

**Mgr Anna Stefaniak**

**The influence of contact with a multicultural past on intergroup attitudes and civic engagement**

**Abstract**

Grounded in intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011) and environmental psychology (Lewicka, 2005; 2014; Low & Altman, 1992) this thesis introduces the notion of contact with a multicultural past as a new type of indirect intergroup contact. Contact with a multicultural past entails indirectly encountering members of a historically present ethnic outgroup by actively engaging with its heritage in one's place of residence. It may be employed in areas characterized by ethnic homogeneity/segregation which used to be ethnically diverse in the past.

Three longitudinal studies confirmed that experiencing such contact leads to intergroup attitude improvement and more positive place-related attitudes. The mechanisms of changes in attitudes towards an outgroup (Jews) were similar as in other forms of indirect contact and showed positive influence of greater interest in local history on intergroup attitudes. Moreover, contact with a multicultural past led to the development of local social capital. These results were corroborated by a qualitative analysis of the intervention participants' written accounts of their experiences.

A series of three experimental studies testing main elements of contact with a multicultural past suggest that such contact cannot be reduced to short-timed experimental manipulation. However, a meta-analysis of these experiments revealed a significant and positive effect of manipulation on inclusion of outgroup in the self, a (marginally significant) effect on attitudes towards Jews, and no effect on place-related attitudes.

Taken together the research results supported the notion of contact with a multicultural past as a tool for tolerance education in areas where remnants of a culturally diverse history exist and as a way to stimulate a more positive and proactive relation with one's place of residence. It thus contributes both to the existing intergroup contact literature and extends the environmental psychology research on the relations between interest in local history, place attachment, and social capital.