

Department of Psychology Distinguished Speaker



Elizabeth Page-Gould, University of Toronto

Intergroup Contact and Friendship in a Diverse World

ABSTRACT

Intergroup contact is one of the most widely studied constructs in intergroup relations, but it has primarily been treated as an individual difference: people who have contact with outgroup members are less prejudiced than people who do not. I will describe a program of research that seeks to disentangle individual differences in contact from within-person fluctuations in prejudice that relate to daily experiences with members of different target groups in real life and through the media. This research follows the trajectory of social interactions with strangers to those with our close friends, showing that these experiences provide us with resilience to negative intergroup interactions that in turn promotes ongoing engagement with people of other social groups. The latter part of the talk will compare direct social interactions with contact through the news and entertainment media in daily life. This work involves diverse community samples of participants who interacted with and reported on their intergroup attitudes towards a variety of social groups (e.g., South Asians, Lesbians) that spanned multiple intergroup domains (i.e., ethnicity, sex, age, sexual orientation), ultimately showing that contact experienced through direct social interactions and media exposure in daily life independently predict fluctuations in intergroup attitudes, but that these effects are not equal across different intergroup domains. Altogether, it seems that intergroup contact is a dynamic, self-propelling, and nuanced effect that explains daily shifts in prejudice.

BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Page-Gould is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto and the Canada Research Chair in Social Psychophysiology. She focuses on how the social interactions we have with friends and strangers shape our way of interacting with the diverse social world. Dr. Page-Gould takes a multi-method approach to this question, combining psychophysiological, behavioural, self-report, dyadic, and longitudinal methods in both the lab and the field to capture a rich picture of these complex social processes. Dr. Page-Gould received her Ph.D. from the University of California Berkeley and completed a Mind/Brain/Behavior Postdoctoral Fellowship at Harvard University.

Friday November 6, 2:30 P.M. BioSciences 1103