

## CONTACT MODELS AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS IN AN ITALIAN AREA BORDERING ON AUSTRIA

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In this study, we analyzed the efficacy of certain contact modes to improve relationships between the Italian and German linguistic group in the Bolzano Province (South Tyrol). In this Province — with an autonomous statute, and annexed to Italy in 1919 — the German group represents the majority and dominant group. The encounter modes evaluated were those conceptualized by the intergroup contact theory (Brown & Hewstone, 2005), the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), the dual identity model (Gaertner, Riek, Mania, & Dovidio, in press). Participants were Italian students, born and living in South Tyrol; they attended senior high school in the city of Bolzano. A questionnaire was used. We found that the cooperative contact benefits were generalized from the proximal members to the distal outgroup: contact fostered empathy, reduced anxiety, and ingroup bias. These effects, however, were generally not moderated by the contact modes evaluated. We discussed the interest of studying the effects of cross-group friendships in this social context.

**Key words:** Common ingroup identity model; Contact modes; Dual identity model; Intergroup contact theory; Linguistic groups in South Tyrol.

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### INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Among social psychologists the idea is widely accepted that intergroup contact has the potential to reduce prejudice. Contact in itself, however, is not enough to decrease intergroup bias. According to contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Cook, 1984; Pettigrew, 1998), prejudice reduction would occur when members of different groups meet on an equal status trying to pursue common goals through cooperative interaction; contact should also have the support of authorities and law. Despite the numerous empirical proofs (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), an unresolved problem for contact hypothesis is how to explain the generalization of positive attitudes from the proximal outgroup members to the whole outgroup. To explain generalization, models grounded on social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) have been proposed, where categorization is a central concept.

According to intergroup contact theory (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Hewstone & Brown, 1986), generalization is possible if categorical memberships are psychologically salient in the contact settings and outgroup members are regarded as sufficiently typical of their group. The positive

attitudes, ensuing from cooperative contact, may be generalized since proximal members are perceived as associated with the outgroup as a whole (Rothbart & John, 1985; Wilder, 1984). The intergroup contact theory (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Hewstone & Brown, 1986) has been supported by a number of studies (e.g., Brown, Maras, Masser, Vivian, & Hewstone, 2001; Brown, Vivian, & Hewstone, 1999; Van Oudenhoven, Groenewoud, & Hewstone, 1996). One of its limitations is that salience of memberships in contact settings may give rise to high levels of anxiety and, hence, to unfavorable attitudes toward the outgroup (Greenland & Brown, 1999; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). It has, however, been found that categorical salience in contact may have moderation effects: intergroup anxiety may be less intense when social identities are more than when they are less salient (Voci & Hewstone, 2002, 2003; see also Harwood, Hewstone, Paolini, & Voci, 2005, Study 2).

Unlike intergroup contact theory, the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989) states that, since categorization fosters discrimination (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971), it is better — in contact settings — to reduce the salience of categorical memberships. According to Gaertner and Dovidio, contact situations should be transformed so that the current ingroup and outgroup are readily recategorized into a larger superordinate ingroup. In this way, the bias previously linked to the original categories should be reduced or eliminated. Recategorization attenuates ingroup bias through a more favorable attitude toward the outgroup (Dovidio, Gaertner, Isen, & Lowrance, 1995). Numerous studies support the common ingroup identity model (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Validzic, 1998; Gaertner et al., 1999; Gaertner, Mann, Dovidio, Murrell, & Pomare, 1990; Gaertner et al., 1989). Nevertheless, the problem of generalization remains unsolved; it seems, in fact, difficult that the positive effects of recategorization can be extended to the outgroup members who are outside of the recategorized context (for studies concerning generalization, see Dovidio et al., 1997; Eller & Abrams, 2003, 2004, 2006; Gaertner, Rust, Dovidio, Bachman, & Anastasio, 1994; González & Brown, 2003, 2006). A further problem of this model is that the abandoning of important identities (e.g., national, ethnic) may not always be so easily obtained (Ensari & Miller, 2002; Hewstone, 1996; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996); in fact, it is not easy to give up the distinctiveness associated with own social identity (Brewer, 1991; Tajfel, 1981).

According to Gaertner and colleagues (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 2000), a dual identity strategy may be more profitable in some intergroup settings. In this perspective, original social identities remain salient within the common group. This salience should favor generalization, namely the extension of the positive effects of contact from the proximal to the distal outgroup. Some studies have shown the efficacy of this contact mode (Gaertner et al., 1994; González & Brown, 2003, 2006, Study 1), especially when contact concerns majority and minority groups (González & Brown, 2006, Study 2).

Finally, the decategorization model (Brewer & Miller, 1984, 1988), like the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), suggests reducing salience of the available social categories. It does not suggest the creation of a superordinate identity, but the breaking down of existing categorical boundaries. In order for contact to be successful, it is necessary to achieve higher differentiation among outgroup members and more personalization, that is greater attention to the idiosyncratic attributes of ingroup and outgroup exemplars. The decategorization hypothesis was supported by a number of studies (Bettencourt, Brewer, Croak, & Miller, 1992; Bettencourt, Charlton, & Kernahan, 1997; Brewer, Weber, & Carini, 1995). Its limitation lies in the fact that, if

contact is completely decategorized, generalization is impossible; in fact, the personalized exemplars may not be associated with the rest of their group (Rothbart & John, 1985).

The aim of our study was to identify the most effective contact mode to improve the relations between the Italian and the German linguistic group in South Tyrol (the Province of Bolzano). In this Italian province — having an autonomous Statute, and annexed to Italy in 1919, after the First World War — three ethno-linguistic groups live together: Italians, Germans, and Ladins.<sup>2</sup> The Italian group represents 26.47% of the population, the German group 69.15%, and the Ladin group 4.38% (2001 Census; ASTAT, 2002). In the capital of the Province (city of Bolzano), the majority (73%) belongs to the Italian group, while Germans and the Ladins represent, respectively, 26.29% and 0.71% of the population. In South Tyrol, Germans have greater political power, and the Italian group perceives this superiority as unjust.

With respect to contact, the two groups attend separate schools and separate social/cultural events, such as religious functions. The Italian group, moreover, is employed above all in industry, whereas Germans work in agriculture, tourism, and handcrafts. Despite these separations, numerous occasions of encounter exist between the members of the two groups. It is, therefore, important to know whether, in contact, ethnic memberships or the common South Tyrolean belonging or both should be salient for the positive effects of contact to be extended from the individual to the outgroup as a whole.

This study concerns only one of the linguistic groups living in South Tyrol: the Italian group. The modes of contact evaluated are those analyzed by the intergroup contact theory (Brown & Hewstone, 2005), the common ingroup identity model, the dual identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). We did not, instead, consider the effects of the personalized encounters (Brewer & Miller, 1984), since they may not be generalized to the distal outgroup. Our expectation was that, in this social context, the most effective mode of interaction would be that envisaged by the dual identity model, because: the salience of memberships allows one's distinctiveness to be preserved; the awareness of the common belonging to the Province, namely the salience of a shared "us," may foster positive intergroup attitudes; and, finally, because the categorical contact may favor generalization.

To test the effects of the three modes of contact, hierarchical regression was applied. In the first phase (Step 1), the main effect of the three independent variables (frequent and cooperative contact; two groups representation; one group representation) was estimated; in the second phase (Step 2), to these terms the two-way products were added; in the third (Step 3), also the effects of the three-way product were examined. Dependent variables were: the emotions felt toward the general outgroup; its evaluation; the evaluative intergroup bias, and the bias concerning resource allocation; subtle prejudice (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). The two-way interactions explain the dependent variable if the portion of variance absorbed by Model 2 is higher than that absorbed by Model 1. Salience of the common identity moderates the contact effects if the contact  $\times$  one group interaction is significant; concerning Hewstone and Brown's (1986) theory, in encounters with outgroup members, salience of memberships moderates the effects of contact, if the contact  $\times$  two groups term is significant. The awareness of a dual identity allows generalization, if the three-way interaction is significant (namely, the portion of variance absorbed by Model 3 is higher than that absorbed by Model 2). This procedure presents the benefit of testing the effects of a contact mode, while controlling those of the other modes. This control is essential in a correlational research design.

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## METHOD

### Participants and Procedure

One hundred-sixty seven students were examined (54 males, 113 females), attending senior high school in the city of Bolzano (Italian schools). They all belonged to the Italian linguistic group. Mean age was 17.77 ( $SD = 0.89$ ). Participants were examined, in a classroom setting, in groups of about 20 people; after completion of the task, the investigator, belonging to the Italian group, explained the study aims.

### Questionnaire

The instrument used was a questionnaire including the following measures.

*Contact with outgroup members.* Two items measured the degree of self-reported contact: “How many people, belonging to the German linguistic group, do you know at a personal level?”; “How often do you interact with people, you know, belonging to the German linguistic group?” A seven-step scale was used from *none* (1) to *more than 10* (7), for the first item, from *never* (1) to *daily* (7) for the second one.<sup>3</sup> Participants who declared that they had no contact with members of the outgroup (22 of the 167 respondents) were excluded from the analyses. These respondents only compiled the part of the questionnaire concerning the evaluations and emotions felt toward the whole German outgroup. The two items were multiplied to obtain an index of quantity of contact (Brown et al., 1999). Quality of self-reported contact was measured by using eight seven-step bipolar scales (e.g., *competitive/cooperative*, *unfriendly/friendly*, *an episodic/a deep acquaintance*). On the seven-step scale, 1 was given to negative and 7 to the positive pole. The eight items were aggregated to construct a single measure of quality (Cronbach’s alpha = .79).

*Group salience during contact.* Group salience during self-reported contact was measured with four items. Sentences started with “In the encounters with people you know, belonging to the German linguistic group: How aware were you personally that you belonged to different groups?”; “How often did you make reference to your different memberships?”; “To what degree did you perceive them as typical members of the German linguistic group?”; “To what degree did you perceive them as representative members of their group?” On the seven-step scale, higher numbers reflect higher membership salience, and higher perception of typicality of the outgroup exemplars. The four items were combined in a single measure of membership salience (alpha = .73).

*Common ingroup identity during contact.* Three items were used to reveal the perception of a common group during contact: “In the encounters with people you know, belonging to the German group, how often were you aware of your common belonging to the Bolzano Province?”; “How often did you feel united by your common belonging to South Tyrol?”; “How often did you feel united by the fact of living in South Tyrol?” All items had a seven-step scale ranging from *never* (1) to *always* (7). The three items were averaged to form a reliable measure of one group perception (alpha = .86).

*Intergroup emotions.* Participants were asked to indicate the emotions they felt, when they thought about the German linguistic outgroup. Nineteen items were used: seven expressed calmness (e.g., *calm*, *tranquil*, *relaxed*), eight expressed anxiety (e.g., *tense*, *nervous*, *threatened*), four

expressed parallel empathy (see Batson, 1998; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Two empathy measures were: "Concerning members of the German group, to what degree do you feel you share their emotions?"; "To what degree do you feel in tune with them?" The seven-step scale was anchored by *not at all* (1) and *very strongly* (7). Reliability was high: .95 for calmness, .81 for anxiety, .93 for empathy. For each emotion, items were aggregated to form a single reliable measure.

*Evaluation of ingroup and outgroup.* Participants rated the Italian linguistic group (ingroup) and the German linguistic group (outgroup) on five semantic differential scales, representing the Evaluation factor: undesirable/desirable, unpleasant/pleasant, negative/positive, disagreeable/agreeable, unvaluable/valuable. On the seven-step scale, 1 was given to the negative and 7 to the positive pole (4 = *neither/nor*). Ratings were averaged for ingroup ( $\alpha = .86$ ) and for outgroup ( $\alpha = .88$ ). A measure of evaluative bias was obtained subtracting the outgroup from the ingroup evaluation.

*Resource bias.* Participants were required to divide 110 Euros between a member of the Italian and a member of the German group. The measure of bias corresponds to the difference between the amount of money allocated to ingroup and the amount allocated to outgroup: the higher the positive score, the stronger the discrimination in favor of the ingroup.

*Subtle prejudice.* Three items from Pettigrew and Meertens' (1995) scale were adapted for this intergroup context obtaining the following five measures: "How similar do you think the members of the Italian and the German linguistic group are in the values they teach their children?"; "How similar do you think the members of the Italian and the German linguistic group are in their religious beliefs and practices?"; "How similar do you think the members of the Italian and the German linguistic group are in the way they speak Italian?"; "How similar do you think the members of the Italian and the German linguistic group are in the way they speak German?"; "How similar do you think the members of the Italian and the German linguistic group are in the values they trust?" The six-step scale was anchored by *very different* (6) and *very similar* (1). Items were aggregated to form a reliable measure of subtle prejudice ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

## RESULTS

### Introductory Analyses

Concerning the quantity of contact, participants declared that they knew well more than seven/eight members of the other group ( $M = 5.32$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ), and that they had with them a moderate amount of contact ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.82$ ). Regarding quality, the mean, higher than the neutral score ( $M = 5.20$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ),  $t(144) = 16.08$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicates that encounters with known members of the other group were experienced as friendly and cooperative. Group salience ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ) and salience of the common identity ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ) during contact were low. Concerning the emotions felt toward the German outgroup, anxiety was very low ( $M = 1.67$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ), calmness was moderate ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ), and empathy ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) was lower than calmness. Both the evaluation of ingroup ( $M = 5.36$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ) and that of outgroup ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ) were positive, but the ingroup was evaluated more positively than the outgroup,  $t(142) = 6.48$ ,  $p < .001$ . Ingroup bias in allocating resources was also present:  $M = 12.20$  ( $SD = 29.24$ ),  $t(143) = 5.01$ ,  $p < .001$ .<sup>4</sup> Finally, the mean relative to subtle prejudice ( $M =$

4.10,  $SD = 0.90$ ) showed the tendency to differentiate ingroup from outgroup in important comparative dimensions.

### Convergent and Discriminant Validity of Measures

Before testing the contact models, the convergent and discriminant validity of measures was evaluated. Confirmatory factor analysis was applied (LISREL 8; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996-2001), and a model with 10 latent variables was tested: the three predictors used in Step 1 of hierarchical regression (Table 1; contact, two groups, one group) and the seven dependent variables (Table 1; calmness, anxiety, empathy, outgroup evaluation, evaluative bias, resource bias, subtle prejudice). Concerning the variable contact, it corresponds to the product between quantity and quality. Prior to multiplying the two terms, quality scores were recoded so that  $-3$  indicated negative contact and  $+3$  positive contact. We used this measure since quality and quantity may not be sufficient to reduce ingroup bias and an optimal combination of the two components may be needed (see Brown et al., 2001; Voci & Hewstone, 2003).

In the factor model, the latent variables — contact and resource bias — were measured by one indicator (error variance was fixed to zero); for all the other constructs, the respective items were aggregated to obtain two indicators. Namely, the method of partial disaggregation was applied proposed by Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994; for the benefits of this method, see Capozza, Dazzi, Falvo, Hichy, & Mari, 2004, p. 146). Analyses were performed on the covariance matrix (Cudeck, 1989). Two goodness-of-fit measures showed the model fitted the data well: CFI (Comparative Fit Index; Bentler, 1990) = .98; SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; Bentler, 1995) = .033. Values for CFI greater than or equal to .95, and for SRMR smaller than or equal to .08 are considered satisfactory from a practical standpoint (see Hu & Bentler, 1997, 1999). Concerning chi-square, it was significant, but the ratio  $\chi^2/df$  was less than 2:  $\chi^2(92) = 143.34, p \cong .00$ .

The convergent validity of measures was shown by the fact that each indicator was loaded only on the respective factor. Regarding discriminant validity, correlations between latent variables were either nonsignificant or different from 1: the confidence interval, which is obtained considering two standard errors above and two standard errors below the estimated correlation, did not contain the perfect correlation ( $p = .05$ ). The highest  $\phi$ s coefficients concerned: the evaluation of the German outgroup and empathy ( $\phi = .69, p < .001$ ); the evaluation of the German outgroup and evaluative bias ( $\phi = -.72, p < .001$ ). Concerning the independent variables in multiple regression — contact, one group, two groups — only the correlation between contact and the two group representation was significant ( $\phi = -.22, p < .02$ ).

### Testing the Contact Models

In applying hierarchical regression, before multiplying the independent variables, these latter were centered, as a means to avoid multicollinearity. With this procedure, low correlations are obtained between the product term and the component parts of such term (see Cronbach, 1987; Jaccard, Wan, & Turrisi, 1990).

Findings are presented in Table 1. As results from the first model (Step 1), all the dependent variables, apart from subtle prejudice, were influenced by frequent and cooperative contact. Contact, in fact, increased the perception of calmness ( $\beta = .24, p < .01$ ) and empathy ( $\beta = .40, p < .001$ ) and reduced anxiety ( $\beta = -.18, p < .05$ ) felt toward the German linguistic group. Friendly contact, moreover, improved the evaluation of the outgroup ( $\beta = .29, p < .001$ ) and reduced evaluative ingroup bias ( $\beta = -.27, p = .001$ ), together with ingroup bias concerning resource allocation ( $\beta = -.15, p < .06$ , marginal effect).

Group salience (two groups) during contact (Step 1), instead, had only negative effects: it increased anxiety ( $\beta = .34, p < .001$ ) and attenuated empathy ( $\beta = -.30, p < .001$ ) toward the German group. Group salience, moreover: worsened the evaluation of the distal outgroup ( $\beta = -.30, p < .001$ ); raised ingroup bias both at the resource level ( $\beta = .28, p = .001$ ) and at the evaluations level ( $\beta = .36, p < .001$ ); it enhanced the perception of differences between the Italian and the German group (subtle prejudice;  $\beta = .34, p < .001$ ). Salience of the common South Tyrolean belonging during contact did not have significant effects (Step 1; Table 1).

With respect to the moderator effects of the categorical representations — two groups, one group — neither the two-way interactions nor the three-way interaction were significant for five dependent variables: calmness, anxiety, outgroup evaluation, evaluative bias, subtle prejudice (Steps 2 and 3; Table 1). The significant two-way interactions concerned empathy and resource bias: for empathy, contact  $\times$  one group,  $\beta = -.16, p < .05$ ; for resource bias, contact  $\times$  two groups,  $\beta = -.20, p < .01$ , and one group  $\times$  two groups,  $\beta = -.21, p = .01$  (Step 2; Table 1).<sup>5</sup> The analysis of the simple effects for the interaction contact  $\times$  one group (Table 2) showed that friendly encounters favored empathy toward the global outgroup more when in contact the common belonging to the Province was less salient than when it was more salient. The two influences are, however, very weak. The simple effects, relative to the interaction between contact and salience of belonging (Table 3), indicate that contact reduced resource bias only when the encounters were of an intergroup type; this result supports the model by Hewstone and Brown (1986; Brown & Hewstone, 2005).

The final interaction did not concern the effects of contact, but of group representations: one group  $\times$  two groups. The simple effects are reported in Table 4. Salience in contact of the common ingroup reduced the tendency to favor — at a material level — the Italian ingroup, if in the encounter settings also the categorical memberships were salient.

Concerning the three-way interactions, none of them were significant (Table 1). In friendly encounters with outgroup members, salience both of the distinct memberships and of the common ingroup did not influence the positive effects of contact on emotions, prejudice, discrimination, and evaluations of the distal outgroup.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to reveal the most effective mode of contact useful to improve the attitudes of the Italian group members toward the German outgroup, in South Tyrol. The intergroup contact theory (Brown & Hewstone, 2005), the common ingroup identity model (Gaert-

TABLE 1  
 Hierarchical regression evaluating the moderator effect of group representations on the relation  
 between contact and dependent variables (standardized regression coefficients)

	Dependent variables						
	Emotions: calmness	Emotions: anxiety	Emotions: empathy	Outgroup evaluation	Evaluative bias	Resource bias	Subtle prejudice
Step 1							
A Contact	.24**	-.18*	.40***	.29***	-.27***	-.15 <sup>†</sup>	-.01
B Two groups	-.10	.34***	-.30***	-.30***	.36***	.28***	.34***
C One group	-.07	.04	.10	.06	-.12	-.12	-.09
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.08	.17	.32	.21	.25	.14	.13
<i>F</i>	3.95**	9.55***	21.60***	12.54***	15.74***	7.37***	6.95***
<i>df</i>	(3, 141)	(3, 141)	(3, 141)	(3, 140)	(3, 139)	(3, 140)	(3, 141)
Step 2							
A Contact	.22**	-.19*	.40***	.31***	-.28***	-.18*	-.00
B Two groups	-.11	.32***	-.27***	-.26**	.30***	.17*	.35***
C One group	-.06	.03	.15*	.06	-.11	-.12	-.13
A × B	-.10	-.06	-.07	.12	-.11	-.20**	.11
A × C	.01	.06	-.16*	-.09	.05	.15	.08
B × C	.04	.01	.07	.03	-.10	-.21**	-.00
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.09	.18	.35	.23	.28	.24	.15
<i>F</i>	2.26*	4.87***	12.48***	6.92***	8.70***	7.09***	3.99***
<i>df</i>	(6, 138)	(6, 138)	(6, 138)	(6, 137)	(6, 136)	(6, 137)	(6, 138)
<i>F</i> change	0.60	0.33	2.61 <sup>†</sup>	1.23	1.50	6.02***	1.03
<i>df</i>	(3, 138)	(3, 138)	(3, 138)	(3, 137)	(3, 136)	(3, 137)	(3, 138)

(table continues)



TABLE 1 (continued)

	Dependent variables						
	Emotions: calmness	Emotions: anxiety	Emotions: empathy	Outgroup evaluation	Evaluative bias	Resource bias	Subtle prejudice
Step 3							
A Contact	.22**	-.19*	.40***	.31***	-.28***	-.18*	-.00
B Two groups	-.11	.33***	-.28***	-.26**	.30***	.16*	.36***
C One group	-.06	.04	.14	.05	-.11	-.13	-.12
A × B	-.09	-.02	-.12	.08	-.10	-.25**	.14
A × C	.00	.04	-.14	-.07	.04	.17*	.07
B × C	.04	.00	.07	.04	-.10	-.20*	-.01
A × B × C	.03	.08	-.09	-.08	.02	-.09	.07
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.09	.18	.36	.24	.28	.24	.15
<i>F</i>	1.93	4.27***	10.86***	6.02***	7.41***	6.24***	3.50**
<i>df</i>	(7, 137)	(7, 137)	(7, 137)	(7, 136)	(7, 135)	(7, 136)	(7, 137)
<i>F</i> change	0.09	0.72	1.12	0.74	0.04	1.09	0.60
<i>df</i>	(1, 137)	(1, 137)	(1, 137)	(1, 136)	(1, 135)	(1, 136)	(1, 137)

Note. Contact = quantity × quality; two groups = group salience during contact; one group = salience of common identity during contact. For the dependent variables, higher ratings mean: stronger emotions of calmness, anxiety, and empathy toward the outgroup; higher outgroup evaluation, and prejudice; higher ingroup bias.

†  $p < .06$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

TABLE 2  
 Simple effects for the interaction between contact and one group representation (empathy)

Empathy		
Salience of common identity	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>
High	0.01**	3.17
Average	0.02***	5.56
Low	0.02***	5.24

*Note.* The mean score of common identity salience is 3.14; high score, low score of salience indicate a standard deviation above and a standard deviation below the mean. *b* = non standardized regression coefficients.  
 \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

TABLE 3  
 Simple effects for the interaction between contact and two groups representation (resource bias)

Resource bias		
Two groups salience	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>
High	-0.30**	3.13
Average	-0.14*	2.32
Low	0.02	0.18

*Note.* The mean score of salience of the two groups during contact is 2.96; high score, low score of salience indicate a standard deviation above and a standard deviation below the mean. *b* = non standardized regression coefficients.  
 \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

TABLE 4  
 Simple effects for the interaction between one group and two groups representations (resource bias)

Resource bias		
Two groups salience	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>
High	-5.97**	3.01
Average	-2.23	1.50
Low	1.51	0.70

*Note.* The mean score of salience of the two groups during contact is 2.96; high score, low score of salience indicate a standard deviation above and a standard deviation below the mean. *b* = non standardized regression coefficients.  
 \*\**p* < .01.

ner & Dovidio, 2000) and the dual identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 2000) were considered. The hypothesis was that the most effective mode of contact would be the one suggested by the dual identity model: salience of common identity may inhibit differentiation, and salience of the respective distinctiveness may allow generalization.

Findings showed a constant positive effect of cooperative contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; see also Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Regarding theories, the intergroup contact theory was not confirmed (Brown & Hewstone, 2005); in fact, salience, in contact, of the respective memberships had a moderator effect only for resource bias. In all the other cases — except for calmness — salience, in contact settings, of the different ethnic belonging increased anxiety and prejudice toward the outgroup, accentuated the evaluative bias, reduced empathy. This result is not new; in other studies it was found that contact of an intergroup type produced negative influences (see Greenland & Brown, 1999, Study 1; Harwood et al., 2005, Study 2; Islam & Hewstone, 1993). Also the common ingroup identity model, interpreted as a model of moderation, was not supported by this study. In interactions with outgroup members, salience of the common belonging to the Province did not moderate the positive effects that friendly contact had on the distal outgroup. The only moderation found signals that empathy toward the outgroup as a whole grew less if, in contact settings, the actor was aware of sharing with the outgroup member the common South Tyrolean belonging. Concerning dual identity, the three-way interaction was not significant for any of the dependent variables. In the encounters with outgroup members, the salience both of the respective belonging and the common ingroup did not influence the positive effects of contact on the distal outgroup (for a recent analysis of the dual identity model, see Gaertner, Riek, Mania, & Dovidio, in press).<sup>6</sup>

The finding relative to resource bias — the only one confirming the theory of intergroup contact (Brown & Hewstone, 2005) — can be explained *a posteriori*. The perception, in contact settings, of being Italians versus Germans evokes negative reactions, but also the idea of the material benefits that Italians, resident in South Tyrol, have with respect to other Italians (e.g., greater welfare, lower unemployment rate). When in encounters memberships are salient, therefore, the cooperative contact tends to decrease material discrimination toward the outgroup.

In conclusion, none of the interaction modes analyzed can make relations between the two groups more harmonious. On the contrary, salience of belonging seems to elicit many negative effects. Intervention strategies, which are valid for every social context, do not exist. In a social environment defined by rivalries — where Italians need to enhance the value of their ingroup, and perceive the attitudes of the dominant outgroup as unfair — the common identity is probably weak and salience of belonging arouses intergroup differentiation and competitiveness. In this social environment, the decategorized contact (Brewer & Miller, 1984) could be effective, or as Brown and Hewstone (2005) suggested, a contact in which both personal attributes and social identities are salient. Ensari and Miller (2002) found that generalization to the distal outgroup was favored by the simultaneous presence of self-disclosure and typicality of the outgroup member (Study 1) or self-disclosure and membership salience (Study 2). The benefit of integrating the decategorization model (Brewer & Miller, 1984) with the intergroup contact theory (Brown & Hewstone, 2005) is also supported by the findings of Hewstone, Cairns, Judd, Voci, and McLernon (2000), Voci and Hewstone (2003), and by the studies on direct and indirect cross-group friendships (see Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2004; Pettigrew, 1997; Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp,

1997). It was found that cross-group friendships reduce prejudice and intergroup anxiety; close cross-group friendships are experiences where both interpersonal and intergroup aspects of contact are present and, sometimes, integrated.

Despite its practical and theoretical implications, this work presents two limitations. First, our data are only correlational; they should be sustained by more controlled experimental evidence. The second limitation concerns the sample examined; we, in fact, considered only members of the Italian linguistic group. It could be that the most effective contact model for the German group which, since being annexed to Italy has struggled to protect its own ethnic identity and tolerates, but does not accept the common South Tyrolean belonging, is, in fact, the one based on salience of the respective memberships (Brown & Hewstone, 2005). But this salience increases anxiety, reduces empathy, enhances prejudice and evaluative favoritism in the Italian group. To perform effective interventions, in this social setting, it is therefore necessary to identify the encounter modes allowing generalization for the members of the German group.

Our findings show that frequent and friendly contact with outgroup members reduces *per se* prejudice toward the outgroup. Even though our opinion is not supported by data, we believe Italian participants, when referring to outgroup exemplars they knew, thought about friends. In friendships, interpersonal and intergroup aspects of contact join together and follow one another, the intergroup aspects allowing generalization and the protection of one's group distinctiveness. The most effective contact model for both groups could, therefore, be that of cross-group friendships: direct or indirect.

Social interventions in South Tyrol, aimed at improving relations between the two ethnic groups, require further studies. It is necessary to examine the members of the German linguistic group; it is necessary to evaluate the effects of cross-group friendships on intergroup relations. At an institutional level, however, the current separation between the schools for Italian and those for German speaking people is not suited to favor relations of cross-group friendship.

The population we considered — young people attending high schools — is an important target, since young people are important agents of social change. For wide-scale interventions, however, it is necessary to identify the most effective mode of contact in South Tyrol — valid for both groups — by examining representative samples of the Italian and German population.

#### NOTES

1. This research was supported by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (FIRB funds, n. RBAU01TEZN, 2001). We wish to thank Anna Cammarano for her help in data collection and coding.
2. Ladin is a neo-Latin language spoken in Ladinia, area situated in the Trento/South Tyrol and Veneto regions.
3. For the first item, the other five degrees indicated: 2 = *one or two*, 3 = *three or four*, 4 = *five or six*, 5 = *seven or eight*, 6 = *nine or 10*.
4. Missing values were revealed for the variables: ingroup and outgroup evaluation, resource bias.
5. For the variable resource bias, the two interactions significantly increased the portion of variance explained,  $F_{change}(3, 137) = 6.02, p = .001$ . The term contact  $\times$  one group, instead, only marginally increased the explained variance of empathy,  $F_{change}(3, 138) = 2.61, p < .06$ .
6. In this study, we tested the common ingroup and the dual identity model as moderation and not mediation models, since our aim was to reveal contact situations which could improve the relationships between the ethnic groups in South Tyrol.

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