**Long Abstract - Stream 19**

**Proposed title: Intergroup Contact and Minority-Majority Relations in Organizations. Multiple Case Studies of Internationals in German Organizations.**

# Introduction and Theoretical Framing

Intergroup contact is an crucial way to reduce intergroup biases, such as prejudice and discrimination in general and in organizations in particular (Dovidio, 2007; MacInnis and Page-Gould, 2015). Especially for minorities within organizations, it is difficult not be subject to prejudice and discrimination. Therefore, the stream migration, diversity and integration is strongly associated with the issue of intergroup contacts in general and the Minority-Majority Relations linked to different ethnic origins in particular (Hewstone *et al.*, 2001). MacInnis and Page-Gould (2015) and MacInnis and Hodson (2019) revealed different research streams of intergroup interaction (II) and intergroup contact (IC), both constructs are used interchangeably. However, there are different outcomes coming from short-term II and long-term IC (MacInnis and Page-Gould, 2015). Short-term II are often found to promote intergroup bias, whereas long-term IC is often found to reduce prejudice, discrimination and intergroup anxiety. That is, ICs are seen often as first contact with strangers. However, within organizations, *are other groups and their member’s strangers?* IC means here, that distrust, prejudice and discrimination can be reduced overtime. MacInnis and Page-Gould (2015) studied the bias between the two research streams. The authors found a *contact threshold* related to the time of the contact between groups. They define a “come-closer-to-each-other” process - from II to IC. (1) It starts with important certain good II. After that (2) the II decrease anxiety. (3) More of such positive interactions may lead to more positive intergroup attitudes. (4) This may lead to IC, which is studied to lower prejudice–short-term II may lead to anxious among respondents.

Less studied yet was the intergroup contact threshold (1) in organizations in general and (2) with different group size in particular. In their paper, MacInnis and Page-Gould (2015) mentioned the work of Studlar and McAllister (2002) regarding the critical mass theory. According to that about minority groups, there may be qualitative changes appear, when a specific group size is reached (between 10 and 35 % of a certain population). This changes may help to reduce intergroup bias and intergroup anxiety (MacInnis and Page-Gould, 2015). Further, within a intraorganizational setting, Studlar and McAllister (2002) built on the Kanter’s tokenism theory in the workplace (1977, 1993). The authors claim, when a minority group reaches the tipping point of 15%, intergroup biases and intergroup anxieties become more harmonious (MacInnis and Page-Gould, 2015).

As the MacInnis and Page-Gould have called, for taking more care (1) for real-life settings, instead of laboratory settings (Stangor, 2015); (2) contrary to primarily use majority group members as participants, the dissertation project will primarily use minority group members (MacInnis and Hodson, 2019; MacInnis and Page-Gould, 2015). (3) Germany has been chosen as a geographic area, as MacInnis and Hodson recommend, that it is important to analyze different parts of the world to generate useful knowledge (2019). (4) As research methodology, the author is encouraged by Staw, who suggest to focus on qualitative research to come to a social psychology of organizations (Staw, 2016). In response to those calls, the author wants to examine ***how an organizational intergroup contact threshold can be reached.***

# Methodology and Empirical Research Design

As mentioned above, Stangor (2015) demonstrated the limitations of the measured outcomes of social psychology via laboratory settings. The author repeated the need of more research "outside of laboratory settings" (Stangor, 2015, p. 15) to obtain innovative information. MacInnis and Page-Gould (2015) and Staw (2016) confirm this. A methodology in the field of social psychology is qualitative research (see, Brown and Locke, 2008; Staw, 2016; Willig, 2008) with interviews within case-studies (see, Jackson and Sherriff, 2013; Staw, 2016; Willig, 2008).

Three papers are planned for the Dissertation project. Paper one will be (1) a literature review about the phenomena close to the organizational intergroup contact threshold (including quantity and quality of intergroup interactions; perspective taking; forms of contact and individual differences, such as working memory). (2) A case study is planned within an organizational setting of a globally operating corporation with a site in Germany to investigate minority groups and Affinity Groups. A second case study is planned for paper two within an organizational setting of a university and the organizational intergroup contact threshold. The rationale for a second case study in a sense of multiple holistic case studies is the need to compare the findings of the first case to establish whether the findings of the first case occur in further cases to generalize the findings (see, Brown and Locke, 2008; Willig, 2008; Yin, 2003). Furthermore, as the first case study will be a closed community, the second case study will analyze a loose organization. The third paper intends to apply a ground theory approach in order to extent the construct of an intergroup contact threshold with the aspect of reaching it within an organizational setting (Charmaz and Henwood, 2008).

# Preliminary Findings and Conclusions

Talking about intergroup contact in organizations and lowering intergroup bias, such as prejudice is still present and not solved (Vezzali and Stathi, 2016). The term social change (Reimer *et al.*, 2017) is part of the equation, as well as perspective taking (Ku *et al.*, 2015) and collective action (MacInnis and Hodson, 2019), because from a perspective of an ingroup, it is known (see, Aberson and Haag, 2007) that, it is possible to take the outgroup perspective. For that, organizations implemented diversity trainings to promote a diverse workforce. That lead us to the first case study about a corporation. From the corporation´s perspective (majority group), as the ingroup, the outgroup perspective (minority group) can be adopted and could be taken it over by the majority, so the organization itself, or at least by other groups. By examine this, there is the possibility to conduct interviews in an organization who has (1) members of several ethnical groups (all together are internationals from several countries) and (2) a more formal Affinity Group (AG) with the focus on multiculturalism. Within the corporation itself, the majority group are Germans and native-speaking German employees. According to a pre-interview – conducted with a member of a Multicultural-AG (MAG) there are differences between, so called “First-Timers” (e.g. employees attending for the first time to an AG event) and “Multiple-Timers” (e.g. employees attending at least for the second time to an AG event) to some events (such as “The International Day”), created by the MAG. Here, the members of the minority groups (i.e. the group of internationals) represent their culture or their country. “First-Timers”–although from the same corporation, thus no total strangers–come to the event and visit booths they are interested-in. Then they start to talk about commonalities to their own knowledge and experiences. “Multiple-Timers”, mostly have more knowledge about the represented country or culture and ask other questions. Studies with majority members equal to “First/Multiple-Timers” distinction were conducted (Gurin *et al.*, 2004, Study 2). The authors differ majority members regarding diversity in less-experienced and more-experienced among other things through “interethnic dialogs”.

In sum, diversity practices, such as organizational Affinity Groups with focus on multiculturalism may enable sustainability of integration on members of disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic origin. Here especially the question about (1) the employers´ actions within the diversity management and (2) the courage of MAG-members to motivate non-MAG-members (which are nevertheless also part of the disadvantaged group of ethnic minorities) to show themselves up and become more encouraged to follow and influence their own career paths.

The theoretical contribution will show insights about the processes and factors of reaching a contact threshold, especially with multiple case studies within organizations (see, Willig, 2008 or Yin, 2003). For practitioners, there will be different findings for organizations. (1) There is the identification of groups which are vulnerable to initiate counter measure (Frable *et al.*, 1998). (2) If a group show signs of wear, this is may be an indicator for discrimination, which can affect the health of employee which each organization is trying to retain (Krieger, 2014; Mendes *et al.*, 2007; Stangor, 2015).

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