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Divide and Rule, Unite and Resist: Contact, Collective Action and Policy Attitudes among Historically Disadvantaged Groups

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Racial segregation encourages members of historically advantaged groups to form negative intergroup attitudes, which then motivate practices of discrimination that sustain inequality and disadvantage. By implication, interventions designed to increase intergroup contact have been proposed as a means of reducing dominant group prejudices and promoting social change. In this article, we highlight another mechanism through which segregation shapes intergroup relations, namely, by inhibiting political solidarity between historically disadvantaged groups. Building on a field survey conducted in postapartheid South Africa, we demonstrate how challenging this form of segregation may reveal alternative mechanisms through which intergroup contact facilitates social change. Notably, we report evidence that positive contact with Black residents of an informal settlement in Pietermaritzburg was associated with Indian residents' support for political policies and

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forms of collective action that might improve conditions in that settlement. In addition, we show that such support was partly mediated by perceptions of collective discrimination.

There is now abundant evidence that intergroup contact reduces prejudice, especially under favorable circumstances, and that its effects generalize across different forms of intergroup relations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). The “contact hypothesis” (Allport, 1954), however, has also attracted criticism over the past few years. While accepting that contact encourages us to like one another more, some commentators are skeptical about whether or not it can alter wider systems of inequality. Indeed, they have presented evidence that interventions to promote positive contact can actually have counterproductive effects on the political attitudes and collective action orientation of disadvantaged groups (e.g., see Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012; Tausch, Saguy, & Bryson, 2015).

The present article contributes to this emerging debate and develops contact research in a new direction. Historically, such research has focused mainly on relations between historically advantaged and disadvantaged groups and has emphasized the role of prejudice reduction in promoting social change. By contrast, we focus on relations between communities who share a history of disadvantage. In so doing, we explore an alternative path through which contact may produce change, namely, by promoting recognition of injustice, empathy with others, and joint collective action. In order to develop this argument, we present evidence from a South African field study, focusing on the role of contact in promoting Indian South Africans’ political support for Black South Africans. We begin by further developing the rationale and theoretical framework of our research.

Beyond Black and White: Contact and Segregation as a Multiracial Process

Early research on contact focused mainly on racial interactions in the United States and was designed to assess the consequences of emerging patterns of desegregation in domains such as housing, education, employment, and the military (e.g., Wilner, Walkley, & Cook, 1952). Although researchers recognized that contact is a relational process, affecting the attitudes of both parties involved, they were concerned mostly with its effects on Whites. Whites were seen as the main perpetrators and beneficiaries of racial discrimination. Reducing their race prejudices was thus presumed to be central to the project of achieving social change.

This presumption carried over into later work. Contact researchers continued to focus primarily on the problem of improving dominant group attitudes toward the historically disadvantaged (e.g., gay people and ethnic minorities), with two consequences. First, evidence on how contact shapes subordinate group attitudes toward dominant groups remained sparse. Second, until recently, evidence on how

contact shaped relations between subordinate groups was rarely collected at all, and now remains limited to a piecemeal, if suggestive, set of studies. Examples include Gibson and Claassen's (2010) work on contact between Blacks, Indians, and Coloreds in South Africa; and Hindriks, Verkuyten, and Coenders' (2014) work on Turkish and Moroccan contact in the Netherlands.

Yet why might researchers be interested in this kind of contact? Are interminority relations not a mere sideshow to the main event of reducing the bigotry of members of powerful groups: those who are in a position not only to hold but also to act on their racist attitudes?

One obvious reason is that interminority prejudices may lead to similar patterns of discrimination and conflict as majority–minority prejudices and they may be likewise ameliorated by interventions to promote contact. Existing research has focused mainly on this possibility, including the studies cited above. For example, Gibson and Claassen's (2010) found that when Indian and Colored South Africans had positive interactions with Black South African members of both groups evaluated Black South Africans more favorably on dimensions such as perceived criminality, trustworthiness, and selfishness.

Another reason for studying contact between historically disadvantaged groups can be derived from analysis of the ideological functions of segregation in colonial societies. Consider, for example, the design of the apartheid city (see Davies, 1981), with its group areas, buffer zones, “natural” barriers and other racial boundaries. Clearly, this design was intended to insulate Whites from unwanted contact with members of other race groups. However, it did not simply install a binary opposition between whites and “non-Whites”: it also sought to divide Indians from Africans, Africans from Coloreds, and Coloreds from Indians. This process was both expensive and inefficient, requiring enormous duplication of infrastructure. Yet it was perceived as serving vital functions. Why?

As in other (post)colonial societies, apartheid was based on a “divide and rule” strategy that sought to preempt the formation of seditious allegiances. This strategy was accomplished through numerous tactics: from the selective conferral of economic privileges to the “preservation” of cultural differences to sponsorship of internecine violence. However, the segregation of different factions of the disadvantaged was fundamental. The apartheid authorities felt that too much contact between historically disadvantaged communities posed a risk to the system. They worried that it might enable the development of political solidarity between them. By thinking in this way, they employed an implicit psychological theory of contact that we begin to explore in this article.

Unite and Resist: From Prejudice Reduction to Collective Action

Most contact research employs a prejudice reduction model of social change, which focuses on getting members of dominant groups to like others more.

Critics have argued that this model of change may prioritize social harmony over social equality (e.g., Wright & Lubensky, 2009). Indeed, by getting us all to get along better, it may even encourage acceptance of the status quo. Recent research has shown, for instance, that harmonious contact between members of dominant and subordinate groups decreases the latter's acknowledgment of discrimination, support for policies to promote social change, willingness to form relations of political solidarity with other subordinate groups, and participation in collective action to challenge inequality (see Dixon et al., 2012 for a review). Among other explanations, these effects have been attributed to the role of contact in promoting positive emotional attitudes toward dominant groups, common identification with such groups, and acceptance of systems-justifying beliefs.

This kind of evidence has inspired a heated debate about the value of the prejudice reduction perspective on social change in general and the contact hypothesis more specifically. Some commentators have argued that, whatever its limits, the promotion of intergroup contact remains vitally important as means of promoting social harmony, particularly in societies marked by a history of intergroup violence. Others have argued that, in some contexts at least, collective action to directly challenge the status quo is a more effective mechanism to promote social change than interventions to promote prejudice reduction, such as the contact hypothesis (e.g., see the commentaries published with Dixon et al., 2012).

To date, this debate has focused almost exclusively on the consequences of contact that is manifestly hierarchical in nature, e.g., contact between more and less powerful groups in the laboratory (Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009) or between groups embedded in longstanding relations of advantage and disadvantage in societies such as Israel (Saguy & Chernyak-Hai, 2012) or South Africa (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2007). We want to argue that shifting the focus of research onto groups who share a history of disadvantage allows us to rethink the relationship between contact and social change, opening up new avenues of inquiry. Perhaps most important, whereas contact with the dominant group may well decrease the collective action orientation of subordinate group members and encourage the development of conservative political attitudes, contact with members of other subordinate groups may have precisely the opposite effect. That is, it may make them more not less willing to act together to challenge the status quo (e.g., via mass protests) and more not less willing to support policies designed to uplift members of other subordinate groups.

The present research, then, was designed to explore the relationship between contact between members of disadvantaged groups and their collective action orientation and attitudes toward policies designed to redress inequality. It was also designed to explore the mechanisms that may mediate this relationship, focusing on the role of perceived discrimination and intergroup empathy.

Perceived Discrimination and Intergroup Empathy

Perceived discrimination. Perceptions of discrimination and injustice are one of the most consistent predictors of collective behavior among members of disadvantaged groups. There is now an extensive body of evidence to suggest, for example, that such perceptions increase support for mass action to promote social change, often by generating “negative” emotions such as anger and outrage (e.g., van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). For this reason, they are central to several theoretical models in the field (e.g., Klandermans, 1997). Relatedly, research evidence has demonstrated a positive relationship between perceived discrimination and attitudes toward policies designed to promote equality. To simplify a more complex set of findings: when individuals believe social inequality is unjust, then they are more likely to support interventions such as affirmative action, welfare relief, and educational desegregation. Conversely, when they attribute inequality to other factors such as a lack of motivation or ability, then support for such policies wanes (e.g., Durrheim et al., 2009).

Building on this work, we argue that positive contact between subordinate groups is likely to increase their perceptions that the social order is unjust and, by implication, alter their collective action orientation and policy attitudes. Perhaps most important, such contact may create opportunities to share experiences of oppression and disadvantage and thus to recognize more fully shared forms of discrimination. This, in turn, may motivate participation in joint collective action and support for interventions designed to reduce inequality. In other words, our study tested the hypothesis that perceived discrimination may mediate, at least in part, the relationship between contact on the hand and collective action and policy attitudes on the other.

Intergroup empathy. The study was also designed to investigate a second mediational relationship, exploring the potential role of contact in promoting empathy for members of other disadvantaged groups. Specifically, we posit that contact may increase the capacity to take the perspective of others and thus to recognize the role of historical and ongoing forms of deprivation and hardship. In turn, this kind of recognition may produce shifts in political behavior: for example, by encouraging support for policies designed to improve others’ situation or participation in joint collective action to promote socioeconomic change.

The explanatory path from contact through intergroup empathy to prejudice reduction is, of course, well-established in the contact literature (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). However, the explanatory path from contact through intergroup empathy to collective action and policy attitudes has not been directly studied to our knowledge. Thanks to a series of studies conducted by Mallet, Hunsinger, Sinclair, and Swim (2008), we do know that empathy increases the willingness of dominant group members to participate in collective action on behalf of

subordinate groups. They found, for instance, that heterosexual men were more willing to take action against homophobic hate crimes when they had higher levels of empathic “outgroup perspective taking.” They found that a similar relationship characterized White Americans’ responses to crimes of racial hatred.

In contrast to Mallet et al.’s work, the present research focused on relations between two groups who have suffered a history of disadvantage within the same society, namely, Indian and Black South Africans, and now live in a community where both groups continue to experience deprivation and discrimination. More specifically, building on the theoretical and empirical work discussed above, our research tested the hypothesis that contact with Black South Africans is positively related to the collective action orientation and policy attitudes of Indian South Africans and that this relationship is (partly) mediated by perceived discrimination and empathy.

Research Context

The research was conducted in the town of Pietermaritzburg, located near the major port city of Durban on South Africa’s east coast. During the apartheid era, Durban and its surrounding areas were targeted by government officials seeking to apply the early waves of apartheid legislation. This legislation sought not only to segregate Whites from “non-Whites,” but also to segregate different kinds of “non-Whites” from one another. Divisions were established, for example, between Indian and Black South Africans through the creation of separate spaces of education, recreation and, most important, residence. The notorious Group Areas Act of 1950 was first tested in and around Durban, with devastating consequences. According to Maharaj (2002), an estimated 75,000 Indians and 81,000 Black Africans were “relocated” from established communities, and several areas of the city that were racially integrated at that time were effectively destroyed.

The historical, cultural and political trajectories of these two groups are, of course, different. During the apartheid era, the state engineered (slight) status advantages for Indians relative to blacks (e.g., by conferring limited forms of political enfranchisement). Moreover, by treating Black Africans as migrant laborers in cities like Durban and Cape Town, they created the conditions under which informal settlement in urban areas proliferated. The legacy of this process has carried over into the “new” South Africa and disproportionately affects its Black citizens, limiting their access to formal housing, property tenure, and associated facilities.

At the same time, both Black and Indian South African shared a common experience of disadvantage under the apartheid regime. Both were involuntarily segregated from Whites and from one another during the apartheid years; both were displaced from their land, homes, and communities as a result of legislation such as the Group Areas Act and the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act;

both suffered under laws such as the Immorality Act, which outlawed sexual relations and marriage across racial boundaries; and above all, both, unlike White South Africans, were primarily subjects not agents, victims not beneficiaries, of apartheid. Equally important, in postapartheid society both remain disadvantaged in terms of basic indices such as wealth, landownership, and access to resources such as healthcare and are accordingly entitled to benefit from policies designed to redress the legacy of apartheid. Though a numeric majority, Africans lie at the bottom of leagues tables of deprivation, while Indians, to adapt Lemon's phrase, remain a "small and virtually powerless minority" (1990, p. 131). The possibility that this creates the conditions for varying forms of local political solidarity is explored in the present research.

Northdale. The research explored relations between Indian and Black residents of a community called Northdale, a suburb of the city of Pietermaritzburg, which has a population of just over 35,500 people. Around 1,200 are Black Africans living in formal housing and informal residential settlements; and the vast majority of the remaining residents are of Indian descent. Overall, Indians represent around 82% of the population of Northdale. This figure is not incidental. During the apartheid era, around 90% of Pietermaritzburg's Indian population were moved there, sometimes by force, with most of its Black African residents being (re)located to a township called Edendale on the city's outskirts. In the postapartheid era, however, pockets of "informal settlement" have resulted in the emergence of predominantly Black areas of the community (see Figure 1), the largest of which is known as Nhlalakahle. Northdale has also remained a deprived area of the city. It is an area where most residents face poverty, unemployment, and inadequate amenities.

This problem is evidenced most starkly within Nhlalakahle itself, which has substandard water supplies and sanitization, and as yet no official system of electrification. Responding to the latter issue, local residents have resorted periodically to the "theft" of electricity, which is accomplished by running makeshift lines off official supplies. As this practice is illegal, it has heightened tensions between the Nhlalakahle community and its surrounding, mainly Indian, neighborhoods. It has also prompted several protests against the local municipality, the most violent of which occurred on July 11, 2012. On the morning of that day, officials from the Msunduzi Municipality's "electricity disconnection unit," escorted by armed police, raided Nhlalakahle and cut off around 150 "illegal" electricity connections. By 5 pm that evening, a group of Nhlalakahle residents had begun to protest this event by blocking off streets, including Bombay Road, burning tires, and throwing bricks at local police and fire fighters. Their demands were clear. As Sibusiso Sibiya, a local resident stated: "We want electricity and water. That is all that we want. We are not fighting with anyone." (Armed de-electrification in Pietermaritzburg).



Fig. 1. Northdale in Pietermaritzburg.
 Note. The positions of the main Black African settlements are indicated by the crosses on this map.

A year later a similar protest occurred. Buried in local media coverage, was a footnote that sparked the present research. It read simply: “Residents living along Bombay Road showed solidarity with those from Nhlalakahle, saying that the municipality was not helping the situation.” (Power cut-off sparks riot; *The Witness*, May 24, 2013).

Method

Sample

The research focused on a random sample of households in Northdale, with participants being selected using the “last birthday method” (Binson, Canchola, & Catania, 2000). A total of 365 respondents completed questionnaires. Their mean age was 45.4 years ($SD = 14.97$), ranging from 18 to 84 years. The sample consisted of 174 females and 185 males (six respondents declined to provide a clear category), all of whom identified as Indian South Africans.

Procedure

Seven research assistants administered the survey via door-to-door visits to selected households. All research assistants were Indian students living in Northdale

or surrounding suburbs. After explaining the purpose of the survey, the research assistants asked the person who first answered the door which adult in the household had most recently had a birthday. If they agreed to participate, then this person was selected as the respondent who completed the survey instrument.

Materials

The survey instrument was presented in English and consisted both of items adapted from previous research and items designed to capture context-specific features. For all items, participants responded on Likert-type scales ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). We report scale reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha coefficients, or correlations, where appropriate).

Contact quality. Contact quality was measured using two items adapted from Islam and Hewstone's (1993) Qualitative Aspects of Contact scale ($r = .71$, $t = 18.73$, $df = 350$, $p < .001$) "When I come into contact with people from informal settlements, we almost always interact as equals"; and "When I come into contact with people from informal settlements, contact is almost always friendly."

Perceived outgroup discrimination. Perceived outgroup discrimination was measured using two items ($r = .4$, $t = 8.01$, $df = 345$, $p < .001$): "South African society just hasn't dealt fairly with people who live in informal settlement" and "People who live in informal settlements are discriminated against."

Empathy. Empathy was measured by adapting and combining two items from Wang et al. (2003) Ethnocultural Empathy Scale ("It is easy for me to understand what it would feel like to live in an informal settlement" and "I can relate to the frustration that some people feel about having fewer opportunities due to the fact that they live in informal settlements"), with two additional items designed to measure awareness that residents of informal settlements suffer hardship (e.g., "I am aware of how our society treats people who live who live in informal settlements differently," "I can see how people who live in informal settlements are oppressed in our society"). These items tapped the perspective-taking dimension of empathy.

Policy attitudes. Policy Attitudes were measured using two items, designed to capture local concerns, namely "Informal settlement residents should be provided by the government with free water and electricity" and "I am happy for informal settlements in Northdale to remain where they are" ($r = .24$, $t = 4.62$, $df = 361$, $p < .001$). Although the interitem correlation is a little low, it falls into the band marked as "extensive" (just below "exemplary" and above "moderate")

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations of Key Study Variables

	Outgroup discrimination	Empathy	Policy attitudes	Collective action	Mean	SD
Contact quality	.25***	.26***	.27***	.31***	2.16	.91
Outgroup discrimination		.43***	.15**	.38***	2.13	.93
Empathy		–	.12 [†]	.35***	2.19	.79
Policy attitudes			–	.17***	0.83	.83
Collective action				–	2.23	1.16

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed); * $p < .05$.

Note. Variables in the table are unit-weighted composites, and not latent variables. Minimum n for all measures = 338.

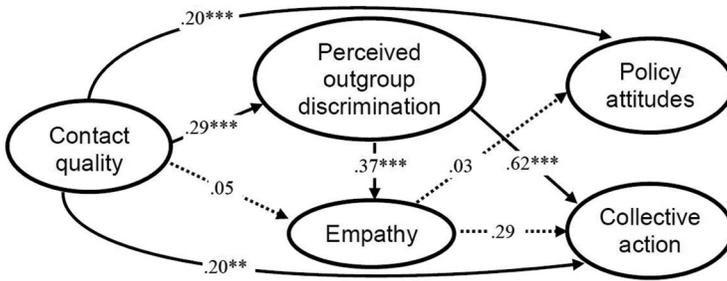
in the table of rating criteria for evaluating attitude measures set out by Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman (1991, p. 13).

Collective action. This scale consisted of two items adapted from Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, and Leach (2004), namely “I would be willing to sign a petition to improve the current situation of residents of informal settlements” and “I would be willing to participate in a project to improve conditions for residents of informal settlements” ($r = .82, t = 27.14, df = 357, p < .001$).

Results

We present the means and standard deviations of all scales in Table 1. Mean scores generally fell close to the scale midpoint of 2, with one exception. The support for policies that might benefit residents of informal settlements was considerably lower ($M = .83, SD = .83$) and this is worth considering when interpreting the implications of our other results. The table also records the zero order correlations between scale measures, which suggest that contact with residents of informal settlements is positively related to empathy, perceived discrimination, collective action orientation, and policy support. In addition, both empathy and perceived discrimination are positively related to collective action orientation.

At the next stage of analysis, we conducted Structural Equation Modeling. To begin with, we assessed the measurement model separately from the structural model. The measurement model proposed five nonorthogonal latent variables, corresponding to the “scales” outlined in the Materials section of this article, with the manifest variables being the items declared there. The degree of fit for the measurement component was good, and certainly high enough to warrant testing the structural component (RMSEA = .04 (90% CI for RMSEA .019 to .058), CFI = .98, TLI = .97, SRMR = .036, $\chi^2_{ML} = 67.31, df = 44, p < .02$).



RMSEA = 0.04 sRMR=.04 CFI = .98 NNFI = .96

$\chi^2_{ML} = 70.24, df = 45$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .025$ *** $p < .005$

Fig. 2. Structural Equation Model (A) of the relationship between Contact, Perceived Discrimination, and political outcomes, with observed coefficients (measurement component excluded for readability).

We then tested an Structural Equation Model (SEM) model proposed in which contact quality was conceptualized as earliest in a chain of relationships, having direct effects on perceived discrimination, empathy, political attitudes, and support for collective action. It was also conceptualized as having a number of indirect effects, through single or multiple chains. Similar comprehensive sets of direct and indirect effects were proposed for perceived outgroup discrimination and empathy. The model also clearly proposed political attitudes and support for collective action as being outcomes, rather than exogenous or mediator variables (see Figure 2).

To test this model (A), we used the SEM function in LAVAAN. Model A was a good fit to the data in terms of standard measures of fit; RMSEA = .04 (90% CI for RMSEA .021 to .059), CFI = .98, TLI = .97, SRMR = .037, $\chi^2_{ML} = 70.24, df = 45, p < .01$). However, many of the paths in the structural model were not statistically significant. Detailed parameters of the structural model are shown in Table 2.

We created a second model (B) by removing the paths in model A that were not statistically significant (shown as Figure 3). Specifically, this model omitted direct paths from contact quality to empathy (but retained an indirect path through perceived outgroup discrimination to empathy), from empathy to either of the outcomes, and from perceived outgroup discrimination to political attitudes. Essentially, this model proposes that quality of contact has positive direct effects on political attitudes and support for collective action and an indirect effect on support for collective action through perceived outgroup discrimination. The role of empathy is interesting in this model: although perceived discrimination has a direct effect on it, and quality of contact has an indirect effect on it, it does not itself have any effects on either political attitudes or support for collective action.

Table 2. Fit Statistics and Unstandardized Regression Weights for Models A and B

Fit statistics	Model A		Model B	
χ^2_{ML}	70.24		71.80	
df	45		46	
CFI	.98		.98	
TLI	.97		.97	
RMSEA	.041		.041	
90% CI RMSEA	.02; .06		.02; .06	
SRMR	.037		.04	
AIC	10,700.98		10,700.53	
<i>N</i>	331		331	

	<i>b</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)	<i>p</i> <	<i>b</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)	<i>p</i> <
OG discrimination ← Contact quality	.29 (.07)	.010	.32 (.07)	.001
Empathy ← OG discrimination	.37 (.10)	.001	.42 (.10)	.001
Empathy ← Contact quality	.05 (.04)	.150	—	—
Policy attitudes ← Contact quality	.20 (.08)	.007	.20 (.07)	.008
Policy attitudes ← Empathy	.03 (.11)	.820	—	—
Collective action ← Contact quality	.20 (.08)	.014	.17 (.09)	.048
Collective action ← OG discrimination	.62 (.22)	.005	.78 (.16)	.001
Collective action ← Empathy	.29 (.34)	.397	—	—

We tested this model with LAVAAN and found an almost identical fit to that for model A (RMSEA = .041 (90% CI for RMSEA .021 to .059), CFI = .98, TLI = .97, SRMR = .04, $\chi^2_{ML} = 71.8$, *df* = 46, *p* < .01). Since model B is nested under model A (differing in terms of deleted paths and added covariances only), we compared the relative fit of the models using difference in χ^2_{ML} . This test statistic was consistent with no difference between the models ($\chi^2_{ML} = 1.56$, *df* = 1, *p* < .22). Note that there is only one degree of freedom for this test, despite dropping several paths, since LAVAAN automatically computes covariances between endogenous variables that are not postulated to be in directed relationships to each other, which is postulated by the developer as best practice in structural equation modeling (Rosseel, 2012). Since the question of what constitutes “nested models” is somewhat controversial in the SEM literature, we also compared the AIC measures of the two models, and these were nearly identical: 10,701 versus 10,700, respectively. The relative probability that the lesser of these values minimizes information loss (over the other value) is .61, which is very little gain.

However, model B seems preferable to model A on several grounds: model A contains a number of paths that are not statistically significant, and it hypothesizes

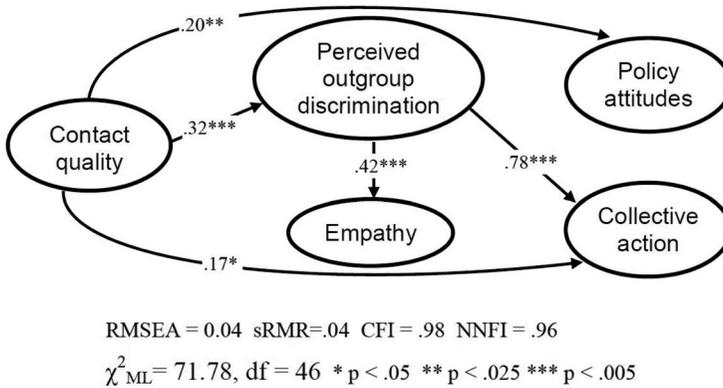


Fig. 3. Structural Equation Model (B) of the relationship between Contact, Perceived Discrimination, and political outcomes, with observed coefficients (measurement component excluded for readability).

a more complex set of relationships. Since model B is no worse than model A in terms of fit, we prefer the simpler model. Of course, part of our model generation has been post hoc in nature, and could be said to capitalize on chance. As a partial check on this, we attempted an internal cross-validation of model B: we randomly split the dataset into equally sized training and testing sets, and reran the SEM on each set. We computed the ECVI index (Expected Cross Validation Index; West, Taylor, & Wu, 2012) for each model, and also compared the fit statistics, as well as the parameter estimates. The SEM models were similar, yielding RMSEA estimates of .061 and .045, respectively, the 90% confidence intervals overlapping substantially, leading to the conclusion that there was insufficient evidence to reject the hypothesis that they were of different size. The ECVI coefficients were .84 and .75, respectively, suggesting similar models (indeed, the 90% confidence intervals overlap considerably). Of course, a more complete check on the validity of the models would be to replicate them with a different sample, but this is beyond our means at present.

Fit statistics for structural equation models are not always sufficiently diagnostic, so we examined standardized residuals and modification indices for model B. Approximately 8% of the residuals were larger than notional 95% cut points on a cumulative normal distribution, and none fell outside Bonferroni corrected cut points. One modification index was larger than 10, the notional cut-off in the MPlus modeling program (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2011).

To further clarify these results, in the next section we outline the strength and direction of the paths included in model B (see Table 2 for a full comparative summary of fit statistics and coefficients for both models; note that all path coefficients are unstandardized).

Contact Quality and Perceived Outgroup Discrimination

As anticipated, the path coefficient relating contact quality and perceived discrimination was statistically significant ($b = .32$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$). That is, the more positively experiences of contact are evaluated, the more that Indian residents recognize that the informal settlers are victims of discrimination.

Contact Quality, Perceived Outgroup Discrimination, and Policy Support

We found support for our hypotheses that policy support is driven by contact quality ($b = .20$, $SE = .07$, $p < .008$).

Contact Quality, Empathy, Perceived Outgroup Discrimination, and Collective Action

Our empathy variable was strongly predicted by perceived outgroup discrimination ($b = .42$, $SE = .10$, $p < .001$) but was not itself a predictor of either collective action or policy attitudes, as established in analysis of model A. Perceived outgroup discrimination was significantly related to quality of contact ($b = .32$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$).

Contact Quality, Perceived Outgroup Discrimination, and Collective Action

Finally, we anticipated that the paths connecting to collective action tendencies from contact quality and outgroup discrimination would be positive and significant. The analysis of model B supports these hypotheses: there are significant positive relationships between contact quality and collective action tendencies ($b = .17$, $SE = .09$, $p < .05$), suggesting that higher quality contact is associated with higher collective action tendencies in our Indian participants. Similarly, the path connecting perceived outgroup discrimination directly to collective action is statistically significant ($b = .78$, $SE = .16$, $p < .001$).

In sum, our analysis of direct effects suggests that higher quality of contact leads to political attitudes that are positively receptive to informal settlers as well as to support for collective action on their behalf. Higher quality of contact also leads to heightened perceptions that informal settlers are discriminated against, which in turn leads—independently—to heightened empathy for settlers. It also leads to support for collective action on their behalf. Notably, heightened perceptions of outgroup discrimination and heightened empathy do not lead to more positive political attitudes toward settlers. We must stress that this interpretation is tentative, as cross-sectional SEM models of the kind we report do not warrant causal conclusions.

There are also indirect effects of quality of contact in Model B, specifically on collective action (through perceived outgroup discrimination), and on empathy (also through perceived outgroup discrimination). These were computed in LAVAAN, and both found to be statistically significant, using bootstrap methods ($n = 10,000$ draws) in LAVAAN ($b = .21, z = 2.60, p < .01$; and $b = .17, z = 3.10, p < .002$).

Discussion

The majority of research on the contact hypothesis has focused on the problem of reducing the prejudices of historically advantaged groups, based on the assumption that getting members of such groups to respond positively to those whom they have historically disliked and mistreated is a prerequisite for social change. The present research has begun to explore an alternative way in which intergroup contact may facilitate social change. In particular, we have explored the idea that positive contact between members of different disadvantaged communities can lay the foundations for new forms of political solidarity and collective action.

This idea is particularly apposite in societies organized historically around the ideological principle of “divide and rule,” of which South Africa is an iconic example. Everyone knows that “Whites” were segregated from “non-Whites” in South Africa during the apartheid era. However, the apartheid state also enforced segregation between individuals classified as “Colored,” “Indian,” and “Black.” In the postapartheid era, those racial boundaries are gradually blurring—at least in some contexts—and the implications of this process for intergroup relations are important. What happens, for instance, when formerly segregated members of disadvantaged groups come to live together in the same residential area? What are the social, psychological, and political consequences of meeting one another as neighbors, acquaintances, and sometimes friends who share a common neighborhood?

Building on survey data collected as part of a South African field study, our research has begun to address such questions, focusing on relations between Indian and Black African residents of Northdale in the city of Pietermaritzburg. Our results suggest that contact between historically disadvantaged groups is positively related to collective action orientation and support for policies designed to promote equality. When Indian residents reported having favorable experiences of interacting with Black residents of the Northdale, they also tended to report greater willingness to participate in collective action designed to improve local conditions, greater support for municipal electrification of the Nhlalakahle settlement where the majority of Black residents live, and greater opposition to proposals to remove the settlement from Northdale. In sum, contact seemed to promote political solidarity among Indian toward their Black neighbors. This finding is important

not least because, as we explained earlier, intergroup tensions around the consequences of electricity “theft” by Nhlalakahle residents have sometimes had a divisive impact on community relations.

Our results also clarify some of the processes that underlie the relationship between contact and these political attitudes. Most important, in line with broader theories of collective behavior (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2008), we found that the relationship between contact and collective action was partly mediated by perceptions of discrimination. Given the opportunity to experience positive interactions with their Black African neighbors, Indian residents were more ready to acknowledge the discrimination they face and this in turn predicted their willingness to participate in community initiatives to produce social change. In addition, perceived injustice also mediated a positive association between contact and empathy. That is, favorable contact with Black residents was indirectly related to Indian residents’ willingness to recognize the hardships they face and this relation was partly explained by heightened perceptions of outgroup discrimination.

Finally, we also explored the idea that empathy might mediate the relationships between contact and our main outcome variables. However, in this case, we found limited evidence to support this idea. Even so, it would be premature to rule out the possibility that empathy plays a mediating role for reasons. First, the measure of empathy used in our study focused exclusively on the cognitive process of perspective taking. It is possible that a measure focused on its affective dimensions might yield different results. Second, given that the contact–empathy relationship is well-evidenced (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008) and that the empathy–collective action relationship has been found in at least one previous study (Mallett, Huntsinger, Sinclair, & Swim, 2008), the mediating role of empathy remains theoretically plausible. In the present research, however, the most parsimonious model posits direct associations between contact and both collective action and policy attitudes. In addition, it posits indirect associations between contact and collective action, which occur via the mediating variable of perceived discrimination.

We conclude by discussing some theoretical and practical implications of our work, acknowledging its limitations, and mentioning some directions for future research.

Theoretical and practical implications: The shift from studying the effects of contact on members of a group who have been clearly advantaged by an unequal social system to studying relations between groups who share a history of disadvantage within that system does not imply a simple extension of traditional models of contact. To the contrary, it opens up new perspectives on the relationship between contact and social change, moving the field beyond a prejudice reduction paradigm. For instance, the most interesting consequences of positive interactions between groups in a place like Northdale are not only, or even primarily, their role

in getting residents to like one another more (important though that outcome may remain). As our research has begun to show, such contact may also help to create new forms of political solidarity, increasing recognition of injustice and supporting political behaviors that challenge the status quo. In other words, qualifying recent critiques of the field, our research shows how certain forms of contact may have “mobilizing” as well as “sedative” (Cakal, Hewstone, Schwar, & Heath, 2011) effects on political orientations and behaviors.

The psychological processes involved in such mobilization are likely to differ from those traditionally prioritized in the contact literature. To be sure, nurturing positive intergroup feelings and reducing intergroup stereotypes may continue to play an important role. However, alternative mechanisms and outcomes may also be brought to the center stage of contact research, including “negative” or even “adversarial” emotions, such as anger and frustration at the status quo.

In turn, at a practical level, our research has implications for how interventions to foster intergroup contact are targeted and designed. Most obviously, it shows the need to devise interventions that promote contact between historically disadvantaged groups. This form of contact is usually treated as secondary to the main issue of encouraging dominant group members to get along better with others. It is rarely the main focus of interventions to promote social change in institutions such as education, industry, or residence. In addition, the contextual conditions under which contact is implemented might also need to shift. A model of change based on creating social harmony and reducing prejudice tends to produce interventions that deemphasize differences, keep controversial or politically charged issues off the agenda, and foster an environment where participants can get to know one another better without “uncomfortable” issues of inequality surfacing. Conversely, a model of change based on creating political solidarity and collective action might require interventions that are designed precisely to flag contentious issues and to motivate participants to recognize and challenge social inequality (see Maoz, 2011; Wright & Lubensky, 2009).

Limitations and Future Directions

The present research based on a field study conducted in a single community in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. The data are cross-sectional and based exclusively on survey methods, making it impossible to draw definitive conclusions about causality. In addition, we have focused exclusively on the responses of the Indian community of Northdale. Although focusing on the responses of a single group is common in contact research, we acknowledge that a relational model of contact needs to explore how interactions shape the attitudes of all parties involved. Moreover, although we tested a number of theoretical models during our analysis, we anticipate that our preferred model may well have simplified the explanation of processes that will be clarified by future research.

What, for example, is the role of “interminority” contact in creating the kind of collective identity (Simon & Klandermans, 2001) that impels their joint mobilization? In an unpublished paper, Wilkinson (2010) recently reported that positive contact between Latinos and African Americans, particularly relations of friendship, tended to reduce perceptions of intergroup competition and increase perceptions that the two communities have common interests. She argues that this is important because such perceptions may ultimately lay the foundations for coalition-building and other initiatives across ethnic lines, an idea that resonates with, and extends, models of intergroup contact based on the creation common identification (see Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2009). By implication, contact between historically disadvantaged groups may affect their political behaviors by increasing their awareness that they share a common history of exploitation, encouraging recognition of common grievances (see Górska & Bilewicz, 2015). Again, such perceptions of past injustice may provide the basis for future political solidarity and collective action.

Similarly, we might ask what is potential role of contact in creating a sense of collective efficacy, giving group members the confidence to challenge collectively the status quo (an outcome that, to our knowledge, has never been studied in the contact literature)? Research on collective behavior has established that a sense of efficacy is sometimes a factor that determines whether or not grievances translate into mass resistance (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2008). In so far as contact may enable the formation of larger, more powerful coalitions between the different factions of the disadvantaged, it may also fuel this process. By the same token, the experience of participating in collective action may in turn create opportunities for forms of intra- and intergroup contact that in themselves help subordinate groups to “unite and resist,” sometimes encouraging a sense of empowerment or even the emergence of new collective identities (see Drury & Reicher, 2009).

The main point of the present article is not to resolve such issues but rather to open up a new agenda for contact research. We want to shift the focus of research onto relations between communities that, however diverse, are potentially united by their shared experiences of economic, cultural, and political disadvantage. We believe that this shift opens up new avenues of research. In this article, we have focused on issues of “race” contact in post-apartheid South Africa. However, the shift we are proposing also brings into view other kinds of intergroup relations that have traditionally been neglected in the field (e.g., relations between different factions of the working class, minority immigrant groups, marginalized sexualities, and ethnic groups still living under the shadow of “divide and rule” systems of government, to mention but a few instances). It also invites us to think about how research on these previously neglected forms of intergroup contact might open up new ways of theorizing the relationship between contact and social change.

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