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The process and domain of intergroup communication: Mapping the field.

This article presents an integrative model mapping the field of intergroup communication. Building from Lasswell's (1948) model of communication, our map discusses how communication about and between groups can be understood by separating Lasswell's concepts (sender/receiver, message, channel, and effect). We present the articles in the current special issue as examples fitting within the map and illustrate how the map suggests some interesting extensions of this work.

Key words: intergroup communication, communication process, communication domains, verbal and nonverbal communication, media

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The field of intergroup communication has grown exponentially in recent decades, moving from a niche subarea in the discipline of communication to a focused area of study that is regularly visible in top journals and conferences (see Giles, this issue, for key recent works). The contributors and editors of this special issue helped stimulate this growth. It was also triggered by growing awareness of the catastrophic effects of intergroup antipathy on human life: war, genocide, hate crimes, group-based harassment and discrimination, intergroup fears and anxieties, health disparities, marginalization, and segregation. Such events and processes result in massive harm to individual people. They simultaneously hurt all of us, privileged and marginalized alike, via huge losses in broader human potential and associated psychological and economic damage. Scholars in communication and social psychology understand that these problems originate in socially (i.e., communicatively) constructed distinctions between groups—distinctions that often appear arbitrary relative to the universe of possible distinctions available. Intergroup scholars also recognize that solutions to some of these problems reside in communication processes. Messages of tolerance, effective intergroup interaction, critical and mindful consumption of hateful messages, expressions of allyship, and active advocacy for group-based human rights and freedoms all contribute to making the world a better place. Intergroup scholarship over the past 50 years has tended to a default position that attitudes and stereotypes are at the root of intergroup problems. Recent communication theorizing suggests a broadening of that perspective, acknowledging that much important intergroup work gets done in communication. Human social behavior is not just an outcome of what is inside people's heads. Rather, human communication is where intergroup relations are modeled, negotiated, questioned, challenged, reinforced, and transmitted. It is where the action is.

Growth in the area of intergroup communication has brought with it theoretical depth and breadth, and a proliferation of methods, paradigms, and research foci (see Giles, this issue). This special issue attests to this breadth and diversity. In our closing article, we present a preliminary organization of the heterogeneous work on display here and in the field more broadly (see Figure 1), with the goal of providing a useful map of where the field is and some pathways for future growth.

Mapping the Field of Intergroup Communication

Lasswell (1948) famously glossed communication as “who, says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect?” (p. 216). The phrase suggests a somewhat context-free and linear process, but it does capture some key elements of the communication process. In his writing, Lasswell is clear that two-way communication is an interactive and dynamic process. He also discusses the potential for social context and embedded institutional power structures to shape communication. As illustrated in Figure 1, Lasswell's phrase provides a useful structure for understanding how intergroup communication occurs and for

Figure 1. *A Process/Domain Model Mapping the Field of Intergroup Communication*

PROCESS	In what context?				
	Who? / To whom?	Says what?	In which channel?	With what effect?	
DOMAIN	1. Source / Receiver characteristics	2. Verbal content	3. Nonverbal content	4. Medium	5. Attribution / Intent / Outcome
About groups					
1.Communicating group membership	<i>Identification, Which group(s)?, Intersectionality</i>	<i>Vocabulary</i>	<i>Accent</i>	<i>Visibility / Anonymity</i>	<i>Categorization "validity"</i>
2.Negotiating group membership	<i>In/outgroup membership(s)</i>	<i>Disclosing identity</i>	<i>Shibboleths; Visual display</i>	<i>Visual/auditory / text salience</i>	<i>Acceptance into group</i>
3.Talking about groups and intergroup relations	<i>Credibility, Leadership</i>	<i>Identity talk, Stereotype transmission, Social influence</i>	<i>Vocal tone, Facial expressions</i>	<i>Understanding history & context</i>	<i>Stereotype reinforcement/change, Desire for contact</i>
Between groups					
4.Direct intergroup contact	<i>Status; Interpersonal relationship</i>	<i>Conflict, Cooperation, Accommodation</i>	<i>Physical distance, Touch</i>	<i>Face-to-face processes</i>	<i>Attitudes, Desire for future contact</i>
5.Indirect interpersonal contact	<i>Skill with medium</i>	<i>Self-disclosure, Verbal affection</i>	<i>Smiling, Vocal tone</i>	<i>Cues filtered out</i>	<i>Allophilia, Intergroup anxiety</i>
6.Mass media contact	<i>Parasocial relationship, Mass media control</i>	<i>Modeling effective intergroup communication</i>	<i>Richness</i>	<i>Interactivity (e.g., via virtual reality)</i>	<i>Outgroup heterogeneity perceptions, Perceived normativity of contact</i>

distinguishing the key process elements that researchers in the field examine. The columns in the Figure represent Lasswell's key concepts, in some cases broken down a little further (e.g., verbal vs. nonverbal).

Across those components, the rows in Figure 1 break down two specific domains and functional subdomains of communication. As shown in the top section of the Figure, intergroup communication research is not always fixated on between-group activity (see Keblusek, et al., 2018). The area encompasses diverse work examining how and why group memberships appear and become salient in discourse, how people communicatively claim, disclose, or conceal their group memberships, and how they talk about their own and other groups (even when members of those other groups are not present). Consideration of such communication is critical to the field, as it provides insight on key questions such as: Why are some groups perceived to be important, while other potential ways of dividing up our species are largely ignored? How do we negotiate boundaries between groups—who gets to be in our ingroup? How are perceptions of groups transmitted from one person to another resulting in shared perceptions?

That said, and as illustrated in the bottom panel, intergroup scholars are naturally interested in what happens when groups meet, which can occur in face-to-face interactions between strangers or close confidants, or in mediated contexts both interpersonal-interactive (e.g., a phone call) or mass-mediated (e.g., a television portrayal of an outgroup). Consideration of communication between groups leads to questions such as: What types of contact between groups can improve attitudes and increase the chances for positive intergroup interaction in the future? How can people nondefensively address issues of intergroup marginalization and privilege in a conversation that features people who have suffered and benefitted from those phenomena?

Figure 1 also illustrates some intersections of specific process and domain elements. In each case, the cells name a few specific phenomena that either tie to articles in this special issue or that have particular resonance in that cell. Many of the issues transcend specific cells. The entries are merely intended as illustrations—terms in a specific place are likely to also be important in other columns and rows. This is perhaps particularly true in the final column, where similar outcomes might be of interest across multiple rows. In the remainder of this article, we highlight a few specific areas of the Figure that both exemplify the breadth of work in this area and the contributions of the articles in this special issue.

A vast literature examines nonverbal content cues to group membership (Row 2, Column 3). Some of this work is descriptive, outlining the specific cues that signal certain social categories (e.g., Scherer & Giles, 1979). Accent is probably the most examined, but vocal cues also signal age, for instance (Mulac & Giles, 1996). Beyond such description, vocal and other nonverbal cues have effects in terms of perceptions of the individual and their group (broadly, the language attitudes literature addresses this: Dragojevic et al., 2021). Fasoli et al. (this issue) extend this work by examining ingroup- and self-perceptions of such cues in a relatively underexplored area (perceptions of gay speech). Their work also advances this literature by exploring intersectional concerns, not just in terms of gay speech and national identity, but also more nuanced intersectionalities of sexuality and gender identities (e.g., relative masculinity/femininity of speech perceptions). Fasoli et al. show that what might seem like simple cues to group membership become sources of self- and other evaluation. In so doing, they illustrate how nonverbal cues are used to reveal and judge group membership itself.

Communication as a discipline draws attention to the nonfixity of group boundaries and categorizations—group memberships are negotiated through communication. This is clearly apparent in interpersonal exchanges where group memberships are claimed, disclosed, and concealed, often for strategic purposes (Rows 2 and 3, Column 2). It is also true in media discourses (e.g., Column 4) as we attend to prominent images and representations of groups, see portrayals of intergroup relations, and read descriptions of group histories. Belavadi et al. (this issue) build on this in their intriguing study of how Greek media narratives present different conceptions of what it means to be Greek. The sociopolitical consequences

of such media narratives are clearly critical in determining the fate of nations and of important movements within those nations (e.g., Shrikant & Giles, 2022).

In between-group contexts (bottom panel of Figure 1), the field has examined contact between members of distinct groups, both in direct (face-to-face) and less direct (e.g., mediated) forms. As demonstrated by Collins et al. (this issue), intergroup communication can contain threats to important aspects of group identity, and groups often meet such threats with reciprocal derogation. In other words, the verbal content of direct and indirect intergroup contact (Column 3, Rows 4 and 5) is part of a process wherein intergroup relations are constructed—for better or worse. Collins et al.'s work is important in introducing connections between these intergroup communication dynamics and important measures of physiological stress and health. Appreciating that intergroup communication has public health consequences reinforces the importance of what we do and provides perhaps unorthodox routes to publication and funding.

As illustrated by Kioumi et al. (this issue), between-group communication processes are also often mediated. Online platforms such as Twitter and Facebook provide spaces for interpersonal-intergroup interactions to occur (Column 4, Row 5). Building on Amichai-Hamburger and McKenna's (2006) early theorizing in this area, Kioumi et al. discuss the role of structural variables such as visibility and anonymity in driving the outcomes of such interactions. However, the verbal content of communication is also critical (e.g., self-disclosure and the intimacy it engenders).

Moscатели et al. (this issue) provide an intriguing twist on these processes, examining the evaluations and attributions (Column 5) of hearing indirectly (Row 5) an outgroup member praising the ingroup. While praise seems like it should have positive outcomes, they nonetheless found that certain forms of praise are viewed as disingenuous and are negatively attributed. Similarly, Gaffney et al. (this issue) illustrate how the multi-group comparative context can influence judgments of outgroup communication. The mere presence of a more extreme outgroup can mollify judgments of messages from moderate outgroups. Gaffney et al. also show how such processes might vary depending on one's ingroup identity (specifically, prototypicality), thus showing how the upper and lower panels of Figure 1 interact.

Concluding Thoughts

Mapping the field is, in one sense, a purely descriptive task, and likely an impossible one, in that the boundaries of any field are fuzzy and subjectively variable. However, it has value for future researchers and theorists in at least three regards. First, there is potential generativity in taking work that exists at a specific point in the map and seeing where it can be extended (e.g., by moving along rows or up and down columns). For example, building from Moscatelli et al.'s (this issue) study of negative attributions for outgroup praise, we encourage

examination of nonverbal cues associated with outgroup praise and the extent to which they might override such attributions (e.g., by conveying sincerity). Similarly, following from Belavadi et al.'s (this issue) examination of media narratives about Greek identity and nationhood, how might such narratives operate differently if they occurred in intragroup or intergroup direct interpersonal talk about the situation? Extending this thought, Figure 1 suggests ways that all intergroup communication work is connected and mutually informative. Studies of communication between groups, such as Moscatelli et al.'s, provide insight into intergroup relations, as those authors accurately describe. Simultaneously, though, they also illustrate how communication shapes intragroup perceptions. Who are "we"? We are people who are skeptical and distrustful of outgroup motives, particularly when the outgroup behaves in this particular manner. Perhaps we are this way because of our shared history wherein the outgroup has taken advantage of us in the past. Put differently, our skepticism is symbolically valuable as a tool for ingroup identification and solidarity. Thus, intergroup communication processes and attributions are constantly constructing norms concerning intragroup perceptions and communication. The reverse is undoubtedly true as well. For instance, while Fasoli et al. (this issue) focus on intragroup perceptions of language, such perceptions will also play out in intergroup contexts with interesting effects. As Fasoli et al. explain, if people from marginalized groups believe that their communication identifies them in intergroup settings, they will perceive stigmatization as more likely, with implications for how much they adjust (accommodate) their speech to audiences in those settings.

Second, Figure 1 suggests neglected connections between areas of study. For example, the ways we talk about our ingroups (identity talk) and how we talk about outgroups (e.g., stereotype transmission) are connected in the model, and probably merit some side-by-side examination as forms of discursive group construction. To our knowledge, work examining commonalities between those two forms of talk is rare, even though a good deal of work has examined one or the other (e.g., van Dijk, 1987, for talk about outgroups; Billig, 1991, for talk about the ingroup). A canonical point of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) is that outgroup perceptions derive in part from a desire for intergroup contrast and differentiation. Hence, in a sense, all ingroup talk is implicitly comparative with some outgroup, and all outgroup talk carries implicit contrasts with the ingroup. Keblusek et al. (2018) elaborate on a similar distinction in their model's consideration of ingroup versus outgroup focus in intergroup communication. In the current special issue, Gaffney et al. illustrate how perceptions of ingroup and outgroup are interdependent and interestingly tangled. Different "versions" of the outgroup (e.g., more or less extreme) and different perceptions of the Self's place in the ingroup (e.g., more or less prototypical) have important consequences for how messages are processed.

Third, the process of building Figure 1 has made one concept particularly salient for us: group salience. Numerous elements in Figure 1 return to the

question of whether (and which) group memberships become apparent and relevant in communication (see Fasoli et al., this issue). As self-categorization theory makes clear (Turner et al., 1987), the salience of specific groups varies according to psychological matters of fit and accessibility. However, a communication perspective moves such considerations into a somewhat more concrete plane: What groups are present in a social situation and are those group memberships visible? Are people openly disclosing their group memberships (verbally or nonverbally) or are they attempting (and failing?) to conceal them (e.g., via shibboleths)? Are people raising some groups in conversation (or in media portrayals) and ignoring others? Are specific groups more apparent (or do they have different meaning) when crossed with other groups (intersectionality)? The multiple groups people claim memberships in, and those they are assigned memberships in, and how those multiple memberships interact, deserve focused attention in this literature. Intergroup relations “happen” in communication, and so the communicative construction of “groupness” should be at the foreground of some of our work as we move forward.

In this context, we draw attention to the intersection between intergroup communication and social psychology highlighted in this special issue. Group salience originates in the psychology literature (e.g., Hewstone & Brown, 1986). As such, it can be conceptualized as a psychological state or trait. However, as with many intergroup concepts (attitudes, stereotypes, etc.) salience is also a communicative accomplishment—something that is determined and negotiated in social interaction. Understanding these dynamic entanglements of cognitive and communicative processes is a core challenge for intergroup social science.

Underlying the study of intergroup communication and intergroup social psychology is a desire for a more equitable and peaceful world in which the diversity of human cultures, ages, genders, sexualities, religions, and so forth is celebrated and enjoyed rather than being a source of conflict. The articles in this special issue contribute to understanding how communication processes might construct and perpetuate positive and negative intergroup environments, and by extension, they provide guideposts leading us toward the better outcomes.

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