



## Social Contact

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# Five minute social contact snapshot ~ A mini survey (Handout)

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- **First level:**

- List everyone with whom you came into contact yesterday (if possible, recall last 2 days)
- Categorize by social identity (race, gender, social class, etc.)

- **Second level:**

- Create visual image of the people in your public/work social environment ~ on public transit, at work, in your neighborhood, in stores or gas stations, etc.
- What skin colors were they? (mostly white, mostly people of color, about half-half...)
- What genders were they? What visible dis/abilities? Religious/cultural clothing identifiers? Ages? Other apparent social groups?



# We are segregated

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**Schools:** segregated; segregated teachers

**Neighborhoods:** Most are segregated

- MN: Both high & low segregation

Ex: Asian-White segregation in Woodbury 6<sup>th</sup> lowest in nation  
- 15<sup>th</sup> highest in St Paul

- Many of us hang with people like selves

**Churches** - “Overwhelmingly mono-racial”

Chaves, 1999, in Yancey & Emerson, 2003, p114; Fannie May 2002;  
Frankenberg, 2006; Frey & Myers, 2002; Pettigrew, 2008



# Race disparity pervasive

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- Race disparity pervasive ~

Infant mortality <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/infantmortality/infantmortality09.pdf>

Criminal justice [http://www.racialdisparity.org/reports\\_defining.php#2](http://www.racialdisparity.org/reports_defining.php#2)

Health <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/POC/POCSpring2009.pdf>

K-12 education

College Stinson & Gillaspy 2006

Child protection MN Dept of Human Services

Poverty U of MN Institute on Race and Poverty

2015 Disparity Handout



## Prejudice is hard to change

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- It is irrational & deeply unconscious
  - “Today’s racism is hard wired into our consciousness from the prejudices of the past” (Ryde, 2009, p. 35)
- Conforms to larger social structures
- Simple and convenient – avoid thinking
- Easier to “stay with one’s own kind”
- Not as confusing or fearful
- Prejudice considered a *NORMAL* part of human behavior.
- Why?



# Theoretical Underpinnings

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- Aversive Racism
- Micro-aggression
- Stereotype threat
- Social Contact Theory



## Aversive racism applies to:

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- The many people who
  - Support egalitarian principles and
  - Believe themselves to be non-prejudiced
  - Tend to be politically liberal
- But also
  - Harbor unconscious negative feelings about historically disadvantaged groups

(Dovidio & Gaetner, 2000)



## Aversive racism leads to discrimination that:

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- Is indirect
- Occurs in ambiguous situations
- Assumes best about people similar to oneself
- Assumes the worst when people are seen as different
- Is rationalized as something other than race

*Minnesota Nice* can mask this type of subtle discrimination

Religious settings are not immune

(Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000)





## Aversive racism

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“...is presumed to characterize the racial attitudes of a substantial portion of well-educated and liberal whites in the United States.”

(Dovidio & Gaetner, 2000)



## For white people, aversive racism feels like...

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- Anxiety & discomfort around people of color

What if I say the wrong thing?

What if I look like a racist?

How should I act in intercultural situations? What is the right thing to do?

What if I tell a stupid joke that is insensitive?

Or worse...What if I really *am* a racist?

- White people may avoid people of color



## For people of color, aversive racism feels like...

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- ✓ Concern with trust & safety around White people

Can I trust what this person is saying?

Will she be fair?

I am not sure where he stands on matters of race.

I need to be watchful.

- ✓ May avoid white people



## Aversive forms of other "isms"

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- Indirect, subtle forms of discrimination occur in other areas as well:
  - Sexism
  - Heterosexism
  - Religious discrimination
  - National origin
  - Disability and health
  - Other areas?



# Microaggressions

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- “Racial microaggressions are brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color”
- “Microaggressions are often unconsciously delivered in the form of subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures and tones”

(Sue et al, 2007. Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life)

[http://www.olc.edu/local\\_links/socialwork/OnlineLibrary/microaggression%20article.pdf](http://www.olc.edu/local_links/socialwork/OnlineLibrary/microaggression%20article.pdf)



# Social Contact Theory

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Prejudice is reduced when people meet under certain circumstances – “contact conditions”:

- Have equal status
- Cooperatively pursue common goals
- Meet long enough to perceive common humanity
- Contact sanctioned by an accepted institution
- Friendship potential

(Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1993)



## Other Contact Criteria

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- Contact repeated and frequent
- Contact contradicts stereotype...leads to different idea of "typical"
- Touches emotions
- Learning and behavior reinforce each other
  - Behavior change leads to change in contact with other groups
  - Changes in contact with other groups leads to behavior changes  
(Pettigrew, 1998)



## **IGD improves intergroup contact**

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- Intentional intergroup contact through IGD reduces prejudice and improves understanding across social group differences
- Increased social contact diversity for the purpose of increasing equity and social justice is the goal