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# Willingness to Engage in Intergroup Contact: A Multilevel Approach

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Numerous studies point to the potential of intergroup contact for reducing prejudice and intergroup tension. However, this potential can be realized only when group members are *willing* to engage in intergroup contact. The goal of the current article is to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the barriers and the motivations that explain why individuals would be willing (or not) to engage in intergroup contact. Our taxonomy relies on Pettigrew's (1997) multilevel approach for analyzing social phenomenon, considering the impact of factors at the macro societal level, the meso intermediate level, and the micro individual level. This taxonomy enables us to devote special attention to barriers and motivations that are specific to groups trapped in violent intergroup conflict (macrolevel factors), to barriers and motivations that result from membership in social groups (mesolevel factors), and to motivators and barriers that exist at the intrapersonal level (e.g., microlevel factors). We discuss the integration of the various levels and the implication of such integration for future research and practice. This article forms a roadmap for investigating a relatively understudied angle in the literature on contact and provides both theoretical and practical insights as to when and why individuals are willing to engage in intergroup contact.

*Keywords:* intergroup conflict, intergroup contact, group power, motivations and barriers, peacebuilding

Of all the interventions that have been designed for the reduction of intergroup bias, intergroup contact has seen the widest application and has been the one most commonly studied. According to the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), intergroup contact, under specified conditions (e.g., with equal status between groups, cooperative intergroup interactions, opportunities for personal acquaintance and with institutional support), can promote positive

attitudes and emotions toward outgroup members (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Maoz, 2011; Pettigrew, 2008). A meta-analysis of over 500 studies has demonstrated that contact reliably predicts reduced prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), an effect largely explained by reductions in intergroup anxiety, increased empathy, and increases in participants' knowledge about outgroup members. Other studies have indicated the potential of intergroup contact for

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altering outgroup orientations also in contexts marked by violent conflict (Halabi, Sonnenschein, & Friedman, 2004; Ron & Maoz, 2013).

The potential of intergroup contact, however, can be realized only when group members are willing to engage in contact with outgroup members. Interventions seeking to capitalize on the potential of intergroup contact must therefore find ways to stimulate an interest in contact. This seems to be a great challenge, particularly when considering the tension that often characterizes relations between groups in diverse societies (Demoulin, Leyens, & Dovidio, 2009).

Notwithstanding the importance of willingness to engage in intergroup contact, relatively little research attention has been directed to it. The goal of the current article was to analyze the barriers and the motivations that explain why members of different groups would be willing (or not) to engage in intergroup contact. Our taxonomy relies on Lewin's (1939) and Pettigrew's (1997) multilevel approach to understanding social phenomenon. This approach considers the impact of factors at the macro level (e.g., cultural norms, institutional characteristics), the meso level (e.g., processes that occur at the level of social interactions), and the micro level (e.g., personality-based tendencies and motivations).

The article is divided into three sections according to these levels (macro, meso, and micro). Within each section, we consider existing research that speaks to motivations and/or barriers to engaging in intergroup contact at that specific level and introduce additional factors that we consider relevant. Furthermore, when relevant we discuss the links among the levels and elaborate on such integration in the concluding section. Considering influences at the macro, meso, and micro levels, and the links among them, allows for capturing the real-world complexity of the willingness to engage in intergroup contact—thus providing fertile ground for research with applied relevance, which is central in this respect.

## Engaging in Intergroup Contact

### Barriers and Facilitators at the Macro Level

Dating back to Allport's (1954) seminal writings, contextual influences were regarded as critical for the success of intergroup encounters. In this section we examine how such factors apply to the realm of motivations to engage or disengage in intergroup contact. We first consider the extremity of intergroup tension and the goals of groups in conflict (separation vs. integration) as shaping willingness to engage in intergroup contact. We then consider normative influences that impact group members in diverse societies not necessarily trapped in violent conflict.

The role of normative support in shaping willingness to engage in contact is best exemplified by considering contexts of severe intergroup conflicts. The norms that typically characterize conflict zones are associated with ideological extremity, general rigidity, and negative emotional climate at a macro level (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2013). For example, the views that are often communicated to group members via the media, leaders, and public discourse in such contexts often fuel existing negativity (Kalb & Saivetz, 2007) and can reinforce views of the conflict as unchangeable (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, & Gross, 2014) and of the

outgroup as evil (see Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Saguy, & van Zomeren, 2014). The stability of such norms may seriously hinder individuals' opportunities and willingness to engage in encounters with the outgroup. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict provides a vivid example of such normative influence by revealing shifts in contact engagement as a direct function of the peace process and the changes in public opinion that accompanied it. For example, between 1993 (the year the Oslo peace agreements were signed) and 2000 (the outbreak of violence) Israeli–Palestinian encounters were most common in the Middle East, reflecting an investment of millions of dollars by both international and local sources (Nadler & Saguy, 2004). Thus, beyond the change of norms toward greater tolerance, the peace processes also gave rise to practical facilitators of contact in the form of donations rendering intergroup encounters a viable possibility for people on both sides.

In their analysis of reconciliation, Nadler and Saguy (2004) identified further macrolevel factors that are likely to critically shape willingness to engage in contact by distinguishing between different goals of groups in conflict; namely, separation versus integration. In some cases, the ultimate aim of parties in conflict is to be able to live together in harmony within the same social unit (e.g., relations between Blacks and Whites in South Africa or between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda; Staub, Pearlman, & Miller, 2003), whereas in other cases the ultimate goal is separation characterized by peaceful coexistence. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict exemplifies the latter, because for many years the stated aim of both parties was to be able to separate in an agreed-upon manner. Such an aim might do little to advance motivation for contact because individuals are aware of the ultimate separation goal and might have little interest in getting to know the other side. On the other hand, if the goal is to become integrated under the same sociopolitical unit, motivation for contact is likely to be more pronounced.

Macrolevel, normative factors might further play a central role in people's willingness to engage in contact even when conflict is less violent. For example, Tropp and Bianchi (2006) uncovered differences in majority and minority members' willingness to engage in contact as a function of the value placed on diversity by the majority group (White students; see also Tropp, 2003). Similarly, Christ and colleagues (2014) found a positive association on the contextual (regional) level between contact-supporting norms and outgroup attitudes. In their large-scale studies, they analyzed contact and norms at a regional level and at an individual level. The studies demonstrated that in social contexts in which positive contact with outgroups was more commonplace (i.e., higher mean levels of contact at the contextual level), there were also stronger norms that supported such positive interactions. In turn, tolerant norms predicted reduced prejudice at the contextual level. This work has shown that people are influenced by the behavior of others in their social context, not merely on a micro scale (via their own interactions) but also on a macro scale by the norms that rise as a function of others' contact with outgroup members.

This conclusion is in line with research on extended contact. The extended contact hypothesis proposes that knowledge that an ingroup member has a close relationship with an outgroup member can lead to more-positive intergroup attitudes (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997). One of the mechanisms that underlie extended contact effects is a change in perceived ingroup norms. Knowledge of an ingroup member's engagement in inter-

group contact can change people's views of what is an acceptable ingroup behavior at a more macro level, which in turn predicts willingness to engage in intergroup contact (De Tezanos-Pinto, Bratt, & Brown, 2010; Mazziotta, Rohmann, Wright, De Tezanos-Pinto, & Lutterbach, 2015).

Taken together, macrolevel influences, which were traditionally considered critical for shaping contact situations, are also highly important when considering willingness to engage in such encounters. Such factors range from the characteristics of the relations (more or less violent) to the norms that are created in a certain context. Such macrolevel influences on willingness to engage in contact are likely to operate via an influence on processes that occur at a more immediate level of social interactions. Such factors are likely to shape a range of other meso- and microlevel factors. In the next section we examine processes at the level of the group to which a person belongs to further feed into the motivation to approach or avoid interactions with members of other groups.

### Barriers and Facilitators at the Meso Level

Decades of research in social psychology have demonstrated that individuals' needs and motivations are strongly shaped by the groups to which they belong (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). Because people derive an important part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups (i.e., their social identities), they strive to maintain a positive value of their groups, typically via intergroup comparisons (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A central element that shapes the value and the threats associated with social identity is the relative standing of the group in the social system (advantaged vs. disadvantaged). In this section we discuss how motivations derived from group membership can influence willingness to partake in cross-group interactions. We begin by considering factors that are uniquely relevant to advantaged group members and then address factors that pertain uniquely to disadvantaged group members. Then we move on to address group-based emotions as a critical mesolevel factor that shapes both advantaged and disadvantaged group members' willingness to engage in contact.

**Identity needs of advantaged groups and willingness to engage in intergroup contact.** Via intergroup comparison, advantaged group members typically enjoy a valued social identity. This positive identity can be seriously threatened, however, when advantaged group members perceive their status as unjustly earned (Knowles, Lowery, Chow, & Unzueta, 2014). Indeed, research on advantaged group members has indicated tendencies to deny privilege, distance oneself from it, or endorse beliefs that legitimize existing inequality (Knowles et al., 2014; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Such tendencies enable advantaged group members to maintain a sense of morality in the face of group-based privilege. The possibility of an encounter with members from a disadvantaged group can undermine such justification by exposing advantaged group members to the reality of inequality (Sonnenschein, Bekerman, & Horenczyk, 2010). Support to this idea comes from in-depth interviews with Jewish Israelis who took part in encounters with Palestinians and reported inner conflicts and even a sense of alienation regarding significant aspects of their social identity (Ron & Maoz, 2013). These findings are consistent with research showing that advantaged group members prefer to address issues associated with cross-group commonalities and to avoid intergroup

discussions addressing topics of power differences when interacting with disadvantaged groups (Saguy & Kteily, 2014).

Thus, even though advantaged group members might be reluctant to engage in encounters that would emphasize their advantaged position, they would be more motivated to partake in interactions that do not pose a threat to their moral identity. When an intergroup encounter involves an emphasis on interpersonal dimensions and on aspects common to both groups, it can remove such threat and further meet more microlevel needs to belong and to relate to others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Such positive encounters can also serve a basic need of advantaged group members to feel part of a moral community characterized by tolerance (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Mazziotta, Feuchte, Gausel, and Nadler (2014) provided direct evidence for the link between acceptance needs and motivation to engage in contact. They found that participants who were encouraged to focus on ingroup harm-doing (vs. ingroup victimization) reported significantly greater need for acceptance—which in turn predicted greater willingness to engage in cross-group contact. Such encounters, if pleasant, may enable advantaged group members to distance themselves from the atrocities of their group, thereby reinforcing their moral image.

An additional, more-instrumental goal that advantaged group members may obtain via a positive, commonality-focused encounter is the reduction of intergroup tension. Across intergroup dynamics, but particularly in those marked by violence, tensions between the groups often require high resource investment, both practical and psychological, on the part of advantaged groups (Bar-Tal, 2013; Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011). Such costs may drive advantaged group members to look for paths for reducing intergroup tension. Intergroup contact, certainly when focused on intergroup commonalities, may serve this purpose. These types of encounters may allow advantaged groups to reduce intergroup tension and violence by befriending members of the disadvantaged outgroup, potentially assuaging their group-based anger (see Saguy, Shchori-Eyal, Hasan-Aslih, Sobol, & Dovidio, 2016). Thus, considering the identity needs of advantaged groups suggests that although some types of contact (particularly those that emphasize power differences) can threaten their identity and push them away from contact, other, more-cooperative and -pleasant encounters can do exactly the opposite by satisfying needs for relatedness, acceptance, and reduction of intergroup tension. This conclusion, nevertheless, poses a great challenge because if such encounters deemphasize differences between the groups they might have the unintended consequence of stabilizing the existing power dynamics by deflecting everyone's attention from social inequality (see Saguy et al., 2016, for a review). The critical question is therefore how to motivate advantaged group members to be willing to engage in encounters that may involve some emphasis on differences between the groups, including those pertaining to power. Whereas extensive research on how to alter advantaged group members' prejudiced attitudes exists, there is little work that speaks to the issue of how to get members of advantaged groups to become more receptive to information that challenges their own power and related moral image.

The few studies that do exist point to self-affirmation, the act of affirming one's core values, as a potentially useful technique in that respect (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). For example, in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Israelis were more willing to acknowledge “difficult truths” regarding their role as perpetrators

after they were self-affirmed (i.e., wrote about events that made them feel proud of themselves; Čehajić, Effron, Halperin, Liberman, & Ross, 2011). Similarly, Whites in the United States were more likely to recognize institutional racism after a manipulation of self-affirmation (Unzueta & Lowery, 2008). The psychological mechanism behind these effects is people's basic need to maintain the integrity of the self. As such, this intervention might be a useful tool for opening up majority group members to types of encounters that do address power disparities. This would also be an important step toward creating openness on the part of advantaged group members to what is often desired by members of disadvantaged groups, as we discuss next.

**Identity needs of disadvantaged groups and willingness to engage in intergroup contact.** Given their relatively low status, members of disadvantaged groups are generally driven to improve the value of their social identity (Ellemers et al., 2002). When status relations are clearly unjust and potentially changeable, disadvantaged group members are particularly likely to support group-level action for advancing equality. These processes were applied to the realm of willingness to engage in intergroup contact (see Saguy & Kteily, 2014, for a review). In particular, whereas members of advantaged groups wish to direct the focus of intergroup encounters to commonalities, disadvantaged group members have been shown to have a clear preference for addressing both commonalities and power differences in the encounter. Moreover, when disadvantaged group members believe that the status hierarchy can potentially change, their desire to discuss power significantly increases and overrides their desire to address commonalities (Saguy & Dovidio, 2013)—demonstrating how the preferred content of contact is shaped by identity needs. Moreover, encounters that provide the opportunity to address the issue of inequality can further satisfy disadvantaged group members' need for empowerment by providing them with the rare opportunity to voice their (often suppressed) perspective in the presence of the advantaged outgroup (Bruneau & Saxe, 2012; Halabi et al., 2004).

However, members of disadvantaged groups may be also drawn to the very same contact interventions that appeal to advantaged groups: those focusing on commonalities. If disadvantaged group members perceive the boundaries between the groups as permeable, they are likely to seek to advance their status individually by mobilizing themselves, personally, to higher status positions (Ellemers et al., 2002). In those cases, disadvantaged group members can find harmonious encounters a means to mobilize into the advantaged group and positively engage with them.

As noted earlier, such commonality-focused encounters can have a stabilizing impact on the broader status relations by deflecting everyone's attention from the inequality (Saguy et al., 2016). Even though no research had addressed this, we propose that under some circumstances disadvantaged group members might become aware of this stabilizing possibility. If so, relatively harmonious encounters can elicit a concern among disadvantaged groups that the contact will be a substitute for, or even counteract, real action toward equality. For example, Kteily, Saguy, Sidanius, and Taylor (2013) have shown that in the context of negotiations, when an advantaged party proposed to prioritize relatively easy (less-contentious) issues, disadvantaged group members saw the agenda as purposely stalling a change to the status relations. We are currently investigating this type of normalization threat among members of disadvantaged groups in more depth.

An additional barrier to commonality-based encounters has to do with disadvantaged group members' fear of being dominated or assimilated into the dominant culture (Horenczyk, 2004) because it threatens their need to maintain a distinct social identity. For example, when mergers involve advantaged and disadvantaged groups, members of the disadvantaged groups perceive less common group identity with the merged entity than do members of the advantaged group (Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2007); they have less favorable expectations of the merger and are generally more suspicious that their group identity will not be adequately represented in the merged organization (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007).

Taken together, this section linked identity processes of disadvantaged groups to motivations and barriers for approaching different types of contact. As indicated throughout this section, the processes we addressed are shaped by macrolevel factors; namely, the extent to which the status hierarchy is stable and legitimate and the boundaries between the groups are fixed. Such factors are likely to feed into relevant group-based perceptions of disadvantaged groups and to in turn shape the processes we have addressed here.

In the next section we discuss mesolevel factors that shape willingness to engage in contact, focusing on emotions that are a function of membership in social groups and are further likely shaped by one's status in the social hierarchy.

#### **Group-based emotions and willingness to engage in contact.**

Group-based emotions are emotions that are experienced by individuals by virtue of their membership in a particular social group (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). Existing research has pointed to such emotions as playing a central role in group members' motivations to approach (or avoid) intergroup contact, the chief emotion being group-based anxiety (W. G. Stephan & C. W. Stephan, 1985). Such anxiety can take different forms, including fear of being hurt by outgroup members (perceived as dangerous or untrustworthy), fear of being perceived as discriminatory by outgroup members, and fear of being rejected in the interactive context. For example, Shelton and Richeson (2005) have shown that both White and Black Americans express willingness to have intergroup contact but believe that outgroup members are not interested in having contact with them.

Whereas fear of rejection can characterize virtually anyone who participates in social interactions, the position of one's group in the status hierarchy can be associated with more-unique types of anxieties. For example, advantaged group members may experience increased intergroup anxiety related to expectations that they will be seen as prejudiced or immoral during the encounter (Shelton, 2003), whereas disadvantaged group members may experience a fear of being perceived according to negative stereotypes (Shelton, 2003; Shelton & Richeson, 2005).

Related negative group-based emotions such as hatred, likely to be particularly pronounced in contexts of severe conflicts, may further drive people away from intergroup contact. Group-based hatred encapsulates the idea of unchangeable negative characteristics of the outgroup (Halperin, 2008) and may exist equally among advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Apart from being associated with extreme delegitimization of the other side, hatred (and associated despair) are also associated with perceptions of groups or situations as fixed (rather than malleable) and can seriously undermine people's belief that intergroup contact can be effective for changing the current reality.

This illuminates a potential motivator for contact. If group members believe that groups can change, they can become more motivated to at least give a chance to the possibility of meeting the other side. Direct support for this idea comes from a study of Turkish Cypriots who were led to believe, via an experimental manipulation, that groups in general can, or cannot, change (Halperin et al., 2012). Participants who learned that groups can change reported lower levels of intergroup anxiety and, as a result, higher motivation to interact and communicate with Greek Cypriots. Thus, by mitigating the belief in the unchangeability of groups, the researchers were able to undermine a critical anxiety associated with the views of the outgroup as inherently evil (Bar-Tal, 2013).

Negative group-based emotions such as anxiety can be further mitigated by indirect forms of contact, such as extended or vicarious contact described in the macrolevel section. Via these forms of contact, individuals are exposed to intergroup contact between a member of their ingroup and a member of the outgroup, but they themselves do not partake in the encounter. Research on such forms of indirect contact has shown that it can effectively prepare participants to engage in intergroup encounters via several processes, including the reduction of group-based anxiety. For example, Mazziotta, Mummendey, and Wright (2011) have shown that merely observing ingroup members (fellow German students) having successful cross-group contact with an outgroup member (Chinese students) via a video recording increased observers' willingness to engage in direct cross-group contact. These effects were explained by increased sense of efficacy (which we elaborate on in the next section) and less uncertainty regarding a future intergroup encounter (see also West & Turner, 2014).

The discussion of negative outgroup emotions and ways to mitigate them is incomplete without considering the opposite end of such emotions. Allophilia, the tendency to have positive emotions and attitudes toward an outgroup, was found to be closely linked to positive intergroup orientations, creating opportunities for friendships and other forms of contact (Pittinsky, Rosenthal, & Montoya, 2011). In the next section, in which we address microlevel factors, we consider personality dimensions that can explain the tendency to endorse such positive group-based emotions. Indeed, processes at the meso level described here are strongly shaped by both micro- and macrolevel factors. For example, group norms and related institutional messages can impact the extent to which disadvantaged group members are concerned with the normalization of power relations. In conflictual contexts marked by repeated failures to advance a resolution (e.g., the Israeli–Palestinian context; Kteily et al., 2013), it is likely that disadvantaged group members will be particularly worried that situations of contact would further legitimize the unequal (and stable) status relations. Such concerns are likely to be less pronounced under conditions that signal a potential change in power relations. We return to such cross-level integrative analysis in the concluding section.

### Barriers and Facilitators at the Micro Level

Processes at the micro level refer to long-standing belief systems, or personality dimensions, that are associated with outgroup orientations. In this section we consider such factors, both those that pose barriers for contact and those that can motivate it. As we describe, the two categories of personality tendencies do not necessarily override one another and sometimes even coexist.

Extensive research within the intergroup relations literature has documented the association between right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1996) and social dominance orientations (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) and various forms of outgroup negativity. Individuals high on RWA are supportive of authoritarian submission, aggression, and conventionalism, and those high on SDO generally support group-based inequality. These dimensions tend to be associated with views of outgroup prejudice as justified (Esses & Hodson, 2006) and with endorsement of a range of ideological beliefs that reinforce such justifications (Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998).

Research has further provided evidence for the association between RWA and SDO and willingness to engage in intergroup contact. For example, authoritarians were shown to be less likely to be living in areas that include outgroup residents, and among those who do live in diverse areas, authoritarians are less likely to have positive intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 2008). Across various intergroup contexts, Rosenthal and Levy (2012) found that individuals' SDO levels are significantly predictive of their interest in intergroup contact and with their appreciation of diversity. Beyond SDO and RWA, more-direct measures of outgroup prejudice were also found to relate to contact avoidance. For example, research has shown that people who are highly prejudiced against Muslims are less likely to have contact with them (Pettigrew, 2008). Such findings underscore the critical role of microlevel factors on tendencies to avoid intergroup interactions.

Nevertheless, when considering individual differences there also appears to be important motivators for contact. Intergroup contact is an opportunity to learn from and about the outgroup. Thus, individual variations in the motivation to learn and to gain information and knowledge through contact with members of other groups can further explain why people approach or avoid situations of cross-group contact. Two personality constructs are relevant in this respect. One is xenophilia, which represents "an attraction to foreign people, cultures, or customs that manifests itself in curiosity and hospitality toward foreigners and benevolent cross-cultural exploration" (Stürmer et al., 2013, p. 832). As such it can be considered as an overall tendency to approach contact with individuals from other groups. In their investigation, Stürmer and his colleagues (2013) found that endeavor-related personality traits (extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness) shape intention to interact with outgroup members. Of importance, these effects remained significant after controlling for predictors such as SDO and ingroup identification, suggesting that personality tendencies of exploration and curiosity can drive willingness to engage in intergroup contact, above and beyond xenophobic tendencies.

A related construct to xenophilia is polyculturalism, which refers to people's tendency to focus their attention on how cultures have interacted, influenced, and shared ideas and practices with each other throughout history and how they continue to do so today (Rosenthal & Levy, 2012). Individuals who endorse polyculturalism view people of all ethnic groups as changing entities, deeply connected to one another through their past and current interactions and mutual influences on each other's cultures. Thus, people who endorse polyculturalism focus not on differences or distinctions between groups (as with multicultural ideology) but on the many connections between different groups. In their studies, Rosenthal and Levy (2012) have shown that individuals high in polyculturalism also show

greater interest in intergroup contact, controlling for factors such as SDO and RWA.

Both xenophilia and polyculturalism are therefore likely to increase people's willingness to engage in intergroup contact in order to satisfy individuals' curiosity and need for learning about other groups. Evidence for this tendency also comes from content analysis of reactions of respondents who took part in Jewish–Palestinian dialogue encounters and indicated that curiosity about the outgroup and its point of view was one of their motivations for participating in these encounters (Ron & Maoz, 2013). Analysis of responses from such encounters reveals another learning opportunity, which is more focused on self-exploration (Ron, Maoz, & Bekerman, 2010). Some of the participants (Jewish Israelis in this case) stated a desire to discover themselves through the contact interaction, alongside their will to learn and know more about their Palestinian counterparts. Thus, intergroup encounters can provide opportunities for internal dialogue within the ingroup by allowing participants to discuss issues concerning their collective identity, further satisfying needs for exploration, also at the intragroup level.

Another relevant microlevel factor for predicting engagement in contact is self-efficacy. The strength of one's self-efficacy beliefs determine, in large part, how one interprets the demands of situations as well as one's capacity to cope with those demands (Bandura, 1997). Cross-group interactions, both when anticipated and when experienced, can invoke feelings of uncertainty and anxiety that have to do with the demands of the situations (Trawalter, Richeson, & Shelton, 2009) and with concerns about whether one knows how to behave competently while navigating cross-group contact situations (Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

On the other hand, a desire to gain self-efficacy through self-expansion may pull individuals toward close interactions and meaningful relationships with those dissimilar to themselves (Davies, Wright, & Aron, 2011). The self-expansion model demonstrates that people are motivated to expand their own opportunities and resources. When individuals become close with another, their identity begins to overlap or assimilate that of the other, leading to the self-perception of gained access to the other's resources as belonging to the self, effectively expanding one's own efficacy (Davies et al., 2011; Wright, Brody, & Aron, 2005). Mazziotta and his colleagues (2011) have shown the role of self-efficacy in shaping willingness to engage in intergroup contact. They found that observation of successful cross-group interactions leads to increased self-efficacy expectancy, which in turn reduces feelings of uncertainty, which then allows for more-positive outgroup attitudes and greater openness to direct cross-group interaction. Thus, in addition to shaping normative perceptions, extended contact can have an important influence on more microlevel dimensions likely to be critical in motivating people to engage in cross-group contact.

## Conclusion

In this article we analyzed a relatively understudied question in research on intergroup contact: What motivates individuals to engage in contact with the outgroup or demotivates them from doing so? We did this by adopting a multilevel approach considering factors at the macro level, meso level, and micro

level (Pettigrew, 2006). This enabled us to map extant research on willingness to engage in contact along these relevant dimensions, to propose additional factors that were yet to be considered in this respect, and to begin considering how the three levels of influence might interact to produce willingness to engage in intergroup contact. As such, we hope that the current framework can assist in bridging the gap between scholarly attention to contact and the actual field in which it occurs. As stated by Pettigrew, when referring to the interventionist aspect of contact, "multilevel approaches are complex; but 'the real world' is complex. Consequently, multilevel perspectives are arguably closer to the real-life circumstances into which remedial applications must fit" (Pettigrew, 2006, p. 616).

As for interventions, whereas the micro level reflects stable personality attributes and the macro level often refers to processes that are far beyond what practitioners can influence, processes at the meso level can be shaped by evidenced-based interventions and related efforts. We referred to such interventions in the discussion on the meso level, describing self-affirmation techniques and also the inducement of malleability beliefs. However, as noted throughout the article, interventions can also strengthen intraindividual orientations that motivate individuals to approach contact. As described in the section on the micro level, ways to increase self-efficacy (e.g., via extended contact) can motivate individuals to engage in contact by reducing concerns associated with the demands of the intergroup situation. Such self-efficacy can also be induced temporarily and motivate people to engage in contact. Similarly, given the literature on curiosity and exploration as microlevel predictors of engagement in contact, intervention can attempt to increase such orientations, even temporarily, in order to motivate people to engage in contact.

Yet, our framework suggests that any effort to translate scientific ideas about willingness to engage in contact into practice must place social–psychological insights within their macro contexts. For example, if the institutional context does not support justifications of inequality, then efforts to undermine such justifications are likely to be more fruitful. Addressing this possibility, Pettigrew (2008) pointed to the difficulty of conducting prejudice workshops with police, potentially due to the organizational culture that often feeds into justification processes. However, little is known about how individuals high on RWA and SDO react in an egalitarian context in which justifications for prejudice are disapproved. Given authoritarians' strong need to appear conventional, such contexts can potentially undermine the association between the RWA levels and willingness to engage in contact. Other contextual factors such as the perceived stability and legitimacy of power dynamics (Saguy & Dovidio, 2013) can further shape the concerns that advantaged and disadvantaged group members bring to the contact situation. For example, when status relations seem legitimate, advantaged group members' concerns with appearing moral and becoming accepted to the moral community are less relevant when compared to situations that clearly emphasize the illegitimacy of group-based inequality.

As such, considering multilevel influences can clarify to researchers and practitioners the potential effectiveness of their interventions. For example, as indicated in the article, research on extended contact has shown that knowledge of intergroup

contact works to motivate individuals to engage in contact via macrolevel influences—by shaping perceptions of ingroup norms, by mesolevel influences, by reducing group-based anxiety, and by shaping a sense of individual efficacy at the micro level. This triangulation of effects can account for the effectiveness of this mesolevel intervention. Dys-Steenbergen, Wright, and Aron (2016) have also demonstrated that self-expansion motivation, a micro factor, can be manipulated to improve cross-group interactions and impact outcomes such as interpersonal closeness and gained self-efficacy. Other types of interventions can benefit from considering the various levels of impact they might have, thus contextualizing both the perspective that guides the interventions and the relevant application.

This approach is also critical considering the extant literature on contact, which suffers from the scarcity of multilevel studies. In their meta-analysis, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found that more than 70% of the intergroup contact research of the 20th century involved participants retrospectively citing prior contact without any data on the situational contexts of this contact—pointing to the critical need to introduce the multilevel framework in this respect. Moreover, multilevel expansions are needed to maximize the practical effectiveness of social-psychological interventions aimed at advancing justice via cross-group interactions.

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