

Amir Y. Contact hypothesis in ethnic relations. *Psychol. Bull.* 71:319-42, 1969.
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Research regarding the effect of intergroup contact on ethnic relations was reviewed, categorizing the variables under numerous topics, primarily those related to producing positive as compared to negative effects. Some generalizations and practical applications were suggested. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI)® indicates that this paper has been cited in over 160 publications since 1969.]

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"My interest in ethnic contact originated from my PhD dissertation at New York University that dealt with this topic. Only 10 years later, this article was published in *Psychological Bulletin*. The idea of writing such an article followed a meeting in 1967, initiated by Israel's Minister (Secretary) of Education and Culture. At this meeting, a number of social scientists from Israeli universities were asked to evaluate possible outcomes of the newly planned policy of ethnic school desegregation (i.e., contact). Interestingly enough, social scientists could not come to any clear conclusions on this matter. Thus, on my way back from that meeting, I decided to read the relevant literature on ethnic contact and see whether more clear-cut recommendations could be made. This venture lasted for a whole year and, consequently, the *Bulletin* article was published.

"Three major reasons come into my mind to account for the large number of citations to the article. First, ethnic contact, like the weather or living with a spouse, belongs to that category of events that fits the idea of 'you can't

live with it, but it's sure difficult to live without it.' Where other approaches, such as education or the mass media, have failed, ethnic interaction is still the one technique that holds some promise to reduce prejudice and produce better intergroup relations. This, too, is not easy to achieve. Yet, as we are dealing here with a major social issue relevant today in many countries of the world, interest in this topic is still high, especially with regard to ethnic contact in the schools, international student exchange, cross-cultural training, dyadic relations, and so on. Second, the article, though not basically theoretical, provided researchers with a broad taxonomy and categorization of independent and dependent variables related to the topic. And finally, no basically new comprehensive summary on ethnic contact has been published since, leaving social scientists no alternative but to quote this article. The only exception to this may be in the field of ethnic contact in the schools (i.e., school desegregation), which has been widely studied and summarized in the 1970s and 1980s, including a recent summary by me.¹

"What will the future tell? As we are dealing with a major social issue, we shall probably see more research on this topic. What is much needed is an article dealing with this topic on a purely theoretical basis involving theory and ideas from different disciplines in the social sciences, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, education, political science, and geography. This is especially important because our present-day information in this area is primarily geared to concrete and applied rather than to theoretical and basic knowledge. Whoever will deal successfully with this aspect of ethnic contact may be next on the list of the most-quoted articles in the social sciences."

1. Amir Y., Sharan S & Ben-Ari R, eds. *School desegregation: cross-cultural perspectives*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1984. 300 p.