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Contact, Political Solidarity and Collective Action: An Indian Case Study of Relations between Historically Disadvantaged Communities

JOHN DIXON^{1*}, HUSEYIN CAKAL², WAHEEDA KHAN³, MEENA OSMANY⁴,
SRAMANA MAJUMDAR⁵ and MUDASSIR HASSAN⁶

¹*School of Psychology, Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom*

²*School of Psychology, Exeter University, Exeter, United Kingdom*

³*Department of Psychology, Millia, Islamia Jamia University, New Delhi, India*

⁴*Department of Psychology, Millia, Islamia Jamia University, New Delhi, India*

⁵*OP Jindal Global University, New Delhi, India*

⁶*Government Medical College, New Delhi, India*

ABSTRACT

Research on the contact hypothesis has highlighted the role of contact in improving intergroup relations. Most of this research has addressed the problem of transforming the prejudices of historically advantaged communities, thereby eroding wider patterns of discrimination and inequality. In the present research, drawing on evidence from a cross-sectional survey conducted in New Delhi, we explored an alternative process through which contact may promote social change, namely by fostering political solidarity and empowerment amongst the disadvantaged. The results indicated that Muslim students' experiences of contact with other disadvantaged communities were associated with their willingness to participate in joint collective action to reduce shared inequalities. This relationship was mediated by perceptions of collective efficacy and shared historical grievances and moderated by positive experiences of contact with the Hindu majority. Implications for recent debates about the relationship between contact and social change are discussed. Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Key words: contact; prejudice; political solidarity; collective action; social change

Research on intergroup contact has proliferated over the past decade, consolidating the legacy of Allport's (1954) 'contact hypothesis'. Much of this research has confirmed the beneficial effects of contact on intergroup attitudes and relationships (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). It has shown that these effects generalize across a range of contexts and

*Correspondence to: John Dixon, School of Psychology, Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom.
E-mail: john.dixon@open.ac.uk

types of intergroup relations, and may occur even in situations that do not approximate Allport's optimal conditions (e.g. equality of status) (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Recent research has also clarified the social psychological processes that explain how and why contact 'works'. Early studies tended to emphasize how contact challenges negative stereotypes by allowing participants to gain more accurate knowledge of one another (c.f. Stephan & Stefan, 1984). Recent studies have focused increasingly on its emotional consequences, showing how contact reduces feelings of anxiety about others and encourages more positive emotional responses, including the capacity to feel empathy across group boundaries (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

The majority of research on intergroup contact is underpinned by what Wright and Lubensky (2009) have called a 'prejudice reduction model of social change'. That is, it focuses predominantly on altering the negative feelings and beliefs that the historically advantaged harbour towards other members of other groups and is based on the assumption that this will gradually erode broader patterns of inequality. The strengths and limitations of this model of change have recently been the subject of debate (cf. Wright & Lubensky, 2009; Dixon et al., 2010; Dixon, Levine, Reicher & Durrheim, 2012; Tausch, Saguy & Bryson, 2015). Critics have suggested, for example, that it disregards how ostensibly positive interactions between dominant and subordinate groups may not only coexist with social inequalities, but also, in certain contexts at least, reinforce them. This is because positive intergroup contact tends to diminish subordinate group members' willingness to recognize and challenge inequality, a process that Cakal, Hewstone, Schwarz and Heath (2011) have labelled the 'sedative effect' of contact.

The present paper contributes to this emerging debate by considering an alternative—and largely neglected—process through which contact may promote social change. Rather than studying the effects of subordinate-dominant group contact, we focus on the role of contact between communities who share a history of disadvantage. In addition, moving beyond a prejudice reduction model of change, we investigate the potential role of contact in fostering the conditions under which the disadvantaged act collectively to challenge inequality. Specifically, drawing on a cross-sectional survey of Indian Muslims' experiences of contact with other disadvantaged communities in India, we explore how contact can facilitate the development of a shared sense of injustice about inequality and a collective conviction that social change is possible. In so doing, we also aim to contribute to the scant psychological literature on intergroup contact in India. To date, this consists of a handful of studies (e.g. Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Tausch, Saguy & Singh, 2009), although of course there is work rooted in other disciplinary traditions from which contact researchers might benefit.

Contact between historically disadvantaged communities

For most of the history of contact research, researchers have concentrated on changing the psychological responses of dominant group bigots. After all, if the prejudice of the advantaged is conceived as the problem, then transforming their hearts and minds via positive contact becomes the solution. As a result of this focus, however, the effects of contact on those who have primarily been recipients rather than agents of discrimination are less well understood. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the evidence gathered so far suggests that such contact produces weaker and less consistent improvements in the attitudes of the disadvantaged than in the attitudes of the advantaged (see Tropp, Mazziotta & Wright, in press, for further discussion).

Even less is known about the nature and consequences of contact between *members of different disadvantaged communities*, a topic that has attracted remarkably little research (though for exceptions see Gibson & Classen, 2010; Hindriks, Verkuynen & Coender's, 2014). This neglect is important for at least two reasons. First, most societies are organized not in terms of simple majority versus minority relations (e.g. black–white, immigrant–host, gay–straight), but in terms of more complex relations, marked by a multiplicity of status distinctions and patterns of allegiance, hostility and discrimination. As such, understanding the psychological consequences of contact between communities who share a history of disadvantage has widespread relevance. Second and more specific, as Dixon, Durrheim and colleagues (2015) recent work on changing relations in post-apartheid South Africa highlights, this form of contact carries implications for social change beyond the reduction of intergroup prejudices. It has the potential to enable new forms of political solidarity, opening up the possibility that communities not only come to like one another more, but also become more willing to work together to challenge the inequalities they jointly face.

In apartheid South Africa, for example, the state-imposed system of divide and rule meant that disadvantaged communities were segregated from one another as well as from whites, resulting in a complicated pattern of interracial relationships and attitudes whose legacy, quite literally, is more than a black and white matter (cf. Durrheim, Foster, Tredoux & Dixon, 2011). The apartheid system was deliberately engineered to prevent the formation of political alliances between so-called 'Black', 'Coloured' and 'Indian' communities (a consequence that mass resistance movements such as the ANC sought to reverse). However, most contact research in South Africa has focused on relations between whites and other groups and has generally taken shifts in white prejudice as its primary outcome measure (e.g. see Foster & Finchilescu, 1986; Minard & du Toit, 1991).

In their case study of residential relations in the city of Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal, by contrast, Dixon, Durrheim and colleagues (2015) explored relations between an established Indian community and a newer community of black African residents in a district called Northdale. In line with traditional contact research, they found that more positive neighbourly interactions were associated with favourable intergroup attitudes. However, perhaps more interesting, they also found such interactions laid the foundations for *political solidarity* between the communities. For instance, Indian residents who had experienced positive interactions with their black neighbours were also more willing to participate in collective action designed to improve conditions in the local settlement where the majority of Black residents lived and more willing to resist proposals to have that settlement removed. Interpreting such results, Dixon et al. (2015) suggested that they qualify recent critiques of the contact hypothesis by showing how (certain forms of) contact may have 'mobilizing' as well as 'sedative' effects on the political attitudes and behaviours of historically disadvantaged groups.

The present research was designed to elucidate the social psychological mechanisms through which this process of political mobilization may occur.

Contact and social change revisited: the role of shared grievances and group efficacy in collective action

We aimed to explore the relationship between intergroup contact and two factors that were hypothesized to mediate its potential effects on collective action: (i) shared grievances about the unjust treatment of disadvantaged groups and (ii) a sense of collective efficacy.

Shared grievances: A well-known paradox of research on social justice is that the worst off in society are not necessarily the most aggrieved with their situation, whilst the best off are not necessarily the most contented. Structural conditions of disadvantage are often not *in themselves* sufficient to account for when and why people challenge 'objective' forms of social inequality. Social psychological factors play a critical role. Of these factors, *shared perceptions of injustice* have repeatedly been shown to increase the likelihood that members of disadvantaged groups will act together to challenge social inequality and are thus central to several models of collective action (e.g. see Drury & Reicher, 2009; Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer & Leach, 2004; Van Zomeren, Postmes & Spears, 2008). Of particular significance are perceptions that derive from the process of intergroup comparison in which the status of 'us' and 'them' is directly contrasted. This tends to foster a sense of 'fraternalistic deprivation' (Runciman, 1966), thereby generating the kinds of emotional responses (e.g. anger and frustration) that fuel collective action to challenge the status quo.

How might positive contact between members of different disadvantaged communities inform this process? We propose that such contact tends to increase the extent to which participants recognize (or come to accept) the *shared* nature of their unequal treatment. This may happen via two interrelated processes. First, contact may create opportunities for discussing common experiences of disadvantage or mistreatment within a social and political system. It may thus encourage the realization of the commonality of discrimination and inequality. Second, contact may promote identification with members of other disadvantaged groups, a process through which 'us' and 'them' come to be viewed as 'we' (c.f. Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). In so doing, it may encourage participants to (re)conceive injustice as a 'fraternal' rather than merely individual or sub-group experience. Through either route, by providing opportunities to formulate a sense of common grievance, contact may facilitate joint collective action to reduce inequality.

Collective efficacy: Again drawing on the literature on collective action (e.g. see Drury & Reicher, 2009), we also argue that the relationship between contact and collective action may be mediated by a second and related process, namely a sense of empowerment or *collective efficacy*. To our knowledge, this process has never been investigated by contact researchers, again probably because the field has taken the reduction of dominant group prejudices as its primary outcome measure.

Research on collective action, however, has consistently demonstrated that collective efficacy is often a decisive factor in determining whether or not grievances actually lead to collective resistance (e.g. Van Zomeren et al., 2008). When group members sense that such resistance is likely to be effective in producing social change, then they are more likely to translate feelings of injustice and outrage into concrete behaviours designed to challenge the status quo. We hold intergroup contact between disadvantaged communities may fuel this process. Such contact feeds the realization that such communities are part of a bigger and more powerful coalition, comprising groups that might, if they work together, be successful in producing social change. At the same time, of course, the very act of participating in collective action involves new forms of intra and intergroup contact. Indeed, according to Drury and Reicher (2009), this experience may—under some circumstances at least—lead not only to a sense of collective empowerment, but also to the emergence of new forms of shared identity and political solidarity. This may in turn heighten the feelings of shared grievance and injustice discussed in the previous section.

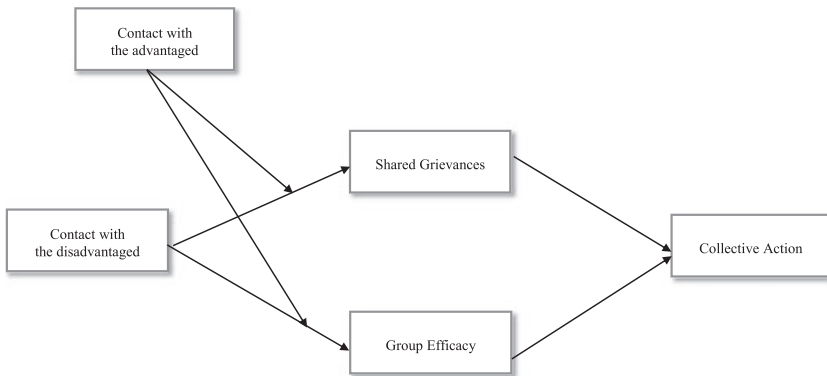


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the relationship between contact, political grievances, collective efficacy and collective action.

Research hypotheses and a proposed theoretical model

In sum, our research was designed to test the hypothesis that contact between disadvantaged communities is positively related to participants' willingness to participate in collective action, increasing the likelihood they will endorse proposals to act together to challenge inequality. As Figure 1 depicts, we also hypothesized that this relationship would be mediated by: (i) perceptions of shared grievances at unjust treatment and (ii) a sense of collective efficacy. As a subsidiary research question, we also explored how, if at all, positive contact with the historically *advantaged* might affect the theoretical processes represented by the model in Figure 1. On the one hand, it is possible that this form of contact operates independently of these processes, having little or no effect. On the other hand, building on research on the 'sedative effects' of hierarchical contact, it is possible that positive interactions with advantaged group members moderates the politically mobilizing effects predicted in our model. Glasford & Calcagno (2011), for instance, studied the relationship between intergroup contact, common identity, and political solidarity amongst members of historically disadvantaged groups in the US. They found that cueing a sense of common identity amongst members of black and Latino communities increased their political solidarity. However, this effect was moderated by their contact with white Americans. Notably, the more contact Latinos had with whites, the less the commonality intervention fostered their sense of political solidarity with blacks.

Research context

The research was conducted at Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, and focused on relations between Muslim students and other students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. (In Urdu, Jamia means 'University', and Millia means 'National'.) The university has a progressive history of anti-colonialism, and its foundation was partly inspired by the pro-independence movement as part of an attempt to create an education system able to question pro-British values and ideology. The university was established 1920 at Aligarh in the United Provinces, and in 1962 the University Grants Commission declared that Jamia was 'deemed to be a University'. By a Special Act of the Parliament,

Jamia Millia Islamia was made a central university of India in December 1988. The university was later granted 'special status' as a minority institution, resulting in a change in the usual reservation policy of admissions to university courses. This meant that the standard reservation of 27.5% for minority members of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) was replaced by a Muslim General (30%) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) (10%) reservation policy, a change that came into effect from 2013 to 2014 academic session.

The university's population is currently approximately 67% Muslim, with the rest of the student population comprising a broad spectrum of social groups. The diversity of the student population creates opportunities for intergroup contact across a wide range of ethnic, religious and caste divisions. Most central to the present research, this includes opportunities for interactions between Muslim students and students belonging to other historically disadvantaged communities in India, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and 'Other Backward Classes'. It would be a gross simplification, of course, to claim that such groups share equivalent social and economic standing in Indian society, existing in 'horizontal' relations with one another. This would overlook important distinctions of power, status, wealth and opportunity both within and between communities (see Jodhka, 2016). Santosh (2016) points out, for example, that discourse about Muslim's 'minority' status today is marked by many intersectional questions (e.g. to do with caste and other sect based divisions *within* the Muslim community).

Even so, relative to the Hindu, often higher status majority, Muslims share with other minorities a longstanding history of disadvantage. Irrespective of complex and constantly shifting concerns with regard to caste and religion, Muslims and Dalits have a common history of disadvantage, whose consequences continue to be reflected by key indicators of health, education, housing, political representation and access to resources (e.g. see Bhalla & Luo, 2013; Channa, 2013; Santhosh, 2016). The aim of the present research was to explore the potential role of intergroup contact with students from other disadvantaged communities in shaping Muslim students' political awareness of common injustices and willingness to act collectively to challenge them. More specifically, we aimed to test some of the hypotheses and relationships captured in Figure 1 above.

METHOD

Participants

Four hundred and forty nine Muslim students (210 females, $M_{age}=21.80$ and $SD=2.66$) were recruited on a voluntary basis to participate in a survey on intergroup relations in India. After giving their consent to participate, participants completed a pen-paper questionnaire containing the measures.

Measures and instructions

Participants were told that the survey was designed to examine 'personal contact and friendships with members of other communities and how this relates to your attitudes and beliefs about them'. They then completed a questionnaire in which variables were measured on 7-point scales, with higher values indicating more contact, higher levels of perceived

group efficacy, shared grievances, and stronger collective action tendencies, (for contact items: 1, *never*; 7, *very often*; for other items: 1, *strongly disagree*; 5, *strongly agree*).

Predictors. *Intergroup contact with other disadvantaged groups* was measured by three items: ‘How often do you spend time with disadvantaged people at the university campus?’, ‘How often do you spend time with disadvantaged people at social activities?’, ‘How regularly do you have interactions with disadvantaged people as part of the same sports team/social club/campus society?’ ($\alpha = .88$). We used the same items to measure contact with ‘high status’ Hindu group members ($\alpha = .84$).

Mediators. We used three items to measure *perceived group efficacy* (van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2010): ‘I believe that disadvantaged groups, working together, can protect our rights.’, ‘I believe that disadvantaged groups, through joint actions, can prevent our conditions from deteriorating.’, and ‘I believe that disadvantaged groups can achieve a common goal of improving our conditions’ ($\alpha = .90$). *Shared grievances* were measured by three items ($\alpha = .89$; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Simon & Ruhs, 2008): ‘In the past both Muslims and members of other historically disadvantaged groups have been discriminated against in India’, ‘A lot of bad things have happened to Muslims and members of other historically disadvantaged groups in India’, ‘Muslims and members of other historically disadvantaged groups have suffered from harmful actions in the past’.

Outcome variables. We used three items ($\alpha = .85$) adapted from Smith, Cronin and Kessler (2008) to measure collective action tendencies on behalf of the disadvantaged group: ‘I would be willing to sign a petition to improve the current situation of all disadvantaged people in India’, ‘I would be willing to sign up for a neighbourhood project to improve conditions for the disadvantaged in my neighbourhood’, and ‘I would be willing to participate in a peaceful demonstration to improve the current conditions for the disadvantaged in India’.

RESULTS

Overview

We report the descriptive statistics of the variables in our main model in Table 1. We employed structural equation modelling and analysed our data using the Mplus software package (Muthen & Muthen, 2008a, 2008b). We did not have any missing data and we used robust maximum likelihood estimation (MLR; Schermelleh-Engel, 2003) to treat

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations between the latent variables in the model

Variable	M	SD	2	3	4	5
1 Contact with the Advantaged Hindus	4.53	1.75	.49*	.25*	.13*	.15*
2 Contact with the Disadvantaged Groups	4.06	1.79	1	.30*	.27*	.17*
3 Shared Grievances	5.13	1.45		1	.20*	.37*
4 Group Efficacy	5.11	1.56			1	.43*
5 Collective Action Tendencies	5.44	1.36				1

* $p < .001$.

any possible non-normality in the data. We assessed the fit of our model by χ^2 test, χ^2/df ratio, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) criteria. While a non-significant χ^2 value (Barrett, 2007) is considered as gold standard for an excellent fit, larger sample sizes tend to yield significant values, so we also report here χ^2/df ratio lower than or equal to 3 for χ^2 ; for other fit indices: .95 or higher for CFI; .06 or lower for RMSEA; and .08 or lower for SRMR (Bentler, 2007; Hu & Bentler, 1999) are indicative of good fit. A confirmatory factor analysis revealed that our measurement model fitted the data well ($\chi^2 = 137.49, p = .001, df = 80, \chi^2/df = 1.71, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .040, SRMR = .036$), with all items loading onto their respective factors with values above $\beta = .60$ (Brown, 2006).

Structural model of contact and collective action

Overall results are reported in Figure 2. Contact with the disadvantaged was positively associated with group efficacy ($\beta = .32, p < .001$) and with shared grievances ($\beta = .26, p < .001$). Both group efficacy ($\beta = .45, p < .001$) and shared grievances ($\beta = .33, p < .001$), in turn, were positively associated with collective action tendencies on behalf of the disadvantaged. Contact with the high status Hindu group was positively associated with shared grievances ($\beta = .14, p < .001$). Our model explained 33% of variance in our criterion variable, collective action, and 9% and 11% of variance in our mediator variables, shared grievances and group efficacy, respectively.

Because we employed correlational data to test our predictions, we are unable to rule out alternative causal relations between our variables. Therefore, we tested two alternative models and compared their fit values to our specified model using Satorra–Bentler Scaled Chi-Square test (Satorra & Bentler, 2010). Previous research has argued that group

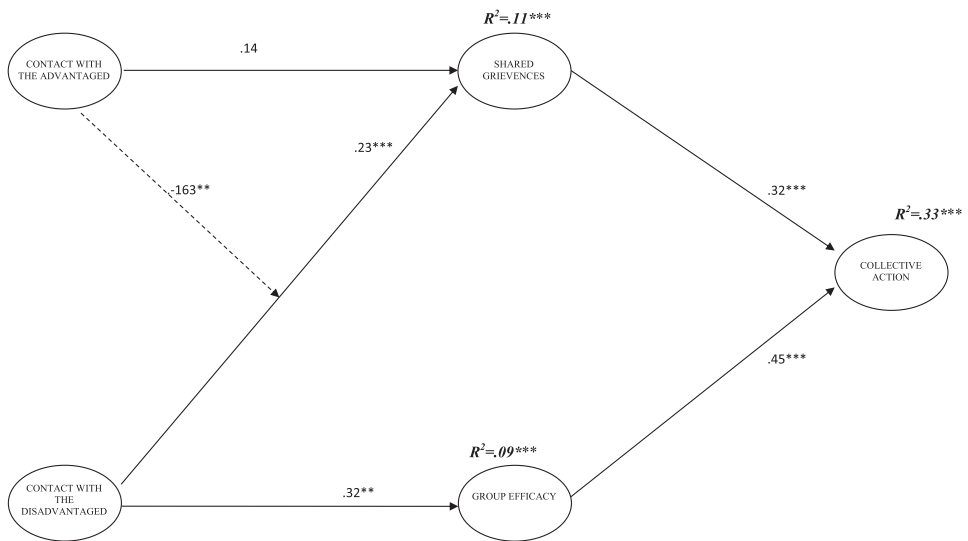


Figure 2. Specified model using data from Indian Muslims ($N = 440, \chi^2(80) = 137.94, p = .001, DF = 80; \chi^2/df = 1.72; RMSEA = .040; CFI = .98; SRMR = .035$). Only significant paths are reported. Path coefficients are standardized estimates, *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .05$.

efficacy could predict ingroup identification via collective action tendencies (van Zomeren et al., 2010), which in turn might be associated with an elevated sense of injustice (e.g. shared grievances). Thus, we tested a model in which we entered group efficacy as a predictor, collective action as a mediator and intergroup contact and shared grievances as outcome variables. The alternative model fitted the data significantly worse than our specified model ('Alternative Model 1' $\chi^2 = 237.28$, $p = .000$, $df = 80$, $\chi^2/df = 2.96$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .065, SRMR = .102; $\Delta \chi^2(2) = 112.17$, $p < .001$).

By the same token, willingness to participate in collective action could also predict intergroup contact as individuals could seek more support and interaction with similar others, which in turn could raise their awareness of shared disadvantages and their perception of togetherness. We tested this model in which collective action tendencies were entered as predictors, intergroup contact with the disadvantaged and intergroup contact with the advantaged as mediators, and group efficacy and shared grievances as criterion variables. This model too fitted the data significantly worse than our specified model ('Alternative Model 2' $\chi^2 = 235.44$, $p = .000$, $df = 81$, $\chi^2/df = 2.90$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .066, SRMR = .105; $\Delta \chi^2(1) = 88.21$, $p < .001$). On the basis of these results, we concluded that the alternative models were a poorer fit for our data than the main model presented in Figure 2.

Conditional direct and indirect effects of intergroup contact on collective action

We hypothesized that intergroup contact with the disadvantaged would predict shared grievances and group efficacy, which in turn would predict collective action tendencies. We also speculated that contact with the advantaged might moderate these indirect effects. Specifically, higher frequency contact with the advantaged could weaken the association between intergroup contact and shared grievances, between intergroup contact and group efficacy, and between intergroup contact and collective action.

To develop this aspect of our analysis, we employed bias-corrected bootstrapping (Williams & MacKinnon, 2008) in Mplus to test whether any of our predictor variables were indirectly associated with our criterion variable (collective action tendencies) via shared grievances and group efficacy. We created point estimates and confidence intervals for these point estimates in 5000 resamples. As predicted, the results revealed that intergroup contact with the disadvantaged was positively associated with collective action tendencies via shared grievances (PE $\beta = .16$, 99% CI [.07, .23]) and via group efficacy (PE $\beta = .08$, 99% CI [.02, .16]).

Next, we carried out a series of moderation tests by creating a latent interaction variable in which we entered contact with the advantaged as a moderating variable. Test results revealed that intergroup contact with high status Hindus negatively moderated the intergroup contact with the disadvantaged-shared grievances path only ($\beta = -.16$, $p = .006$; see Figure 2). When contact with high status Hindus was low (-1 SD from the mean) the indirect effect of contact with the disadvantaged on collective action tendencies via grievances was significant ($\beta = .16$, $p < .001$). When contact with high status Hindus was at mean this effect decreased in size ($\beta = .10$, $p = .03$) but it was still significant. When contact with high status Hindus was high (1 SD from the mean) the indirect effect of contact with the disadvantaged on collective action tendencies became non-significant (see Figure 3).

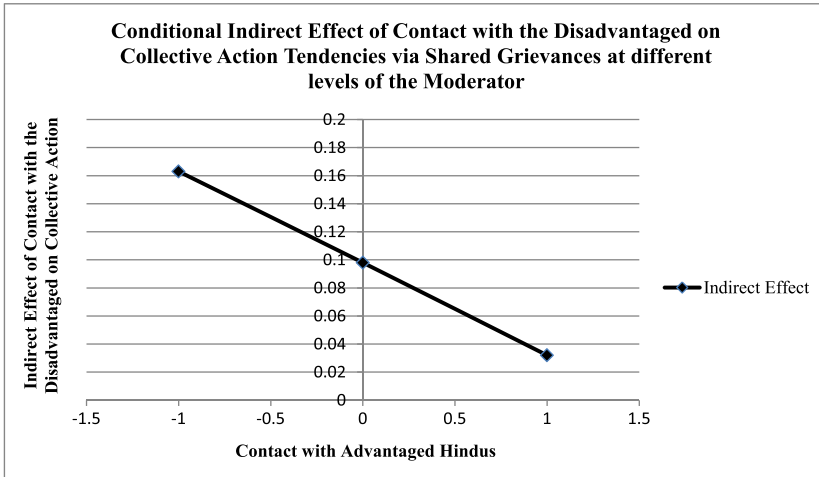


Figure 3. Visual representation of the linear function relating contact with the advantaged Hindu to the indirect effect of contact with the disadvantaged groups on collective action tendencies via shared grievances.

DISCUSSION

Research on the contact hypothesis has prioritized the problem of reducing dominant group prejudice in the hope that this will combat wider forms of inequality and discrimination (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). The present study, by contrast, investigated the role of contact in promoting political solidarity amongst members of communities who share a history of disadvantage. Specifically, we examined the relationship between Indian Muslims' self-reported contact with members of other historically groups and their willingness to support joint collection action to promote social change.

Our results confirmed the existence of a positive relationship between contact and participants' collective action orientation. That is, the more contact Muslims reported having with members of other disadvantaged groups, the more they endorsed collective action to redress shared inequalities. This finding is in line with Dixon et al.'s (2015) South African work, which similarly found that positive contact between Indian and Black South Africans was associated with an increase in political solidarity, as evidenced, for example, by greater support for policies that benefited another disadvantaged community.

The present research also clarified the social psychological processes that may underpin the relationship between contact and political solidarity. First, we found this relationship was partially mediated by a collective sense of grievance about the unjust treatment of disadvantaged groups in India. Contact seemed to encourage participants to recognize more fully common forms of injustice. Second, we found that this relationship was partially mediated by a sense of collective efficacy, the belief that the status quo might be transformed via collective resistance. Contact seemed to empower participants to believe that they could challenge the status quo.

Both of these processes have been widely investigated in the literature on collective action and are a mainstay of theoretical models in the field (e.g. see Drury & Reicher, 2009; Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer & Leach, 2004; Van Zommeren, Postmes &

Spears, 2008). Their relationship to intergroup contact, however, has potentially important implications. Notably, it expands and enriches the model of social change that informs the contact hypothesis, moving the field from a prejudice reduction to a collective action perspective. It is worth noting here that the forms of contact that are optimal for promoting collective action are likely to differ from those that are optimal for promoting prejudice reduction. The former typically involves promoting recognition of group differences and inequalities, 'negative' intergroup emotions such as anger and frustration, and forms of action that tend to create social conflict; the latter typically involves deemphasizing group differences, promoting 'positive' intergroup emotions such as empathy and forgiveness, and above all, nurturing harmonious relations between groups. In short, there are fundamental tensions between these two models in terms of their basic conception of the nature and function of interventions to promote social change.

Such tensions are arguably illustrated by our findings regarding the role of positive contact with members of the high status Hindu majority on the political solidarity with other disadvantaged groups displayed by Muslim respondents. The moderated mediation component of our SEM suggested that such contact tended to be associated with *reductions* in participants' collective action orientation, an effect that occurred indirectly via its relationship with collective grievance. That is, positive 'upwards' contact with high status Hindus seemed to weaken the relationship between contact with other disadvantaged groups and perceptions of injustice. By implication, as Figure 2 above illustrates, such contact also served to moderate the theoretical pathway from contact to collective action.

This finding fits generally with recent critiques of contact research and specifically with the work of Glasford and Calcagno (2011). On a general level, it arguably extends recent evidence on the so-called 'ironic', 'paradoxical' and 'sedative' effects of positive intergroup contact on political mobilization (see Wright & Lubensky, 2009; Dixon et al., 2010, 2012). This evidence suggests that contact with the historically advantaged may sometimes carry ideological consequences, diminishing both their willingness to recognize inequality and their motivation to do something about it. Specifically, it complements results reported by Glasford and Calcagno (2011). In their study, they showed that cueing a sense of common identity amongst members of black and Latino communities in the US resulted in a heightened sense of political solidarity. However, this effect was moderated by contact with members of the historically advantaged white community: the more interaction Latinos had with whites, the less solidarity with black Americans they reported.

Limitations and future directions.

As ever, when evaluating the results presented in this paper, one must bear in mind the limitations of our research design. First, our data have been derived from a cross-section survey of a sample of Muslim students based in south Delhi, conducted in an institution that broadly supports intergroup contact and solidarity. As such, we can make strong claims neither about issues of causality nor about issues of generalizability. Second, the sheer complexity of relations of status, region and caste in India means that our findings are at best a very general indicator of the potential role of intergroup contact in promoting solidarity amongst the disadvantaged. It may well be the case, for example, that in other Indian contexts pre-existing religious, economic or cultural tensions override any mobilizing effects of contact. Moreover, to date, there has been little psychological work

on intergroup contact of any kind in India, making it particularly important to exercise caution about the generalizability of our findings.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the present study has instigated a conceptual shift in how researchers study and explain the dynamics of intergroup contact. In our view, this shift opens up a range of important new questions, bringing into closer dialogue two traditions of research—on prejudice reduction and collective action—that have traditionally developed in isolation from one another. What forms of contact are most effective in building the kinds of political solidarity that encourage participants to collectively challenge social inequality? What psychological factors other than perceived injustice and collective efficacy might explain how, when and why contact between disadvantaged groups has politically mobilizing or demobilizing effects? How might the study of such contact inform interventions to promote social change in societies marked by a history of social inequality?

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