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**Inter-group Contact and  
Out-group Altruism after Violence**

**Abstract:**

Altruism among humans is common. It is especially prominent among in-group members. However, results from laboratory-in-the-field experiments with out-group members of different ethnic or religious backgrounds presents a puzzle. In all instances, the groups were rivals in civil wars. While we find almost no altruistic behavior among groups that were engaged in fighting, out-group altruism emerges with the passage of time. To address the underlying mechanism that might explain this puzzling result, a laboratory experiment is used to sort between norms revision and a contact hypothesis explanations. The findings show that contact with out-group members, in a mutually beneficial task, results in a reversion to prior levels of out-group altruism following conflict. The findings reinforce the idea that deeply held attitudes toward a stigmatized out-group change following productive interactions with those out-group members. It is clear that hostility between groups need not persist over time.

**About the Author:**

Professor Wilson is interested in human behavior. In the past his work focused on political history and the design of political institutions - especially the U.S. Congress in the pre-Federal and early-Federal period. His current work focuses on human cooperation and conflict. Of special interest are the evolutionary, biological, and neurological foundations of human behavior. He has designed experiments that explore the development of cooperation in numerous bargaining games. This research has a strong cross-disciplinary cast and was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation and was facilitated by the Rice University Behavioral Research Laboratory. Dr. Wilson is the Herbert S. Autrey Emeritus Professor of Political Science at Rice University.

