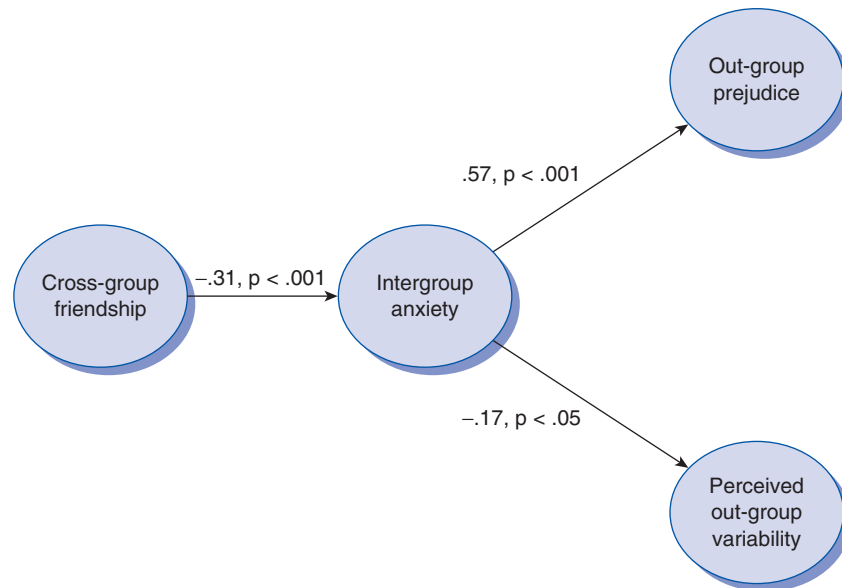
Intergroup contact is now one of the most widely used psychological interventions for the reduction of prejudice and the improvement of intergroup relations (Oskamp & Jones, 2000). But despite its successes, the contact hypothesis has often been subject to two major criticisms, although both of these have now been addressed in contemporary research. The first criticism was that the contact hypothesis failed to specify how the effects of contact would generalize beyond the immediate situation to other situations and from the individuals involved in the contact to the entire outgroup. For instance, if a white person and a black person have a friendly, positive interaction with one another, although they will likely develop a positive opinion of one another, how can we be sure that (a) they would be nice to members of the other ethnic group in other situations, and (b) they would have a more positive attitude towards the other ethnic group *in general*? Contact may also lead to *subtyping* of

individuals involved in the contact away from the group representation. The white person in the previous example may, for example, decide that although they like the black person they met, this person is unusual, an 'exception to the rule', and therefore cannot be considered representative of black people in general. As a consequence, category-based prejudice would remain.

Hewstone and Brown (1986) have argued, however, that contact can generalize to the outgroup as a whole when the ingroup and outgroup members taking part in the contact encounter are regarded as sufficiently typical or representative of their groups, and so cannot be subtyped away from the group so easily (Wilder, 1984). They argued that for this to happen, group memberships must be psychologically salient during contact (Johnston & Hewstone, 1992). In other words, group members must be aware of their respective group memberships during the interaction. This fits in with the 'multicultural perspective': the idea that 'colour-blind' policies (ignoring group membership) are not effective and that group differences need to be embraced, and seen in a positive light.

A second criticism of the contact hypothesis was that it became overly complex, as a result of researchers specifying many conditions that need to be met for intergroup contact to reduce prejudice. It was, for example, suggested that for contact to be effective at reducing prejudice, initial intergroup attitudes should be favourable, there should be a common language, a prosperous economy, and the contact should be voluntary rather than forced (Wagner & Machleit, 1986), to name but a few such conditions. The theory became essentially unfalsifiable, as few contact situations would meet all the conditions specified (Hewstone, 1996). Recently, however, a number of theorists have argued that none of the proposed conditions are *essential*; instead, they *facilitate* the effect of intergroup contact in reducing prejudice (e.g. Brown & Hewstone, 2005). Supporting this argument, in a meta-analysis of 515 contact studies, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found that although contact which met Allport's original conditions led to the greatest reductions in prejudice, prejudice reduction still occurred in their absence.

Contemporary research on intergroup contact has moved on to consider whether certain types of contact, such as *cross-group friendship*, are particularly effective at reducing prejudice. This is the idea that people who have friends in an outgroup are likely to hold more positive attitudes towards that outgroup in general, and it has received considerable support. In a survey of 3800 participants from all over Europe, Pettigrew (1997) found that the more friends from minority groups participants had, the less prejudice they showed and the more sympathy and admiration they had for those groups. The relationships between both neighborhood and co-worker contact and lower prejudice were considerably weaker. Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis also supported the idea that friendship is a particularly effective form of contact. They found that studies where intergroup friendship was used as the measure of contact had a markedly stronger effect on prejudice than those that did not.



**Figure 7.1** Path model of the relationship between cross-group friendship, outgroup attitude, and outgroup variability among Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, showing mediation via reduced intergroup anxiety.

So how exactly does cross-group friendship lead to more positive intergroup attitudes? Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, and Voci (2004) asked Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland to fill out a questionnaire about their experiences with, and attitudes toward, the other community (i.e. Catholics answered questions about Protestants, and Protestants answered questions about Catholics). They found a positive relationship between cross-group friendship and two outcomes, outgroup attitude and perceived outgroup variability (the latter being the extent to which the outgroup is seen as including many different types of people, rather than being seen as all the same as one another – see Chapter 3). But these relationships operated via an underlying mediating mechanism, *intergroup anxiety*, which is the negative arousal experienced at the prospect of contact by individuals who have little experience with the outgroup (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). It emerged that the more friends participants had in the other community, the less anxious they were about interacting with members of that community. In turn, participants with lower levels of anxiety tended to have more positive outgroup attitudes and were more likely to perceive variability among the outgroup (see Figure 7.1).

Other research has shown that *self-disclosure*, the sharing of personal information between two people, can explain why people who have cross-group friends are less prejudiced. Turner, Hewstone, and Voci (2007) investigated cross-group friendship between the South Asian and White communities in the UK and found that the more



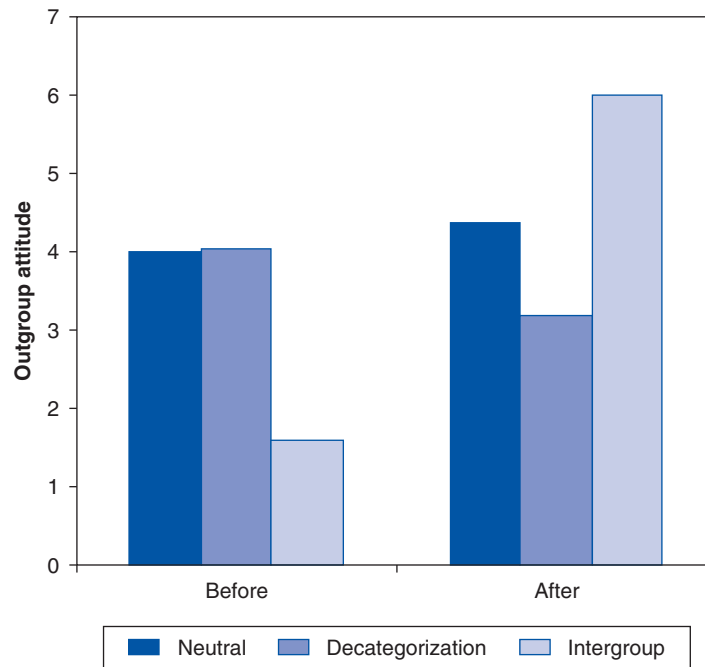
outgroup friends participants had, the more they engaged in self-disclosure with outgroup members. Moreover, the more participants engaged in this self-disclosure, the more likely they were to have a positive attitude towards the outgroup in general. Self-disclosure seems to be associated with more positive outgroup attitudes for two reasons. First, it leads to empathy towards outgroup members, and second, it helps to generate mutual trust.

## Indirect Contact

Despite the benefits of cross-group friendship as a means of reducing prejudice, it has one inevitable limitation: it can only be used as an intervention to reduce prejudice when group members have the *opportunity* for contact in the first place. That is, unless an individual lives in the same community, attends the same school, or works in the same place as outgroup members, they will not be able to form friendships with them. As a result, cross-group friendship may not be useful in segregated settings. Fortunately, recent research on *indirect contact* may provide a solution to this dilemma. There are two types of indirect contact which have been investigated to date: *extended contact* and *imagined contact*.

Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, and Ropp (1997) showed that *just the knowledge* that other people in your group have friends in the outgroup can reduce intergroup bias, a phenomenon referred to as **extended contact**. In the first phase of an experiment designed to illustrate this effect, participants were divided into two small groups (formed ostensibly on a random basis). Ingroup solidarity was created by having group members work together on a series of cooperative tasks designed to create ingroup familiarity and liking. In the second phase of the experiment, intergroup rivalry was generated by having the two groups compete against one another on a series of tasks. To enhance intergroup conflict, each team was given a negative evaluation from the opposing group following each task. In the third phase of the experiment, one participant from each group was randomly chosen to take part in what they were led to believe was a different study. The chosen participants together completed a closeness-building task (Aron et al., 1997) that had previously been shown to create high levels of interpersonal closeness among pairs of strangers in a short period of time. Finally, these two participants returned to their previous groups and were asked to discuss the experience with the rest of the group, in order to 'bring everyone up to date'.

At each stage of the experiment, participants were asked to divide \$500 between the two teams. The findings revealed that participants showed intergroup bias (allocating more money to the ingroup than the outgroup) after phase 1; that is, following categorization but before the introduction of intergroup competition. Intergroup bias was even greater following the introduction of competition in phase 2. However, after learning about the positive intergroup contact experience of one group



**Figure 7.2** The effect of extended contact stories involving disabled and non-disabled children on outgroup attitudes towards the disabled among primary school children. Data from Cameron and Rutland (2006)

member in the final phase of the experiment, even participants not directly involved in the closeness-building task showed a reduction in intergroup bias (see Text Box 1.2 in Chapter 1 for more details about Wright and colleagues' research).

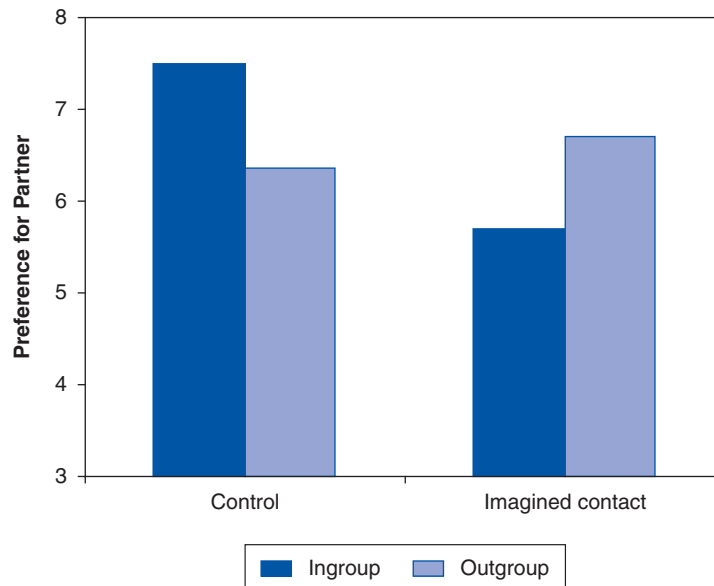
Extended contact has been successfully applied with children in educational contexts. Cameron and Rutland (2006) asked non-disabled children aged between 5 and 10 years to take part in a 6-week intervention study which involved them being read weekly stories featuring disabled and non-disabled children in friendship contexts. Participants were assigned to one of three conditions: an extended intergroup condition, in which the stories emphasized the group memberships of the characters and highlighted their typicality as group members, a depersonalized condition in which stories emphasized individual characteristics of the protagonists, and a neutral condition in which neither group membership nor personal characteristics were highlighted. Attitudes towards the disabled became more positive after the intervention, but only in the intergroup extended contact condition (see Figure 7.2). This finding is important, because it illustrates that the group membership of those involved in extended contact should remain salient if the interventions are to lead to more positive attitudes towards the

outgroup in general (consistent with Hewstone & Brown's, 1986, *mutual intergroup differentiation model*).

Extended contact, like cross-group friendship, improves outgroup attitudes by reducing intergroup anxiety (Paolini et al., 2004; Turner, Hewstone, Voci, & Vonnakou, 2008). The more ingroup members participants know have outgroup friends, the less anxious they are at the prospect of interacting with outgroup members themselves, and in turn, the more positive their outgroup attitudes become. This is because observing a positive relationship between members of the ingroup and outgroup is likely to reduce negative expectations about future interactions with the outgroup. Extended cross-group friendship may be especially useful in situations where there is less opportunity for contact, as an individual does not need to *personally know* an outgroup member in order to benefit from it (Turner et al., 2007).

But what about *very* highly segregated settings, where people may not know *anyone* who has outgroup friends. In this situation, even extended contact may run into problems. A second type of indirect contact, however, does not suffer from this limitation. **Imagined contact** is the mental simulation of a social interaction with a member or members of an outgroup (Crisp & Turner, 2009). The basic idea is that mentally simulating a positive contact experience activates concepts normally associated with successful interactions with members of other groups. These can include feeling more comfortable and less apprehensive about the prospect of future contact with the group, and this reduced anxiety should reduce negative outgroup attitudes. Imagery works because it increases the accessibility of thoughts and feelings that are typically associated with the social situation at hand. Imagining being in a crowd, for example, has been shown to activate feelings of being 'lost in a crowd' and 'unaccountable', feelings which are associated with less helping behaviour in real situations (Garcia et al., 2002). Similarly, when people imagine intergroup contact they should engage in conscious processes that parallel the processes involved in actual intergroup contact. They may, for example, actively think about what they would learn about the outgroup member, how they would feel during the interaction, and how this would influence their perceptions of that outgroup member and the outgroup more generally. In turn, this should lead to more positive evaluations of the outgroup, similar to the effects of face-to-face contact.

To test this idea, Turner, Crisp, and Lambert (2007) asked young participants to spend a minute imagining a positive interaction with an elderly stranger. Participants in a control condition were asked to imagine an outdoor scene instead. After writing down what they had imagined, participants were told about a future study in which they would be asked to interact with either an elderly person or a young person, and were asked to indicate how keen they would be to take part in these two interactions. While participants in the control condition were biased in favour of young people, preferring to interact with a young person rather than an elderly person, those who had previously imagined interacting with an elderly person were equally happy to interact with an elderly person or a young person. Imagining intergroup contact was



**Figure 7.3** The effect of imagined contact on intergroup bias against the elderly among young children. Data from Turner, Crisp, and Lambert (2007).

therefore effective at reducing intergroup bias (see Figure 7.3). Imagined contact has subsequently been shown to improve attitudes towards a variety of target groups including gay men (Turner, Crisp, & Lambert, 2007), Muslims (Turner & Crisp, 2009), and Indigenous people in Mexico (an ethnic minority compared to the majority Mestizogroup; Stathi & Crisp, 2008).

So how do direct and indirect forms of contact compare to one another? On the one hand, indirect forms of contact are more versatile because they are not reliant on opportunity for contact, which means they can be used to improve attitudes even in segregated settings (e.g. Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007; Turner et al., 2008). On the other hand, attitudes based on direct experience are thought to be longer-lasting and more powerful than attitudes based on indirect experiences (Fazio, Powell, & Herr, 1983; Stangor, Sullivan, & Ford, 1991). Research comparing actual and extended contact, for example, typically shows actual contact to have the stronger impact on prejudice (Paolini et al., 2004; Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007).

Crisp and Turner (2009) have proposed an integrative model that incorporates these different types of contact, arguing that imagined, extended and actual contact form a *continuum of contact* interventions, with each recommended depending on how much opportunity for contact there is in a particular context (see Figure 7.4). In situations where there is high segregation and little opportunity for contact, imagined contact may be the only viable intervention to help encourage attitude change and intentions to engage in preliminary contact, or ensure that when that contact



**Figure 7.4** Continuum of contact (Turner & Crisp, 2009)

does occur, it does so with open minds and an increased chance of success. When boundaries have begun to permeate, and there are some positive interactions initiated between members of different groups, extended contact will work well to reinforce the impact of isolated contact encounters. Increasing extended contact may lead to the development of friendship networks which include people from different social groups. This may then lead to a cascade of positive direct interactions, with further benefits for intergroup relations.

## Summary

In this section, we talked about intergroup contact as a means of prejudice reduction. According to *the contact hypothesis*, contact between members of different social groups can lead to reductions in intergroup bias, but only if there are *social norms* favouring equality, if the groups are of *equal social status*, and if group members *cooperate* to achieve common goals. Although the contact hypothesis has been criticized for failing to specify how the positive effects of contact *generalize* from individual outgroup members to the entire outgroup, and for being overly complex, recent reformulations of the theory have helped deal with these criticisms. More recently, research has suggested that friendship contact is most likely to reduce prejudice towards other groups, but only in settings where there is the opportunity for contact. On the other hand, indirect forms of contact, such as *extended contact* and *imagined contact*, can be useful even in segregated settings.

## SUMMARY

In this chapter we have discussed the psychological processes that can help us to explain prejudice, discrimination and social conflict. We first saw how pervasive kinds of prejudice in the form of racism and sexism have evolved to take account of the development of egalitarian social norms. *Aversive racism* and *ambivalent sexism* are characterized by people holding conflicting positive and negative views about groups at the same time. Prejudice can also be explicit or implicit in nature.

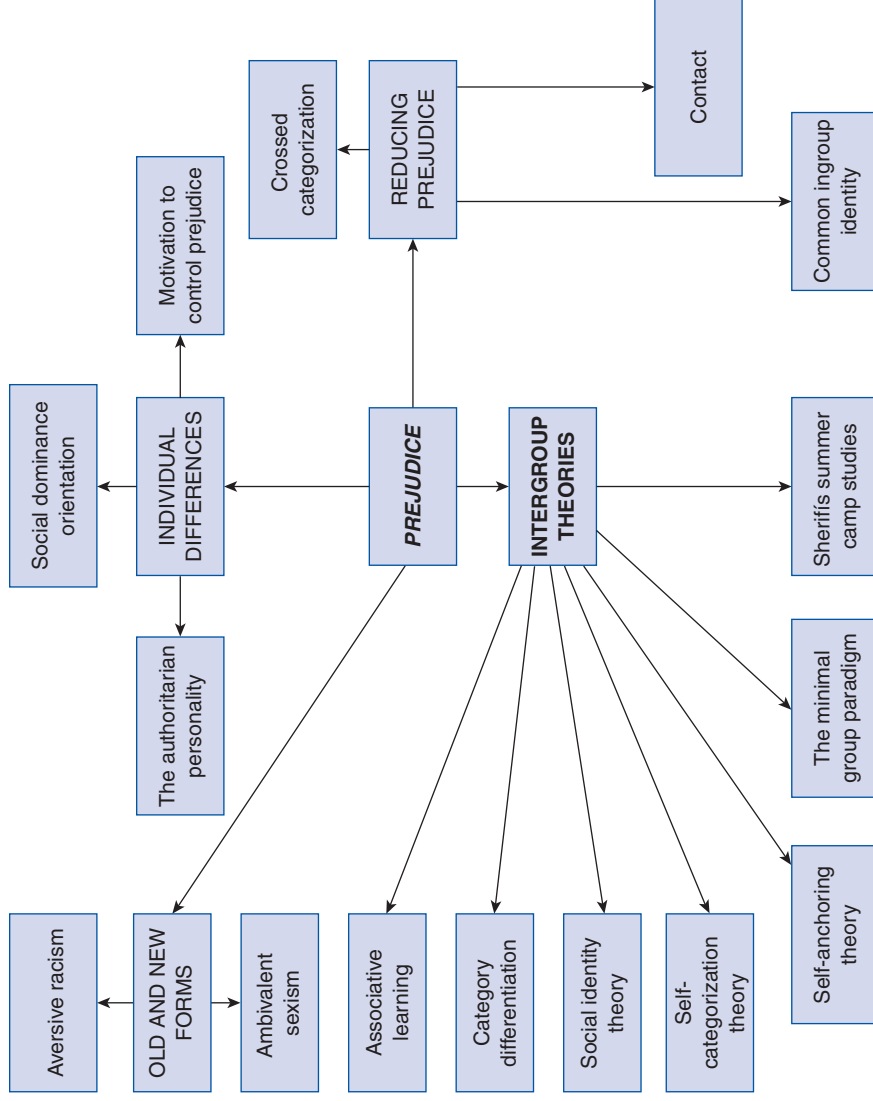


Figure 7.5 Memory map

Although there is not much evidence that individual differences in authoritarianism can explain prejudice, differences in the degree to which individuals have a *social dominance orientation* appear to have a role in explaining why some people are more biased than others. Modern forms of prejudice are characterized by a desire to be egalitarian but with implicit negative attitudes, and individuals can become more egalitarian via a process of *self-regulation*, both through internal regulation and via interactive dialogue with others. On the basis of this knowledge about the nature of prejudice, psychologists have sought to develop ways of reducing intergroup bias and encouraging more egalitarianism. *Intergroup contact* works by getting members of ingroups and outgroups together under conditions that favour positive outcomes (e.g. cooperative goals). *Cross-group friendship* is a particularly effective form of contact, although it is only useful in settings where there is the opportunity for contact, for example in multicultural communities. Indirect forms of contact, such as *extended contact* and *imagined contact*, can be utilized in settings where there are higher levels of segregation in order to reduce prejudice.

## Taking it Further

### Try This

Several different interventions have been devised by social psychologists to reduce prejudice. In this chapter, we discussed contact-based interventions, which have been developed on the premise that people are prejudiced in part because of lack of experience with other groups. However, research findings suggest that personality also plays a role in explaining prejudice. Try devising an intervention strategy to reduce prejudice in an educational setting, based on what you have learnt about the psychological bases of prejudice in this chapter. Use a form or forms of contact in your intervention, but make sure your intervention takes personality factors into account (for instance, will your form of contact work as well for people with high as with low social dominance orientation, and if not, what could you do to compensate?).

### Debate This

Although the expression of prejudice has become less socially acceptable over time, there is nonetheless evidence that different forms of prejudice, including sexism, racism, and homophobia, still exist. Will society ever be completely rid of prejudice? Or is prejudice a 'normal' aspect of society that we can try to reduce, but that we will never be able to eliminate? Based on what we know about prejudice and prejudice reduction, what are our best hopes of eliminating prejudice?

## Something for the Weekend

We have been focused in much of this chapter on reducing prejudice via contact, but in essence what we are talking about is attitude change. Contact is therefore a distinct way of persuading someone to change their negative attitude towards a certain group into a positive one. But if you think back, every single chapter so far has something to contribute to our understanding of attitude change. Come up with a mental map that links prejudice to one concept, phenomenon or theory from each chapter that we've covered so far, and say why the link is there. This could be to do with majority influence (societal changes in explicit prejudice), cognitive dissonance (if anti-racist laws make egalitarian behaviour more likely, this will lead to internal attitude change) or even leadership (Barack Obama represents an inherently non-racist choice by American society). Compare your mental map with others in your class – you'll be surprised at how many different links you can make between all of the topics and issues we've covered so far in the book (and we're only half way through!).

# Further Readings

## The Essentials

Hewstone, M., Rubin, M., & Willis, H. (2002). Intergroup bias. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 575–604.

This review article will tell you everything you need to know about different forms of intergroup bias, their causes and their consequences.

## Next Steps

Turner, R.N., Hewstone, M., Voci, A., Paolini, S., & Christ, O. (2007). Reducing prejudice via direct and extended cross-group friendship. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 18, 212–255.

Crisp, R.J. & Turner, R.N. (2009). Can imagined interactions produce positive perceptions? Reducing prejudice through simulated social contact. *American Psychologist*, 64, 231–240.

These two recent review articles focus more specifically on the different types of intergroup contact discussed in this chapter (direct, extended, and imagined contact), explaining how they reduce prejudice and when they are most effective at doing so.

## Delving Deeper

Brown, R.J. (1995). *Prejudice: Its social psychology* (chp. 8). Oxford: Blackwell.

This comprehensive book is written by one of the leaders in the field. It will give you an exhaustive account of all the key areas of research on prejudice, and is written in an engaging and accessible style.