

# What Variables Mediate the Effects of Intergroup Contact?

By Joel Seltzer

## Introduction

- Meta-analysis of over 500 studies: Intergroup contact reduces bias with an average effect size of  $-.21$  (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).
- Intergroup contact is effective for most outgroups including (Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, & Cairns, 2009)
- Improved outgroup attitudes result in direct, extended (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997), and imagined contact research (Crisp, & Turner, 2009),
- Intergroup anxiety suggested as possible mediator (Abrams & Crisp, et al. 2008) but this has mostly been tested in attitude change rather than behavioral change.

## Method

- Participants performed imagined contact paradigm with either outgroup or ingroup member interaction.
- Participants rate attitudes, opinions and likely behaviors toward outgroup members on a Likert scale.

## Sample Results

- Turner, West, and Christie (2013) compared participant rating on attitudes, intergroup anxiety, and trust toward asylum seekers. Used 1-7 Likert scale (see Figure 1).
- Participants also rate likely approach and avoidance behaviors. Used 1-7 Likert scale.
- College student (age 18-21) participants (N = 41)(14 male, 27 female) rated asylum seekers on various qualities.
- Series of t-test conducted to compare imagined contact with asylum seeker and unspecified individual
- Figure 1 shows
  - Outgroup Trust,  $t(63) = -2.23, p = .029$ .
  - Outgroup Attitude,  $t(62) = 2.86, p = .006$ .
  - Intergroup Anxiety,  $t(62) = 4.63, p = .005$ .
- Figure 2 shows
  - Approach behavioral tendency,  $t(62) = -3.43, p = .001$
  - Avoidance behavioral tendency,  $t(62) = 2.47, p = .016$
- Figure 3 shows
  - Post hoc Pathway analysis used to assess imagined contact's (reverse coded as  $-1$ =control,  $1$ =experimental) effect on behavioral tendencies of approaching and avoiding asylum seekers. Analysis revealed behavioral tendencies mediated by trust, attitude, and intergroup anxiety toward asylum seekers. Relationships summarized in figure 3.

## Participant Ratings of Asylum Seekers

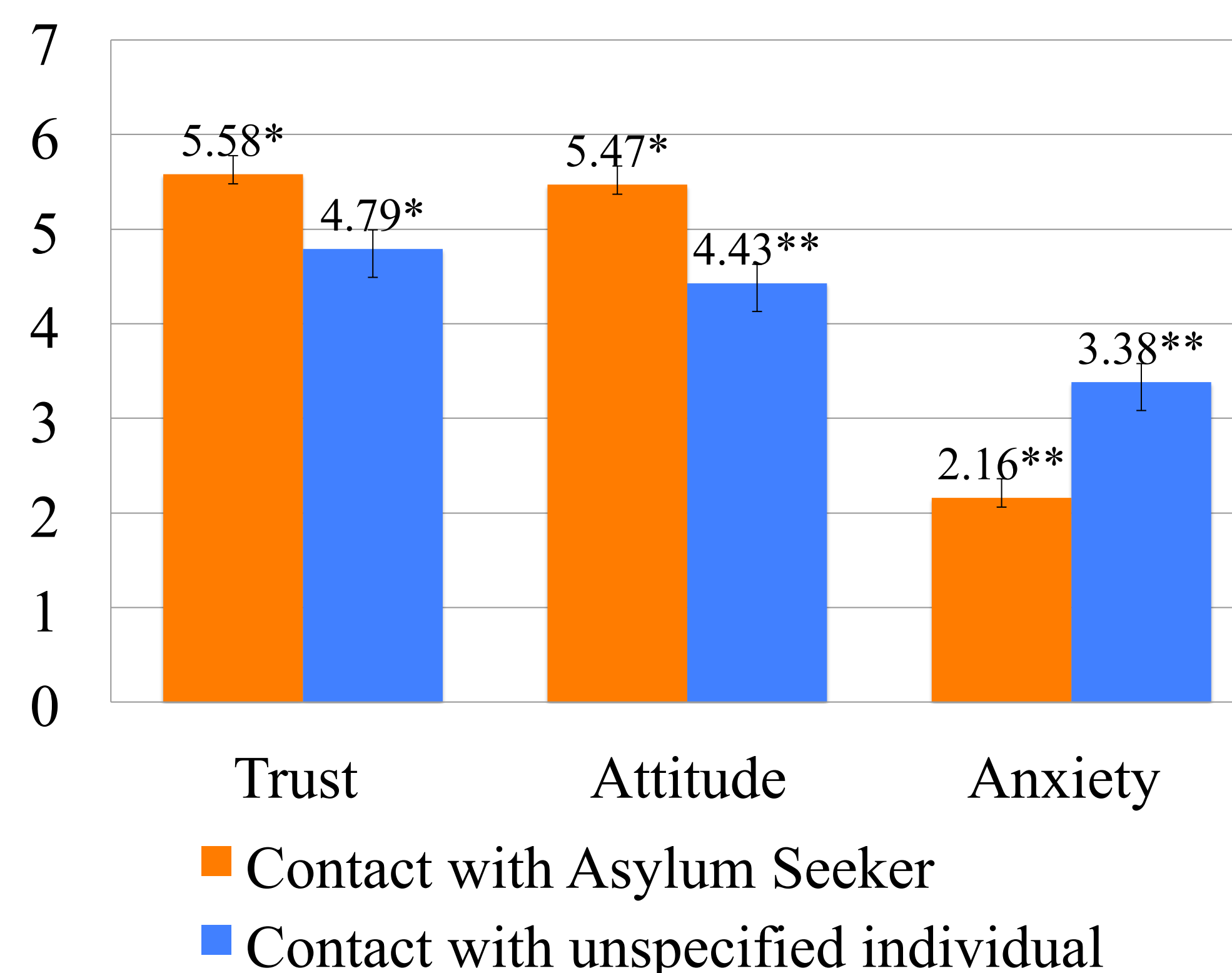


Figure 1. Participant ratings of asylum speakers after experimental manipulation. Adapted from Turner, West, and Christie (2013). Error bars represent SEM.

## Behavioral Tendency Measures

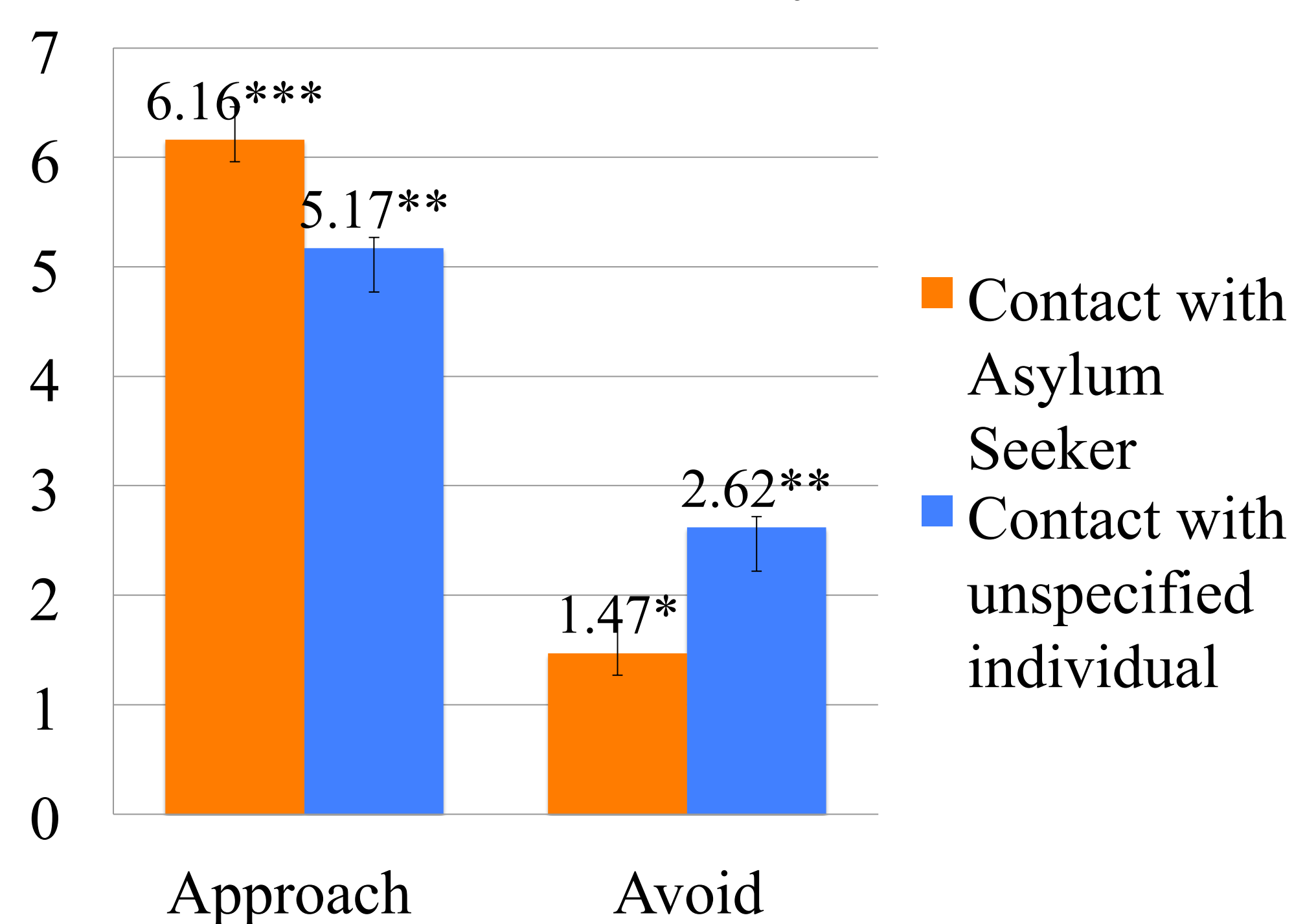


Figure 2. Mean values for approach and avoid tendency in experimental versus control condition participants. Adapted from Turner, West, and Christie (2013) Error bars represent SEM.

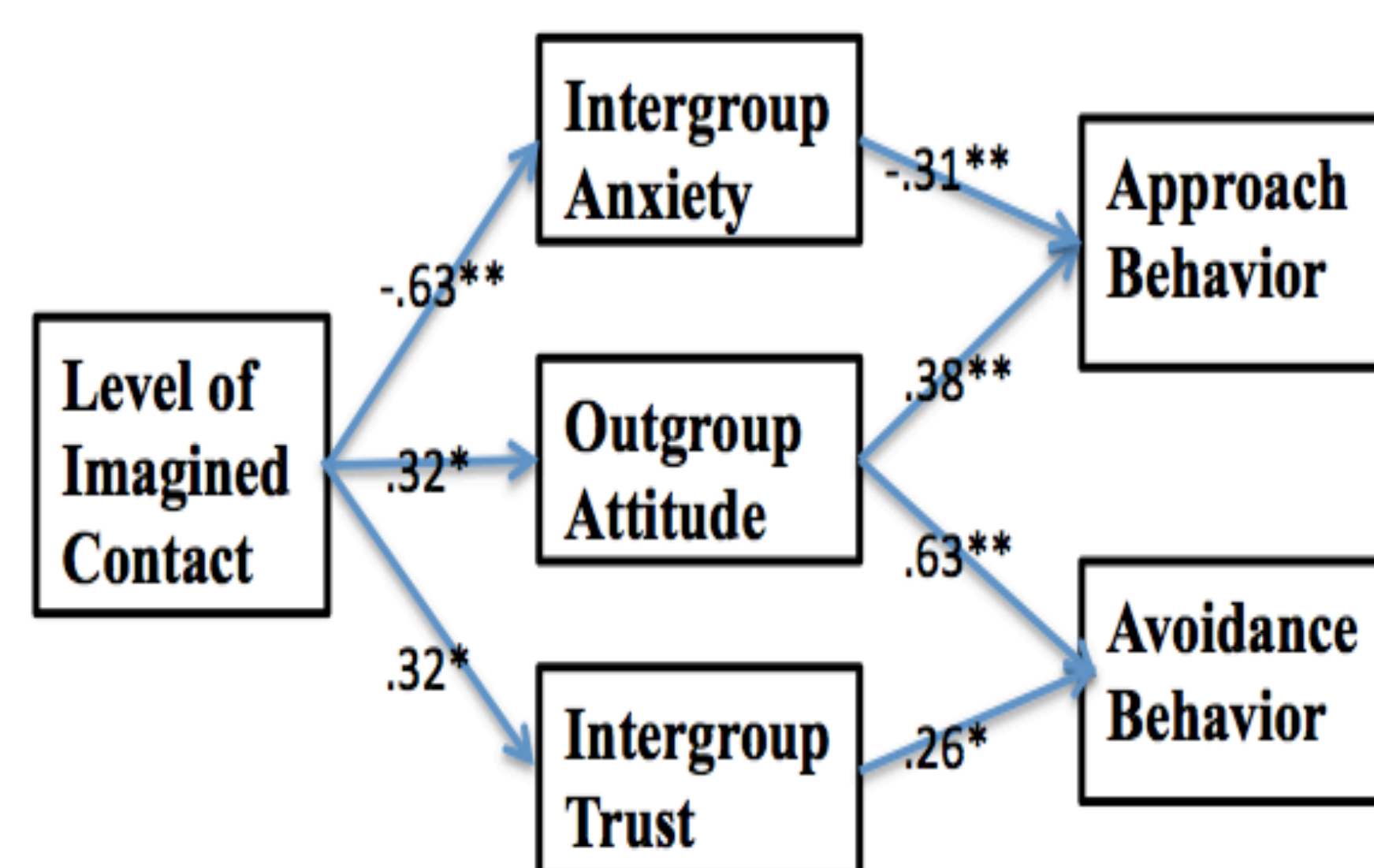


Figure 3: Significant correlations: anxiety/trust,  $r = -.46, p = .008$ ; anxiety/attitude,  $r = -.41, p = .016$ ; trust/attitude,  $r = .54, p = .003$ ; approach/avoid behavioral tendencies,  $r = -.21, p = .020$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## Future Directs

- All three mediator (trust, attitude, and anxiety) have significant effect on behavioral change. Research should develop methods of stressing these variables.
  - Creating low anxiety scenarios for the contact to take place under
  - Develop sense of trust between ingroup and outgroup members
- Are these mediators consistent among all outgroups?
- What other mediating factors may be present?
  - Participants emotional state?
  - Activity in which the imagined outgroup member is engaging
- Current research uses correlational results and path analysis. Future research should use experimental manipulation to test for effect of mediating variables on behavioral tendency.

## References

- Abrams, D., Crisp, R. J., Marques, S., Fagg, E., Bedford, L., & Provias, D. (2008). Threat inoculation: Experienced and imagined intergenerational contact prevents stereotype threat effects on older people's math performance. *Psychology and Aging, 23*(4), 934-939.
- Crisp, R. J., & Turner, R. N. (2009). Can imagined interactions produce positive perceptions?: Reducing prejudice through simulated social contact. *American Psychologist, 64*(4), 231-240.
- Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2008). How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic tests of three mediators. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 38*(6), 922-934
- Turner, R. N., West, K. and Christie, Z. (2013), Out-group trust, intergroup anxiety, and out-group attitude as mediators of the effect of imagined intergroup contact on intergroup behavioral tendencies. *J Appl Soc Psychol, 43*: E196–E205.
- Tam, T., Hewstone, M., Kenworthy, J., & Cairns, E. (2009). Intergroup Trust in Northern Ireland. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*(1), 45-59.
- Wright, S. C., Aron, A., McLaughlin-Volpe, T., & Ropp, S. A. (1997). The extended contact effect: Knowledge of cross-group friendships and prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*(1), 73-90.