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## Welcoming the Unwelcome: How Contact Shapes Contexts of Reception for New Immigrants in Germany and the United States

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*How receiving society members perceive and respond to immigration are crucial factors that shape the context of reception for immigrants coming to a new country. In this paper, we examine these processes through the lens of intergroup contact research, with a focus on relations between immigrants and members of receiving societies, to discern ways in which receiving societies are or are not welcoming toward immigrants. Reviewing recent theorizing with illustrative empirical studies and ongoing programs of research that focus on new immigrants in Germany and the United States, we describe how direct and indirect forms of positive and negative contact can serve either to facilitate or inhibit positive immigrant-receiving community relations. We also discuss factors that may contribute to the emergence of positive and negative contact experiences between immigrants and receiving society members. We close with a discussion of policy implications.*

How receiving society members perceive and respond to immigrants and immigration are crucial factors that determine the context of reception for immigrants coming to a new country. Research on contexts of reception for new immigrants have tended to focus on the role of institutions (see Fussell, 2014;

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Portes & Rumbaut, 2014), rather than relations among individuals within institutions and communities. Emerging literature has begun to increasingly pay attention to the latter, however, showing that prevailing attitudes and stereotypes among members of the receiving society are instrumental for a welcoming (or unwelcoming) social climate (e.g., Citrin, Green, Muste, & Wong, 1997; Okamoto & Ebert, 2016; Phelps, Ommundsen, Türken, & Ulleberg, 2013; Segovia & De-fever, 2010). They are likely to shape relations between immigrants and receiving society members (Christ, Asbrock, Dhont, Pettigrew, & Wagner, 2013; Huo, Dovidio, Jiménez, & Schildkraut, 2018), as well as immigrants' feelings of identification with the receiving society (Jones-Correa, Marrow, Okamoto, & Tropp, 2018).

Contact between receiving society members and immigrants is often an important driver of intergroup attitudes (Meleady, Seger, & Vermue, 2017; Pettigrew, Wagner, & Christ, 2007; Voci & Hewstone, 2003). Indeed, extensive research on intergroup contact has demonstrated that contact generally helps to reduce mutual rejection and prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Yet in recent years, scholars have noted that research has tended to focus on the effects of positive intergroup contact, with insufficient attention to negative forms of intergroup contact and their adverse consequences (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Thus, we grant special emphasis to the ways in which positive and negative forms of intergroup contact may both shape contexts of reception for new immigrants and facilitate (or inhibit) their incorporation within receiving societies.

In this paper, we review recent work examining how positive and negative contact between immigrants and receiving society members serves as a bedrock for the extent to which immigrant-receiving nations are likely to be welcoming or rejecting toward immigrants (Christ et al., 2013; Fussell, 2014; Huo et al., 2018; Tropp, Okamoto, Marrow & Jones-Correa, 2018), using illustrative empirical studies and ongoing research examines from Germany and the United States. We use examples of research from these national contexts, because immigration to both countries has grown considerably in recent years, presenting urgent challenges to social relations and efforts toward integration between immigrant newcomers and members of these receiving societies (Alba & Foner, 2017). Moreover, these countries provide the contexts for much of our own work, such that we know them best and can most readily envision how contact functions in these societies.

First, we briefly introduce the current contexts of reception for new immigrants in Germany and the United States. Next, we provide an overview of the research literature on intergroup contact, describing the ways in which contact may facilitate or inhibit positive relations between immigrants and members of receiving societies, and may thereby contribute to framing contexts of

reception.<sup>1</sup> We close with a discussion of factors that are likely to shape the emergence of positive and negative contact experiences between immigrants and receiving society members, and the broader implications of this work for relevant policy.

### **Putting Contact into Context: Germany and United States**

The national contexts of Germany and the United States provide useful examples with which to examine contact dynamics between immigrants and receiving society members, given the large immigrant populations that have come to each country. More than 20% of the German population are first- or second-generation immigrants—that is, they themselves, or at least one of their parents, emigrated to Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018). Recent estimates indicate that 10.5% of the total population in Germany are individuals with non-German nationality (Federal Institute for Population Research, 2018). The United States, an immigrant-receiving country since its inception, has the largest number of foreign-born residents worldwide (Alba & Foner, 2017). Approximately one-fifth of the world's migrants reside in the United States; immigrants and their children now account for 27% of the total U.S. population (Zong, Batalova, & Hallock, 2018). Thus, both countries have rich and long-standing histories of immigration.

However, like many regions in the world, Germany and the United States have received increasing numbers of immigrants in recent years. In 2015, both Germany (with a population of 80 million) and the United States (with a population of 320 million) received approximately one million new registered immigrants (Demographie Portal, n.d.; Eurostat, 2016; Homeland Security, 2016). Germany became a major destination for people leaving their home countries due to war, civil rights violations, and/or economic suffering (Demographie Portal, n.d.; Eurostat, 2016). More than 75% of U.S. adults report that immigrants live in their community, with about a quarter (27%) reporting there are now many recent immigrants in the community where they live (Pew, 2015).

Heated debates about immigration and its effects persist in both countries (e.g., Decker, Kiess, & Brähler, 2016; Infratest dimap, 2016; Saad, 2014; Segovia & Defever, 2010; Waters & Pineau, 2015). On the one hand, there is widespread support for immigrants and immigration in Germany and the United States. In Germany, this was most apparent when thousands of asylum seekers and refugees arrived in the summer of 2015; many people acted in support of refugees, or had acquaintances who were actively supporting them, by donating time, goods, or

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<sup>1</sup>In this paper, we focus on direct and indirect intergroup contact effects. Readers interested in contemporary discussions on diversity and how the mere presence of social groups may affect intergroup relations are encouraged to read Hewstone's (2015) article cited in the reference section.

money (Ahrens, 2017; Felser & Bohrer, 2016; Karakayali & Kleist, 2015; Küpper, Rees, & Zick, 2016). In recent years, greater numbers of Germans have reported knowing people who were actively involved in supporting newcomers, representing an upward trend as compared to reports in past years (Ahrens, 2017; Felser & Bohrer, 2016). As for the U.S., there has been considerable growth in local initiatives to welcome immigrants throughout the country. Many of these initiatives have been coordinated by Welcoming America ([www.welcomingamerica.org](http://www.welcomingamerica.org)), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization supporting communities in their efforts to include all residents, including immigrants, into the fabric of society (Welcoming America, 2018). Welcoming America, in collaboration with city offices of immigrant affairs, has been influential in planning “welcoming weeks” across the country and designating particular cities as “welcoming cities” (Welcoming America, 2018). Citizens and local governments have advocated that hundreds of cities and towns across the United States become “sanctuary cities,” to protect undocumented immigrants from deportation even at the risk of losing funding from the federal government (Huo et al., 2018; Marcin, 2017). Moreover, nearly three quarters of Americans now support granting legal status to immigrants brought to the United States illegally as children (Pew, 2018). Given these trends, initiatives and programs across Germany and the United States often seek to enhance contact between members of the receiving society and immigrants, to promote positive intergroup attitudes and greater social cohesion (e.g., Anstiftung, n.d.; Jones-Correa, 2011; Über den Tellerrand, n.d.).

However, attempts to encourage positive contact between receiving society members and immigrants are not without challenges. There is often widespread suspicion and rejection of new immigrants in both Germany and the United States. Nativist and nationalist movements are gaining renewed traction (Bouie, 2018; Infratest dimap, 2017a, 2018). In Germany, these developments are for instance reflected in the rise in the electorate for the right-wing party AfD propagating nationalist policies (Goerres, Spies, & Kumlin, 2017), and physical assaults directed toward refugee-immigrant-related targets (e.g., *Mut gegen rechte Gewalt*, 2018; Wagner, Tachtsoglou, Kotzur, Friehs, & Kemmesies, 2018). In the United States, Donald Trump was elected as president with a strong focus on anti-immigrant sentiments, symbolized in his demand to build a wall at the U.S.—Mexican border. The number of hate groups and hate crimes against minorities in the United States grew drastically from 2015 to 2016 (Al Jazeera, 2017). Indeed, the majority of bias incidents during the first 3 months after Trump’s election were motivated by anti-immigrant sentiments (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017). In both countries, the rejection and suspicion are often justified by suggesting that new immigrants pose threats to public safety, economic prosperity, or social cohesion (Cooper, Cox, Lienesch, & Jones, 2016; Infratest dimap, 2016, 2017a,b; Washington Post, 2018), which undoubtedly exerts a negative influence on receiving-immigrant relations (e.g., Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

### Contact as a Facilitator of Positive Intergroup Relations

In light of these recent developments in Germany and the United States, we may therefore consider how intergroup contact shapes contexts of reception and relations between immigrants and members of each receiving society. Intergroup contact theory has long held that interactions between members of different groups can promote positive intergroup relations (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). Still, even in its earliest formulations, researchers were well aware that not all kinds of contact would lead to positive outcomes; thus, conditions were specified to highlight factors that would be especially likely to facilitate reductions in prejudice and improved intergroup relations:

Prejudice (...) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups on the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional support, and provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between the members of the two groups (Allport, 1954, p. 281).

Subsequent empirical research over several decades has demonstrated encouraging effects of contact across many nations, settings, and groups, even when not all specified conditions are met (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Indeed, studies from North America, Europe, and beyond indicate that receiving society members' contact with immigrants can yield positive attitudes toward immigrant populations (Binder et al., 2009; Ellison, Shin, & Leal, 2011; Fetzer, 2000). For instance, in one lab-based experiment conducted in Germany, participants were asked to engage in a structured conversation with either "Abdelrahim," a confederate who supposedly immigrated to Germany as a refugee, or "Frank," a confederate who supposedly did not have a migration background (Kotzur, Schäfer, & Wagner, 2018). After an evaluation of the conversation that appeared to mark the end of the study, participants were invited to participate in a second, and ostensibly unrelated, study in which they were asked to provide their evaluations of refugees in general, among other things. Consistent with intergroup contact theory, participants who had interacted with "Abdelrahim" evaluated refugees more favorably than participants who had interacted with "Frank."

Additional studies corroborate these findings, suggesting that intergroup contact can enhance the process of immigrant integration (Clément, Noels, & Deneault, 2001; Gonzalez, Sirlopú, & Kessler, 2010; Schmid, Hewstone, Küpper, Zick, & Tausch, 2014; Voci & Hewstone, 2003), such that those who have had positive contact experiences with members of recently immigrated groups are likely to be more accepting of newcomers. To provide an illustrative example, Tropp et al. (2018) conducted random digit dial telephone surveys of U.S.-born White and Black Americans who reported on their contact experiences with first-generation Mexican and Indian immigrants to the United States. Results show that the more U.S.-born Whites and Blacks interacted with new immigrants from these groups,

the more they sought to welcome these groups into their own communities—effects that persisted even when controlling for respondents' demographic characteristics, and a context-level indicator of intergroup exposure, which assesses the probability of encountering a member of each immigrant group in their neighborhoods (see Massey & Denton, 1988). Moreover, parallel surveys of first-generation Mexican and Indian immigrants indicated that the more contact they had with White and Black Americans, the more they felt welcomed by these groups; both the effects of contact on welcoming and feeling welcomed were enhanced to the extent that respondents rated their contact as friendly in nature. Relatedly, studies indicate that positive intergroup contact can lead receiving society members to show less opposition to supportive immigration policies (McLaren, 2003) and even to participate in protests to promote the interests of immigrant outgroups (Kotzur, Schäfer, et al., 2018).

Additional lines of research suggest that direct face-to-face contact between groups may not always be necessary to harness the power of contact to shift intergroup attitudes. For instance, research from the United States suggests that when White Americans are prejudiced toward one minority (e.g., anti-Black), they are likely to be prejudiced toward other minorities as well, including immigrants (e.g., Akrami, Ekehammar, & Bergh, 2011). Correspondingly, the beneficial effects of intergroup contact might extend beyond the groups involved in the original encounter, to shape attitudes toward other outgroups, thereby creating a broader welcoming context of reception through secondary transfer processes (see Pettigrew, 2009). As one example, White Americans who reported positive contact experiences with Black Americans not only reported more positive attitudes toward Black Americans, but also toward recent immigrant communities in the United States (Marrow, Tropp, van der Linden, Okamoto, & Jones-Correa, 2018). Such generalization of attitudes toward noncontacted groups occurs due to the more positive attitudes gained through interactions with members of the contacted group (Tausch et al., 2010), and it is especially likely to occur when the outgroups are perceived to be similar (Harwood, Paolini, Joyce, Rubin, & Arroyo, 2011; Pettigrew, 2009; Tausch et al., 2010). Thus, intergroup contact with a racial or ethnic minority group has the potential to foster more positive responses toward new immigrants and other minority groups, thereby cultivating welcoming contexts of reception in diverse societies.

Overall, then, extensive empirical evidence suggests that varied aspects of intergroup contact can promote positive relations between immigrants and members of receiving societies. Such salutary effects of contact are most likely to emerge under facilitating conditions and when immigrants and receiving society members rate their encounters as friendly or welcoming (see also Hayward, Tropp, Hornsey, & Barlow, 2017; Tropp et al., 2018).

### Contact as an Inhibitor of Positive Intergroup Relations

Nonetheless, at the same time as contact can often improve intergroup relations, contact with other groups has also been shown to negatively impact relations between immigrants and receiving society members. Distinguishing between positive and negative aspects of contact may help to explain why contact sometimes enhances and sometimes diminishes prospects for positive intergroup relations among immigrants and members of receiving societies.

Though relatively understudied (Barlow et al., 2012; Dixon et al., 2005), negative effects of contact are especially likely to occur when intergroup encounters are associated with feelings of intergroup anxiety and threat (see Pettigrew, Wagner, & Christ, 2010; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Generally, intergroup anxiety refers to feelings of insecurity and discomfort in interactions with specific outgroup members. Intergroup threat refers to more general emotional responses involving how the outgroup might affect one's access to economic and material resources, or the values, norms, or ways of living in one's society (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Recent surveys of both the German and U.S. populations illustrate that intergroup anxiety and threat are strongly related to the rejection of newcomers (Cooper et al., 2016; Infratest dimap, 2016, 2017a,b; Pew, 2017; Washington Post, 2018).

Beyond the adverse effects of threat, new generations of contact researchers have begun to examine the effects of negative contact experiences (Barlow et al., 2012; Hayward et al., 2017). Generally, in the United States, reports of varied forms of negative contact experiences (such as being insulted or mistreated) tend to be associated with greater attempts to avoid outgroup members (Hayward et al., 2017). In Germany, the more neighbors of a shelter for refugees reported that they have experienced negative contact with refugees, the more negatively they felt toward refugees in general (Mohn, 2015).

Paralleling the findings of positive contact reviewed above, varied forms of negative contact with specific groups of newcomers can also have consequences for relations with noninvolved outgroups (Harwood et al., 2011). One German study found that, compared to Germans assigned to a control condition, Germans who imagined an unpleasant encounter with a refugee expressed not only more negative attitudes toward refugees in general, but importantly, they also rated other social groups more negatively (Kotzur, 2018). As it has been shown with positive intergroup contact effects, the transfer to other social groups was strongest when these groups shared certain features with current refugee groups in Germany, in this study groups with Muslim faith (e.g., Muslims in general and Turks). Moreover, these generalization effects were mediated by the more negative attitudes participants had developed toward refugees. Thus, research suggests that various forms of negative contact experiences can give rise to negative attitudes and hostility toward ethnic outgroups, which can inhibit the more general tendency for members of the receiving society to welcome newcomers.

### Considering the Joint Effects of Positive and Negative Contact

A question arises, then, regarding how positive and negative contact may jointly contribute to our understanding of relations between new immigrants and members of receiving societies. Not surprisingly, positive and negative forms of contact typically exert opposing effects on prejudice and related constructs (e.g., Hayward et al., 2017). Indeed, the more frequently receiving society members engage in contact with new immigrants, the more likely they will have both positive and negative intergroup experiences (Kotzur & Wagner, 2018a). Nonetheless, correlations between positive and negative contact are relatively small in magnitude, suggesting that receiving society members' positive and negative contact experiences with immigrant newcomers are likely to occur rather independently from one another (see, e.g., Hayward et al., 2017; Mohn, 2015).

Recent work shows that, both in the United States and Germany, when respondents are asked about their contact experiences with immigrants, receiving society members typically report that positive encounters are more frequent than negative encounters (Kotzur & Wagner, 2018a; Tropp et al., 2018). These trends are consistent with earlier contact research suggesting that, while negative contact experiences may have greater impact on intergroup attitudes than positive ones (e.g., Barlow et al., 2012; Schäfer, Fell, Hewstone, & Christ, 2018), positive contact experiences tend to be more common than negative ones (e.g., Graf, Paolini, & Rubin, 2014; Hayward et al., 2017).

Together, these studies lend encouraging preliminary evidence to the notion that intergroup contact is generally inclined to promote a welcoming context of immigrant reception. But such a conclusion is likely to depend on the degree to which the presence of new immigrants (or other outgroups) appears to somehow threaten members of the receiving society (see Wagner & Hewstone, 2012, for a relevant review). To illustrate, consider a German survey-based study conducted in 2017 (Seidler, 2017), when a majority of Germans felt that refugees disrupted their way of life (Infratest dimap, 2017a); in this threat-ridden context, negative contact emerged as a stronger and more powerful predictor of prejudice toward refugees, relative to the effects of positive contact (Seidler, 2017). However, findings regarding this difference in magnitude are far from consistent across studies (see, e.g., Aberson & Gaffney, 2009; Árnadóttir, Lolliot, Brown, & Hewstone, 2018; Kotzur & Wagner, 2018b).<sup>2</sup>

The lack of consistency in results regarding the relative effect size of positive and negative contact suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the nature of

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<sup>2</sup>An additional challenge associated with research in this area is that intensity of positivity and negativity, or dosage of positive and negative contact, are not easily controlled in field studies of immigrant-receiving community relations or relations between racial minority and majority groups.



relations between groups, and the degree to which relations between the groups have been marked by threat and/or legacies of conflict, on the one hand, or histories of positive intergroup experiences on the other (see Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011; Tropp, 2015; Wagner & Hewstone, 2012). Recent work has therefore sought to examine whether and how prior individual's contact attenuates the impact of later intergroup contact experiences on attitudes (e.g., Árnadóttir et al., 2018; Paolini et al., 2014), suggesting that contact may have differential effects contingent on individuals' histories of intergroup encounters.

A very small number of studies have systematically tested conditional effects as interactions between positive and negative contact, suggesting that prior positive contact may buffer the effects of negative contact (Paolini et al., 2014) and that the benefits of positive contact may even be facilitated by the presence of prior negative contact experiences (see Árnadóttir et al., 2018; Birtel & Crisp, 2012; Fell et al., 2018 as cited in Árnadóttir et al., 2018). Thus far, studies from our labs have not consistently revealed such interactions of positive and negative contact in predicting attitudes toward immigrant groups (see Hayward et al., 2017; Mohn, 2015; Seidler, 2017; Tropp et al., 2018; Wettklo, Wins, Lichtenberg, Varel, & Kotzur, 2017). As it is a very recent area of research, more research is necessary to make firmer claims.

### **Examining the Emergence of Positive and Negative Intergroup Contact**

The lines of inquiry on positive and negative intergroup contact described above also encourage us to consider the factors that determine whether contact with new immigrants will generally be perceived as positive or negative—that is, whether encounters between immigrants and receiving society members are regarded as pleasant and friendly, or whether such encounters will be riddled with tension, mistreatment, or misunderstanding. In line with theorizing summarized in the previous section, such determinations are likely to depend on the frequency and valence of prior contact experiences. People who have had many prior positive encounters with refugees are more likely to report greater numbers of positive encounters in the future (Kotzur & Wagner, 2018b; but see Kotzur & Wagner, 2018a). These findings are consistent with other research showing that prior positive contact experiences are associated with greater interest in future cross-group interactions (Asbrock, Gutenbrunner, & Wagner, 2013; Tropp, 2003), and may enhance our views regarding the intentions of outgroup members (Tropp, Hawi, O'Brien, Gheorghiu, Zetes, & Butz, 2017). Such trends highlight the importance of effectively integrating immigrants and other newcomers within receiving societies, as developing histories of positive or negative encounters between immigrants and receiving society members are likely to shape how future encounters are construed.

Whether intergroup encounters are perceived positively or negatively may also depend on preexisting levels of prejudice (Kotzur & Wagner, 2018a). While many studies show that contact can affect levels of prejudice (e.g., Kotzur, Schäfer, et al., 2018; Lemmer & Wagner, 2015; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), both experimental and longitudinal studies also show that levels of prejudice predict reports of future contact (e.g., Binder et al., 2009; Sidanius, Levin, Van Laar, & Sears, 2008). That is, highly prejudiced people typically report engaging less frequently in intergroup contact than less prejudiced people. However, there is little published research on the processes that underlie such effects, and whether highly prejudiced people would report lower levels of both positive and negative contact. Prejudiced people may avoid intergroup contact altogether—be it positive or negative—which should result in reports of less frequent contact, regardless of its valence, relative to people with lower levels of prejudice. An alternative is offered by the intergroup forecasting error literature (Mallett, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008), and literature on right-wing authoritarians, that tend to be prejudiced (Asbrock, Gutenbrunner, & Wagner, 2013; Brune, Asbrock, & Sibley, 2016). Prejudiced people may expect more negative outcomes from the outgroup encounter than less prejudiced people. When intergroup contact occurs, the contact experience may be more positive than anticipated, leading to higher increases in the frequency of positive intergroup contact, and lower increases in the frequency of negative intergroup contact, compared to less prejudiced people. Alternatively, research on the confirmation bias (Oswald & Grosjean, 2004) and self-fulfilling prophecies (Madon, Jussim, & Eccles, 1997) suggests that—when they do interact with outgroup members—highly prejudiced people may be more likely to perceive intergroup encounters negatively, and less likely to perceive them positively, than people with lower levels of prejudice.

In line with the latter theorizing, three longitudinal studies in the German context reveal that highly prejudiced people are more likely to perceive interactions with immigrants negatively than less-prejudiced people (Kotzur & Wagner, 2017, 2018a). Two longitudinal datasets tested causal relationships between positive and negative contact and prejudice against asylum seekers and refugees in Germany (Kotzur & Wagner, 2018a). In the first of these, participants were 120 residents of a neighborhood that hosted an initial reception center for asylum seekers, who completed surveys once before and twice after the reception center opened. Examining trajectories of change over time, they found that the more neighborhood residents perceived asylum seekers in a positive manner prior to the opening of the reception center, the more frequently they reported positive contact, and the less frequently they reported negative contact, with asylum seekers after the opening of the reception center. However, data from a larger three-wave nationwide longitudinal survey of German nationals ( $N = 758$ ; Wagner, Schmidt, & Kauff, 2018) did not support these results (Kotzur & Wagner, 2018a, Study 2).

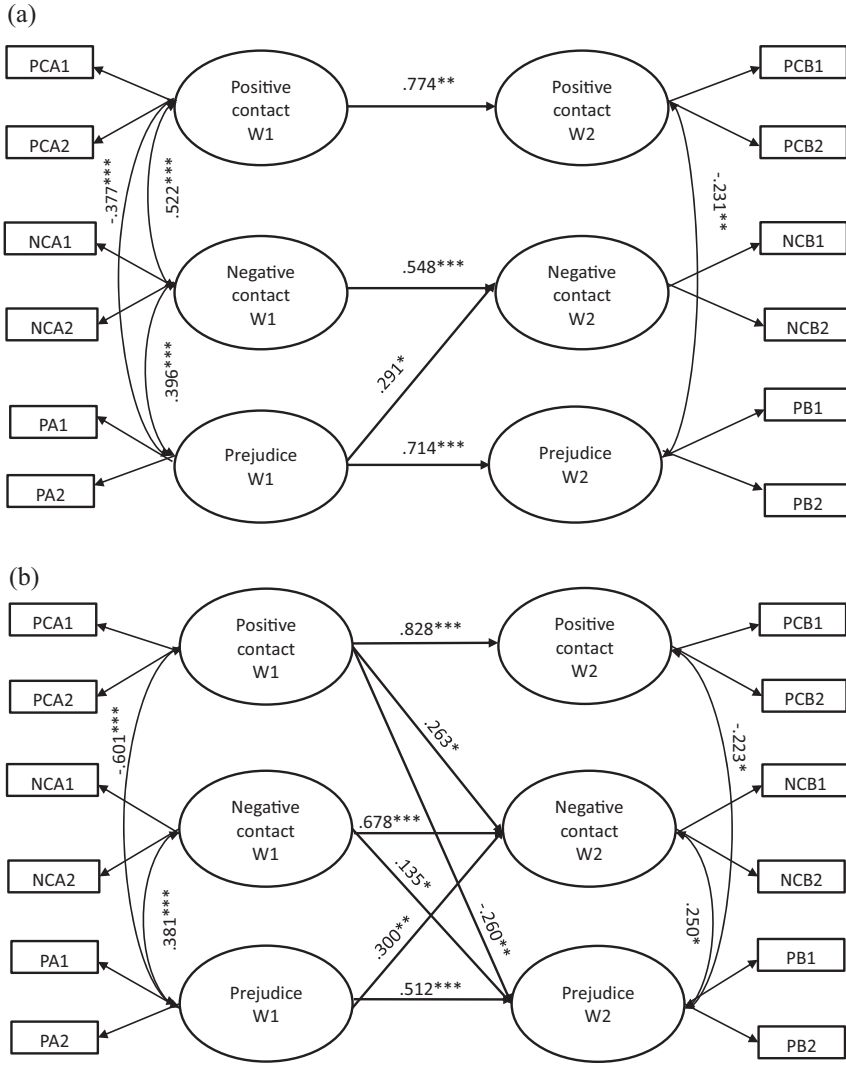
The authors wished to test the extent to which these findings might generalize to experiences with and feelings toward other minority groups. Fortunately, a large two-wave dataset (Wagner, Schmidt, & Kauff, 2016<sup>3</sup>) provided them with information regarding how often participants interacted with, and how they felt toward refugees, but also other groups, such as foreigners in general. Thus, they compared how the dynamics of intergroup contact and rejection of refugees generalize to foreigners (Kotzur & Wagner, 2017; see Figure 1a and 1b). Respondents who reported more prejudice toward refugees at Wave 1 reported having more negative interactions with refugees at Wave 2. Similarly, respondents who reported more prejudice toward foreigners at Wave 1 reported having more negative interactions with foreigners at Wave 2.<sup>4</sup> Together, these results not only show that preexisting intergroup attitudes can meaningfully contribute to shaping how likely immigrants and receiving society members are to interact with each other. They also show that preexisting intergroup attitudes contribute to what extent these interactions are perceived positively or negatively.

In light of recent work on secondary transfer effects (Pettigrew, 2009), it is also plausible that prejudice toward other outgroups could affect the frequency and perceived positivity of contact with immigrant newcomers. Preliminary findings support this contention (Kotzur & Wagner, 2018b). Residents of the neighborhood where the initial reception center for asylum seekers was situated (Kotzur & Wagner, 2018a) were asked to report their attitudes toward Turks, expatriates from Russia, and toward Sinti and Roma, as well as toward asylum seekers. Those neighborhood residents who held highly negative attitudes toward Turks at Wave 1 also reported more negative attitudes toward asylum seekers at Wave 2, which predicted fewer positive and more negative contact experiences with asylum seekers by Wave 3. Overall, then, there is a growing body of empirical evidence to suggest that the frequency and perceived valence of prior contact, as well as preexisting levels of intergroup prejudice, can promote the emergence of either positive or negative contact experiences between immigrants and members of receiving societies, which in turn shape contexts of reception for new arrivals in the receiving society.

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<sup>3</sup>This dataset is a predecessor of the Wagner, Schmidt, et al. (2018) dataset.

<sup>4</sup>We also inspected whether respondents who reported more positive contact with a target group, and less negative contact with a target group, at Wave 1 also reported less prejudice towards the target group at Wave 2. Perhaps not surprisingly, these effects emerged for foreigners as a target of prejudice, yet not for refugees. We believe that reflects overall very low levels of contact with refugees at Wave 1; clearly, contact has to be present in order to exert any effects. We have also fitted the same cross-lagged model to other target groups present in the same data set (Sinti and Roma, and Muslims) through a multiple-group comparison. Only the model for Muslims produced longitudinal reciprocal effects of the contact variables and prejudice, similar to the effects of the model for foreigners.



**Fig. 1.** Cross-lagged model of majority members' positive contact, negative contact, and prejudice toward (a) refugees and (b) foreigners (Kotzur & Wagner, 2017). Nonsignificant paths not shown. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### Conclusion and Implications

On the whole, psychological research on intergroup contact has many insights to offer regarding how to ease tensions and facilitate positive relations between

immigrant newcomers and members of receiving societies. With the present paper, we contribute a discussion of factors that are likely to inhibit or enhance a sense of welcoming among members of the receiving society and new immigrant arrivals, using example studies from the United States and Germany—a field promising to receive more attention in the future, given the wide range of ongoing national and international research efforts in this area (Wagner & Greipl, 2017). Overall, our review of this literature indicates that there are many encouraging, yet also some discouraging, effects of contact between new immigrants and receiving society members. Several factors, such as histories of prior contact and tensions between groups, preexisting levels of prejudice, and even encounters with other groups, have the potential to shape the course of relations between immigrants and members of the receiving society. These social realities must be taken into account as we consider strategies commonly used to promote greater contact among immigrants and receiving society members.

How can the insights from the work we reviewed be used to inform social policy and interventions? We believe that there are many ways, some of which we highlight below, referring once again to Germany and the United States as relevant examples. Promoting opportunities for positive contact, and hindering the potential for negative contact, both appear to be important and implementable strategies to improve relations between receiving society members and new immigrants. Across many spheres of life, there are numerous ways to foster opportunities for positive contact. One example would be to encourage integrated schooling, for instance, among refugee and receiving society children in Germany, and among first-generation immigrant and receiving society children in the United States; the creation of integrated classrooms should be combined with teaching methods that foster cooperation and interdependence, such as the “jigsaw classroom” or other cooperative learning strategies, which have been shown to contribute to the emergence of positive intergroup contact effects (Aronson, & Patnoe, 2011; Aronson, Stephan, Sikes, Blaney, & Snapp, 1978; Lanphen, 2011; Slavin, 1980; Wagner, 2017; Wagner & Wagner, 2017). Another example would be to support initiatives designed to receive new immigrants in local communities, such as the “Freundschafter” program in Germany, where community members pair up with refugees to engage in a number of structured group and one-on-one activities, and the “Welcoming America” initiative in the United States that we introduced previously (Henz & Berneburg, 2017; Wagner, 2017; Welcoming America, 2018; Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, 2014; Williams, 2015).

By contrast, policies that lead to increased segregation, such as the currently implemented large scale, decentralized “reception, decision, and repatriation centers” for asylum seekers in Germany (“Ankerzentren starten”, 2018), should be reconsidered, to instead facilitate greater opportunities for positive contact between receiving society members and new immigrants. Following the lead of early work on integrated housing in the United States (e.g., Deutsch & Collins,

1951), this could be achieved by offering newcomers housing in residential units dispersed throughout communities, rather than in separate facilities. Furthermore, in cases where contact between receiving society members and immigrants may prove difficult, indirect approaches that involve contact between ethnic minorities and majorities in receiving societies may be used to establish more welcoming contexts of reception for new immigrant arrivals. For instance, in the United States, Americans who are generally unwelcoming toward immigrants and immigration may benefit from having greater opportunities for positive contact with fellow citizens from other racial and ethnic backgrounds; this may serve not only to improve racial and ethnic relations in the United States, but also to enhance a willingness to welcome new immigrant groups. Similar strategies may be used in Germany, by supporting opportunities for native Germans to engage in positive contact with people of other ethnic backgrounds.

Additionally, given the adverse effects of negative intergroup contact, limiting the potential for negative contact is of equal importance. This implies that institutional norms and policies supported by politicians, opinion leaders, and other influential parties are needed to guide contact and facilitate positive intergroup experiences (see Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006); such messages from institutional authorities are especially important to convey in threat-ridden contexts laden with histories of negative intergroup relations, and when levels of intergroup prejudice are heightened. An example that may be applied to the German context involves the promotion of neighborhood halls, which would offer a place for facilitated discussions of challenging issues that may arise (e.g., housing for refugees) as well as possible solutions. Lastly, since people's attitudes are prone to be shaped by the frames with which they perceive and interpret intergroup relations, policymakers and members of the media also have to acknowledge the ways in which linking discussions of societal issues (e.g., economy, crime, and public safety) with immigrants and immigration can have detrimental effects on receiving society members' attitudes (Eberl et al., 2018). Thus, along with others (Wagner, Christ, & Heitmeyer, 2010; Wagner & Hewstone, 2012), we encourage both researchers and policymakers to recognize how contact experiences between immigrants and receiving society members are both likely to be shaped by and shape the social and political contexts in which they live, and to be aware of the consequences of their own actions that have the potential to impact how new immigrants are received in receiving societies.

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