

The Parasocial Contact Hypothesis

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Intergroup Attitudes

- **Our attitudes & beliefs about other groups of people is influenced both by direct contact and mediated contact.**
- **Such groups can include different racial, national, and ethnic groups, and people with different sexual orientations or gender identifications. *Any group ID.***
- **Often, ignorance → prejudice and negative stereotyping, especially if one's sources of information is minimal.**

The Contact Hypothesis

- Popularized by Gordon Allport, the CH says the best way to decrease intergroup prejudice is through Contact—under certain circumstances.
- Must be similar status, common goals, acquaintance potential, and not-opposed by authority/law.
- *Remember the Titans* a classic example of CH.
- Literally hundreds of studies have been done proving the CH. We *learn* about “other” groups & that decreases stereotypes & prejudice. “A differentiated category is the opposite of a stereotype” (Allport, 1954).

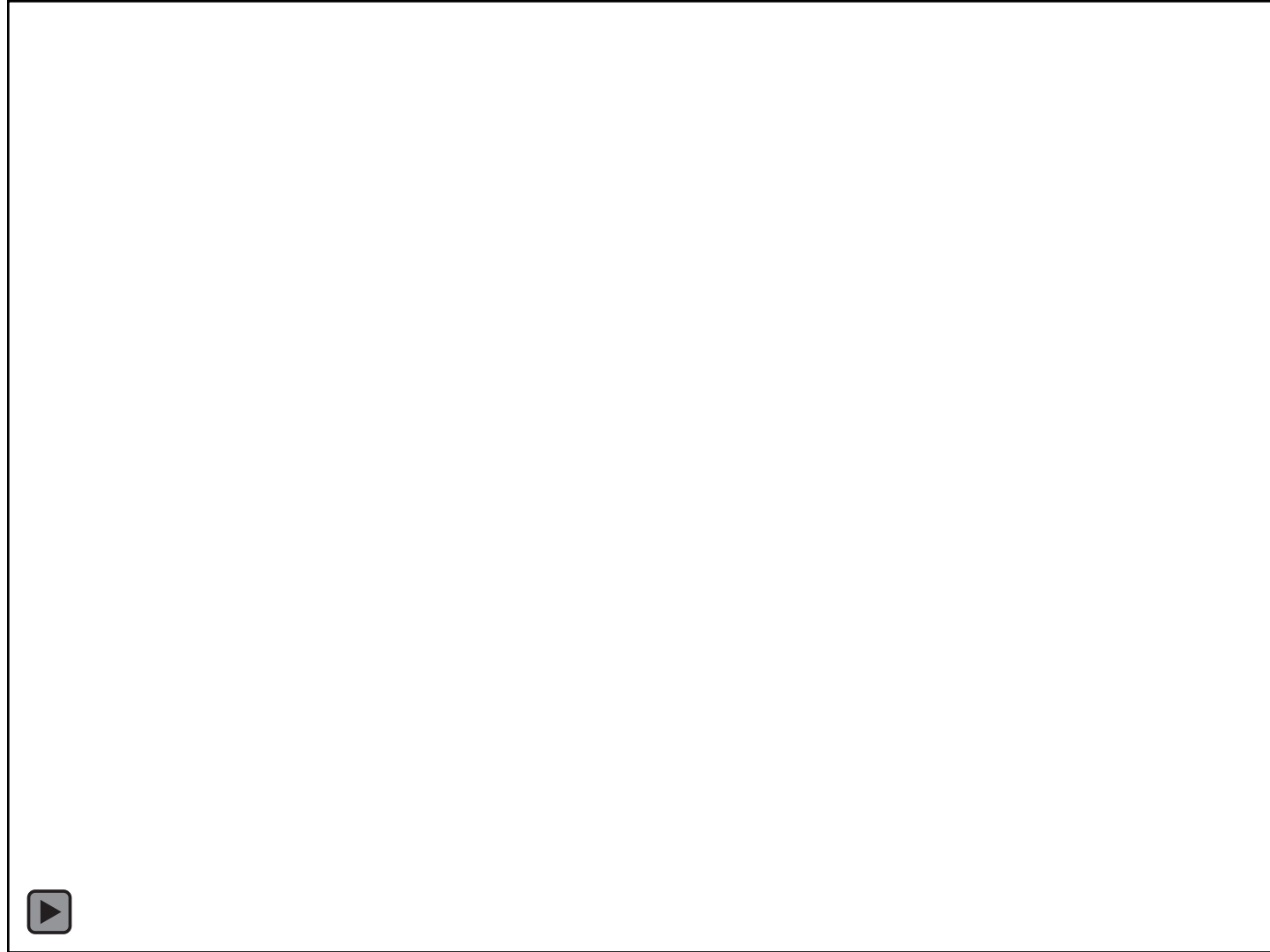
We Learn from Media Representations

- Both the Cultivation Theory and Social Learning Theory state that we learn about people from media portrayals.
- This includes any and all categories of people (race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual identity or orientation, professions, etc.).
- The less contact in the real world, the more we depend on mediated contact, also known as “parasocial contact.”

The Parasocial Contact Hypothesis

- As social learning suggests, we can learn about other groups through mass media. Contact is “parasocial” or “mediated.” Learning = reduced stereotyping.
- Our studies (Schiappa et al., 2005, 2006) show that intergroup prejudice can be reduced thru mediated contact.
- TV shows like *Queer Eye*, *Six Feet Under*, and *Will & Grace* reduce prejudice toward gay men, for example.
- Eddie Izzard study = decreased prejudice toward transvestites accompanies learning about the category (remember Allport quote about categories).

Suzy Eddie Izzard, Transvestite* Comic



Even TikTok

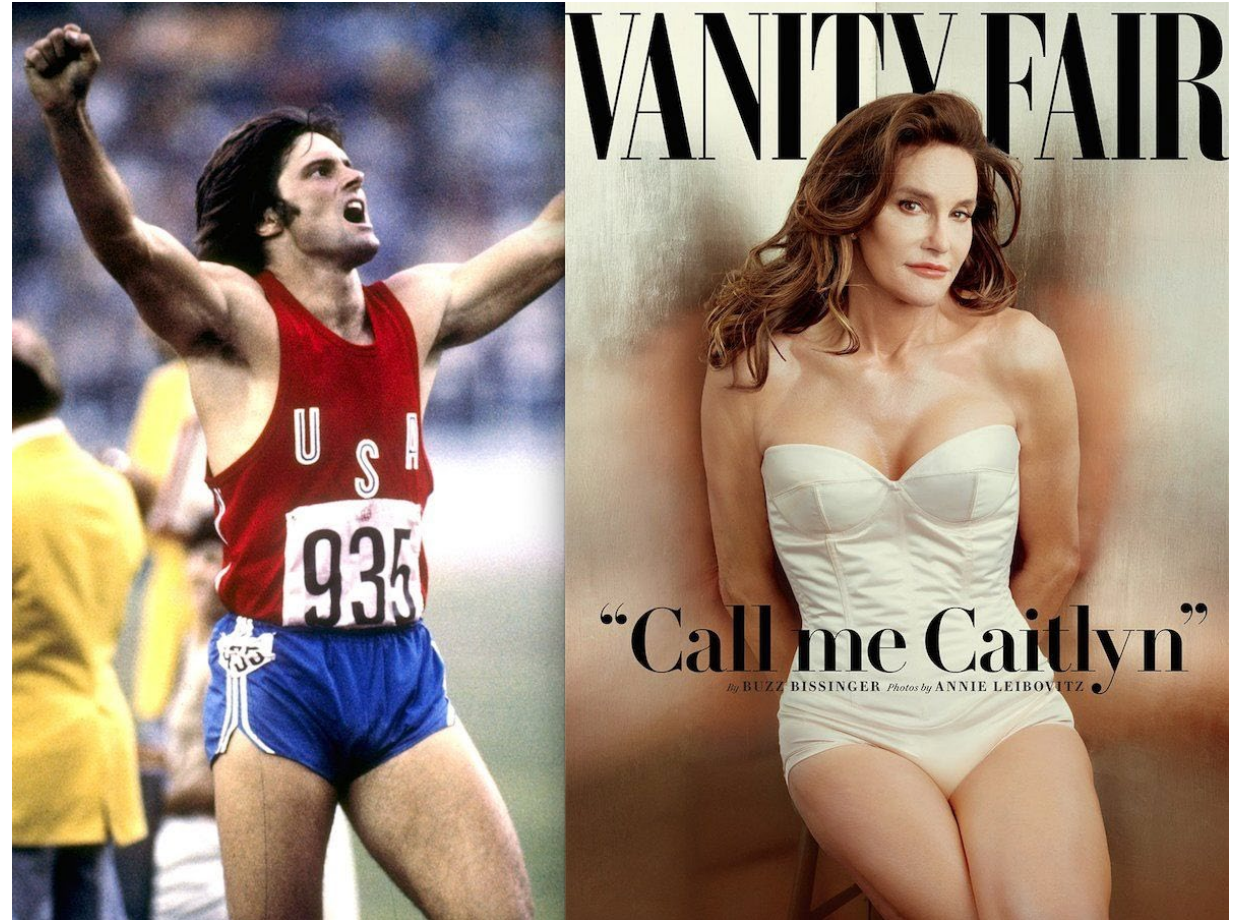


Considerable Research on PCH

- **Since our work in 2005, many scholars have done research on PCH or “mediated contact” and found reductions in prejudice (1000+ citations).**
- **Research done in Communication, Media Studies, Health Education, Social Psychology, Political Science, Sociology, & Gender Studies.**

Caitlyn Jenner

Research in the aftermath of Caitlyn Jenner coming out as transgender also suggest that such media coverage increased acceptance of transgender people.



Recent Example: Transgender

- The number of transgender people is quite small, so mass media provides an opportunity to influence attitudes.
- Li (2019), who conducted an experiment using short clips from the reality show *Becoming Us* that support the contention that a positive narrative involving a transgender character can result in a modest improvement in attitudes toward transgender people as a whole.

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TABLE 1. ATG Scores and r with Viewing Frequency (VF) and Parasocial Interaction (PSI) for Subgroups Based on Number of Gay Acquaintances

Subgroups	ATG M	SD	VF r	VF n	PSI r	PSI n
1. No gay acquaintances	18.84	8.7	-.48**	25	-.65*	14
2. Gay acquaintances, but no gay friends	17.12	8.4	-.33***	83	-.37**	58
3. 3 or less gay friends	13.02	8.4	-.36***	103	-.35**	66
4. More than 3 gay friends	10.82	6.5	-.21	33	.30	28
Totals	14.7	8.6	-.32***	244	-.34***	166

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

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Meta-Analysis (79 studies)

Published in 2020, Banas, Bessarabova, & Massey (*Human Communication Research*) reported that positive parasocial contact decreased prejudice ($r = -.23$), and negative parasocial contact increased prejudicial attitudes ($r = .31$).

Meta-Analysis

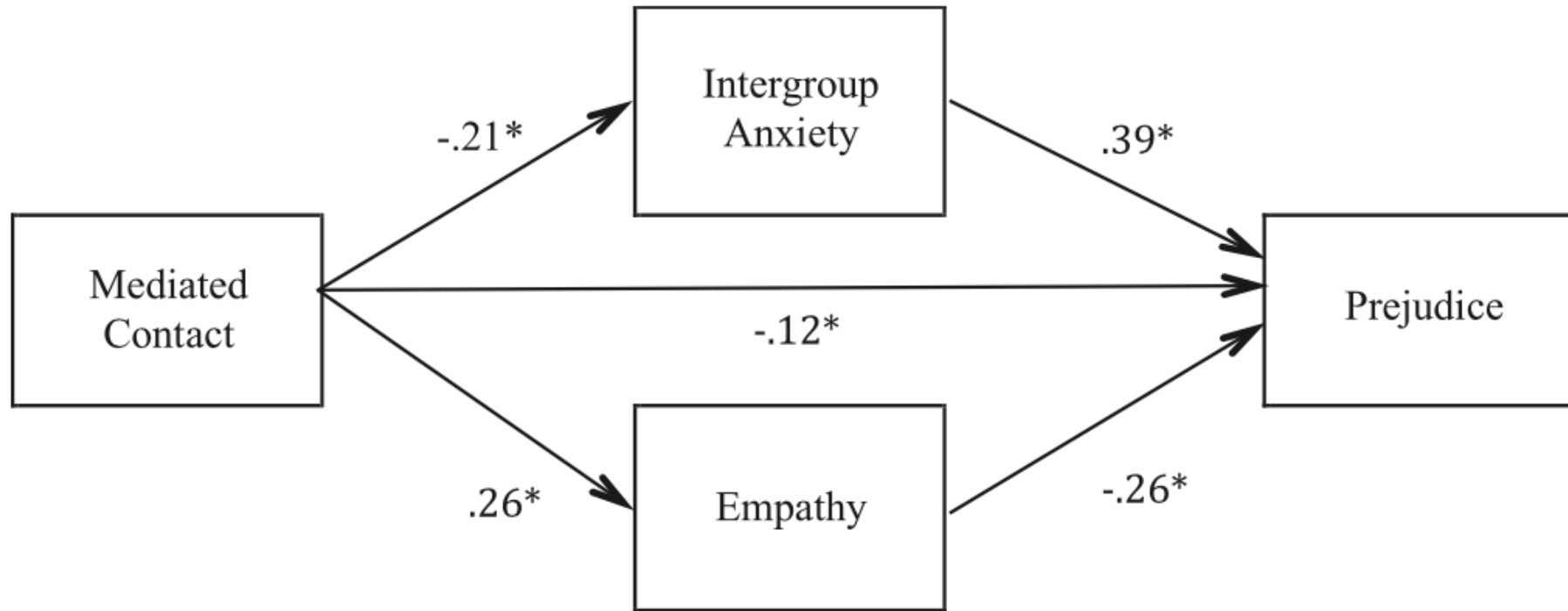


Figure 1 Path model with standardized coefficients. $*p < .05$

Conclusion: Keys to Attitude Change

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