



Deconstructing Intergroup Contact and Prejudice in Everyday Life

Abstract: Prejudice is traditionally thought of as being a stable, trait-like characteristic of a person, and thus psychologists typically measure prejudice as an individual difference. Similarly, the amount of interaction that someone has with people from different groups (“intergroup contact”) is also assumed to be a relatively stable characteristic of a person. In

this talk, I will describe research suggesting that the relationship between our everyday social experiences and prejudice is much more dynamic than we thought. By examining intergroup contact and prejudice towards multiple target groups over time, we are able to observe the factors that explain why someone would feel relatively less prejudiced towards an outgroup on one day and relatively more prejudiced towards the same outgroup on the next day. We can also determine the stability, frequency, and duration of intergroup contact in the real world to understand how intergroup contact unfolds in real life. I will close the talk by describing a theoretical model that unites research on intergroup contact and prejudice with research on intergroup interaction. Altogether, this work suggests that the interactions we have with people each day covary with dynamic changes in prejudice, but that these daily fluctuations circulate around an overarching contact effect which predicts longer-term trends in prejudice over time.