

To know you is to love you: Effects of intergroup contact and knowledge on intergroup anxiety and prejudice among indigenous Chileans

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Two surveys were conducted in Chile with indigenous Mapuche participants (N study 1: 573; N study 2: 198). In line with previous theorising, it was predicted that intergroup contact with the non-indigenous majority reduces prejudice. It was expected that this effect would be because of contact leading to more knowledge about the outgroup, which would then lead to less intergroup anxiety. The two studies yielded converging support for these predictions.

Keywords: Intergroup contact; Intergroup knowledge; Intergroup anxiety; Prejudice.

There is considerable evidence that one of the most promising measures for reducing prejudice is intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Research inspired by Allport's (1954) original formulation of the Contact Hypothesis confirms, by and large, that bringing members of different groups into contact usually has positive effects on their attitudes towards each other, particularly if certain conditions – such as institutional support for the contact, equal status contact, intergroup cooperation and high acquaintance potential during contact – are met (see e.g., Eller, Abrams, & Zimmermann, 2011). Positive effects of contact have been demonstrated for a wide array of intergroup relationships – for example, relations between European and African Americans in the USA (e.g. Cook, 1978), inter-nation and inter-ethnic attitudes in Europe (Pettigrew, 1997), attitudes towards the elderly in the USA (Harwood, Hewstone, Paolini, & Voci, 2005) and Catholic–Protestant relations in Northern Ireland (Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2004). Integrating this research meta-analytically, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conclude that there is, indeed, a reliable positive effect of contact on intergroup attitudes.

Despite the impressive size of the literature, very few studies have investigated contact effects outside a

North American or European context (for an exception, see Swart, Hewstone, Christ, & Voci, 2011). Remarkably little, if any, work has examined contact between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. The strong reliance on Western (mainly white, middle class, student) participants in much of social psychological research obviously means that we still know very little about whether findings generated for that specific population can be generalised to other types of participants (i.e., to the majority of humanity). One group which has seldom been the focus of social psychological investigation are the indigenous Mapuche in Chile in South America. Indeed, a PsycINFO search (conducted 29 March 2015) for the search term “Mapuche” yielded only 38 article published in peer-reviewed, English language journals. Hence, we would argue that this little studied minority group is an excellent choice to test the generalisability of the contact effect.

The Mapuche are Chile's biggest indigenous group. They have fought against invaders for over 300 years and were finally defeated only in the 1880s, which makes them the last people to be subjugated by the colonisers on the whole South American continent. Since then, they have suffered further infringements of their land

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