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Theory and Conceptual Article

An Examination of Interracial Contact: The Influence of Cross-Race Interpersonal Efficacy and Affect Regulation

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Abstract
The ability of employees to interact cooperatively and collaboratively is the fulcrum of competitive advantage for organizations operating in pluralistic environments. Contact theory suggests several conditions under which effective interpersonal relationships across racial, ethnic, and cultural groups may occur: Research examining the contact hypothesis has been mixed. The explanation of this inconsistency in the research generally centers on procedural rather than cognitive aspects of the interactions. This article discusses the contact hypothesis with respect to social cognitive functioning of interaction participants. We propose that positive outcomes from application of the contact hypothesis may be influenced by the individual employees' level of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation. An investigation of the influence of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation may lead to a more developed theoretical understanding of the variance currently associated with the application of the contact hypothesis.

Keywords: diversity, efficacy, contact theory

Recent trends suggest that the U.S. workforce is growing more racially diverse (Toosi, 2002). The proliferation of international partnerships, alliances, and mergers of U.S. and foreign organizations has increased substantially (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000). In response to these trends and to promote positive diversity behaviors, organizations have invested considerable resources to improve the representation and organizational experiences of racial/ethnic minorities and other diverse groups (Carr-Ruffino, 2005). At the same time, the number of discrimination complaints filed against U.S. employers escalated from 72,302 in 1992 to 84,442 in 2002 (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). Large organizations continue to

experience difficulties with discrimination and employee behaviors that negatively impact employee productivity and organizational reputation (Bell, 2006; James & Wooten, 2006).

The interface of these positive and negative developments demonstrates a need for managerial proficiency and effectiveness in facilitating organizational environments that maximize the benefits of diversity (Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & KO, 2004). The increase in organizational diversity impacts the nature and expectation of employee interactions (Bell, 2006). The organizational imperative is to develop contextual interventions geared toward congenial work relationships that transcend pluralistic differences (Combs & Nadkami, 2005). Although prior research recognizes the need to understand and better utilize a wide spectrum of diversity dimensions (Bell, 2006), race continues to be the most common complaint of discrimination (Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2002; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.).

Research investigating the effects of racial differences on critical workplace variables is important to the field of human resource development (HRD) in advancing organizational goals and objectives (Alderfer, Alderfer, Tucker, & Tucker, 1980; Brown & Lent, 1996; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Roberson, Deitch, Brief, & Block, 2003). Numerous studies show race to be correlated with job satisfaction (Friday, Moss, & Friday, 2004); perceptions of procedural justice (Wesolowski & Mossholder, 1997); employee developmental outcomes (Ely & Thomas, 2001); career assessments (Thomas, 1993); attitudes toward training (DeMeuse & Hostager, 2001); quality of mentoring relationships (Murrell & Tangri, 1999); and the effectiveness of coaching and feedback processes (Proudford & Thomas, 1999). Despite the broad range of empirical research conducted to differentiate the effects of race on work interactions, little is known about the specific interpersonal processes that might mitigate adverse cross-race interactions and promote positive diversity outcomes (Shelton, 2003).

The purpose of this article is to examine the application of the contact theory hypothesis and the potential mediating role of cross-race interpersonal efficacy (confidence) and affect regulation on the effectiveness of cross-racial contact conditions. Contact theory sets forth the premise that the frequency and nature of encounters between minority and majority group members lead to improved relational outcomes (Allport, 1954) and effective diversity performance (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Pettigrew, 1998). Although contact theory has demonstrated favorable results in recent meta-analytic studies (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), theorists contend research has not adequately mapped out how interacting partners produce relationships that decrease prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998). Figure 1 represents the theoretical model of the proposed relationship between constructs.

Drawing from Bandura's (1986) conceptualization of social cognitive theory and perceived self-efficacy construct, we define interpersonal cross-race efficacy as a person's beliefs about his/her capacity to mobilize capabilities, courses of action, and cognitive resources to achieve valued outcomes

in cross-race interpersonal interactions. Considering the work of Gross (1999) and Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, and Target (2002), we conceptualize affect regulation as the cognitive process by which individuals identify, monitor, and adjust the expression of mental models and emotions toward a target person, thing, or situation. We argue that organizations that develop and encourage affect regulation and cross-race interpersonal efficacy capabilities in employees will increase effective employee contact experiences that facilitate more inclusive and productive work environments (Richard, 2001).

An analysis of the impact of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation on the operation of contact conditions is important to human resource development. The relational component of human capital is integral to creating and sustaining high impact performance (Combs & Luthans, 2007). Group and team structures (both actual and virtual) rely on relationships between diverse individuals (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Extant research on racial prejudice and the implementation of contact conditions has focused primarily on situational and procedural aspects for integrating diversity into an organizational context (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Missing from these investigations is an assessment of cognitive and affective elements that may advance our understanding of the underlying processes that may facilitate positive outcomes of contact conditions (Connolly, 2000). The development of positive intergroup relationships may directly depend on an individual's ability to effectively initiate and monitor personal behaviors for relationship development. Our effort seeks to formulate a framework for this discussion.

In subsequent sections of this article, we provide a review of the literature relating to intergroup relations, the contact theory, cross-race interpersonal

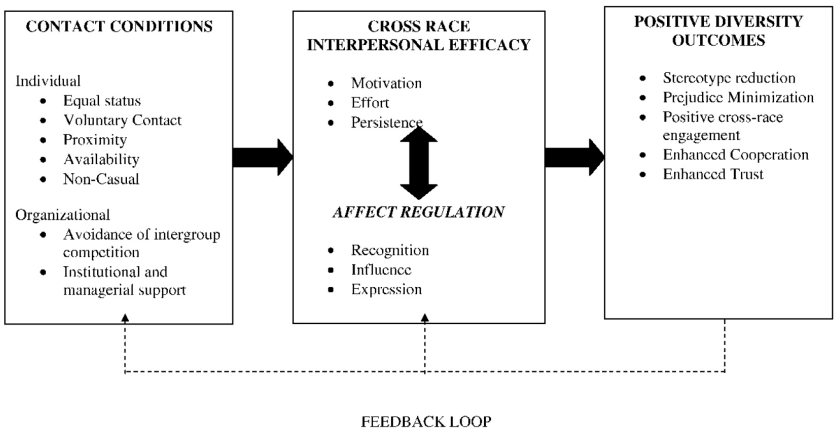

Figure 1: Theoretical Model of the Influence of Cross-Race Interpersonal Efficacy and Affect Regulation on the Relationship between Contact Conditions and Positive Diversity Outcomes

efficacy, and affect regulation. We discuss intergroup differences to establish a base of understanding for foundational issues associated with racial bias. Our presentation of the aspects of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation centers on their potential to influence individual perceptions and interactions in contact conditions in organizational settings. Additionally, because contact theory is largely based in black and white cross-group interactions, our examples are presented in terms of black and white individuals and group contexts.

Intergroup Differences and Racial Bias

An understanding of the dynamics of contact conditions requires a discussion of bias and prejudice that operate on individual and organizational levels. Group categorization and identity, the formation and operation of stereotypes, and interracial trust are important to the effectiveness of contact outcomes.

Group Categorization

Tajfel and Turner (1986) contend that individuals tend to categorize themselves and others into groups contingent upon shared values, norms, cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors. Groups can be socially constructed to reflect the normative values and belief structures of the larger society, or be construed from the intersection of various social, historical, political influences, and relational schemas (Heider, 1958). Knowledge of group membership may lead to attributions that prompt specific individual actions, behavioral orientations, or perceptions of social reality (Tajfel, 1982). For example, the saliency of group membership may lead individual group members to operate on the environment to protect their group identity (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Members may behave individually to influence their environment so as to affirm their identity group status and their perceptions of others (Feagin & McKinney, 2003).

A major factor guiding much of the research on prejudice is in-group and out-group membership orientation (see Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Ensari & Miller, 2005; Tam, Hewstone, Harwood, Voci, & Kenworthy, 2006). In interpersonal evaluations, it is common for individuals to form in-group and out-group distinctions based on salient characteristics of individuals and generalized perceptions of the group as a whole (Allport, 1954). Consider identifying one as a black male or white female may carry considerably different implicit information about the individual than identifying an individual as white and male (Blair, Judd, Sadler, & Jenkins 2002). Differences in these implicit representations may promote mindsets and distrust that in turn affect the nature and frequency of interactions between individual members of different groups (Feagin & McKinney, 2003). Using black and white as terms to describe racial identity groups, Phelps, Taylor and Gerard (2001) suggest that the mistrust between black and white individuals manifests ostensibly in "business and work, interpersonal, and social

relations" (p. 209). These conditions may negatively impact and limit the development of the types of inter-group relations necessary to mitigate racial/ethnic bias in organizations (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996).

Stereotypes in Intergroup Relations

Research regarding in-group and out-group dynamics acknowledges that stereotypes about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of out-groups may contain negative undertones that can influence subsequent information processing activity (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). As embedded complex mental representations, stereotypes influence the way individuals classify information about others different from themselves. Additionally, these representations are often referenced in automatic evaluations process (Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986; Roberson et al., 2003).

The interaction of stereotypes and perceived group differences has influenced the organizational experiences of members of stigmatized groups (e.g., black individuals and other racial/ethnic minorities). For example, a field study conducted by Crocker and Major (1989) found that negative feedback communicated to black individuals in performance evaluations led to racially based performance attributions. Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990) also found that black employees, in comparison to white employees, reported more difficulties being accepted in their organizations, received lower evaluations on relationship measures and task performance, and experienced slower career growth. More recent studies focusing on black workers maintain that interactions between organizational members might be limited to the extent their category membership activates automatic avoidance behavior as well as negative emotions relating to particular stereotypes (Jonas & Sassenberg, 2006; Roberson et al., 2003).

From a human resource development perspective, stereotypes operate to the disadvantage of stigmatized group members in two ways. First, in situations where a stereotype is likely to become activated (e.g., performance evaluations, informal information requests), workers fail to receive critical developmental information resulting in impoverished developmental opportunities (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002). Second, stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995) may shape the development of targeted workers by generating counterproductive behaviors in work settings. Such behaviors may cause apprehension and mistrust of key evaluative and decision-making processes. In turn, this apprehension and mistrust may limit the developmental potential of evaluative feedback (Walsh, Bingham, Brown, & Ward, 2001); hamper mentoring opportunities (Thomas, 1990); elevate negative perceptions of procedural justice (Feagin & McKinney, 2003); and impede cross-racial closeness (Brookins, Anyabwile, & Nacoste, 1996). For organizations, these circumstances can reduce the ability to maximize diversity and negatively impact competitive advantage. Further, these limitations are particularly important in organizational environments where teamwork and synergy are required and encouraged (Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993).

Contact Theory

The contact theory hypothesis (Allport, 1954), centers on the improvement of between-race interactions and the betterment of relational outcomes among racially diverse groups. A number of theorists postulate that prejudice and bias towards racial group members are the products of a lack of knowledge and understanding by white individuals of other social identity groups (Connolly, 2000; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Miller, 2002). Allport (1954) offers a set of conditions for intergroup contact that is believed to encourage stereotype reduction and minimize prejudicial perceptions and behaviors. The theory stresses that as cross-race groups interact in conditions that are of equal status, noncasual, voluntary, and have proximity and availability of cross-race interactions, they learn more about one another. This learning tends to restrict their judgments based on stereotypes (Pettigrew, 1998) and promote improved interaction outcomes (Plant & Butz, 2006; Wilder & Thompson, 1988).

Research support for the contact hypothesis has been generally established in the areas of public policy and sociological determinants of group interactions (Emerson, Kimbro, & Yancey, 2002; Welch, Sigelman, Bledsoe, & Combs, 2001). For example, Sigelman and Welch (1993) found that the effects of contact influenced the extent to which attitudes between black individuals and white individuals differed on issues of political inequity. These studies have demonstrated that interracial contact can prove beneficial to the development of positive intergroup relationships and may lessen the significance of accessible stereotypes in evaluative processes. In spite of the varied cross-disciplinary applications and overall appeal of the contact hypothesis in decreasing cross-racial prejudice, a meta-analysis conducted by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) suggests research support has been generally mixed in terms of the effectiveness of contact conditions.

Studies cited in Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis illuminate the conflicting results derived from both field and laboratory studies of the effect of contact on cross-race relations. For example, Riordan's (1978) examination of contact between black and white teenagers who had completed tolerance training revealed an insignificant decrease in the interracial attitudes of black teenagers and a significant decrease among white teenagers. In another study of a school desegregation plan, Parsons (1985) found that interracial contacts between black and white parents and students did not improve interracial attitudes over time. In addition, Rothbart and John's (1993) 4-year longitudinal study of stereotypes held by black and Asian individuals showed that those interacting in contact conditions solidified their stereotypes to the extent that increased contact influenced the favorability of stereotypes.

On the other hand, a number of studies show support for the contact hypothesis. Studies along these lines tend to show contact leads to decreases in prejudice as evidenced in Cook's (1978) study of interracial attitude change. More recently, Emerson, Kimbro, and Yancey (2002) showed that prior in-

terracial contacts have a positive effect on social ties. In addition, Levin, van Laar, and Sidanius (2003) found those with more out-group encounters in their earlier years of college were less likely to demonstrate in-group bias in the later years of college.

Most studies of contact conditions have examined the structure of contact experiences and the temporal relationship between contact and positive cross-race relationships (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). For example, Ensari and Miller (2005) articulated that individuation of group members from larger group categories is a function of personalized contact and high out-group salience. Pettigrew (1998) focused attention on the structural factors that are believed to accelerate the establishment of effective cross-group relations in contact conditions. Interestingly, these studies do not address the cognitive components inherent in personalized responding and individual experiences (Miller, 2002). These nonstructural contact conditions reference the interpersonal interactions that may be anchored in identity salience, in-group-out-group dynamics, and stereotype initiation (Voci & Hewstone, 2003). Attending to cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation may lessen the impact of nonstructural dimensions that may influence contact conditions. Determining ways to build individual abilities in cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation may stabilize the outcomes of cross-race contact conditions and foster positive inclusionary organizational practices.

In our review of the literature, we found few studies that examined contact in specific human resource development areas or as a factor in organizational diversity initiatives. For example, Combs and Sommers (2004) provide a series of testable propositions that link contact, social comparison, and career development for African Americans in predominately white organizations. In this work, the authors suggest that positive contact may improve the evaluative processes critical to effective career development. Elvira and Cohen (2001) examine elements of contact and representation of women in upper-level management positions. The proximity and availability dimension of contact theory played a prominent role in their findings regarding sex composition and turnover. Based on the above research we propose the following:

> **Proposition 1:** Nonstructural contact conditions have a positive significant relationship to positive organizational diversity outcomes.

The Role of Cross-Race Interpersonal Efficacy and Affect Regulation

In this article we suggest that a more comprehensive understanding of the application of contact theory in work organizations can be reached by considering an efficacy- and affect regulation-based approach to cross-race interpersonal relations. In diverse environments, the degree to which con-

tact conditions facilitate meaningful relationships may depend on levels of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and the ability to effectively regulate ones interpretation of events, and regulate personal behavior in cross-race interactions. In the following sections, we present the theoretical underpinnings of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation. We then explore their relationships to the development of positive cross-race relationships and their potential contribution to the success of contact theory application in organizations.

Cross-Race Interpersonal Efficacy

Efficacy theory postulates that those high in efficacy perceptions select purposeful courses of action and structure their environments to successfully accommodate personal development, adaptation, and change (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, those who believe they have the ability to successfully exercise control over events experience increased chances of personal success (Harrison, Rainer, Hochwater, & Thompson, 1997). High levels of self-efficacy have been shown to enhance performance in a variety of workplace domains, such as task performance (Schwoerer, May, Hollensbe & Mencl, 2005; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998), decision making (Markus & Owen, 1992), and complex interpersonal skills (Gist, Stevens, & Bavetta, 1991).

Human resource development literature reveals an association of efficacy with important employee outcomes, such as organizational learning and training (Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000; Combs & Luthans, 2007; Schwoerer et al., 2005). More prevalent discussion of race differences in HRD literature centers more on career development and career decision making (e.g., Hackett & Byars, 1996; Leong, 1995). For example, Gloria and Hird (1999) found that ethnic identity and other group orientation perceptions held by minorities (e.g., black aspiring employees) more significantly predicted career decision-making self-efficacy than demonstrated for whites. More recently, Chrobot-Mason and Thomas (2002) describe the complex nature of diversity in organizations through an interactive model of the intersection of individual and organizational racial identity development. However, in spite of this body of research we did not find empirical examination or conceptual formulation of a relationship between cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation and a potential effect on the operationalization of contact theory conditions.

Although general efficacy beliefs have been researched, individual efficacy perceptions can be specific to particular functional domains (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Stated differently, individuals can exhibit differing levels of efficacy/confidence perceptions in various life domains to the extent that people form beliefs about what they can do and the likely consequences of prospective action (Bandura, 1991). Analogous to the construct of diversity self-efficacy, which Combs and Luthans (2007) describe as the perception and belief (confidence) in ones abilities to successfully accomplish desired diversity goals in the workplace, we define cross-race interpersonal efficacy as a

person's beliefs about his/her capacity to mobilize capabilities, courses of action, and cognitive resources to achieve valued outcomes in cross-race interpersonal interactions. However, cross-race interpersonal efficacy differs from diversity self-efficacy. Diversity self-efficacy appears to represent confidence in handling diverse environments from an overarching perspective. On the other hand, cross-race interpersonal efficacy focuses on a specific set of intricacies and nuances of cross-race interactions that can directly influence individual-level and, in some cases, group-level situational response.

Efficacy beliefs influence how one overcomes adversity, preserves through difficulties, and withstands stressful conditions (Bandura, 1988, 1991). When people exhibit a strong sense of cross-race interpersonal efficacy they may interact with others more confidently through the influence of their own and others behavior. Cross-race interpersonal efficacy may enhance the application of contact theory as the mechanism through which contact operates. Specifically, in newly forming cross-race interpersonal interactions anticipatory control and self-evaluative influences operate in concert (Shelton, 2003). The effectiveness of interracial contact might depend on the individual's perception of his or her ability to initially succeed in cross-race interaction, and the progress experienced toward particular outcomes (Harrison et al., 1997). In this regard, cross-race interpersonal efficacy may mediate the effectiveness of contact experience.

We suggest that cross-race interpersonal efficacy beliefs impact diversity behaviors by directly influencing how contact theory may be operationalized between interaction partners. Gist et al. (1991) found that efficacy mediated the effect of knowledge on learning motivation and behavior. Additionally, in their study of 276 workers in a variety of employee categories, Combs and Luthans (2007) found that the development of diversity self-efficacy mediated the relationship between diversity training and trainees' intentions to engage in positive diversity behaviors. The researchers concluded that the effect of diversity training on intentions to promote positive diversity outcomes was mediated by the trainee's level of diversity self-efficacy. Additionally, diversity self-efficacy was positively correlated with both the number and difficulty of the diversity intentions in which trainees proposed to engage. Given the above research we propose:

> **Proposition 2:** Cross-race interpersonal efficacy will mediate the relationship between contact conditions and positive diversity outcomes.

Affect Regulation

Affect is an important concept to consider when assessing the effectiveness of cross-race interpersonal relationships (Berscheid, 1983; Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Russell and Carroll (1999) define affect as a set of subjective experiences and moods, rather than thoughts about specific events. Affective experiences

can represent short-lived momentary feelings and reactions to the characteristics of the target individual or situation; or they can represent a psychological experience involving less intense and diffuse affective states (Forgas, 1995). Given that human behavior is largely purposive, affective states are constantly being regulated by the ongoing exercise of self-influence of cognitive strategies and behavior to influence achievement of particular goals or outcomes (Bandura, 1991). Thus, we have conceptualized affect regulation as the cognitive process by which individuals identify, monitor, and adjust the expression of mental models and emotions toward a target person, thing or situation.

The emphasis on affect regulation in cross-race interpersonal relationships stems from individual desire for interdependence and the need to socially belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Devine (1989) suggests that the regulation of one's behavior toward others in terms of what others expect and would prefer requires control and is not automatic. In the context of contact theory, affect regulation implicates the forethought dimensions of efficacy. Forethought is directed toward relationship outcomes based on criteria set by interaction participants (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). This means that people may need to monitor what mindsets they have regarding out-group members, and how they allow these mindsets to influence their experiences with others (Fonagy et al., 2002). Such a view is consistent with bounded emotionality theory, which posits individuals build interpersonal relationships in organizations by attending to others through sensitivity and preferred modes of expression (Mumby & Putnam, 1992; Putnam & Mumby, 1993). Integrating a bounded emotionality framework with affect regulation suggests that emotions or affective states should not be altered in the service of instrumental gain as would be the case of emotional labor and impression management (Ashforth & Humprhey, 1995; Hochschild, 1983), but serve to enhance the well-being of individual organizational members in general (Martin, Knopoff, & Beckman, 1998).

Affect regulation appears similar to constructs such as emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995); mood-processing effects (Forgas, 1995); the social exchange of affect (Lawler & Thye, 1999); and social intelligences (Bar-On, 2000). However, recent literature suggests that affect regulation is consistent with the self-efficacy based view of psychosocial functioning (Caprara & Steca, 2005). Using the efficacy-based view, affect is likely to become important in implementation of contact conditions when individuals attempt to form impressions of others based on observable attributes and behaviors demonstrated in the context of cross-race social interaction (Asch, 1946). This suggests that rather than permitting spontaneous emotions to influence mindsets and behaviors, individuals should be encouraged to cognitively regulate their experiences to facilitate behaviors and thoughts aimed at reducing their anxiety and frustration (Devine, 1989).

Shelton's (2003) work on cross-race interactions found that white individuals' interpersonal concerns about appearing prejudice had a direct impact on perceptions of white participants interactions by black participants and

black participants' description of the interaction. Specifically, black participants' interpersonal concerns about white participants being prejudiced directly impacted black participants' enjoyment of the interaction when they expected their white partner to be prejudiced. Additionally, current experiences and perceptions of discrimination and historical memory of prejudice and bias may cause interaction participants to experience and express tension and anxiety (Islam & Hewstone, 1993) that cast the encounter as negative and/or unproductive (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). We contend in such instances that the quality of cross-race interactions could be positively influenced through enhancing individual efficacy/confidence and tooling individual ability to identify, monitor, and regulate habitual affective responses that may emerge when engaging cross-race others.

The processes by which individuals control or regulate affect generally fit within the social cognitive perspective of tension reduction (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Bandura, 199 1). Individuals who experience negative states are typically inclined to relieve those states by engaging in behaviors that positively reduce the tension and by avoiding encounters with objects provoking the tension (Higgins, 1987). Exercising affect regulation in cross-race interactions may permit the engagement of control processes to reverse and manage potentially negative states triggered by cross-racial contact (Plant, Devine, & Brazy, 2003). Forgas (1995) finds that such regulation plays an integral role in monitoring and managing everyday interpersonal interactions. Additionally, Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) stress that individuals must demonstrate personal control in achieving organizational objectives. Thus, we propose the following proposition:

> **Proposition 3:** Affect regulation will mediate the relationship between contact and positive diversity outcomes.

The Interaction of Cross-Race Interpersonal Efficacy and Affect Regulation

Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino, and Pastorelli (2003) propose a causal model between affect and interpersonal efficacy. Additionally, it is suggested that affect is related to and predictive of positive relational outcomes (Caprara & Steca, 2005). For example, Ekman and Oster (1979) suggest that displays of negative affect relate to negative outcome expectancies and positive affect can be projected onto situations resulting in positive perceptions and reactions. Similarly, positive nonstereotypic compliments directed to an individual are generally perceived as positive (Garcia, Miller, Smith, & Mackie, 2006).

Affect regulation impacts individual self-interpretations of cross-race interpersonal efficacy. These constructs may operate reciprocally to influence the success of contact conditions in facilitating positive diversity outcomes (Johnson & Fredrickson, 2005). Bodenhausen and Moreno (2000) argue that

people use affect to inform their response patterns toward a particular target and as a guide to subsequent judgments. Similarly, Schwarz and Clore (1983) propose that affect influences the way individuals evaluate and cope with the dimensions of unfamiliar circumstances.

In a longitudinal study, Bandura et al. (2003) examined the role of affect regulation on academic efficacy and empathic efficacy, and highlighted the importance of affect regulation on influencing several important personal outcomes. The study found that perceived affect regulation correlated closely with those efficacy domains in terms of adaptation or change. Similarly, follow-up studies discovered that one's ability to regulate positive affect was related to higher levels of social self-efficacy (Caprara & Steca, 2005); and that positive affect and interpersonal efficacy demonstrated a positive relationship with prosocial behavior (Caprara & Steca, 2005). Therefore, we propose the following:

> **Propositions 4:** There is a significant positive relationship between cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation.

The Integration of Contact Conditions, Cross-Race Interpersonal Efficacy, and Affect Regulation

Our belief that affect regulation and cross-race interpersonal efficacy are predictive of the success of contact conditions is supported by Schwarz and Clore (1983). These researchers demonstrated that affect-based judgments influence how individuals relate to others who are different from them. We propose that for contact conditions to be effective, individuals who differ on salient dimensions of diversity (e.g., both black and white individuals) must monitor their affective response and work to develop cross-race interpersonal efficacy in encounters with one another. The convergence of actual and perceived bias and the need for positive cross-race interactions may lead to irritation, physical and emotional discomfort, and aversive behaviors (Dijker, 1987; Garcia-Marques & Mackie, 2000). Consequently, a lack of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation may exacerbate tensions between racial groups and potentially lead to negative outcomes even in prescribed contact conditions.

A social cognitive approach to cross-race interpersonal relations assumes individuals can choose to regulate responses to experiences as well as their behaviors resulting from those experiences (Bandura, 1997). Applying this perspective to diversity and contact conditions, individuals who possess the efficacy/confidence and the ability for affect regulation would be positioned to facilitate, in themselves and others, appropriate and positive diversity-related workplace outcomes (Bandura et al., 2003). Organizations attempting to promote inclusion through implementation of contact conditions may benefit from methods that build or enhance cross-race interpersonal efficacy

and affect regulation. Specifically, capability in cross-race interpersonal efficacy coupled with engaged affect regulation may mitigate stereotype activation and other maladaptive responses that can occur when interracial contact conditions are implemented (Bodenhausen & Moreno, 2000). Next, we will provide an example of the suggested influence of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation on the more prevalently prescribed contact condition of equal status.

Equal Status

We propose that cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affective regulation are important corollary constructs that serve to interactively support the positive outcome of contact conditions in cross-race interactions. In the vast amount of research on contact theory, the condition of equal status appears as the most prevalent and constant condition in the mix of components of the contact hypothesis (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Individuals come into organizations with preconceived notions of status or develop status perceptions from the context of the organization. In organizations, status might be conveyed through the physical arrangements, homogeneity of individuals positioned within the hierarchy (e.g., racialized or genderized positions), and/or through individual gestures and other verbal communication between members (Ruscher, Cralley & O'Farrell, 2005).

In terms of black and white racial groups, status differentials can be heavily based on the prescribed differences in group status that are reflected and reinforced in the larger society (Awbrey, 2007; Ely & Thomas, 2001; James, 2000). For example, social identities indicate status functions that can be antecedents of intergroup perception (Boldry & Gaertner, 2006). As individuals work toward understanding the place and/or role of other organizational members, elements of status may become relevant dimensions for interpreting out-group behavior (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Finding ways to reduce these status differentials to acceptable levels is an important consideration when attempting to establish contact conditions that maximize human resource potential (Awbrey, 2007).

We argue that one way to offset the effects of status is to regulate affective response such that individuals in cross-race interactions express mutually accepted positive behaviors, offset stereotypic informational processing tendencies, and establish shared impressions for positive future interactions (Miller, 2002). Through the advancement of these exchange components, individuals may be less likely to perceive status differences based on in-group and out-group membership. Pulling from the work of Stroessner, Mackie, and Michaelsen (2005), this positive affective response should increase perceptions of intergroup similarity and mitigate differential status perceptions. Additionally, individuals with high levels of cross-race interpersonal efficacy will find ways to capitalize on and use the learning from the experience to limit the influence of perceived status differentials. Furthermore, the effective regulation of affective response coupled with cross-race interpersonal ef-

ficacy might reduce external perceptions of threat leading to more enduring personal relationships and consensual understanding across racial groups (Ruscher et al., 2005).

The Contributions of Improved Contact Conditions on Organizational Outcomes

Organizational members are increasingly required to work together to accomplish desired organizational outcomes (Watson et al., 2004). Such team-based interactions require increased cooperation (Ensari & Miller, 2005). Getting diverse members to cooperate more effectively may greatly depend upon the mitigation of stereotypes that can have an adverse impact on the quality of work interaction (Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones, & Vance, 2002). When stereotypes are evoked, there may be a tendency for individuals to be committed to advancing actions that establish positive outcomes for themselves, and resist cooperating with others who are perceived to be either of lower status or psychological threats (Awbrey, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Schimel, Arndt, Pyszczynski, and Greenberg (2001) in their study of relationships where intrinsic qualities could be communicated, found a significant increase in positive feelings toward the other and reductions in overall tendencies to be defensive. Conversely, a tendency toward stereotype activation and confirmation might directly influence judgments of other aspects of the labeled individual. Consistent with this assertion, Jackson and Dutton (1988) suggest that when individuals perceive a threatening condition, they are highly likely to attend to those specific characteristics that support previous suspicions. Extending this argument to contact theory, we expect that cross-race interpersonal efficacy and effective regulation of affective response are likely to influence the degree of persistence in establishing harmonious cross-race relationships. This may be due to individual confidence in ability to interact with others and less potential to give up in the face of difficulty (Bandura et al., 2003). Additionally, the appropriate regulation of affect (identifying, monitoring, and adjusting mindsets and behaviors) may reduce the exhibition of prejudice and bias and facilitate cultivation of positive cross-race interactions in both short- and long-term encounters (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998).

The proper facilitation of contact conditions should be both an organizational directive and an individual process. Assuming interpersonal and affect regulation positively affects the perceptions of organizational members in a bidirectional fashion, it is not enough to rely on organizational policies and structures to implement the establishment of such conditions (Schimel et al., 2001). What we suspect is that by developing cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation competencies in employees, performance at the individual, group, and organizational level should increase as a consequence of contact conditions. This type of developmental focus may foster collabora-

tive and congenial work relationships where members share intimate knowledge of each other's strengths, skills, and abilities. In addition, high levels of interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation should also produce positive relationships between individuals that transcend any negative experiences from identity group membership (Caprara & Steca, 2005).

Implications for Human Resource Development

The implications of this article for human resource development in organizations rest in the areas of employee training and development, performance management, and organizational development and change. From the perspective of training and development, enhancing the cross-race interpersonal efficacy of organizational members can be infused through employee education and skill development (Combs & Luthans, 2007). Specific training that solely concentrates on cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation would help employees identify their personal levels of strength and challenge relating to their confidence levels in confronting both low- and high-risk interactions across identity groups. As an example, Gist, Stevens, and Bavetta (1991) developed an efficacy-based intervention that emphasizes self-management. This training provided participants who demonstrated lower self-efficacy the confidence to avail themselves of pertinent skill development programs.

Organizations can develop and affirm employee skills in navigating cross-race interactions by supplying information that provides a thorough understanding of different communication styles, conflict resolution skills, and the recognition of subtle nuances of racial difference. This could be considered baseline training that ensures a certain level of understanding and integration of cross-racial issues that could assist individuals in regulating affect and monitoring interpersonal responses. Similarly, employees might develop methods of regulating affect in order to abate the operation of psychosocial elements such as stereotypes and prejudices that can negatively impact positive diversity behaviors (Stockdale & Cao, 2004).

Employees may defer to situational cues as a means to regulate their effectiveness in cross-race interpersonal interactions (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). The recognition of affect regulation between interacting parties may mitigate opportunities for negative interactions. The process involved in developing affect regulation and cross-race interpersonal efficacy may heavily rely on mastery experiences, peer feedback, and peer modeling (Bandura, 1991). For example, video-recorded feedback of cross-race interactions may be developmental tools that facilitate mastery experiences. Additionally, this may offer meaningful information about how others make attributions about cross-race interpersonal behaviors.

In performance management cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation may be used to ensure success of the performance feedback process and its outcomes. In both the giving and receiving of performance feedback involving cross-race individuals, mistrust and communication missteps

can contribute to nonpositive reactions and lack of acceptance of the feedback (Aronson et. al, 2002). For example, Landau (2006) in a study involving 1,268 managerial and professional employees found that black and Asian employees were rated lower than white employees in promotion potential, which correlated to significant mistrust of the evaluation procedure and feedback process.

Cross-race performance evaluation and feedback environments may be tension and anxiety producing (James, 2000). When performance feedback is unfavorable, affect regulation might help employees to be positive and open to elements of performance feedback and to avoid responses that unnecessarily incorporate race saliency. Attention to cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation, through the use of self-reflection techniques, may alleviate the stress and anxiety surrounding cross-race performance assessment and feedback (Roberson et. al, 2003). In these instances, self-reflection could facilitate the adjustment of ineffective individual responses peculiar to cross-race interactions. Similarly, for the supervisor or manager providing the performance feedback, high levels of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and the ability to positively regulate affect might result in more effective communication and a more facilitative appraisal environment. These capabilities may be critical to the success of mentoring and coaching organizational environments.

Organizations contemplating or involved in pluralistic climate or culture change should have an interest in building cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation in order to assist proactive embracement and adjust to change. Changing the organizations climate or culture regarding diversity is suggestive of an organizational development focus (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002). These would include long-term efforts that require employees to submit to iterative processes of data gathering and analysis, implementation, and evaluation (Cox, 2000). To sustain the process and impact of organizational diversity change efforts, supervisors/managers may need to help employees personally and professionally adjust to a heightened diversity or pluralistic focus (Bell, 2006).

Organizations may envision contact conditions as avenues for implementing pluralistic changes in individual and group perspectives and making cross-racial differences less salient in the work environment (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Hewstone & Brown, 1986). This will demand high levels of cross-race interpersonal efficacy to ensure that individuals will effectively and appropriately articulate their needs and perceptions, and that individuals will have the know-how and skill to appropriately acknowledge the needs and perceptions of others. Effective changes in organization cultures with respect to diversity will no doubt impose a demand for high levels of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation capabilities. The know-how and skill to appropriately articulate needs and perceptions and to acknowledge the needs and perceptions of others are critical for progression to pluralistic organizational environments (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000).

Finally, the convergence of multiple races, cultures, values, and beliefs across employee groups demands attention to the nature of cross-race interpersonal relationships. Interest should not only rest at managing diversity but building an effective climate where diversity can be nurtured. In order for contact tenets to work fully toward improving cross-race relations, interaction participants must be appropriately motivated and believe that they can successfully execute the necessary behaviors to foster pluralistic environments.

Future Research

Future research might consider the extent to which emotions align with one's authentic self or whether implementation of all or certain contact conditions (i.e., noncasual) may result in maladaptive situations, such as emotional labor (Ashforth & Humprhey, 1995). Additionally, examination of the effect of contact conditions on the perceptions of different racial/ethnic groups might be instructive. Some research has revealed that black and white individuals respond differently to contact conditions with black individuals demonstrating a reverse or minimal impact (Sigelman & Welch, 1993).

Finally, individual perceptions of sincerity in cross-race relationships may influence and be influenced by cross-race interpersonal efficacy and the ability to effectively regulate affective response. To the extent that individuals do not engage voluntarily and instead pursue instrumental outcomes in interpersonal interaction, contact conditions may be jeopardized and may have negative carryover effects for organizational diversity performance. Future investigation of the relationship of perceived sincerity would be helpful to our understanding of the interplay of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation on the operationalization of contact conditions initially and over time. Additional research is needed to sort out these relationships.

Conclusion

Providing a positive diversity climate that fosters pluralism and inclusion is a critical requirement for contemporary organizations. The ability of employees to work collaboratively requires individual ability to initiate, cultivate, and nurture positive cross-racial (and cross-cultural) interpersonal interactions and relationships. However, the historical perspectives brought to the organizational environment and their influence on cross-race interpersonal experiences may inhibit individual cross-race interpersonal efficacy while simultaneously heightening the need for more effective affect regulation (Stephan & Stephan, 1992). Contact theory has been examined for its potential to assist organizations in fostering an inclusive climate. However, the wide appeal of contact theory conditions is overshadowed by the inconsistency of results in instances where attempts have been made to foster positive contact.

We offer here consideration of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation as constructs to mitigate and promote positive individual relationships within contact conditions. In addition, we speculate that the extension of cross-race interpersonal efficacy and affect regulation might easily translate to cross-cultural contexts. Culture might be examined on country, ethnic group, and organizational levels. For example, in global organizations the integration and differentiation of these cultural aspects might prove quite challenging for application of contact conditions. In other words, efficacy beliefs could be enhanced using mastery and modeling techniques to equip individuals with skills that allow them to attain and maintain meaningful relationship outcomes despite demographic differences.

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