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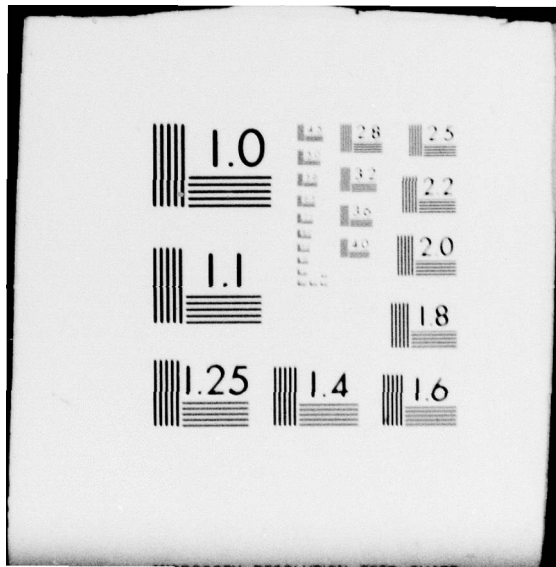
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The Intergroup
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6 The Intergroup Contact Hypothesis as Applied to Women at West Point

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ABSTRACT

This paper applies Amir's model of prejudice reduction in intergroup contact to the situation of intergender contact at West Point. The effect of contact with women at the squad level during summer training in 1976 is examined empirically. Six variables, each reflecting plebe male attitude toward women, were measured by questionnaires at the end of summer training. Results showed that plebe men who had squad level contact with women cadets had more rigid beliefs about the equal treatment policy than did men without such contact. In addition, they felt more harshly treated, and perceived more unfair consideration was given to other groups. In some companies, the leadership climate was such that contact with women appeared to have a favorable effect in fostering acceptance of non-traditional roles for women. In most companies, the opposite was true. Thus, a simple version of the contact hypothesis must be rejected, in spite of its simplicity and optimistic appeal. Amir's more complex model for intergroup contact appears to be highly useful in analyzing the future of intergender contact at West Point.

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The Intergroup Contact Hypothesis as Applied to Women at West Point

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Robert F. Priest, Ph.D.

Direct interpersonal contact between members of different groups, can in certain circumstances, lead to a reduction of intergroup prejudices. In World War II, the U.S. Army experimented with racial integration of a previously racially segregated Army. White soldiers in racially mixed companies were much more in favor of integrated platoons than white soldiers in racially segregated companies. Although the black soldiers were not exactly equal to the white soldiers in every respect, they had volunteered to be in integrated companies, and they had been in combat together with the whites. The results are a dramatic indication of the effectiveness of intergroup contact, when each group has fairly equal status. Amir (1969), after reviewing a number of studies on the "Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations," summarizes the intergroup contact conditions which tend to produce a favorable reduction in prejudice:

- a. When there is equal status contact between the members of the various ethnic groups.
- b. When the contact is between members of the majority group and higher status members of a minority group.
- c. When an "authority" and/or the social climate are in favor of and promote intergroup contact.
- d. When the contact is of an intimate rather than casual nature.
- e. When intergroup contact is pleasing or rewarding.
- f. When members of both groups in the particular contact situation interact in functionally important activities or develop common goals or super ordinate goals that are higher ranking in importance than the individual goals of each of the groups." (page 338)

Unfortunately, there are also cases on record where intergroup contact has served to increase prejudice rather than to reduce it. Amir (1969) summarized the conditions which tend to increase prejudice:

- a'. When the contact situation becomes competitive between the groups.
- b'. When the contact is unpleasant, involuntary, tension laden.
- c'. When the prestige or status of one group is lowered as the result of the contact situation.
- d'. When members of a group or the group as a whole are in the state of frustration - here contact with another group may lead to the establishment of an ethnic scapegoat.
- e'. When the groups in contact have moral or ethnic standards which are objectionable to each other.

¹ I would like to thank Major Howard Prince and Captain Teresa Rhone for their observations on CBT company climate and their comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I would like to thank Captain Alan Vitters and Dr. Nora Scott Kinzer for the stimulus they provided, under the aegis of Project Athena, for this paper. Major Dave Ohle and Major Alan Futernick also provided helpful comments.

f'. In the case of contact between a majority and a minority group, when members of the minority group are of a lower status, or are lower in any relevant characteristic than the members of the majority group."
(page 338-39)

In this paper, we will apply insights based on social psychological studies of inter-ethnic group contact, to predicting changes in male plebe prejudice against women after Cadet Basic Training (CBT) in the summer of 1976. There is a certain danger in using analogies. Men and women are two groups that have been in contact since the beginning of history; women are not a minority in a statistical sense in society as a whole. Nevertheless, in spite of these objections, the principles of intergroup contact as stated above by Amir may be highly useful in analyzing the effect of intergroup contact on prejudice against women.

In applying Amir's conditions to the integration of women at West Point, it is clear that a number of factors were favorable to the reduction of prejudice against women through contact. Contacts among the members of the Class of 1980 should be regarded as equal status contacts. There is evidence (Priest et al, 1977) that women cadets tended to have better educated fathers than the men cadets; in addition, they had better high school grades, and better Verbal SAT Scores than the men. Thus women cadets could be seen, at least in some respects, as representing a high status "minority", and thus meeting Amir's second criterion. With regard to the third condition, West Point administrators took well-publicized steps to promote careful planning for the admission of women. The faculty was quite positive toward the admission of women to West Point and had positive attitudes toward non-traditional women's roles (Priest, 1976a). However, the policy was not designed to encourage as much intergroup contact as possible, for fear of encouraging fraternization. Thus, on the third factor, West Point was only moderately positive. On the fourth factor, the contact between men and women was intimate, according to Amir's criteria, because men and women cadets live and work in close proximity, rather than only in public settings, or only in the classroom. There is no evidence to suggest that men and women's contact time during CBT this summer was pleasant or unpleasant; therefore Amir's fifth positive condition cannot be evaluated. On the sixth factor, the development of common goals, there is little documented evidence. CBT is often focused on screening out unworthy candidates, rather than on developing common goals among the new cadets. The emphasis is on stress, rather than on growth of cohesive units (Fourth Class System, 1977).

In applying Amir's conditions, it is also clear that some factors in CBT tend to strengthen male prejudice against women as a result of intergroup contact. In Amir's first negative condition, competition between men and women as groups can strengthen prejudice; there is some scattered evidence that new men cadets resented the publicity given to new women cadets. Although such resentment has not been systematically monitored, it suggests unwarranted rivalry between groups. In Amir's second negative condition, the tension laden stressful environment of CBT can lead to heightened intergroup tension. But the fact that attendance at West Point is voluntary mitigates the effects of stress on prejudice. This condition applied with more force to upperclass cadets who may perceive, justifiably or not, that the women cadets were forced on the academy. Regarding Amir's third negative condition, many upperclass cadets, prior to admission of women, felt that the admission of women would result in a lowering of standards and thus a lowering of the prestige of a West Point degree. Such a negative belief may have been transmitted to the male plebes, resulting in an increase in male plebe prejudice against women. Amir's fourth condition appears to apply with special force to the CBT situation; CBT is designed as a specially frustrating and stressful situation. There are different types of stress. Stress perceived as arbitrary, non-task-oriented, irrational is particularly likely to lead to scapegoating. Frustration levels leading to scapegoating may vary widely among CBT companies depending on the company tactical officer's policies, how the tactical officer defines

his role and the climate created by the cadet detail in carrying out these policies. Therefore, an interaction between CBT company and male plebe prejudice changes was to have been expected. There is evidence that women and men plebes had different attitudes toward a number of social, political, and cultural issues (Priest, Prince, Rhone & Vitters, 1977). Therefore, there is partial support for applying Amir's fifth negative factor.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Amir's sixth negative factor applies most strongly; women were clearly lower in physical aptitude, which is perceived by cadets as highly relevant to success at the U.S. Military Academy. Thus, there appear to be conditions in West Point's integration of women which would tend to make the effect of intergroup contact increase prejudice, as well as other conditions which would reduce it.

METHOD

This analysis focuses primarily on the attitudes of male plebes in the Class of 1980, using data gathered during regular ODIR testing of 4 September 1976, which is after the end of CBT during Reorganization Week, and before the beginning of academic work. Initially, 1366 male plebes entered the Class of 1980. Of these, 70.4% were assigned at random to squads 3-6, which contained no women in each platoon. The remaining 29.6% were assigned to squads 1 and 2 within each platoon and company, to which women plebes were also assigned. Thus, women were present in every CBT company and platoon, but only in one-third of the squads. Contact between men and women at the squad level provides the most extensive contact. Men in all-male squads were not completely isolated from interaction with women cadets, but the opportunities were far less than in the mixed sex squads. The main independent variable of this analysis is contact with women at the squad level. The dependent variables are attitude measures taken at the end of CBT. One important intervening variable in the analysis is CBT company assignment. Each of the 8 CBT companies was headed by a different tactical officer, each with his own unique style of setting and administering policy, each with a different set of First Class detail leaders to implement policy in daily face-to-face interaction with the new cadets. According to OML counselors, there was a great deal of variation in the psychological climate of the 8 CBT companies, as revealed by interviews with new cadets, by contact with each new company cadre, and tactical officers.

Of the 1366 males who started, 1233 remained in the Corps as of 28 August. Of the latter number, 1001 were available for testing, and supplied complete attitude data.

Table 1 presents a description of the attitude variables used in this report as dependent variables. They were selected on the basis of their relevance to the contact hypothesis from a list of 132 variables developed for Project Athena. The other variables will be described in a forthcoming report, since they may have only an indirect bearing, at best, on evaluating the contact hypothesis.

For each of the variables in Table 1, a one-way analysis of variance was computed, using 10 planned comparisons. Comparisons 1 thru 8 test whether or not the contrast between the contact and no-contact groups was significant within each CBT company. To test the hypothesis that there was a significant effect of contact within company (contact/company) we may make use of the fact that the sum of squares of eight independent normally distributed statistics has a chi square distribution. Since each contrast is approximately normal, and under the null hypothesis has a mean of zero and unit standard deviation, chi square with 8 degrees of freedom is the appropriate test statistic for the interaction. Comparison 9 tests the contact hypothesis itself, by comparing all 8 contact groups with the 8 no-contact groups. Contrast 10 tests a prediction about the effect of favorable company climate on the efficacy of intergroup contact. The OML counselors identified 2 companies with an especially frustrating anti-female atmosphere, based on their experience with cadets. They also identified

another company with an especially favorable equalitarian atmosphere. The identity of those companies will not be disclosed in this report, since it would serve no useful scientific purpose. Likewise, the identities of the eight individual companies will be disguised by relabeling. In summary, there were three major hypotheses tested: (1) that simple contact reduces prejudice; (2) that contact within some companies reduces prejudice; (3) that contact was favorable in the counselor-identified equalitarian companies, but unfavorable to prejudice reduction in the anti-female atmosphere companies.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents a summary of the major hypotheses being tested. There were statistically significant contact effects for Equality, Victimization and Jealousy. For Variable 61, Equality, men in contact squads had significantly higher scores than men in no-contact squads. That is, men in contact groups favored a more rigid, inflexible application of equal treatment policies than other men. This indicates an unfavorable change in attitude as a result of contact. For Variable 68, Victimization, men in the contact groups reported higher levels of victimization than men in the no-contact groups. For Variable 69, Jealousy, men in the contact groups reported higher levels of jealousy than men in the no-contact groups. Thus, for every variable with a significant contact effect, intergroup contact had a negative effect on male plebe attitude.

Table 2 also shows that several variables reflect significant Contact/CBT Company interactions; AWS, Victimization, and Jealousy. Table 3 shows the AWS scores for the two sets of groups. Two companies show a significant negative effect of intergroup contact, companies X1 and Z5. Other companies show non-significant trends toward positive intergroup contact effects. The results indicate that CBT company climate had a significant moderating effect on how men's attitudes toward women changed with squad level contact. In some companies, contact made men more traditional in their attitudes towards women's roles; in other companies, contact made men plebes more non-traditional.

Table 4 shows that data on which the significant Contact/Company effect was based for the victimization variable. In some companies, contact between men and women results in an increased perception of victimization; in other companies, contact reduced victimization scores. As Table 2, Column 3 ("Company Climate") shows, there is a significant contrast between companies X1, X2, and Y. That indicates that the cadet counselors were correct in their assessment of the company climate of these companies. As Table 4 shows, there were several significant differences in companies Z1 thru Z5. In these companies, intergroup contact resulted in increased male victimization scores. That is, men reported being treated more harshly because of race, ethnicity, or sex in the mixed sex squads.

Table 5 shows mean Jealousy scores of men in high and low squad contact groups. Over all CBT companies, there was a tendency for men in high contact squads to experience more jealousy. That is, men in such squads were more likely to report seeing other cadets receiving special consideration because of race, ethnicity, or sex. In two companies, X1 and Z2, the difference was highly significant. In company Y, the opposite trend was found, although it was not significant. However, as Table 2 shows for this variable, the contrast among companies X1 and X2 versus Y was statistically significant. That is, for these particular companies the cadet counselors correctly predicted the effect of company climate on attitudes.

DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings will be reviewed and interpreted, limitations noted and tentative implications stated.

The data reported in Tables 2 - 5 refer to differences in attitude scores between men in contact squads and men in no-contact squads. Since plebes were assigned to squads

at random, it is reasonable to interpret group differences in past CBT scores as the effects of intergroup contact. It is not necessary to have pre-CBT scores in order to infer attitude change. The experimental design allows us to assume that prior to CBT, the two random groups had similar distributions of scores within the limits of normal sampling variability.

The results show that intergroup contact resulted in the male plebes favoring more rigid application of the equality of treatment policy, reporting more instances of harsh treatment to themselves because of sex, and report more instances of special consideration given to other cadets because of sex. In each instance, the effect of intergroup contact was to increase forms of intergroup hostility. As an application of Amir's intergroup contact model, it shows that negative conditions in CBT were stronger than the positive. Each particular finding will be discussed separately below.

Negative changes in the Equality variable reflect a desire for exact equality with "no exceptions" whatsoever, on the part of male plebes in the mixed sex squads. Such a rigid no exceptions approach to leadership has been characterized as "stupid," in the spontaneous remarks of a general officer at USMA, as well as a research psychologist. During the first week of CBT, there was a significant sex difference in scores on the Equality variable (Priest, Prince, Rhone, & Vitters, 1977), with males having higher scores indicating greater rigidity. On the ACE Survey, women cadets indicated they were not advocates of preferential treatment for minorities (Priest, 1976b). Thus, low scores on the Equality variable do not necessarily indicate a generalized belief in preferential treatment. Referring to Amir's model for intergroup contact, competitiveness between men and women could increase male scores on the Equality variable, since competition often leads to a heightened concern for exact equality of rewards to the competing parties.

There are significant sex differences in Victimization scores, with female cadets reporting more harsh treatment due to sex (Priest 1977). Thus, male reports of increased harsh treatment due to sex in mixed-sex squads may reflect an above average level of harsh treatment in such squads. In this analysis, we did not compare male and female attitudes within the mixed sex squads. Such a comparison might help to confirm whether such squads were in fact harsher than single sex squads, simply more variable, or neither. But since there were no single sex female squads, such an analysis would not be conclusive. Men in mixed sex squads did not report increased Protection scores. Women cadets did report higher protection, as well as higher victimization (Priest, 1977). Perhaps the squad leader tended to take out his anger on the whole squad rather than pick on the women in the mixed sex squad. But when the situation called for kindness or protection, the squad leader gave it to the individual woman. Such a pattern of behavior would explain the data.

When they entered, men in the Class of 1980 had more non-traditional attitudes to women's roles than men in previous classes, as measured by Spence's AWS. Over the course of the summer their mean score dropped from 42.5 to 39.9, a highly significant change. During the previous summer, a similar socializing effect was observed in the Class of 1979; the class had relatively liberal attitudes toward women in July, but by September had become much more conservative (Priest, 1976c). It is thus evident that the West Point environment, particularly the stressful CBT environment, makes men more traditional in their sex role attitudes. In the context of such powerful socializing forces for conservative sex role attitudes, it was surprising to find that, in some CBT companies, contact with women tended to increase non-traditional sex-role attitudes. Of course, in other companies, the effect of contact was to increase sex role traditionalism in male plebes. The Superintendent once said, in a wry comment, that West Point had perhaps unconsciously trained its men to be male chauvinists. The evidence is that, even after the admission of women, new male plebes are still being influenced to have traditional sex role attitudes.

There are several limitations to the generality of the interpretations advanced here. Clearly, the effect of contact with women was to increase male plebe prejudice. But such an increase in prejudice may be only short lived. It is conceivable that, in the more relaxed atmosphere of the academic year, and with women being more capable in academics, that contact will increase mutual respect. Secondly, the variables chosen to measure male attitudes toward women may not be sensitive enough to represent the major relevant dimensions of the CBT experiences. In addition, there may be a number of positive features which were not captured by the variables of Table 1. During Reorganization Week the Class of 1980 was asked to estimate how often they "felt like an outsider;" there was no sex difference on this item. Thus, after CBT, both men and women cadets felt equally well accepted, according to their response on this item. A complete analysis of all the 1976 CBT measures still has to be done. When it is, it may be discovered that there were substantial similarities between men and women's CBT experience in other areas.

Amir's model specified a number of positive and negative conditions which mediate the effect of intergroup contact. More analysis is needed to make the model fully explicit, so that it may be more easily applied. Still, the model has a useful role in explaining why certain kinds of intergroup contact do not impact on prejudice. For example Cadet Mengel, in a research paper for an OML course showed that squad leaders in the Class of 1977 in charge of mixed sex squads did not change their AWS differently than squad leaders in charge of same sex squads. Both kinds of squad leaders became more traditional in sex role attitude, however. In this case, contact between the squad leader and the women plebes was clearly not equal status contact, and would not be expected to produce positive effects under Amir's model. Nor would we expect last year's CTLT leaders, or the Project 60 leaders, to demonstrate positive effects. Under Amir's model, the greatest positive effects of contact would come when a female First Class cadet is in charge of a new cadet CBT detail for the Class of 1983. In an experimental study, it was shown that contact with a superior status minority officer is associated with a lack of prejudice by the subordinate (Futernick, 1977). There is a report that the Israeli Army is using women soldiers successfully as drill instructors (Brilliant, 1977). While we may be skeptical of early optimistic reports of program success, especially from a biased source, the Israeli report does fit the conditions of positive contact in Amir's model. Most importantly, Amir's model suggests that USMA can develop more positive conditions for intergroup contact than presently exist. Will "Super Ordinate Goals," as Amir calls them, develop naturally with time, or should USMA create new training situations which focus explicitly on such goals? Intramural competition could serve such a purpose if it were organized to emphasize skills in which women are the equal of men, (e.g., de-emphasize upper body strength). But according to Amir's model, intramural sports competition will not lead to the development of super ordinate goals under present circumstances.

The contact hypothesis in its simplest form states that under ordinary conditions, putting two groups together produces positive attitudes to members of the other group. The foregoing analysis suggests, however, that prejudice reduction is a far more complex phenomenon. Amir has enumerated several factors which may promote as well as interfere with prejudice reduction. Amir's model for the contact hypothesis is far more useful as a basic guide for understanding action oriented research than the simple form of the hypothesis stated above.

Table 1

Attitude Measures Which May Reflect Prejudice Toward Women				
Variable ¹ Number	Location ²	High Score Interpretation	Range	
			Low	High
50	57ROQ	Interest in physical contact with the opposite sex has decreased since I came to West Point (SEX INTEREST)	1	3
60	1PA8	Non-Traditional attitudes to women's roles in society (AWS)	0	75
61	159PA8	Favors rigid, inflexible application of equal treatment policy to men and women (EQUALITY)	0	3
68	162PA8	Perceives self to have been treated more <u>severely</u> than others due to <u>race, ethnicity, or sex</u> (VICTIMIZATION)	0	5
69	163PA8	Perceives self to have been treated more kindly than others due to race, ethnicity, or sex (PROTECTION)	0	5
70	164PA8	Perceives others to have been treated with greater consideration due to race, ethnicity, or sex (JEALOUSY)	0	5

¹ Variable number in file DSR2110, 2/23/76 creation date.

² The item number precedes the questionnaire description. ROQ refers to the Reorganization Week Questionnaire given to all classes, 1976. PA8 refers to the Project Athena Questionnaire given to the Class of 1980.

Table 2

Tests of Contact, Contact within CBT Company, and Company Climate Hypothesis

Variable	Contact : t	Contact / CBT Company χ^2 (8)	Company Climate t
50. Sex Interest	1.89	7.48	-.665
60. AWS	-0.93	17.23*	-.514
61. Equality	2.78**	12.31	-.028
68. Victimization	2.88**	25.59**	2.712*
69. Protection	.96	9.69	.91
70. Jealousy	2.12*	22.45**	2.367*

* p < .05

** p < .01

Table 3

ANS Scores for Men in Squads Designated as High and Low in Intergroup Contact

Company	Squad Contact with Women		t^1
	High	Low	
X1	34.9	39.5	-2.15*
X2	42.6	38.8	1.78
Y	40.8	39.8	.45
Z1	36.9	40.6	-1.78
Z2	40.5	40.3	.07
Z3	39.1	39.7	-.29
Z4	41.9	39.3	1.16
Z5	36.2	40.6	-2.13*

NOTE: Companies X1 and X2 were identified by the OML Counselors as anti-female; Company Y was identified as equalitarian; the others were indeterminate.

¹ In each case, the t value is the Fisher-Behrens t statistic, with the error based on a separate variance estimate. DF ranges from 48 to 80.

* $p < .05$

Table 4

Male Plebe Perceived Victimization as a Function of Contact and CBT Company

CBT Company	Degree of Squad Contact		t
	High	Low	
X1	2.00	1.31	2.52*
X2	1.77	1.93	- .67
Y	1.41	1.86	-2.35*
Z1	1.87	1.74	0.54
Z2	2.48	1.74	2.35*
Z3	2.13	1.65	1.80
Z4	1.64	1.57	0.32
Z5	2.00	1.47	2.01*

NOTE: Companies X1 and X2 were identified by the OML Counselors as anti-female; Company Y was identified as equalitarian; the others were indeterminate.

¹ In each case, the t value is the Fisher-Behrens t statistic, with the error based on a separate variance estimate. DF ranges from 48 to 80.

* p <.05

Table 5

Jealousy Scores as a Function of Contact and CBT Company Assignment

CBT Company	Squad Level Contact		t
	High	Low	
X1	4.00	3.17	2.98**
X2	3.60	3.63	-0.07
Y	3.33	3.68	-1.407
Z1	3.90	3.82	0.31
Z2	4.35	3.66	3.11**
Z3	3.63	3.63	0.01
Z4	3.60	3.46	1.35
Z5	3.84	3.86	-0.08

NOTE: Companies X1 and X2 were identified by the OML Counselors as anti-female; Company Y was identified as equalitarian; the others were indeterminate.

¹ In each case, the t value is the Fisher-Behrens t statistic, with the error based on a separate variance estimate. DF ranges from 48 to 80.

** $p < .05$

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