



Concordia Discors.

***Understanding Conflict and Integration Outcomes of
Inter-group Relations and Integration Policies in
Selected Quarters of Five European Cities***

**A Selective Review of theoretical and Empirical
Contributions to the Study of Intergroup Relations**

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1. The theoretical assumptions

The study of relations between members of the host society and immigrants represents one of the most important components of the theoretical and empirical corpora on which the Social Sciences were founded. In fact, the first models of social theory are concerned with the analysis of the encounter between the host society and groups arriving from other contexts¹. The situations of conflict that often accompany relations between host society and immigrating collectivities constitute the focus of these early sociological studies. Their objective was to understand the reasons underlying such social discord, and, secondarily, to single out various means that could help reduce, if not eliminate intergroup conflict. Thus, according to Thomas and Znaniecki, for example, it was necessary for the Polish-American community to maintain its values and traditions as a solid base in order to facilitate its members' assimilation into mainstream America.

To this day, the same questions raised nearly a century ago by Thomas and Znaniecki continue to stir debate in all areas of the social sciences involved in the study of human group relations. These studies have contributed significantly to furthering the progress of socio-psychology, by constantly directing attention to the results of social change as their primary subject of enquiry. Moreover, this same tension underlies all forms of human interaction, even the most elementary ones, and must not be interpreted as a mere synonym of intergroup conflict overt and violent. In this sense, tensions between groups are, first and foremost, a *process* whose results can be extremely varied, but whose basic result is to provide a forum for negotiation between different views of reality. This process of negotiation is manifested in the representations, attitudes, and practices which surround relations between local population and immigrants.

The theoretical framework illustrated in this paper aims to provide the conceptual tools for the implementation of the empirical work of the Concordia Discors project. The paper will be organized in four paragraphs. The first focuses on some concepts which we deem essential in order to define the unit of analysis. The second paragraph presents the main paradigms for the study of the intergroup relations, as they have been developed by the social psychological school, and then widespread in all the branches of social sciences interested to study this object. The third paragraph is focused on some recent theoretical developments in the study of the intergroup relations, with particular to some recent research in the fields of sociology and political science. After this theory review, in the conclusions we will argue in favour of a mix of different theoretical perspectives as opposed to the adoption of a "pure" theoretical perspective.

¹ An example can be found in the notion of "self-fulfilling prophecy" and the cycle of "disorganization-reorganization" by W. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, as well as the "race relation cycle" proposed by R. E. Park and E. W. Burgess.

1.1 The Unit of Analysis

Given that the objective of the Concordia Discors project is to investigate mechanisms driving integration in everyday life, and that it rests on the idea that conflict and cooperation between humans groups can coexist, the propaedeutical need to define the unit(s) of analysis thus arises. In general, the international literature on intergroup relations qualifies the actors in terms of opposites², distinguishing between *ingroups* and *outgroups*, *insiders* and *outsiders*, or *majority groups* and *minority groups*.

Ingroups, *insiders*, as well as *majority group* are categories made up of people who see themselves as the direct descendants of the population that allowed for the constitution of the national society which they are now part of. In this regard, the literature recognizes that Weber's contribution still remains fundamental: the primary condition on which the definition of *majority* or *national group* is based, is a subjectively-held belief in a common descent [Weber 1971, or. 1921]. According to Weber's perspective, the prerequisite for defining a majority group (or national group) is the «feeling of sharing certain things in common»³. Weber qualifies this "national" feeling as fed by a synergy of different sources: « common political memories, religious creed», a « common language » and «race»⁴. These elements characterize an integrated community whose members perceive it as having specific and exclusive group customs which, « regardless of the objective situation [...] are, in large measure believed to be shared »⁵. However, a final ingredient must be present for this "community feeling" to translate into collective actions. If the shared symbols, values and historical roots are to be kept from being weakened, they must be administered and entrenched within a political dimension⁶. The *majority group* (which for Weber coincides with the national population), is founded on the sharing of political and cultural properties which are perceived as exclusive and opposed to those of other groups.

Other concepts, such as *insiders* and *outsiders*, key analytical categories for the study carried out by Elias in the English town of Winston Parva, may appear in the course of the empirical analysis of the material. The term *insiders* refers to the old inhabitants of a culturally-integrated community, while *outsiders* are « foreigners who do not subscribe to the credo of their [host, ed.] community » [Elias, Scotson, 1965]. Insiders close the access doors to outsiders and « in general terms, they stigmatize them as people with inferior human value », treating them like individuals who « do not belong to their city, like trespassers, or *outsiders* »⁷. Elias also suggests not losing sight of the variable which, in the end, contributes most to fuelling intergroup tensions, namely, power. This variable is

² Although it stands to reason that the "process" mentioned above certainly represents a more complex dimension than the mere "opposition" of actors, it should be underlined that it is rather a "procedural tension" which inevitably develops between different groups. Therefore the idea of "opposition" between groups remains as the basic cause, par excellence, of the process which takes place.

³ Weber M. (1971), *Économie et Société*, Plon, Paris, tome 2, p. 143 [orig. 1921].

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ In this regard, Weber talks of "political power", and it is the « relations with the "political power" » which constitutes the fundamental pillar for all national sentiments; Ibidem, p. 144

⁷ Elias N., Scotson J.L., (1965), *The Established and the Outsiders*, Sage Publication, Oxford, p. 31.

expressed in terms of the extent of resources available to an integrated group (economic, cultural, political, demographic). The “majority group” draws its legitimacy from the arguments that allow it to qualify the prerogatives and privileges which it boasts as its exclusive right to use. In this sense, the *minority group(s)* find(s) itself(themselves) in an uneasy situation with respect to the *majority group*, which, to reiterate the position of de Guillaumin, exercises a fundamental role in the process of their social definition⁸. This is in fact the central element of every kind of relationships among groups: majority and minority not existing as abstract categories, they are social entities that take shape in the mutual interactive process. The key driver of scientific interest is the understanding of the motives that push the groups to interact and the characteristics of the context in which the interaction takes place.

In terms of critical analysis, it is possible to advance the hypothesis that the process of defining the status of minority groups is not unidirectional, in the sense of an exclusive monopoly exercised by the members of the host society. Rather, since it is a dialectical relationship that opposes two actors, the group with fewer resources will inevitably participate in the definition of its social position using strategies developed to respond to the actions of the *majority group*. This question will be taken up again below, when dealing with the notions of ethnic relations and ethnicity.

Furthermore, the experience accumulated thanks to studies on intergroup attitudes, particularly quantitative ones, shows that the notions of *majority group*, *ingroup* and *insider* must be understood in broad terms. These broad terms, due first of all to the effects of economic, cultural and social capital, have a notable influence on the way of representing and interacting with the *minority groups*. The three afore-cited aspects of capital contribute significantly to defining the social distance between individuals. If for the sake of simplifying the argument, the term *majority group* is defined in most cases in the singular, the researcher should constantly bear in mind the background variables which contribute to defining the social position of individuals and groups. The background variables refer not only to individual characteristics but also to contextual ones, such as the flows of information, the socio-economic features of a neighbourhood or a city, or the political choices adopted to manage the presence of immigrants. According to this perspective, also regarding the majority groups is legitimate use the plurals: *majority groups*.

1.2 Conflict and cooperation

At this point, it is opportune to raise the question as to what exactly is intended by *conflict* between groups, or *intergroup conflict*? Far from being conceived as a pathological anomaly, rather, *conflict* is regarded as a crucial stage on the way to reaching an equilibrium between the various groups in society, and ultimately arriving to a state of peaceful co-existence. In the *race relations cycle* designed by Park and Burgess, *conflict* represents the second of the four phases that make up their

⁸ Guillaumin C., (1972), *L'idéologie raciste*, éd. Mouton & Co, Paris, pp. 119-21.

model (competition, conflict, accommodation, assimilation)⁹. According to this perspective, conflict happens in the instant where an intense interaction in which the majority group aims to reinforce the immigrant community's (marginal) position. One of the essential characteristics of *conflict* is that the antagonism between local population and newcomers becomes manifest.

Another and more recent contribution originates from the studies of Sherif on the competition and the conflict. Following Sherif, when members of a group come into contact with the members of another to attain goals that each urgently desires, but which can be attained only by one group at the expense of the other, competitive activity turns into hostility between the groups and their members [Sherif and Sherif 1969, 239]. When competitive activity between groups changes into conflict, unfavorable attitudes and negative stereotypes of the "other" come into use and place the "out-group" at a definitive social distance to the "in-group". This is accompanied by an increase in ingroup solidarity and an overestimation of its positive characteristics [Sherif and Sherif, *ibidem*].

An update theory formulated on the basis of the European panorama is the model devised by Hartmut Esser [Esser 2000, 418-423]. According to this author, ethnic-cultural conflicts are a special case of social conflicts and social movements¹⁰. At the beginning of social movements and of each ethnic-cultural conflict you find a structural antagonism. In this situation it is important which cultural models are available to evaluate and define the situation, and to "solve" the conflict. In this perspective, the ethnic-cultural model contains attitudes which serve to define the situation ethnical and to develop a frame to estimate the conflict. Esser describes that as a process of "framing" the conflict. If the process of framing is successful, doubts about costs and risks will begin to suppress. For the dynamic it is relevant what kind of resources a group can mobilise to react on the conflict (including the costs-profit calculation, and how the process of framing is successful), and if there exist other groups which are able to enclose. Then the conflict can spread. If there exist a structural antagonism with disintegrating patterns, if the actors decide for an ethnic-cultural model to define the conflict and to find a frame for the conflict/define the situation ethnical, if the actors are ready to pay a high price, if the organisation of resources is possible, and if there are other enclosed groups, the probability is increasing to mobilise a social movement and to spread the ethnic-cultural conflict. If a social movement has developed and the conflict is spreading, the situation of all actors is beginning to change. The actors come into a "dilemma of prisoners" after the first conflict acts: if one group wants to finish the conflict one-sidedly, it will lose all meanwhile the other group will win all. That is the path dependent of a beginning conflict.

Maybe it is useful to underline a central point regarding Esser's theory. This contribution is particularly useful for the study of contexts with a long history of immigration, in which immigrant communities have access to resources and capacities for mobilization. It is in fact difficult to think that any mobilization could take place in the absence of these conditions.

⁹ Park R. E., Burgess E. W., (1933), *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, ed. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 504.

¹⁰ Out of the Esser's comprehension a conflict exist just at that moment when a social movement is developed and mobilised.

As anticipated at the opening of the previous paragraph, it would be an error to take into consideration only those relations of a conflicting nature. It can be assumed that relations between groups of humans develop along a continuum, with one pole governed by conflict and the opposite one being characterized by peaceful interaction and *cooperation*. Thus, there can be many intermediate situations. The majority group and minority group(s) can, for example ignore each other reciprocally, despite sharing a certain spatial proximity. It is also conceivable to encounter cases in which conflict and cooperation co-exist: the majority group could set up cooperative relations (or indifferent ones) with some groups and at the same time bear hostile attitudes towards others. These preliminary considerations already suggest how intergroup relations are a multi-dimensional variable. For this reason, it is opportune to broaden the analytical horizon from the mere interaction between groups, to the contextual variations which contribute to defining the space in which the interaction takes place. In this sense, *conflict* and *cooperation* are always social and contextual products.

To return to the other pole of our continuum, namely *cooperation*, the theoretical digressions surrounding it are less ambitious than those regarding *conflict*.

In a broad sense, the literature converges on the difficulty in finding a shared definition of these concepts. This does not mean that the literature has a scarcity of references on this matter.

A possible definition is that we have “cooperation” when social groups exchange symbolic and material goods to obtain mutual advantages. As M. Sherif noted, it is important to underline the double role of these goods: they could be the pretext for antagonistic relations as well as becoming stakes to develop cooperative relations. In a broad sense, cooperative relations can arise when there are super ordinate goals concerning the interests of the groups¹¹. For example according to Esser «the basis of cooperation can be defined as the interests of actors for a resource that can be attained only through a common effort » [Esser 1999, 146]. Furthermore, the groups involved have to become aware that the attainment of these goals requires the contributions of other groups. It is only with this social-psychological condition that the cooperation can take form. To do an example close to the Concordia Discors project, the residents of a neighbourhood can understand that only with the contribution of all the groups, natives and immigrants, it will be possible to eliminate some problems that are damaging their area. In this way, the cooperation is a sort of “positive interdependency”. This means that the other group is perceived as necessary for the attainment of “our” goals. On the contrary, when the other group is perceived as an obstacle we will have a “negative interdependency” that could lead in an overt conflict¹². Anyway, before to close this part on the cooperation it may be useful to keep in mind as Heckmann states, that only a series of acts of cooperation could reduce hostility between the groups, because « A single episode of cooperation will not have this effect » [Heckmann, 2008: 13].

¹¹ Hewstone M., Strobe W., Jonas K., Voci A., (2008), *Introduction to Social Psychology. A European Perspective*, Blackwell, Oxford, p. 413 and especially the chapter XIII.

¹² A discussion about the concepts of “positive” and “negative interdependency” could be found in : Mummendey A., (1984), *Social Psychology of Aggression: from Individual Behavior to Social Interaction*, Springer, New York.

In summary, as will be seen below, conflicting and cooperative relations between groups can have either material or symbolic stakes. The essential point, as underlined by Blumer, is that these are collective processes in which individuals are not involved singularly, but as members of integrated groups whose mobilization aims to protect specific group prerogatives. [Blumer 1958].

1.3 The intergroup relations, and intergroup attitudes

Definition problems arise also with regard to “intergroup relations” as such – which in this literature review are taken as dependent variable. As a matter of fact, the international literature is rife with references to such terms as *interethnic relations* [Rex, Mason 1986; Coenders, Gijsberts, Sheepers 2004] and *interracial relations* [Hallinan, Maureen 1989; Quillian 1995, Quillian, Campbell 2003]. Having said this, it should be underlined that the objective of the Concordia Discors project does not lie in the study of ethnic or racial characteristics of group relations. Rather, the project focuses on the characteristics of interactions, in an attempt to highlight the variables that contribute to conflicting or cooperative relations between the majority population and minority groups. For this reason, it is preferable to adopt the more neutral expressions such as *intergroup relations* and *intergroup attitudes*. Having said this, it may be useful to explain why in some cases we will talk about *intergroup relations* and in other cases we will rather focus on *intergroup attitudes*. Although the Concordia Discors project is mainly based on a qualitative approach, a quantitative survey was also carried out in the city of Turin. From a rigorous point of view, the *intergroup relations* could be analyzed only by the direct observation of the interaction between the groups; we are in the field of the qualitative techniques. On the other hand, when we study the evaluations that a group express about the others by means of a structured tool, we fall in the field of the attitudes analysis. In that case it is better to qualify the dependent variable as the intergroup attitudes.

Expressions such as *intergroup relations* or *intergroup attitudes* are rather more neutral categories and are less implied in ontological debates. The reason is simple: concepts like ethnic and racial, and all of their variations (ethnicity, race, racism, etc.), represent such extremely complex subjects of investigation that they make up very particular fields of study on their own. From an epistemological point of view, the definitions of *ethnic* and *racial* are among the most fluctuating and unstable terms in the social sciences. After at least three centuries of embracing the idea that populations on the planet are animated by natural characteristics (*race*), the conviction that culture (*ethnicity*) is actually the lymph of human behaviour emerged in the course of the 20th century. Regardless of the intrinsic specificity of these prospects, they share a common point. Whether the realm of nature or that of culture are called into question, in both cases, thoughts and behaviours are determined in an irreversible way. Ethnicisation and racialisation mechanisms create powerful ascribed positions of status and conversely, the effects of these labels are very difficult to shake off once they have been attributed.

For the objectives of the present study, it is sufficient to remember that both ethnicisation and racialisation of the “Other” are social processes which the host society as well as the newly-

established community participate actively in together. This is true especially for ethnicisation, while several authors uphold the theory that racialisation of otherness, that is to say the perception of a given group as the product of a different human nature as compared to “Ours”, is rather a unidirectional process of social domination [Bonilla Silva 1997, 2004; De Rudder, Poiret, Vourch, 2000]. In addition, the concepts of *race* and *racism* are still largely rooted in a naturalizing vision of human groups which has little appropriateness in a study of social processes, such as that conducted by Concordia Discors projet.

The concepts of *ethnic / ethnicity* are mostly the result of dynamic processes. Thanks to the work of Barth, the postulate that ethnicity is not a fact in and of itself which is capable of precede the definition of the situation and social action has gradually gained acceptance [Barth 1964, 1966, 1984]. It is thanks to the definition of situations and the intentions underlying the actions of groups that *ethnicity* and its derivatives take shape. It would thus be risky to assume that ethnic groups and ethnic borders are notions that can be taken for granted. Intergroup relations are, in fact, the result of a continuous process of dichotomization between the majority and minority groups [Poutignat, Streiff-Fénart 2008]. According to Wimmer, « ethnic groups are seen as the result of a reversible social process of boundary making, rather than as given component parts of the social world » [Wimmer 2007, p. 13]. Intergroup boundaries thus arise as the result of a meeting of social stereotypes that are continually constructed and reconstructed in the endless dialectic between majority and minority groups. The social organisation between groups is structured within this symbolic communication, and it is here that the nature of their relationship is defined (cooperative or conflicting).

Keeping in mind the complexity of the terms that have just been discussed, the “simpler” expressions and *intergroup relations* is preferred for the purposes of this study. In this sense, attitudes are multi-dimensional value judgments that the actor express through cognition, emotions and the propensity to take action, all of which are destined to create cooperation or conflict in the confrontation with the Other. Theories of race and racism have their place at a macro-structural level that is inappropriate for a study of urban interaction. T. A. v. Dijk, in his *Communicating Racism*, proposes a series of similar considerations, stating that if « racism is studied at a structural level, in the form of a societal phenomenon »¹³, prejudice and discrimination are manifested rather at a « micro level, within interpersonal communication that characterizes everyday life »¹⁴. In this sense it will be possible to talk of prejudice, xenophobic manifestations, discriminatory, indifferent or cooperative attitudes.

As for the dynamics of *ethnicisation*, these are processes with complex outcomes, in which the actors taking part in characterizing the “Other” are involved at a particularly emotional level [Esser 2000]. It is legitimate to talk of the existence of prejudice or ethnically-based discrimination only insofar as

¹³ van Dijke T. A., (1987), *Communicating Racism. Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk*, éd. Sage Publications, Newbury Park, p. 11.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

specific expressions of hostility towards a precise group emerge with a certain frequency. The tendency to stereotype a particular group more markedly than other communities has the effect of crystallizing the group's behaviour within a frame of meaning which, in the eyes of outside spectators, pre-determines all the judgments expressed toward it and its members. It is inevitable that such a process of hetero-definition may generate also direct effects on *minority groups*. This is also why the notion of process is highly suited to the study of intergroup relations, the outcomes of which are the fruit of the various forms of reciprocal interaction.

So the term *intergroup relations* refers to the interactive process between majority group and minority groups which involves using particular stereotypes, and aims to define the specific intergroup borders. Such stereotypes have an eminently social origin and contribute to determining the level of conflict or cooperation between the groups; although the term is now a little outdated, it could also be defined as the level of *social distance*. It's by means of these stereotypes that the in-groups and the out-groups shape their boundaries, boundaries that are product of a meticulous process of social construction. This is also why a more neutral starting point has been chosen for the intents and purposes of this study, and, as has just been seen, only later, on the basis of the material collected, may the "Other" become the object of some form of ethnic qualification.

1.4 And what about diversity?

Finally, parallel to the questions raised by the concept of ethnic, there is the issue of *diversity*. In the same way as for the *ethnic* category, so *cultural diversity* cannot be presumed to be the sole element that sparks conflict or fosters cooperation between groups. Just as with ethnic groups, *cultural diversity* is anything but an objective data. *Cultural diversity* can become the cause of tension only insofar as it becomes the target of particular moral or political value judgments [Goffmann 1963; Memmi 1994]. The basic objective of every study of intergroup relations is the investigation of the social mechanisms through which the diversity that characterizes certain groups becomes the object of either positive or negative value judgments. Such judgments can generate cooperative or conflicting behaviours. However, the concept of *diversity* must be considered in its broadest sense, wherein culture is meant to include religion, language, gender roles, intergenerational changes, economic diversity, etc.

2. Theories and paradigms

Following this epistemological assumptions, it is now possible to define the theoretical foundations on which the project will base the study of intergroup relations, or relations between majority and minority groups.

There is a vast literature on the subject and the most significant number of contributions comes from the United States tradition. This school of investigation is marked by a series of characteristics that make it readily identifiable. These can be summarized as:

- a) a predominance of survey-type quantitative studies;
- b) an over-abundance of studies on relations between the White group and the Black group – dictated by the profoundly entrenched *color segregation line* in American society;
- c) a consistent attention towards conflict and the variables that contribute to its formation;
- d) little attention to the local dimension as opposed to the national one;
- e) finally, a moderate attention to epistemological issues, especially by comparison to the European tradition (concepts such as racism, ethnic group, racial, ethnic or any other kind of declension, are introduced into the argumentation as *explanans* without actually pondering their real coherence with the *explanandum*).

Studies conducted in the European field, which have become significantly more numerous since the 1980s and 1990s, stand out for their greater focus on the local dimension (city, neighbourhood) and, in particular, for their determination to investigate more heterogeneous subjects of study. Some of these studies analyse conflicting relations, others investigate cooperative ones, while yet other studies focus on the factors that contribute to increasing integration and social cohesion.

Notwithstanding the above-stated differences between the American and European schools, both can nevertheless be shown to share a series of common paradigms. The years immediately following the Second World War saw the establishment of the principal models for the study of intergroup relations: *Contact Theory* (C-T), *Personality and Ideology Theory* (PI-T), *Realistic Conflict Theory* (RC-T) and *Social Identity Theory* (SI-T).

It should be underlined that while C-T, RC-T and SI-T can easily be applied to sociology and political science, the situation with PI-T is quite different. This last theory, in fact, continues to remain almost exclusively within the boundaries of psychology, where it serves to explain prejudice and discrimination as the result of emotional dynamics within the individual [Adorno e al. 1950; Altmeyer 1988; Duckitt 2001]. Moreover, the PI-T is not focused on the intergroup attitudes, neither on the prejudice. The goal of the T. W. Adorno's group research was to understand the roots of the anti-Semitism phenomena and the ethnocentrism. For these specific reasons, and for the objectives of the Concordia Discors project, it's not useful to keep in consideration this theoretical frame.

The paragraphs hereunder are dedicated above all to RC-T and SI-T, in as much as both models concentrate on the conflicting aspects of group relations. A brief presentation of C-T will follow, to explain this solid paradigm whose assumptions come closest to examining the causes underlying cooperative relations.

2.1 Realistic Conflict Theory

Realistic Conflict Theory (RC-T) came to light at the end of the 1950s, thanks to the work of Blumer¹⁵. RC-T assumes that the hostile attitudes and behaviours the majority group manifests towards the minority group(s) is (are) essentially a status phenomenon. Prejudice and discrimination are group strategies aimed at protecting the prerogatives and privileged status that members of the host society enjoy and regard as their exclusive right. Conflicting attitudes represent a « collective process by means of which the feeling of belonging to a socially-integrated group takes shape »¹⁶. According to Blumer's theoretical framework, the stakes are mostly socio-economic and, among other aspects, can refer to competition in the job market, the distribution of welfare services, the will to maintain urban segregation, as well as to problems related to public order. The essential point here is that the feeling of being threatened can be based simply on perceptions, as much as on actually existing competitive situations.

As underlined above, the essential point for RC-T lies in the group dimension. In fact, the significance attributed to this variable characterizes the developments of the model. At the beginning of the Eighties, Smith highlighted that the hostility of the White group towards the Black minority could be reduced if Whites failed to perceive their status as dominant group as being undermined by Blacks¹⁷. Approval of scholastic or urban desegregation policies grows proportionally as the number of Blacks attending their children's schools or living in their neighbourhoods drops.

Studies conducted in the Eighties and Nineties by Bobo and Kluegel demonstrated how interracial attitudes are nothing more than the reflection of the socio-economic relations that link the White group to the Black one¹⁸. Attitudes towards Blacks are regarded as a "shield" to protect the White group's dominant status. By analyzing reactions to social policies, it becomes clear that the aversion to "race-target"¹⁹ policies and the acceptance of policies which aim to create equal opportunities regardless of ethnic stratification lie essentially in the group's interest. In summary, as Whites aren't directly involved in "race-target" policies aiming to create equal opportunities, they support equal opportunities policies that do involve them indirectly.

The essential methodological point of these theories resides in the necessity to concentrate on the analysis of both the objective conditions that characterize group relations, as well as on how group relations are perceived by individuals. Studying only the objective data or the subjective perceptions would not provide a complete picture, which is why the authors opt for an approach simultaneously focusing on the contextual characteristics and perceptions. According to Bobo and Kluegel this is the

¹⁵ Blumer H., (1958), *Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position*, in "Pacific Sociological Review," vol. 1, n° 1.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 4.

¹⁷ Wade A. S. (1981), *Racial Tolerance as a Function of Group Position*, in "American Sociological Review", vol. 46.

¹⁸ Bobo, L. (1983), *Whites' Opposition to Bussing : Symbolic Racism or Realistic Group Conflict ?*, in "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, vol. 45, n° 6; Bobo L., Kluegel J. R., (1993), *Opposition to Race-Targeting: Self-Interest, Stratification Ideology, or Racial Attitudes*, in "American Sociological Review", vol. 58.

¹⁹ Policies that favour certain minority groups.

only way to catch the essential features of the realistic conflict which the majority group feels, namely, the sensation that its dominant status is being threatened.

Gunthrie e Hutchinson arrive to similar conclusions²⁰. In their study of the interaction between African American and Asian American communities in social housing projects, they underline the need to concentrate on cognitive filters such as stereotypes, by means of which individuals evaluate and judge others. It's not important whether these filters are real or imaginary, the authors continue, what counts is that they influence perceptions and actions.

In conclusion, according to the scholars' endorsement of RC-T, *conflict* can arise as a result of different stakes: competition for scarce resources like jobs, housing, welfare benefits, but also criminality and the use of public spaces like commercial spaces, parks, street corners, leisure areas, etc..

2.2 Social-Identity Theory

Born of the reflections of Tajfel regarding RC-T, SI-T differs in that it moves the focus of attention from material stakes to symbolic ones²¹. According to the essential points of this model, individuals need to represent the group they belong to as superior to external groups in light of the way it reflects positively on their social image. This assumption is based on the fact that in self-descriptive processes and self-representation, properties deriving from collective belonging (eg. being a member of group X, being Italian, etc.), generally have a greater importance as compared to properties deriving solely from the individual's characteristics (eg. being a man/woman, being a university graduate, etc.) [Croket & Luhtanen 1990, 1992]. The individual will thus have an advantage in representing the community he/she belongs to as symbolically superior to that of the external community which he/she is not a member of, in the form of the benefits it reflects on his/her own social identity and the related feeling of self-worth. According to this mechanism, the act of undervaluing other "out-groups" takes on an essentially strategic function. The manifestation of xenophobia by the majority group toward the minority one(s) is dictated by the need to maintain its higher status and a safe intergroup distance. If others are perceived as "symbolically inferior", then preventing the risk of any possible "cultural contamination" becomes a necessity.

In the wake of Tajfel's first experimental results, several later studies have again confirmed this hypothesis. Discrimination towards other groups takes place mostly indirectly by exercising positive discrimination towards the group one belongs to, the ingroup [Abrams & Hogg 1988]. In this sense, the more the ingroup is valued, the greater the social benefits for its members will be. Other studies follow the same hypothesis, only they steep it in a more emotional dimension, linking it to the use positive discrimination on behalf of the ingroup in order to maintain a high level of personal self-

²⁰ Gunthrie P., J. Hutchinson, (1995), *The Impact of Perceptions on Interpersonal Interactions in an African-American / Asian American Housing Project*, in "Journal of Black Studies", vol. 25, n° 3.

²¹ Tajfel H., (1982), *Human Group and Social Categories*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

esteem. Although in this case we are faced with the “deep” level of the actor, its mind, it is still possible to identify some useful correlations with the Concordia Discors project. In fact, the inhabitants of a city could practice positive discrimination on the ingroup in order to raise the value of their urban belonging, for example, the neighbourhood they live in. This sets in motion a cyclical spiral with the following pattern: the more prestigious membership in that neighbourhood is, the greater the personal self-esteem, and consequently, the more strategic it becomes to discriminate against other groups. As will be examined in greater detail hereunder, it should be noted that in this case, the recurring theme is “prestige”, in other words, the symbolic resources available to an individual, rather than the strictly material ones.

The paradigm on which SI-T is based, is the most recent in chronological order, and it is probably for this reason that it still appears unmodified today, and remains faithful to its original form, as it was theorized by Tajfel. It is worth recounting how this theory was developed. In fact, the original contributions of Tajfel and Turner did effectively show the constant tendency of individuals to favour the in-group over the out-group²². Tajfel’s theory provides empirical proof that the stronger the sense of identification with one’s own group is, the more pronounced favouring behaviour towards that same group will be. It follows logically that there will not necessarily be adverse treatment of the out-group. Having said this, it should be underlined that the interpretation of this model, as described above, has rapidly imposed itself in the international literature.

SI-T is habitually contrasted with RC-T. The first of these is based on the sense of threat to symbolic identity, while the second is based on a more material sense of threat to all that’s at stake. As was acutely noted by Doise, both theories contain a conflicting feature, but the difference is to be found in the socio-dynamics that underlie the basic processes of social categorization²³. RC-T is based on social categories moved by precise material interests, while SI-T is principally based on mechanisms of symbolic comparison that suggest the idea that “Our” lifestyle is better than of the “Others”.

Studying the attitudes of the American population towards immigration shortly after the events of September 11th, Esses, Dovidio and Hudson provide a clear illustration of this paradigm²⁴. The terrorist attacks perpetrated on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were felt as an attack on the values shared by western democracies, as well as a threat to the sense of symbolic domination that the US plays worldwide. According the authors, this made clear to Americans, and to all those who share the belief in their principles, the challenge that foreigners which share a different life style – and not just terrorists – represent for the “American way of life”, leading to the conclusion that their models of behaviour are incompatible.

²² Turner J. C., (1982), *Towards a Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group*, in Tajfel H. (dir.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

²³ Doise W., (1984), *Les relations entre groupes*, in Moscovici S., (dir.), *Psychologie sociale*, Presse Universitaire de France, Paris.

²⁴ Esses W. M., Dovidio J. F., Hudson G., (2002), *Public Attitudes Toward Immigration in the United States and Canada in Response to the September 11th, 2001 “Attack on America”*, in *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*.

2.3 Contact Theory

2.3.1 The Origin of the Model and Some Preliminary Clarifications

Contact-Theory (C-T) was conceived in the Fifties by G. W. Allport²⁵. His objective was to understand situations in which contact improved relations between the majority group and minority/ies. Allport's aim was to defy the commonly-held myth dating from that period according to which any simple interaction between a White and a Black person could be sufficient to construct positive relations. The abundant theoretical and empirical evidence he brought as examples serve to demonstrate how contact can only produce positive attitudes and behaviours provided it takes place within a context characterized by the following conditions:

- absence of competition,
- equal status of the actors,
- institutional education or control,
- cooperation on a common goal.

These pre-requisites for efficient contact remain unmodified in the area of C-T still today [Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, Christ 2011]. Furthermore, this paradigm continues to be the one most often studied by researchers interested in inter-ethnic relations, especially as a result of its ability to be adapted to extremely heterogeneous evidence (experimental situations, surveys, socio-metric studies, ecological analysis). Given its primary importance, some of the theory's principal and most interesting developments are highlighted below.

Prior to presenting the main results achieved by this paradigm, a note of clarification is necessary. The "contact" variable may assume two different states: *anonymous contact*, in which the individuals interacting do not know each other, and, on the other hand, contact characterized by *mutual acquaintance* and a bond of *affection*. According to the international literature on the subject, the second type, namely affectionate contact, is the only variable able to reduce intergroup hostility. In this case, the main interest of study focuses on factors that can facilitate the birth of friendly relations or positive feelings. There have been numerous studies carried out on the effects of anonymous contact on intergroup relations. In Hallinan and Maureen's opinion, anonymous contact is the first pre-condition for generating friendly contacts, which in turn can reduce intergroup hostility [Hallinan & Maureen 1987, 1989]. It is in fact impossible to develop friendly relations when there is no chance of meeting in a heterogeneous environment.

It's noteworthy to underline that in recent studies carried out by important scholars as Pettigrew, the intergroup contact is assumed without distinguish between anonymous and affective relations. In accordance with the results of these huge surveys, which can account over 200.000 respondents, « greater contact is routinely associated with less prejudice » [Pettigrew et al. 2011: 274]. Within the

²⁵ Allport G. W., (1954), *The Nature of Prejudice*, ed. Addison-Wesley Publishing, Cambridge-Massachusetts.

Concordia Discourse project it better to adopt a cautious attitude toward this way to proceed, and especially for two reasons. First the strength of the correlations isn't so high, usually around .22 and .25 (r). Second, and this is the main reason, the ecological level of analysis is very elevated. That is to say, representative samples of different countries aggregate together. The richness of a work on the neighborhood level is the possibility to penetrate in the dynamic of the inter-group processes. Then, we believe that the distinction between anonymous and affective contact showed above will be a useful variable to take into account.

2.3.2 Developments

A few years after the publication of Allport's work, another author was to provide empirical proof which revealed itself to be fundamental to supporting the contact hypothesis, thanks to an experiment that was unique in the history of the social sciences, given that it was carried out in a "natural" environment and that the large sample of candidates (a summer camp for adolescents) were completely unaware of being involved in it. Sherif demonstrated that cooperation in reaching a commonly-shared goal, particularly when it is aimed at resolving a difficult situation which is preventing previously set objectives from being reached, can noticeably reduce pre-existing conflicts, even if these are very intense [Sherif & Sherif 1961]. Several later studies came to the same conclusions, though they pointed to another critical prerequisite that had already been indicated by Allport as necessary in order for contact to produce positive results: the equal status of the interacting parties [Stephan & Stephan 1985; Brewer & Miller 1996]. Based on these initial findings, a useful hypothesis to put to the test could be regarding the effects of facts or events that have taken place in a given neighborhood and that require the cooperation of all the residents in order to improve the habitat. A study could investigate whether having had to cooperate on reaching common goals for the benefit of improving the quality of life in a given area of residence represents a variable that contributes to alleviating intergroup tension and creating lasting cooperative relations. The role of the interpersonal contact at a neighbourhood level has been studied by Sampson. By mean of a series of quantitative indicators of the British Crime Survey, he shows that the strongest predictor of individual local friendships is length of residence: the longer you live in an area, the more local friends you are likely to have acquired²⁶.

The link between intergroup contact and attitudes has given rise to a multitude of studies and research projects. T. F. Pettigrew, the author who more than any other is specialized in the study of C-T, has long raised questions on the causal connection between prejudice and contact; in other words, is prejudice the result of a lack of contact, or, on the contrary, does absence of prejudice lead to more intergroup contact? In two well-known studies he concludes as follows: it is the empathy generated by friendly inter-ethnic relations that influences the level of intergroup hostility. Pettigrew

²⁶ Sampson, R. (1988), Local friendship ties and community attachment in mass society, *American Sociological Review*, 53, pp. 766–779.

therefore believes it's fundamental to lay the structural foundations able to foster friendly relations between the majority group and the minority group(s), in light of the cumulative process underlying this relation. Namely, intergroup friendship reduces prejudice and, in turn, a reduction in prejudice increases the probability of further intergroup friendships²⁷. Among the structural conditions that would seem to facilitate the birth of friendly relations, he sees the very presence of minority groups as the principal variable to keep in mind. Although it may appear to be an obvious consideration, in order for positive relations to be forged, it is necessary for the groups to have the opportunity to interact physically. For Pettigrew, but also for H. Matsuo, who conducted a path analysis on a sample of citizens from St. Louis, Missouri²⁸, the greatest probability of creating friendly bonds occurs in neighborhoods with the highest number of minorities. This would seem, in turn, to have a counter-impact on attitudes, reducing levels of prejudice.

Regarding research on the causal connection between "contact and prejudice" however, other, more cautious positions do exist. This is the case, for example, with M. L. McLaren, who doesn't hesitate to qualify it as an unsolvable problem²⁹. Nevertheless, McLaren's studies do introduce some interesting information, in particular by qualifying "contact" as a variable capable of mediating the effects of the context. From the causal model used, it would appear that in urban areas characterized by a significant presence of minorities, individuals with high levels of intergroup contact tend to get low scores on the prejudice index. In contrast, individuals in similar contexts with low levels of contact display stronger attitudes of closure.

The main authors who have conducted studies on the effects of intergroup contact all stress the need to respect Allport's pre-requisites in order to set up the conditions required for positive, non-conflicting intergroup contact to occur³⁰. It is worth mentioning L. Quillian and M. E. Campbell's socio-metric study carried out in U.S. high schools in the 1990s. Focusing on factors that contribute to reducing the impermeability of intergroup boundaries, Quillian and Campbell attribute decisive importance to the numerical aspects. In short, their analysis shows that the more a majority group outnumbers the minority group(s), the harder the minority group will attempt to preserve its symbolic and cultural specificity³¹. Consequently, besides the 4 pre-requisites cited above (absence of competition, equal status, institutional control, cooperation), the authors also underscore the need to bear in mind the relative homogeneity in the distribution of groups, in order not to create numerically dominant positions.

²⁷ Pettigrew T. F. (1997), *Generalized Intergroup Contact Effects on Prejudice*, in "Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin", vol. 23, n° 2; Pettigrew T. F. (1998), *Intergroup Contact Theory*, in « Annual Review of Psychology », n° 49.

²⁸ Matsuo H., (2004), *Ambivalent Prejudice Toward Immigrants: the Role of Social Contact and Ethnic Origin*, unpublished paper, Saint Louis University.

²⁹ McLaren L. M., (2003), *Anti-Immigrant Prejudice in Europe: Contact, Threat Perception, and Preferences for the Exclusion of Migrants*, in "Social Forces", n° 81, vol. 3

³⁰ Brown R, (1995), *Prejudice. Its Social Psychology*, Oxford, Blackwell Publisher; Hallinan M. T., Maureen T., (1989), *Interracial Friendship Choices in Secondary Schools*, in "American Sociological Review", vol. 1954, February; Hallinan M. T., Maureen T., Sorensen A. B., (1985), *Ability Grouping and Student Friendships*, in "American Educational Research Journal", vol. 22, n° 4; Hallinan M. T., Williams A., Teixeira R. B. (1987), *Opportunities and Constraints: Black-White Differences in the Formation Interracial Friendships*, in "Child Development", n° 58.

³¹ Quillian L., Campbell M. E., (2003), *Beyond Black and White: The Present and Future of Multiracial Friendship Segregation*, in "American Sociological Review", n° 68.

The study by A. Bisin, E. Patacchini, T. Verdier and Y. Zenou, which also investigates the neighborhoods in some of the U.S.'s largest cities is also noteworthy³². The results that emerge from their survey are striking for their implicitly provocative nature: the more ethnically mixed the neighborhood, the greater the effort on behalf of the minority group to retain and transmit the basic traits of its respective ethnic identity to the younger generation. Such efforts would appear absent in more segregated neighborhoods, where inter-identity tensions are less accentuated. This research team doesn't embrace the idea of urban segregation as a solution to reduce inter-ethnic hostility. Rather, they start from the assumption that ethnic identity is an intrinsic source of conflict. In their conclusions, they limit themselves to expressing perplexity at some of the "*mixité*" policies that characterize parts of the European panorama. Implicit in this result is a critique of all those authors, some of whom were cited above, who believe in the importance of living in heterogeneous contexts in order to improve intergroup relations.

Still another investigation whose results lie outside the classic realm of C-T is the recent study conducted by R. Putnam. Putnam puts C-T theory to the test on the question he holds most dearly to: social capital³³. His point of departure is from a position opposed to the beneficial effects of intergroup contact. He believes that individuals who live in cities with ethnically heterogeneous neighborhoods are more likely to suffer from a lack of goodwill and interpersonal mistrust. The analysis carried out on American survey-based datasets highlights how the more ethnically mixed the city is, the less individuals will participate in collective life and the more they will tend to withdraw into "private life". His results show that the "hunker down" syndrome, that is to say the attitude to withdraw from the sociability and the social participation, affects both the majority and the minority groups. In light of these results, Putnam launches a warning with political overtones, so that identity policies might be formulated with a view to encouraging an ever greater sense of pluralism, a sense of "Us". Further, Putnam sees raising citizens' awareness of "hyphenated identities" as an unavoidable task in order to promote future social cohesion.

Finally, in concluding this section regarding C-T, it's opportune to deal now with the topic of the generalisation of the effects of intergroup friendship. Many authors, among whom Pettigrew, claim that friendly relations can radically reduce levels of prejudice. In short, having a friend who is a member of the X group would allow for an improved view of this collectivity on the whole³⁴. Unfortunately, there are very few studies into this interesting area as yet, and the limits and areas of application of this thesis are still unknown. Others researches have shown that intergroup friendship can co-exist with significant levels of prejudice [Bergamaschi 2010; Brewer & Miller 1996; Brown &

³² Bisin A., Patacchini E., Verdier T., Zenou Y., (2006), *Bend It Like Beckham: Identity, Socialization and Assimilation*, paper of "Polarization and Conflict Project CIT-2CT-2004-506084, European Commission-DG Research Sixth Framework Programme".

³³ Putnam R. D., (2007), *E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century. The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture*, in "Scandinavian Political Studies", vol. 30 – n° 2.

³⁴ Pettigrew T. W., (1997), *Op. cit.*

Turner 1981]³⁵. In this case, investigation should focus on intra-individual mechanisms that could justify such intrinsically dissonant positions as: “*Please don’t talk to me about immigrants. Except for my friend Abdul...*”. The generalizing of effects from intergroup contact remains, for the time being, one of the principal frontiers of the branches of social sciences concerned with the study of intergroup relations.

2.4 The New Facet of Intergroup Intolerance

It should be noted that the three main schools of study of intergroup relations examined thus far do not exhaust the entire range of possible theoretical contributions, particularly when considering how the literature has evolved over the past three decades. Thus, a few passages can now be dedicated to examining recently-emerged theories of the new forms of intolerance, such as *symbolic racism*, *new racism* and *subtle racism*³⁶. Despite their moderately limited usefulness for the enquiry at hand, given that this is a review of the literature on intergroup relations, it is preferable to not forget them entirely.

These theories share the common objective of understanding the transformations that have marked the ways in which a *majority group* expresses negative attitudes towards the *minority group(s)*. They start from the observation that *old-fashioned* hostility, which was expressed through « blatant » prejudice both in terms of the tone used and the contents, is no longer possible in countries that consider themselves the standard-bearers of democratic and egalitarian values and tout themselves as the best of possible worlds. Consequently, a more « democratic » form of prejudice would seem to have emerged, one that can be shared by persons who uphold the values of equality and don’t normally think of themselves as having preconceived ideas. Thus, intolerant persons can enjoy the possibility of expressing their attitudes without violating the liberal-democratic principles that define their sense of belonging to a nation, and especially, without feeling they are *racist*.

As far as *symbolic racism* is concerned, for Kinder and Sears, the anti-Black attitude of American Whites derives from the fact that their lifestyle is seen as violating the principles underlying American democratic beliefs³⁷. Sears insists on the fact that the majority White group is intolerant of what it considers to be a « assistance-dependent » form of behaviour: according to them, the Afro-American group has gone well beyond the level of acceptance, and they think that the State has done too much for them (*affirmative actions, quotas, etc.*). Such anti-Black feelings are not based on a real or perceived threat, but rather on a strictly symbolic dimension which « originates in the pre-

³⁵ Bergamaschi A., (2011), *Les Préjugé et les jeunes. Représentations et stéréotypes des populations immigrés auprès des lycéens d’Italie et de France*, Éditions Universitaires Européennes, Saarbrücken.

³⁶ It will not be possible to consider “aversive racism”, given is markedly emotional and psychological dimension. [Dovidio J. F. & Gaertner S. L., 1998].

³⁷ Kinder R. D., Sears D. O. (1981), *Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism Versus Racial Threats to the Good Life*, en “*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*”, n° 40, p. 416.

adult acquisition of traditional racial values, stereotypes and fears »³⁸. The main difference that distinguishes this new form of hostility from the *old-fashioned* type lies not simply in its less aggressive style, but in the absence of a racial frame of reference. *Old-fashioned* racism is more deeply rooted within a naturalizing conception of human groups and therefore places race at the centre of its founding structure. Symbolic racism, on the contrary, makes no mention of racial arguments, only the mere fact that the Afro-American group has received more than its share. Furthermore, according to *symbolic racism*, the phenomena of discrimination and social exclusion which characterized relations between Blacks and Whites up until recent years, are thought to have now completely disappeared.

As for *new racism*, Sniderman and Tetlock believe that it leads to more elaborate positions than *old-fashioned* intolerance. For example, it's difficult to explicitly affirm today that Afro-Americans aren't entitled to social assistance as a result of their origin, but it can be done by saying something to the effect that « they make no real effort to resolve their problems by themselves »³⁹. According to the authors, it's thanks to this very "slightness", that *new racism* manages to spread to even the most educated individuals, to residential neighborhoods as well as to political discussions.

Another contribution to the collection of studies of new forms of intolerance worth noting is that of Pettigrew and Meertens, which uses data from the 1998 *Eurobarometer 30 Survey*, collected in four European countries (the Netherlands, Germany, France and the U.K.), to propose the expression *new racism*⁴⁰. The authors distinguish between subtle and more open forms of prejudice, and question whether the first type really does present the characteristics that have been used up until now to define actual prejudice. The results they arrive at deal with the process of recognizing positive or negative attributes for the *outgroup*. Pettigrew and Meertens find that *subtle prejudice* isn't so much expressed by conferring negative attributes to minority groups, as by reserving positive judgments exclusively for the belonging group.

From the point of view of critical considerations, the significance of these theoretical developments resides mainly in their methodological approach. They underscore the importance when attempting to detect discriminatory attitudes, of avoiding making direct and explicit questions that could "pollute" the interviewees' answers by imposing standard expectations and that might compromise their naturalness and spontaneity. As Adorno had already remarked in his study of authoritarian personalities, the research must focus attention on the more subtle and hidden aspects of discrimination. Such attitudes as are encountered for example « in the business world, in problems

³⁸ Kinder D. R. (1986), *The Continuing American Dilemma: Whites Resistance to Racial Change 40 Years after Myrdal*, in "Journal of Social Issues, vol. XLII, n° 2. p. 155.

³⁹ Sniderman P. M., Piazza T., Tetlock P. E. Kendrick A., (1991), *The New Racism*, in "American Journal of Political Science", vol. 35, n° 2, p. 424.

⁴⁰ Meertens R. W., Pettigrew T. F., (1997), *Is Subtle Prejudice Really Prejudice?*, "Public Opinion Quarterly", vol. 61, pp. 54-71,

regarding public housing and more generally in social interactions are mainly pseudo-democratic, rather than anti-democratic »⁴¹.

The areas of application of the above-described theories regards mainly two levels of investigation: experimental and survey. Having said this, regardless of the area of application, the essential goals of each model remain unvaried, namely, understanding in what way inter-ethnic relations are influenced by:

- the role of the material stakes for RC-T,
- the importance of the symbolic threat for SI-T,
- the conditions under which intergroup contact develops for C-T,
- the socio-cultural mutations which have taken place in democratic societies over the past decades, in terms of *symbolic racism*, *subtle racism* and *new racism*.

Having now presented these two main paradigms, it should be useful make a conclusive clarification, especially in light of the slight superposition between RC-T and SI-T. Both models provide important and flexible paradigms that can serve as a valid framework for interpreting highly diverse realities. Despite their different titles, they each place *conflict* as the main dependent variable. As we have seen, their difference lies principally in what social stakes are thought to give rise to it.

Secondly, they are both ideal-types with very elastic borders, intermediary situations can also arise. An exemplary case of this is constituted by the accusation often brought against minority groups of having altered the nature of the neighbourhood. This case touches on both socio-economic values – declining value of real estate, closing down of shops and businesses, stigmatization of certain public spaces, etc. – as well as cultural and identity-related values, since it implies the belief that the neighbourhood loses its original spirit as a result of the influx of newcomers, a spirit from the past which locals could once identify themselves with.

Thirdly, it is important to note that in the vast majority of cases, these models have been used to test hypotheses centred around the individual level with the notable exception of C-T, which already dedicated a large measure of focus to structural level variables in its original formulation. The main variables that can serve to test the relevance of RC-T and SI-T include the social position of the individual, with all of the potential contradictions and disparities, perceptions related to the surrounding environment, including the “definition of the situation” and lastly, the choice of whether to adhere to one system of values over another. In the final analysis, the emotions stirred by the above-cited variables are considered the most important predictors of intergroup attitudes⁴².

⁴¹ Adorno T. W., Frenkel-Brunswik E., Levinson D J., Nevitt-Sanford R., (1950), *Op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁴² Espenshade T. J., Hempstead K., (1996), *Contemporary American Attitude Toward U.S. Immigration*, in “International Migrations Review”, vol. 30, n° 2, p. 557.

Fourthly, another essential point is that the various threats, whether of a socio-economic or symbolic and identity-related nature, can be triggered by concrete and objective situations, just as they can be the product of purely imaginary concerns.

Despite the relevance of these paradigms, it is also important to keep in mind their limits. In general terms, these theories emphasize the negative feelings and emotions as well as anxiety states that the individual feels towards minority groups⁴³. Prejudices emerge from a cognitive dimension and feelings towards minority groups occurring along a continuum from positive emotional states to negative states⁴⁴. Intergroup attitudes are cognitive assessments that emerge from feelings and emotions⁴⁵. Then, as these authors point out, the attention is focused solely on the perceptions, regardless of the real characteristics that mark the relationship between majority and minority. The socio-political mechanisms which at national or local level produce negative stereotypes against minority groups are not taken into consideration⁴⁶.

The approach of social psychology tends to ignore the social, political and cultural context in which the representations of diversity and attitudes towards minority groups take shape. Paying attention to the context, to its way of structuring the status of minority groups, would allow understanding how certain stereotypes and prejudices circulate in the public sphere and, consequently, are internalized by the individual.

For this purpose, we can assume that the diffusion of certain stereotypes and prejudices requires conditions to take roots in public discourse. By studying the manifestations of xenophobia in Western Europe, Koopmans and Olzak argue that each country seems to be characterized by the existence of a "discursive opportunity structure"⁴⁷, a sort of socio-cognitive tank, necessary to the formation of public opinion and which legitimates the expression of forms of intolerance.

This is the result of the action of political parties that legitimize the circulation of negative stereotypes against minority groups, which are then taken up and amplified by the action of the media's. This entanglement between one side, the arrangement of political actors and the other, the media, is the necessary backdrop for spreading stereotypes and prejudices against minority groups. This is what can be called the socio-dynamic of xenophobia, which manifests itself by different slogans according to the circumstances.

Bearing this in mind, the aim of the Concordia Discors project is to place some of the assumptions of these models within the dynamics that characterise urban units, thus in superior ecological

⁴³ Stephan, W., G., Lausanne, C., R., Esses V., Stephan, C., W., M., & Martin, T. (2005). The effects of feeling threatened on attitudes towards immigrants, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, vol. 29(1), p. 1-19; Stephan, W., G., & Stephan, C., W. (1996). Predicting Prejudice, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, vol. 20(3/4), pp. 409-26.

⁴⁴ Hastorf A., Isen M., (1982), *Cognitive social psychology*, New York: Elsevier North-Holland

⁴⁵ Dovidio J. F. Gaertner S. L., (eds.), *Prejudice, Discrimination and Racism*, New York, Academic Press.

⁴⁶ The same expression "realistic conflict theory," for example, lends itself to be discussed.

⁴⁷ Koopmans, R. & Olzak, S. (2004). Discursive Opportunities and the Evolution of Right-Wing Violence in Germany, *American Journal of Sociology*, 110, 198-230

environments as compared to the single dimension of the individual. Studies which attempt to understand inter-ethnic dynamics, regardless of the chosen field of study, all start from the same paradigms. They allow for the formulation of different hypotheses, ones that are sometimes in contrast to the original models from which they derive, but they all nevertheless remain variations on the original theme from which they evolved.

3. Variations in the Study of Intergroup Relations

In spite of the fact that the paradigms presented in the preceding paragraphs have a distinctly American bias – with the notable exception of SI-T – this by no means suggests that the social sciences on the Old Continent have nothing to say about inter-ethnic relations. As of the 1980s in fact, many studies have attempted to deal with the question of the status of immigrant groups in their European host countries. The fact that interest for such questions in the European sphere has only been awoken recently is attributable to a number of different factors.

First of all, the very idea of a “country founded on immigration” is much more rooted in the United States than in Europe. In this regard, many authors refer to the “belated awareness” of the importance of migratory phenomena on behalf of European researchers operating in countries with a long experience of immigration, such as France, England and Germany⁴⁸.

Secondly, the American situation is unique in its historical racial contrast, one that is rooted in the era of slavery. The presence of ghettos is an element that profoundly marks the reality of many American cities, and is a sign of the effective opposition between two groups of human beings (Blacks and Whites), and underlies the main urban conflicts. Indeed, in this regard, many authors point out that such urban concentrations based on ethnic and “racial” criteria are limited in Europe. European “ghettos” are rather a concentration of population segments bound by unfortunate socio-economic conditions, that are located in urban areas affected by various difficulties such as the lack of services, higher crime levels and unemployment. Several different sources converge on this point, among which the Report on the B5 cluster, edited by the IMISCOE network⁴⁹, in addition to authors like Mustered⁵⁰ and Malheiros⁵¹. Having acknowledged these differences, there have also been attempts made to propose conceptual reformulations, such as in the IMISCOE Report, wherein the authors suggest using expressions like “poor ghetto” or “exclusion ghetto”.

⁴⁸ Rea A., Tripier M. (2003), *Sociologie de l'immigration*, La Découverte, Paris ; Bommes, M., E. Morawska (eds.) (2005), *International Migration Research: Constructions, Omissions and the Promises of Interdisciplinarity*. Aldershot: Ashgate. Bommes, M., Thränhardt, D., (eds.) (2010), *National Paradigms of Migration Research* (IMIS-Schriften, Bd. 13), Göttingen: V&R unipress.

⁴⁹ IMISCOE Network of Excellence on Immigration, *Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe Cluster B5 - Social Integration and Mobility: Education, Housing and Health* (SIM), State of the Art Report (SOAR).

⁵⁰ Mustered S., (2005), Social and Ethnic Segregation in Europe: Levels, Causes and Effects, in *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Vol. 27, n° 3.

⁵¹ Malheiros J., (2002), *Ethni-cities: Residential Patterns in the Northern European and Mediterranean Metropolises – Implications for Policy Design*, in “*International Journal of Population Geography*, n° 8.

As far as the differences between “US ghettos” and “EU ghettos” is concerned, Vacquant proposes an even more radical view, even if in his case he refers exclusively to the French reality⁵². Vacquant claims that the issue of *color line segregation* is profoundly rooted in the “American way of life”, to the point that it represents the basis on which the Black group builds its identity and world vision; suffice it to think of the rise of the “Black is beautiful” motto in the course of the Eighties. As regards the *banlieues* of French cities – labeled “Red belts” in order to distinguish them from the “Black belts” – in the eyes of the people who live in them, they represent a painful violation of the republican ideals of universalism and egalitarianism in which they were educated from the early years of school.

Thirdly, the significant territorial diversity between the American and European contexts must not be underestimated. European nations are affected by the phenomenon of immigration to varying degrees, and some countries have only been touched by it for the past two or three decades. What is more, European cities enjoy a symbolic recognition of their socio-economic and cultural vitality that often surpasses the national dimension. The American situation is also different on this account, since immigration affects its territory uniformly and national political action prevails over local action. For these reasons, the possibility of radically importing the American approach for the study of European inter-ethnic relations is often met with skepticism. On this question, the research group that directed the first URBEX report, for instance, believes that the American literature can serve as a source of inspiration, but it has expressed doubts further to the possibility of concretely applying its models for analysis⁵³. Such positions do clash however, with numerous surveys conducted by European researchers, who continue to test the validity of American theoretical models by corroborating their basic hypotheses⁵⁴. In these cases, the theoretical paradigms born from *color line segregation* find a valid field for their application and confirmation within the heterogeneous European fabric, despite the above-cited contextual differences.

In addition to the elements just taken into consideration above, the European literature is mainly characterized by a greater attention to epistemological issues – in the sense of clarifying the conceptual baggage used – and a focus on the local dimension. For example, the question studied is often not “conflict”, but rather “cohesion”. On this matter, a 2008 report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation provides an interesting definition of social cohesion, based on the idea of social participation, interpersonal trust and cooperation on a project for a common society⁵⁵.

⁵² Vacquant L., (1993), *Urban Outcast: Stigma and Division in the Black American Ghetto and the French Urban Periphery*, in “International Journal of Urban and Regional Research”, vol. 17, n° 3.

⁵³ URBEX, (1999), *Urban Social Exclusion and Modes of Integration Literature Review Series*, No. 1, Sako Musterd, Chris Kesteloot, Alan Murie and Wim Ostendorf.

⁵⁴ Among the most significant European contributions: Coenders M., Lubbers M., Scheepers P., (2004), *Majority Populations' Attitudes Towards Migrants and Minorities*, Report of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, Vienna, ref. no. 2003/04/01; Coenders M., Gijsberts M., Scheepers P., (2002), *Ethnic Exclusionism in European Countries, Public Opposition to Grant Civil Rights to Legal Migrants as a Response to Perceived Ethnic Threat*, in “European Sociological Review”, n° 18; Coenders M., Lubbers M., Scheepers P., (2009), *Opposition to Civil Rights for Legal Migrants in Central and Eastern Europe*, in “East European Politics & Societies”, Vol. 23, n° 2; see also R. Brown, (1995), *Prejudice. Its Social Psychology*, Blackwell Publisher, Oxford.

⁵⁵ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2008), *The Housing and Neighbourhood Impact of Britain's Changing Ethnic Mix*, Report 2008, p. 4

However, European studies can be distinguished mainly by the attention they place on the local dimension, much greater than in the American literature, which is focused rather on large-scale national surveys. The neighborhood reality, with its day-to-day practices, and the local policies put in place to manage the phenomenon of immigration, are what shape inter-ethnic relations, and it is from here that the effects are then diffused to the rest of society⁵⁶. In the field of immigration studies, the local dimension assumes relevance for its intrinsic proximity with the dynamics of insertion. Regarding this point Giuliano et al. (2011) underline that although the integration process takes place in the frame of the national policies it becomes concrete only at the local level, through the interaction between the newcomers, the inhabitants and the institutions⁵⁷.

We can find also more practical reasons to explain this interest for the urban areas. For example, as Forrest and Kearns say (2001) the neighbourhood « has regained the attention of policymakers for two reasons. First as the basic building block for maintaining social cohesion (associated with the current fashion for communitarian etc.) and second because of the evident saturation of poverty and disadvantage in certain parts of major cities »⁵⁸.

Furthermore the relevance of the neighbourhood is also motivated by the reconfiguration of the space and time concepts typical of these last decades. Intuitively, it would seem that as a source of social identity the neighbourhood is progressively being eroded with the emergence of a more fluid, individualized way of life. However globalizing processes may have the opposite effects. As the forces which bear down upon us seem to be increasingly remote, local social interaction and the familiar landmarks of the neighbourhood may take on greater significance as sources of comfort and security. According to the literature this sort of “protective shell” seems more important in particular for poorer households; probably due to their modest socio-economic-cultural resources. For example, Vankempen underlines that « less well educated people and lower income groups often have more contacts within the neighbourhood than do those with a higher educational level and a higher income » [Vankempen 2008: 4]⁵⁹. But Vankempen himself suggests that however important is the neighbourhood this level of the social life should however not be reified. Sometimes also the big investments to renew an old and poor area could be without any relevant impact [*Op. cit.*, 15].

In some cases, the neighbourhood is perceived as an independent space of action, distinct from the larger macro-social context. Positive attitudes and relations may well abound at this level, despite the national media’s profoundly disparaging campaigns against minority groups⁶⁰. According to these studies, the main variable in explaining conflicting relations is the speed with which migratory

⁵⁶ *Generating Interethnic Tolerance and Neighbourhood Integration in European Urban Spaces (GEITONIES)*, (2007), Maria Lucinda Fonseca: GEITONIES (2011), *Draft summary of the results*, <http://geitonies.fl.ul.pt/Publication/Summary%20of%20results.pdf>

⁵⁷ Giuliano G., Tenaglia S., Testana S., (2011), L’integrazione socio-economica degli immigrati. Strade percorribili, *Osservatorio Isfol* n. 2/2011

⁵⁸ Forrest R., Kearn A., (2001), Social Cohesion, Social Capital and the Neighbourhood, *Urban Studies*, vol. 38(12), pp. 2125–2143.

⁵⁹ van Kempen R., (2008), Social Cohesion, Social Mix, and Urban Policies in the Netherlands, *Paper for the Housing Studies Spring Conference in York*, 2-4 April 2008,

⁶⁰ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2008), *Op. cit.*

influxes inflows modify the urban landscape. The faster, the more unexpected and unplanned the change happens to be, the more likely it is to lead to conflict between locals and immigrants.

One of the elements many diverse European studies have in common is their focus on the socio-dynamics of the neighbourhood, albeit considered from a series of different perspectives. A second URBEX report demonstrates that in spite of their appearance as often ancient city centers, most centrally-located neighbourhoods offer more resources to foster the development of peaceful interactions than the more modern suburban neighbourhoods⁶¹. The working group singles out the following variables among the main determinants of social cohesion: a) the strength of the local welfare system, b) the economic system's dynamism and its capacity to absorb newcomers, c) the solidity of interpersonal relationships. Here too, the research group concentrates its attention on the scale of change. Similar considerations are expressed by Wimmer. In his researches, he finds that intergroup conflict and intergroup boundaries are more marked in situations where the welfare state is strong [Wimmer 1998]. Always on this theme, another point of view emerges from the study carried out recently by Friedrichs, Galster and Musterd. Through the comparison between the United States and Europe, these authors show that the impact of welfare-state policies might decrease the impact of residential environments [Friedrichs, Galster & Musterd 2003].

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation the centre of attention lies a multidimensional idea of change related as much to the dynamics of this influx as to the socio-economic variables listed above. In a neighbourhood where the offering of welfare services becomes poorer, the local job market is on the decline and inhabitants possess limited interpersonal networks, it's easy for social cohesion to suffer and for the situation to evolve towards intergroup tension.

The results from the GEITONIES research project also point to the importance of heeding local social processes⁶². If the objective is to gain an understanding of the dynamics of local *association*, it is nevertheless important to distinguish between "modes of association" and "fields of association". The former refers to outcomes of intergroup interaction (friendships and inter-ethnic emotional bonds, the density of positive meetings between locals and immigrants, the level of existing ethnic hostility, etc.). On the other hand, "fields of association" are the places or spatial levels at which interactions take place. In this sense, it can be expected that inter-ethnic interaction will be influenced by the various settings in which it takes place, like the public and private spheres.

About the influence exerted by the urban and socio-economic context, including the level of diversity, it has been more deeply scrutinized. The effect of urban infrastructures on intergroup relations has been traditionally analyzed by studies on mixed neighborhoods, which highlight as schools, effective transportation and pedestrian links, green spaces, sport and recreation spaces usually foster social mix among different categories of population [Arthurson 2008; Bailey et al. 2007; Lee 2002]. Also the level of diversity of the residential area has been object of several studies which have led to the development of different and contrasting theories. As we already said, according to

⁶¹ URBEX, (1999), *The Spatial Dimensions of Urban Social Exclusion and Integration Series*, No. 20.

⁶² GEITONIES (2007), *Op. cit.*

the contact theory, the intergroup contact fosters mutual tolerance and social solidarity, although only at certain conditions. On the contrary, the conflict theory states that diversity fosters out-group distrust and in-group solidarity [Allen & Cars 2001; Alesina & La Ferrara 2002; Letksi 2008].

Finally, the above-mentioned call for an interdisciplinary approach must not however, be limited to theoretical and methodological aspects. As in the construction of the image of the outgroups it is of a great importance to pay attention to the flux of information, we deem it useful to present here some key points on the role of the media. The relation between the mass media and attitudes is in fact extremely complex, and for this reason it would be preferable to tackle it progressively. Within this field of study in fact, there is a host of divergent positions on the subject. In recent years, E. Macé, an author who has long been interested in the question of the social effects of the media, with particular reference to media coverage of urban violence, doesn't hesitate in affirming that society is nothing more than the reflection of media actions⁶³. Alongside this claim, which has become famous for its radical position, there are still other, more cautious contributions. As a general rule, authors who deal with intergroup attitudes tend to attribute a large significance to the role of media, and consider it a variable capable of sensibly influencing cognitive processes⁶⁴. They do however, tend to underline that the impact of the media is indirect and filtered rather than direct. Although the media play a determining role in triggering a particular type of public discourse, this same discourse is mainly diffused via inter-individual communication, as if to underscore the fact that in the final analysis, everyone can contribute to modelling the contents of discourse⁶⁵.

It's worth noting the results of a study conducted in Japan on the media representations of the Nikkeijin⁶⁶. According to the author, Japanese media undoubtedly contribute to creating the dominant stereotype regarding the members of the Nikkeijin community, portraying them as poor, miserable and less competent than the locals. A kind of socially accepted prejudice, to use the words of the author, not driven by feelings of being threatened by competition, but limited to diffusing the image of a sort of Japanese "under class". One of the most important aspects to emerge from the study relates to the way in which this stereotype takes root. In fact, people surveyed who shared the image conveyed by the media were found to have already held a similar prejudice beforehand. In this sense, the role of the media would be limited to reinforcing pre-existing notions, without actually intervening in the process of generating them. Similar results had already emerged at the end of the 1970s from some American findings. These studies called for the need to take note of the media's

⁶³ Macé E., (2006), *La société et son double. Une journée ordinaire de télévision*, Armand Colin, Paris.

⁶⁴ Some of the most recent studies include: Bevelander P., Otterbeck J., (2007), *Young People's Attitudes Towards Muslims in Sweden*, Malmoe University, – JEAMS ; Ward C., Masgoret A.-M., (2008), *Attitudes Toward Immigrants, Immigration, and Multiculturalism in New Zealand: a Social Psychological Analysis*, in "The International Migration Review", vol. 42, 1.

⁶⁵ C. Le Bart, (1998), *Le discours publique*, Presse Universitaire de France – Que sais-je?, Paris.

⁶⁶ Nikkeijin are third and fourth generation Japanese immigrants to America and Australia, who have begun to return to Japan in recent years. Although they're of Japanese origin, once they return to their native land they become victims of prejudice and discrimination, just as other communities of immigrants. For more information see: Bergamaschi A., (2008), *Identità nazionale e dinamiche migratorie nel Giappone contemporaneo*, in "Studi Emigrazione" – Cser, Roma, n° 170.

ability to effectively reinforce existing stereotypes, and to its relative irrelevance in modifying attitudes⁶⁷.

The role of the mass-media in shaping intergroup relations is a field of study that certainly requires well-deserved examination, particularly given its distinctively transversal nature. The connections between exposure to the stream of media information and the type of contact are of great interest – and the question brings us back to C-T. According to some of the pioneering studies of the 1970s [Hartmann & Husband 1974]⁶⁸, later re-confirmed by research carried out more than two decades later [McQuail 1994]⁶⁹, messages transmitted by the media would seem to have a greater capacity to mould attitudes in contexts where immigrant presence is numerically less significant. The fewer experiences of direct contact with minority groups, the more likely stereotypes conveyed by the media are to take hold amongst the majority population. It is an interesting hypothesis which would seem to recall M. Castells' opposition between « non-contiguous ethnic encounters » vs « contiguous ethnic encounters », a variable that the author judges to be crucial in forging intergroup stereotypes and prejudices⁷⁰.

4. Conclusions: Combining Rather than Testing Theories

The question of whether American knowledge can be transferred to the European reality is still far from being answered. Perhaps the greatest benefit from this debate is to be found in the possibility of having a number of research tools available which, depending on the requirements, can find a particular field of application, regardless of what school of thought they derive from. Above and beyond the diverging perspectives, the objectives are to be considered common to all of them: gaining an understanding of the factors that contribute to inter-ethnic conflict or to peaceful co-existence between groups. To pursue this objective it is not only fundamental a mixed theoretical approach, but also a mixed methodological approach. The contributions presented in this paper belonging both to the quantitative and the qualitative research. According to Lupton (2003) the qualitative techniques might allow the quantitative data - often based on statistical indicators on the quality of life picked up at high abstracting level - to be anchored to the daily situations and the social moods⁷¹.

Probably, only by an interdisciplinary approach is possible to light if the neighbourhood is a community or an easier anonymous context. Forrest and Kearns [*Op. cit.*: 2141] highlight what for them is the crucial focus of every kind of study on the urban areas: « there is the neighbourhood as

⁶⁷ Curran J., Gurevitch M., Woollacott J., (1977), *The Influence and Effects of Mass Media in Mass Communication and Society*, Edward Arnold, London,

⁶⁸ Hartmann P., Husband C., (1974), *Racism and the Mass Media. A Study of the Role of the Mass Media in the Formation of White Beliefs and Attitudes in Britain*, Rowman & Littlefield, New York.

⁶⁹ McQuail D., (1994), *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, Sage Publications, London.

⁷⁰ Castells M., (1989), *The Informational City: Information Technology, Economic Restructuring, and the Urban-Regional Process*, Blackwell, Oxford.

⁷¹ Lupton R., (2003), 'Neighbourhood Effects': Can we measure them and does it matter?, London School of Economics - Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, paper 73.

‘community’ — the local domain of friendships and casual acquaintance which, according to the available evidence, appears to remain as an important dimension of our everyday lives. There is the neighbourhood as ‘context’ — particularly in the negative sense of social reputation, labelling, ill health and the development of perverse social norms and behaviour as responses to social exclusion ». In this sense a neighbourhood could be seen in a positive manner leading support, reception, and social contacts and in a negative sense, « the development of deviant norms and values as a consequence of contacts between people in situations of deprivation » [Wankempel *op.cit.*].

As corroborated by Barbosa, it is by virtue of the very complexity of this issue that an interdisciplinary approach becomes essential⁷². An interdisciplinary approach, conceptual clarity, an attention to symbolic aspects and comparative logic are, according to Barbosa, the necessary ingredients for studies that intend to venture into this field of study. The analysis of intergroup attitudes is a complex subject, rife with (apparent) contradictions.

The aim of this first paper was to highlight some of the different approaches to the study of intergroup relations. In doing so, an attempt to deliberately underscore the points of convergence and divergence between the various schools of thought examined was made. The importance of adopting an interdisciplinary approach however, is the one element that cannot be diminished. Such an approach has to take into account the effects of variables from within different contexts (local and national policies, the job market situation, quality of neighborhood life, the role of the media, etc.), as well as variables linked to individual characters (socio-economic and cultural status, inter-personal experiences, representation of the situation, etc.), doing so regardless of the school of thought. The transversal objective is to reach an understanding of the processes that generate intergroup relations, trying to distinguish conflict factors from factors which are likely to foster peaceful relations. By understanding the types of threats that undermine social cohesion, it ought to be possible to bring the “matter” that serves to build intergroup boundaries to the surface. Boundaries, which, as underlined by Sciortino, bear an eminently symbolic character and constitute the frontlines for different world views⁷³. These contrasting world views, however, are not perennial, but rather are born of and reproduced by means of narration and the mobilisation of interests on behalf of individuals and social groups.

In conclusion, Concordia Discors project intends to follow a line which adopts an interdisciplinary methodological and theoretical approach to the study of intergroup relations. It is therefore important to pay attention not only to perceptions and to the concrete objective conditions of interaction, but also to distinguish between where interactions take place and what type of

⁷² E. M. Barbosa, (2001), *Urban Spatial Segregation and Social Differentiation: Foundation for a Typological Analysis*, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Conference Paper.

⁷³ Sciortino G., (2011), *Ethnicity, Race, Nationhood, Foreignness Etc. Prolegomena to a Cultural Sociology of Difference-Based Interactions*. In Alexander J. C., Ronald J., Smith P., *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, New York: Oxford University Press

interactions derive from the context, without forgetting the question of values, attitudes and the spread of information through media and the action of the local policies.