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Diversity Training and Intergroup Contact: A Call to Action Research

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Diversity training is a type of prejudice reduction and social inclusion intervention in need of "action research"—an integration of research and theory with practice (Lewin, 1946). Hundreds of workplaces and schools use some form of diversity training, but most interventions are not grounded in theory and there is little evidence of program impact. A recent study of a school diversity training program illustrates how action research can address theoretical issues using experimental methods and unobtrusive outcome measures. For future research, the literature on intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998) can provide theoretical guidance while testing and refining its principles in the application and investigation of diversity training. Action research will benefit diversity training and the broader theoretical and applied project of prejudice reduction and the promotion of social inclusion.

"Diversity Day"

A group of office workers shuffle into a fluorescent-lit room where two rows of chairs face a television stand. Standing in front of a "Diversity Day—Take 2!" banner, their supervisor Michael urges them into their seats: "Let's have fun, everybody!" After the group watches a video of a man speaking about the importance of diversity, a South Asian woman rises and heads for the door. She pauses in front of Michael to explain she has a customer meeting. "If you leave, we'll only have two left—er, yes, enjoy!" Michael blurts. Turning back to the group, composed of eight White men and women, one Hispanic man and one Black man, he introduces himself and the exercise of the day.

Michael instructs each person to pick an index card from a pile and put the card on his or her forehead without seeing what is written on the other side. The various

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cards say "JEWISH," "ASIAN," "ITALIAN," and "BLACK." "I want you to treat other people like the race that is on their forehead, okay? . . .Nobody knows what their race is." As the men and women eye the small billboards on their partners' heads, Michael encourages them to mingle and "let the sparks fly! . . .Let's get real!"

A woman with "JEWISH" on her head stands with the Black man who has by chance chosen the "BLACK" card. Carefully, he offers, "I admire your culture's success in America." Michael appears between the two of them "Good! Olympics of suffering right here! Slavery versus the Holocaust, come on!" The Black man frowns and pulls off his index card: "Who am I supposed to be?"

The "JEWISH" woman moves on to speak to a man wearing an "ASIAN" card. He hails her with a "Shalom" and asks her for a loan. Grimly, she compliments him on his culture's cuisine. Once again Michael jumps in: "Come on, stir the pot. Stir the melting pot!" She draws a breath. "Okay. If I have to do this, based on stereotypes that are totally untrue, that I do not agree with, you would maybe. . . not be a very good driver." The "Asian" man grimaces. "Oh man! Am I a woman?"

The South Asian woman returns to the room, and Michael strides to meet her, motioning all to watch. Using an absurdly exaggerated Indian English accent, he pretends that he is a convenience store owner inviting her into his store. The woman's expression shifts from bewilderment to anger. As Michael's voice reaches a fever pitch, she reaches back and slaps him. The group stands in a dead silence. Michael straightens up and declares, "Yes, that's it! NOW she really knows what it's like to be a minority!"[1]

Diversity Training as an Intergroup Relations Intervention

> "The goal of diversity training programs is to increase awareness of racial, ethnic, and cultural differences and help [people] to value these differences" (Hollister, Day, & Jesaitis, 1993; cited in Stephan & Stephan, 2001 p 80).

Diversity training is an intergroup relations program that often triggers a heated and politically sensitive public debate. The "Diversity Day" story above is actually a scene from the American television comedy "The Office," a show that lampoons workplace culture. Diversity training's critics might agree with the office's portrayal of a diversity training gone terribly wrong. Journalists and academics have asserted that diversity trainings perpetuate racial tension, heighten stereotypes, and foster new sensitivities and anxieties, while relying on pseudo-scientific theories and no supporting evidence (see Day, 1995; Ford, 2000; Lasch-Quinn, 2001; Lynch, 1997). Proponents of diversity training might respond that the show is a satire and it portrays one ill-advised approach out of a wide spectrum of diversity training programs.

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[1] The Office, © 2005 NBC Studios, Inc., and Universal Network Television LLC. All rights reserved. Special thanks to Richard Eibach for bringing this episode to my attention.

But like all good satire, "Diversity Day" exposes and exaggerates some very real problems and questions that are recognized by those who believe in the value of diversity training. For example: Do representatives of minority groups need to be present? Should diversity trainings encourage people to openly express their stereotypes and prejudices? How do people's emotional reactions inhibit or facilitate the goals of diversity training?

A review of the professional and scholarly literature about diversity training reveals that after 30 years and thousands of workplace interventions, the most accurate answer to these and other questions is "we aren't sure." Previous reviews recognize that diversity training's critics are correct in some respects—oftentimes programs are not designed on established theory or empirical evidence, and there is a serious lack of rigorous evaluation and follow-up to gauge program impact (Stephan & Stephan, 2001; Weithoff, 2004). With exceptions (Alderfer, 1992; Katz, 1977; Stockdale & Crosby, 2003; Weithoff, 2004), academics who are interested in prejudice reduction and social inclusion have left diversity training to a corps of professional nonacademic consultants. Meanwhile, unanswered questions about diversity training leave it exposed to polemical attacks (e.g., Feder, 1994; Lubove, 1997) and even to lawsuits (e.g., Stender v. Lucky Stores, 1992).

Yet diversity training sells well; it has become a fixture of the American workplace, where in 2005 66% of U.S. employers used diversity training despite the fact that training is not required by federal equal opportunity law (Compensation and Benefits for Law Offices, 2006). Diversity training is positioned to impact thousands of people and workplaces in a positive way. But by and large, scholars and practitioners have passed up the opportunity for a collaborative project that could harness this widespread intervention to improve the theory and practice of prejudice reduction and social inclusion. A comprehensive project would have two goals:

1. A clear theoretical rationale for predictions about the implementation and outcomes of diversity training: for whom, when, for how long, with which methods, and to what ends.
2. Evaluation research to determine the impact of different types of diversity training in different contexts, prioritizing randomized controlled field experiments and unobtrusively measured outcomes.

These two goals reflect the Lewinian (1946) "action research" approach highlighted in this issue, where social interventions based on theory are refined and continuously retested in real world contexts. This article calls for a coordinated effort among theoreticians, researchers, and practitioners to understand diversity training's processes and potential impact in real world settings. Because intergroup relations scholars and diversity training practitioners wrestle with similar questions,

a logical starting place is to use existing theory and research that has immediate relevance for the questions surrounding diversity training.

The literature on intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998) is one body of academic work where such collaboration could begin. Academic research on intergroup contact probes the conditions under which prejudice decreases among groups and individuals, even in situations when there is no direct intergroup contact. Diversity training and intergroup contact both stand to gain from a collaborative action research project; diversity training programs could use the relevant insights of the intergroup contact literature, while providing externally valid tests of its hypotheses and generating new insights and further research questions. This particular example of action research demonstrates how this kind of collaboration is important for the broad project of intergroup relations theory and application.

Roadmap

First, I present a brief history and some popular forms of diversity training, and review the sparse literature on its impact. Next, I provide methodological recommendations for future action research on diversity training, highlighting the importance of field experimental methods and unobtrusive outcome measurement. I use one recent study of a school diversity training program as an example. I then review the intergroup contact research and how its common concerns overlap with many questions regarding the purposes, methods, and outcomes of diversity training. These areas of common concern are potential spaces where action research could benefit intergroup contact theory and the practice of diversity training.

Diversity Training: An Overview

The invention of diversity training followed affirmative action efforts in the 1960s and 1970s that changed the demographic composition of many organizations. These early "sensitivity trainings" were often responses to or preventative measures against discrimination lawsuits. In the late 1980s a think tank report called *Workforce 2000* (Johnson & Packer, 1987) jumpstarted a "diversity craze" (Judy & D'Amico, 1997, cited in Hays-Thomas, 2004, p 13) with its projection that the percentage of non-Whites and females would rise significantly in the workplace over the coming decade.[2] Diversity consultants recommended "diversity management"—a comprehensive approach ranging from one-day diversity trainings to institutional reforms for hiring and retention—as a labor market imperative, not

[2] Interestingly, part of the rush to implement diversity programs came out of a widespread misinterpretation of the report's graph of a projected 15% *net* percentage decrease among White male workers. The media incorrectly reported that by 2000, only 15% of the workforce would be made up of White males. The actual projected percentage of White males in the workforce was 41%, one percentage point above the actual figure in 2000.

just a social good. Diversity training experienced another surge in demand after the 9/11 attacks, even as companies cut their budgets for other kinds of training (cited in Leonard, 2002).

Diversity training is a catchall title that encompasses many types of activities, from lectures to movies to role-plays. Some researchers classify diversity training activities along a continuum from instructional to experiential training methods (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1983; Lindsay, 1994; Stephan & Stephan, 2001).

Instructional methods of diversity training supply information and raise awareness of the problems associated with misunderstanding or mishandling diversity, or conversely, the benefits of "diversity friendly" behaviors and policies. Instructional activities include lectures, videos, fact sheets, and group discussions led by a diversity trainer (usually an outside consultant). Presentations may cover such topics as equal opportunity laws, policies against gender harassment, the nature of a region or country's demographic changes, or information about underrepresented groups meant to replace myths and stereotypes (Ferdman & Brody, 1995; Gannon & Poon, 1997; Holvino, Ferdman, & Merrill-Sands, 2004; Roberson, Kulik & Pepper, 2001). Some diversity trainings lecture about different "cultural styles" of communication and social interaction (Griggs & Louw, 1995), or different personality profiles associated with different groups (www.DiscProfile.com™). A brand new development in instructional diversity training is the use of the Implicit Attitude Test to teach members of organizations about the prevalence and implications of unconscious bias in everyday behavior (IAT Corporation, 2005).

Experiential methods of diversity training take a personalized and participatory approach to building skills that promote harmonious and productive interaction across group lines. Participants in these trainings may travel to neighborhoods of a different economic or ethnic background than their own, practice communication techniques, or observe one another's style of intergroup interactions (e.g., Hanover & Cellar, 1998). Sometimes experiential methods have the flavor of a group therapy session, in which participants are invited to disclose their feelings toward diversity, or to describe their personal backgrounds or past experiences with prejudice. Group discussions and dialogues about "difference" of all sorts comprise another popular method (Walker & Hanson, 1992) as do role playing exercises featuring work or social situations with characters from a variety of backgrounds (see Alderfer, 1992). Recently a city council encouraged employees to attend the Hollywood movie "Crash," which deals with the topic of race relations, as part of their annual diversity training requirement (Frazier, 2006).

Whether from an instructional or experiential approach, most diversity trainings are based on implicit assumptions about the value of overcoming ignorance, expressing one's hidden assumptions, or feeling empathy for an oppressed group or individual. Fewer trainings are explicitly based on established theories about prejudice reduction or social inclusion (c.f. Nagda, this issue). Moreover, programs

take different views on what exactly constitutes diversity. Some programs focus on traditionally recognized group cleavages like race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, and sexual orientation, while others expand the meaning of diversity to include ability, philosophical or political views, working style, and so forth. The number of activities in a diversity training varies—some programs have one signature exercise, while other trainings use an assortment of exercises, discussions, and videotapes over the course of the training session. The majority of diversity trainings take place in one day, but some diversity consultants contract with an organization to conduct courses across weeks or months.

Real "Diversity Days": Two Illustrations

An example of an instructional diversity training is a video used in thousands of organizations, including major corporations like Hewlett Packard and Proctor and Gamble. *A Tale of "O"* features animated X's and one O, who symbolizes the odd person out. O works among X's, walks by X's on the street, and often feels different and confused about how to behave. When the X's are not actively prejudging O, they still feel uncomfortable and hesitant in their interactions with O. The video encourages participants to relate to O by thinking of a time they felt like a minority for any number of reasons—whether they were a woman among men, wearing the "wrong" clothes at a party, or traveling in a foreign country. Based on findings about minority status from a seminal study of gender in organizations (Kanter, 1977), the video's objective is to ". . .help both X's and O's understand what is happening to them, and [to] help each learn to feel more comfortable dealing with the other" (www.goodmeasure.com, 2006).

The Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes technique is a type of experiential training made famous by Jane Elliot, who divides trainees into two arbitrary groups (most famously, according to eye color) and for the next several hours favors one group while verbally harassing and denying privileges to the other. To highlight group differences she pins collars on the "inferior" group members, expounds on pseudo-scientific theories that justify their lesser status, and singles out individual group members for humiliation. Her website quotes a review of her training method: "Even we, the spectators in BLUE EYED, can't get rid of this feeling of uneasiness, embarrassment, anxiety, and utterly helpless hatred when she starts keeping people down." The purpose of the training is to demonstrate that "prejudice. . .is in irrational class system based on purely arbitrary factors" (http://www.janeelliott.com/, 2006). Trainees are supposed to develop empathy and awareness through their own personal experience of discrimination. Organizations request a live trainer, including Elliot herself, or they watch a video of the program.

The Measured Impact of Diversity Training

> "The preferred solution to the problems of [outcome] measurement and description is to declare them irrelevant and proceed on faith alone. "*One of the problems corporations have with diversity is that they like things in boxes,*" says [a diversity consultant]. . ."*It is. . . an evolutionary process that is very difficult to be specific about . . .you need to work five or ten years before you can say you're into a diversity process. It never ends.*" And at [the consultant's fee of] two grand a day, there's no reason to think it will." (MacDonald, 1993, p. 22)

What rigorous field studies demonstrate the impact of the various types of diversity training? Unfortunately there are very few studies that meet social scientific standards for measuring the casual effects of an intervention. Even if one is sympathetic to practitioners' concerns that diversity programs need time to transform an organization, the lack of evaluation has given rise to cynics who see diversity training as a modern day medicine show.

A large number of posttraining surveys measure participants' opinions of the training exercises or of their own consequential change in attitudes or behaviors (e.g., Morris, Romero, & Tan, 1996). These surveys cannot provide accounts of program impact because it is impossible to rule out well-known sources of bias like self-presentation and social desirability concerns that plague self-report survey studies. Without an equivalent comparison group of nonparticipants, investigators cannot know whether enthusiastic answers regarding the value of diversity do not come from participants' desire to satisfy the diversity trainer or their workplace supervisor (a self-presentation bias), or from their need to conform to social norms of political correctness (a social desirability bias). Even in the absence of these concerns, people are not especially insightful when it comes to evaluating outside influences on their behavior (Nisbett & Bellows, 1977), thus surveys asking participants to judge their own level of prejudice reduction cannot be weighed heavily, even when they are confidential.

Excluding the posttraining surveys, a limited group of prepost or controlled studies has posed some interesting and important questions about the impact of diversity training. These questions include: what is the impact of isolated one-shot trainings compared to those that are part of comprehensive diversity management programs? Does employee feedback increase their managers' sensitivity to diversity concerns posttraining? What are the short versus long-term effects of diversity training? Unfortunately, just a few isolated studies are devoted to each question, and correlational designs or small sample sizes circumscribe these studies' disparate conclusions.

One example is a study by the American Management Association that correlated the investigators' *own* opinions of companies' "training effectiveness" with the structure and the duration of the diversity training. From these biased data, they concluded that isolated instances of diversity training were less effective compared

to those that are part of diversity management programs (cited in Caudron & Hayes, 1997).

Investigators have probed other questions with better methods, but with a small number of studies from which it is difficult to generalize. One evaluation of a diversity training program for White middle managers investigated whether a diversity training plus anonymous feedback from their subordinates would improve managers' diversity-sensitive behaviors such as discouraging jokes based on stereotypes (Hanover & Cellar, 1998). Managers who participated in the training rated diversity-sensitive behaviors as more important and reported engaging in those behaviors more than a control group of managers. Two problems with the conclusions of this study are that there is no way of telling which component or components of the treatment (e.g., the diversity training activities or the anonymous feedback) were responsible for the outcome, and if the managers actually behaved in the way that they reported in the final questionnaires.

An evaluation of a diversity training for supervisors at a U.S. military installation attempted to determine whether the impact of a stereotype-reduction training would endure over time by comparing trained supervisors to those who were waiting to be trained (Tansik & Driskell, 1977). Initial decreases in stereotyping (measured by a questionnaire in which trainees rated "American Indians", "Blacks," "Whites," and "Latinos" as successful vs. unsuccessful, unpleasant vs. pleasant, honest vs. dishonest, etc.) rebounded after 3 months had passed, but stereotyping continued to fluctuate over the course of repeated follow-up surveys. It is unclear whether the investigators would have observed the same outcomes with a less transparent measure of stereotyping.

One field experiment examined whether the demographic composition of diversity training groups would change trainees' reactions, using a sample of graduate instructors at a business school (Roberson et al., 2001). For the 4-hour voluntary and instructional training, 127 graduate students were randomly assigned to a racially homogenous or a racially heterogeneous training group. At the end of the training the investigators measured the trainees' knowledge, attitudes toward diversity, and their intentions to promote intergroup understanding. Group composition did not make a difference for any of these outcomes; however, graduate instructors who reported prior experience with diversity training scored better on the knowledge and intention outcomes when they were in homogeneous groups. Roberson et al. hypothesized that homogeneous groups may be best for a social modeling process, in which people are better able to imitate those who are similar to themselves. However, this was a post hoc explanation rather than a theoretically driven prediction.

Thus, many of the important questions investigators pose about diversity training are stranded by the small number of studies and the methods used in each one; meanwhile consultants make many recommendations in advance of the accumulation of solid evidence. The most important lesson from the current assertment of evidence is that future research needs to overcome their

methodological limitations in order to fully address important practical and theoretical questions.

Methods for Investigating Diversity Training

The key strategies for overcoming past methodological limitations of diversity training research are: (1) establish the causal effect of the program, (2) use unobtrusive outcome measurement that goes beyond self-report, and (3) conduct the research in relevant populations and settings. Accomplishing these goals will help to ensure that studies are able to answer the questions they are designed to ask.

Previous research on diversity training has been unable to establish the causal effect of training by using random assignment of participants to training groups and to a no-training control group. In a review of the prejudice reduction literature, my colleague Donald Green and I only found eight studies of diversity training activities that used randomized treatment and control groups (Paluck & Green, in press). Experimental designs could also help to solve the "kitchen sink" problem faced by diversity training evaluations—that is, which component of a multifaceted diversity training is the "active ingredient" of its success? Alternately, what is the added benefit of each component: lectures, videos, role-plays, and the like? Experiments can address these questions by randomly assigning participants to different training groups, i.e., lecture-only versus video-only versus lecture plus video.

Future research should also develop more unobtrusive measures for diversity training outcomes. Moving beyond transparent questionnaires that communicate the "correct" response (e.g., "Do you discourage biased statements in your workplace," or, Rate the honesty of "blacks," "women," "Asians," etc.) is especially important in the context of diversity training. Participants' concerns about self-presentation may be magnified in workplace or school settings by the presence of a research investigator in addition to a work supervisor or teacher. Measuring behavior is a challenging task of any evaluation, but it is an outcome measure that is generally less subject to self-presentation bias and is an important piece of evidence for diversity training's impact. A creative and underutilized solution to the difficulties with direct observation of behavior is to collect "third party reports" from outside sources like colleagues and supervisors, or to examine physical evidence (if accessible) such as minutes from meetings and employee or student evaluations. Because each one of these sources of information is unreliable on its own, evaluators should try to collect multiple measures of participants' statements, work habits, and interactions with others.[3]

[3] Many diversity trainers value qualitative feedback from participants, which can still be collected in the context of an experiment with all of the other unobtrusive measures mentioned above. Participants' impressions and reactions can inform certain aspects of the training design, however, this feedback should be collected in a separate session, to avoid "contaminating" the less-transparent impact questions with straightforward feedback questions. Feedback should never be confused with evidence of impact.

The populations studied in diversity training evaluations are not always similar to participants in nonresearch diversity trainings. For example, the Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes training has only been evaluated in a college student population, though it is regularly used with adults in professional organizations. Researchers should strive to study diversity training in the contexts where they most often occur in order to generalize their findings.

One understudied setting is organizations that are forced to conduct diversity training under threat of or following a discrimination lawsuit. These types of organizations are usually reluctant to allow researchers access, but researchers could make the case that an evaluation would send a signal that the organization is committed to finding out "what works" to change their hostile workplace environment. Whatever the arrangement, the pay off would be large in terms of the ability to extend theoretical insights and intervention methods to a wider range of settings and populations.

A Randomized Controlled Evaluation of a Diversity Training Program

To illustrate how future studies of diversity training can use rigorous methodology to answer theoretically driven questions about prejudice reduction and social inclusion, I offer an example from my own work, a study of a school diversity training I recently conducted with Donald Green (Paluck & Green, 2006). We investigated the impact of a Peer Training Program run by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in several U.S. high schools.

The Peer Training Program aims to reduce prejudice in individual students and in the general school culture by training a representative sample of student "Peer Trainers" to be voices of tolerance in the hallways and classrooms of their schools. Peer trainers are expected to engage fellow students in discussions about prejudice and social inclusion, and to stand up for targets of prejudice in their school community. We were interested in first, the impact of the training program on the knowledge and attitudes of student Peer Trainers, and second, the influence of the Peer Trainers on their friends and classmates. To study these two processes, we selected a sample of 10 schools, matched similar schools into pairs, and randomly assigned one school in each pair to begin the Peer Training Program (treatment condition), and the other to a waiting list (control condition). Before the program started, future Peer Trainers in both the treatment and the control schools wrote down the names of two close friends and eight classmates, in a supposedly unrelated general questionnaire administered by the ADL.

After Peer Trainers in the treatment school completed their training, we conducted a telephone survey of students in both treatment and control schools: Peer Trainers as well as the close friends and classmates they listed in the presurvey. The telephone survey was designed to minimize self presentation and social desirability concerns with a number of different techniques. For one, interviewers

introduced the survey as the "Yale Adolescent Viewpoints Project" so that students would not connect the study with the ADL program. Secondly, we measured behavior in addition to self-report, by asking students if they would volunteer their names for a website petition advocating gay and lesbian rights, and by asking for "third party reports." We asked students to report the names of up to four students in their school who would be most likely to stand up for targets of biased teasing in the hallway. Students also responded to a series of open-ended and closed questions probing their attitudes toward various social, groups, and instances of bias in their school (e.g., teasing and social exclusion) with our assurances of complete confidentiality.

In brief, we found that the training program improved Peer Trainers' awareness of and attitudes toward prejudice against various social groups, but not personal comfort with different groups. To a certain degree, Peer Trainers did influence the attitudes of their friends and classmates toward issues like structural discrimination and speaking out against prejudice in their school. We also found that friends and most of all classmates in the intervention condition were more likely to nominate Peer Trainers out of any student in the school as the people who were most likely to stand up for victims of prejudiced teasing.

Overall, this study accomplished a few important goals: it measured the causal effect of the training program, it traced the diffusion of the program's influence onto other students in the environment, it measured changes in attitudes, feelings, and behaviors in an unobtrusive manner, and not least of all, it addressed practical and theoretical questions posed by ourselves and by the practitioners who implement the program. We answered the overall practical question of whether the program's particular approach—instruction with an emphasis on practicing antiprejudice behavior—had its intended effects. Theoretically, we were interested in differential impact of this type of approach on the various outcomes we measured.

We were particularly interested in the finding that the intervention did not impact participants' personal comfort with members of different social groups, even though it did affect their attitudes and behaviors toward prejudice. The finding can be juxtaposed with a previous field experiment in which an intergroup contact intervention (an Outward Bound camping trip) that made no mention of prejudice or social inclusion *did* increase participants' personal comfort with members of other groups (Green & Wong, 2001). Our own prospective research agenda includes the use of action research to push theoretical questions about whether and why certain prejudice reduction interventions can reliably affect different outcomes. For example, would these findings replicate among groups with deeper divisions or histories of conflict (Hewstone & Cairns, 2001)? Do various intervention approaches trigger different forms of empathy (Stephan & Finlay, 1999)?

I now turn to the issue of how theoretically driven action research can inform various questions about the methods, process, and outcomes of diversity training.

The intergroup contact literature is one body of academic research that stands out as particularly relevant for this kind of action research project.

Intergroup Contact Research and Diversity Training

One of the oldest and most venerated hypotheses in the history of intergroup relations research is the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Williams, 1947). The contact hypothesis states that prejudice is reduced between members of different groups who come together under the optimal conditions of equal status, a common goal, personal intimacy, and sanction from authority.

The fundamental assumptions of the contact hypothesis and common approaches to diversity training overlap in notable ways. First and most importantly, intergroup contact is the impetus for diversity training. Diversity training began as a response to increased interracial and cross-gender contact in the workplace, and it has evolved into programs aimed at increasing people's sensitivity toward contact with many kinds of differences, contact with an increasingly diverse public, and in some cases, cross-cultural contact with international colleagues. Second, both the contact hypothesis and diversity training target intimate or factual knowledge of other groups as an avenue for bias reduction. The original thinking of the contact hypothesis was to provide optimal conditions so that individuals could learn about one another, and instruction about group differences remains a primary thrust of diversity training. A third place of overlap is the "authority sanction" condition of the contact hypothesis that requires contact to be blessed by some higher authority or institution. Diversity training models also stress the importance of institutional support, whether it is company management or school authorities (e.g., Holvino et al., 2004).

Questions about when, for whom, and how intergroup contact reduces prejudice have guided scholarship on intergroup contact for the past half-century, leading to many theoretical insights and extensions that could inform diversity training. For example, contact studies have moved beyond their original focus on racial and ethnic groups to investigate the malleability of prejudice toward all kinds of social differences, including religion, sexual orientation, age, and mental illness (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Theorists have reconsidered which conditions of contact are most important for the reduction of prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998). Empirical research has measured how reduced prejudice toward individuals in one context might generalize to an entire social group (e.g., Brown, Vivian, & Hewstone, 1999), along with examining the roles of motivation (e.g., van Dick et al., 2004), emotional responses (e.g., Voci & Hewstone, 2003), and personal disclosure (e.g., Ensari & Miller, 2002) in prejudice reduction. Importantly, intergroup researchers demonstrate that direct face-to-face contact is not always necessary to enhance positive outcomes—indeed, prejudice may be reduced by

learning that members of one's group are in friendly contact with other groups through their personal testimonies or by reading books (e.g., Cameron & Rutland, this issue; Liebkind & McAllister, 1999; Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2004; Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997).

Action Research Using Diversity Training and the Intergroup Contact Literature

Given all of the overlaps between the concerns of diversity training and intergroup contact research, the following list of selected topics is meant to stimulate ideas for collaborative action research projects on diversity training and intergroup contact.

Bringing Out Differences

Does focusing on difference rather than on common humanity backfire? Many diversity trainings focus on difference, e.g., the video "Different Like You" (Edge Training Systems, 2001) or the popular "Valuing Differences" program (Walker & Hanson, 1992) even though basic psychological research suggests that a focus on difference may increase prejudice (e.g., Bodenhausen & Macrae, 1994). Contact research suggests that group boundaries should be salient during contact for any reductions in prejudice to generalize beyond the individuals in contact to the entire group (Brown et al., 1999). The tension between finding common ground and "valuing differences" within applied diversity trainings might be a fruitful area of research, e.g., to explore when group boundaries might be *too* salient for bias reduction. Researchers might test the insights of contact researchers who suggest a simultaneous emphasis on commonalities and differences (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Hewstone, 1996) by pitting modified versions of "difference and common humanity" diversity training materials against the original "difference" versus "common humanity" materials. Importantly, Hewstone (1996) recommends emphasizing differences in expertise rather than identity, a strategy that lends itself well to a diversity training intervention.

Utilizing Emotions

Are diversity trainings more effective when they provoke emotional reactions? "I'm gonna bring you all to tears" Michael of The Office announces to participants prior to his disastrous "Diversity Day." Many real life diversity trainings are ". . .specifically designed to spark lively and emotionally-charged discussion" (cited in Lasch-Quinn, 2001, p. 187). Similarly, some experiential exercises like Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes aim to provide first hand experience of the humiliation, anxiety, or embarrassment of discrimination. A meta-analysis of contact

research also highlights the importance of emotions—specifically the importance of *reducing* negative emotions—for bias reduction (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Positive emotions such as empathy, on the other hand, might be linked to bias reduction in contact situations (Kenworthy, Hewstone, Turner, & Voci, 2005). The links among positive and negative emotion and prejudice reduction could be examined in many diversity training contexts.

Presence of "Minorities"

One of the most persistent debates in diversity training is whether there should be a "minority presence" at the training, meaning a representative of an undervalued or minority group. A minority presence is recommended on the basis of various assumptions: that members of stereotyped or oppressed groups will bring authenticity or legitimacy to the discussion, will facilitate the most personal change in other group members, or will increase perceived need for change. Yet the opposite recommendation is nearly as common: compose homogeneous training groups so as to prevent polarization of different attitudes, to prevent impression management (i.e., "political correctness"), and to avoid tokenism. Leaving aside the question of what a "homogeneous" group would look like, particularly when diversity is defined in broad terms, these opposing recommendations require further investigation. At the crux of the issue is the most fundamental question of contact research: when does contact facilitate and when does it limit possibilities for bias reduction? The intergroup contact literature has no blanket answer to these questions, but could guide investigations toward understanding the conditions under which a minority presence (or various proportions of minority to majority group members) or a homogenous group facilitates the most change.

Discussing Stereotypes

Can talking about stereotypes help to diminish them? Many diversity consultants maintain that group discussions should create a safe space for individuals to "explore" their prejudices, usually meaning aloud (e.g., Walker & Hanson, 1992). Members of devalued groups may feel threatened by the expression of prejudice. On the other hand, the repression of bias may have the ironic effect of making biased thoughts more accessible (e.g., Monteith, Spicer, & Tooman, 1998). Contact research suggests that after coming into contact with people who express bias, individuals from the targeted group will feel worse and will be less willing to interact with *any* members of the other group, biased or not (Tropp, 2003). Many models of diversity training encourage participants to express their stereotypes as a kind of cathartic release, and these trainings would serve as an interesting testing ground to investigate the tension between repression and expression of bias in diverse groups.

Mandatory Versus Voluntary Training

Mandatory diversity training reflects a commitment to tolerance and inclusion on an institutional level, which the contact hypothesis recommends (Allport, 1954). Contact research finds that the strongest effects of contact occur among those who had no choice in the contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), but also that unmotivated individuals (e.g., those who are being forced into training) may not benefit from contact (van Dick et al., 2004). The juxtaposition of high institutional support plus low motivation (mandatory training) or low institutional support plus high motivation (voluntary training) suggests an interesting and important experimental paradigm to test in diversity training settings.

Further questions might include: how does diversity training impact individuals from majority and minority groups differently, or how should diversity trainings define "difference" or "groups?" These and other questions demonstrate the ways in which an action research project on diversity training that is built upon an existing theoretical framework could have theoretical and practical benefits. The methodologies for investigating these questions outlined above, paired with theoretically rooted questions, can help an action research project to clarify relationships among various features of training and outcomes.

Final Thoughts

Diversity training is a widespread prejudice reduction and inclusion promotion intervention in the real world that has received too little attention from intergroup relations researchers. A review of the different types of diversity trainings field demonstrates that it is ripe for collaborative action research involving scholars, theoreticians, and practitioners. Intergroup contact research is a literature that could bring insight to and that could benefit from such collaboration. Certain investigators have brought other theories to the study of diversity training, such as the theory of planned behavior (Wiethoff, 2004), embedded intergroup relations theory (Alderfer, 1977; 1986), and theories of group processes (e.g., Gibson & Vermeulen, 2003). In the spirit of this special issue, I encourage more action research in which scholars and practitioners to work together to improve the theory and practice of diversity training using rigorous research methods based in real world practice.

Rigorous and collaborative scholarship on a politically charged intervention like diversity training should not be expected to resolve accompanying controversies ignited by topics of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other social cleavages implied by "diversity." Recall for example the detailed report submitted to the Supreme Court by psychologist Patricia Gurin (Gurin, 1999), along with other briefs and reports written by psychologists and practitioners that cited dozens of research findings supporting the academic and social benefits of diversity

(e.g., American Psychological Association, 1996; Crosby & Clayton, 2001). These reports did not "settle" the debate that still rages over affirmative action at the University of Michigan and elsewhere. However, I remain guardedly optimistic that scholarship rooted in real world applications can supply these debates with useful theory and evidence. If communicated well to the public, research reports that lay out thoughtful descriptions of measured outcomes and best practices can help to elevate discourses surrounding diversity training and perhaps around social differences more generally.

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