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Contact and Intergroup Conflict: New Ideas for the Road Ahead

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This article explores a number of new directions that we hope will inspire thought and debate and perhaps broaden the focus of theorizing, research, and interventions based on the relationships between cross-group contact and intergroup conflict. Pettigrew's (1996) *levels-of-analysis* framework articulates that intergroup relations include processes (and changes) at the level of the individual; at the level of interpersonal cross-group interactions and relationships; and/or at the level of institutions, policies, and practices that define the broader intergroup relationship. We use this framework to describe how research in contexts marked by open hostility and direct violence can make especially apparent how research and interventions based on cross-group contact should (and sometimes do) consider processes and outcomes at all 3 levels. Recognizing that there are multiple types of peace and violence, we stress the benefits of explicitly describing conflict as a continuum and recognizing that true peace may not involve the absence of conflict. We consider what this claim might mean for current work on contact and propose that research and theorizing on intergroup negotiations and conflict management might be usefully integrated with current ideas about cross-group contact.

Public Significance Statement
The articles in this special issue add to a growing volume of evidence of the potential for cross-group contact to assist in the amelioration of destructive intergroup conflicts and to assist in the process of reconciliation following conflict de-escalation. However, many of these articles also demonstrate the complexity and nuanced nature of the relationship between contact and conflict reduction and reconciliation. Thus, if we are going to design interventions and policies to promote contact, it is critically important we continue to build a clear and deep understanding of the processes involved in this relationship. This article seeks to encourage a broadening of the conversation and the research agenda in an effort to build this understanding and improve applications.

Keywords: intergroup contact, intergroup conflict, negotiations, levels of analysis, violence

Despite the historical link between contact research and conflict-laden contexts (Allport, 1954), many of the authors of the articles in this special issue point out that much of the research and theorizing on contact has focused on intergroup contexts that lack the open hostility and violence that characterize protracted intergroup conflicts (see also Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Tropp, 2015; Wagner & Hewstone, 2012). Of course, the work in relatively low conflict contexts is critically important because the real

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goal is to create societies that are not only free of violent conflict but offer what might be considered true peace. As Techakesari, Droogendyk, Wright, Louis, and Barlow (2017) remind us, a society that lacks open conflict but perpetuates systemic discrimination and maintains consequential group-based inequality cannot be described as truly peaceful (see Cohrs & Boehnke, 2008; Galtung, 1969; Jackman, 2001). However, investigations of cross-group contact in intergroup contexts faced with openly hostility and violent conflict represent a critical contribution to the contact literature. From the inception of this special issue, we saw it as a chance to bring together researchers who are taking up this challenge.

In addition, we hoped that this collection of articles would highlight the ways that a focus on conflict-laden contexts could test the generality and boundaries of contact effects, demonstrate the growing internationalization of contact research, and deal directly with some of the interesting contradictions and controversies within the contact literature. We believe that this special issue has accomplished these goals. The breadth of ideas and questions that are considered, the number and geographic dispersion of the intergroup contexts considered, the investigation of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups, and the combination of theoretical contributions and empirical research using a wide range of methods and designs combine to make this collection an exciting and valuable addition to this burgeoning literature.

The challenge we take up in this final article is not to provide another review of the cross-group contact and/or intergroup conflict literatures. There are already a number of excellent recent reviews (e.g., Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Halperin & Sharvit, 2015; Hewstone et al., 2014; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Tropp, 2012; Tropp, Mazziotta, & Wright, 2017; Tropp & Page-Gould, 2015; Wagner & Hewstone, 2012). We will be somewhat idiosyncratic in the issues that we raise here. Rather than summarizing ideas and findings from this volume, we explore a number of new directions for continued work and engage several broad theoretical and practical issues that we hope will inspire thought and debate and thus add to the understanding of the relationships between cross-group contact and intergroup conflict.

Using Pettigrew's (1996) *levels of analysis* model, we consider how research in societies marked by open hostility and violent conflict helps to make apparent the need to consider the degree to which contact theory, research, and intervention do (and should) focus on processes and outcomes at different levels. The model proposes that intergroup relations can be usefully understood to include processes (and changes) at the level of the individual; at the level of people's cross-group interactions and relationships; and/or at the level of institutional structures, policies, and practices that define the broader intergroup relationship. With the recognition that there are multiple types of peace and of violence, we consider the benefits of explicitly describing conflict as a continuum and of recognizing that true peace may not involve the complete absence of conflict. We consider what this claim might mean for intergroup contact and propose that work on negotiations and conflict management might be usefully integrated with theories and research in cross-group contact.

Contact as Political and Personal: A Levels-of-Analysis Approach

Beyond Prejudice: In Praise of Research in High-Conflict Contexts

There is a growing recognition among intergroup contact researchers that theorizing and empirical work needs to expand the traditional focus on when and how cross-group interactions improve individual attitudes and interpersonal behavior (see Dixon & Levine, 2012; Tropp & Mallett, 2011). The focus on contact within conflict-laden intergroup contexts exemplified by the contributions to this collection helps to bring an important perspective to this issue. Specifically, hostile and protracted conflict makes clear the need for a clear articulation of how interactions across group boundaries can subsequently influence not only the attitudes and actions of individuals but also the larger systemic and institutional forces that control the relations between groups.

This general idea that changes in intergroup relations can be understood in terms of different *levels* of social change is nicely elucidated by Pettigrew's (1996; see also Nadler, 2012; Ron, Solomon, Halperin, & Saguy, 2017) levels-of-analysis model. The model describes three distinct levels at which elements of intergroup relations occur. Pettigrew uses the term *micro-level* to describe *intra*personal phenomena, or aspects of intergroup relations that are manifested in the cognitions and emotions of individuals. For example, negative stereotypes, prejudice, hatred, and fear but also positive stereotypes, admiration, and allophilia (see Pittinsky, 2012; Wright, Aron, & Tropp, 2002) are all phenomena that reside "in the heads" of individuals but are also critical for understanding the relations between groups. The term *mesolevel* describes *inter*personal phenomena, or ways that intergroup relations influence and emerge within the content of interpersonal interactions that involve members of different social groups. Cross-group friendships and casual daily interactions between members of different groups would be examples of these mesolevel phenomena. The term *macrolevel* describes broader social institutions and conventions that are relevant to the relations between groups. Thus, laws, policies, and institutional practices, as well as broadly shared ideological beliefs and group norms, represent macrolevel phenomena that influence the relative position of groups and the normative treatment of members of different groups, as well as the general quality of the relationships between these groups (i.e., from cooperative alliance to hostile enemies).

At its core, Allport's (1954) formulation of the contact hypothesis that has guided the lion's share of contact research proposes that the nature and content of interpersonal cross-group interactions (mesolevel phenomena) can influence the stereotypes, prejudice attitudes, and behavioral intentions of the individuals involved (microlevel change). The empirical evidence for this proposition has been all but undisputable (see many of the articles in this issue, and Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011, for a review). Second, this relationship is seen to be bidirectional, because these microlevel changes should spark mesolevel changes—more positive attitudes should lead to reductions in interpersonal acts of discrimination during subsequent cross-group interactions (mesolevel change). There is strong evidence for this claim as well (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). Thus, the research and theorizing in this tradition has provided an extensive and useful understanding of the

relationship between micro- and mesolevel processes. However, most traditional accounts and empirical tests of contact have provided less clarity about how these micro- and mesolevel effects translate into changes at the macrolevel. How do better attitudes and more positive interpersonal interactions across group boundaries lead to changes in laws, policies, normative beliefs, and institutional practices? It is possible that as positive contact becomes more common, making the resulting positive attitudes and friendly interpersonal behavior more normative, there could be increased recognition of structural inequalities and group-based injustice, which in turn could lead to greater advocacy for changes in social institutions that perpetuate discrimination and inequality (see Pettigrew, 2011).

However, a number of authors have questioned this optimistic view of an inevitable transfer of positive micro- and mesolevel change into macrolevel change (e.g., Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012; Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009; Wright & Baray, 2012; Wright & Lubensky, 2009). Although these authors have not singled out high-conflict contexts for special attention, their misgivings seem especially relevant to intergroup contexts marked by open hostile conflict. In these contexts, it is often macrolevel forces that most effectively and consistently support, encourage, or even mandate the most destructive intergroup behaviors (e.g., slavery, war, genocide, mass incarceration). Thus, a focus on high-conflict contexts makes obvious why the question of how contact effects can translate into macrolevel change is paramount (see Kelman, 2010; Pettigrew, 1998). It is thus critical that contact research continue to strengthen the understanding of how positive cross-group contact can and will lead to the removal of institutions, policies, and ideologies that sustain the ongoing violence and hostility.

A first step in this direction is offered in a number of articles in the current issue, which include measures that directly query participants about their desire for structural changes in the intergroup relationship. Prominent among these is the concept of "reconciliation" (e.g., Ben David et al., 2017; Čehajić-Clancy & Bilewicz, 2017; De Tezanos-Pinto, Mazziotta, & Feuchte, 2017; Shani & Boehnke, 2017; Tropp et al., 2017; Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017). Although the specific meaning of *reconciliation* is contested, Nadler (2012) claimed that "most, if not all, scholars and practitioners would agree that the multicausal nature of intergroup conflict necessitates that full reconciliation be an outcome of changes on several dimensions" (p. 293). He went on to propose that true reconciliation involves not only the building of positive relationships and trust (what he calls "relational change"; p. 294) but also changes in the structural and institutional relationship between the groups. Reconciliation can truly be achieved only through renegotiating collective rights, obligations, and rules. Thus, saying that one supports reconciliation, while likely meaning that one intends to be engaged in positive interactions with outgroup members, is also an explicit statement about the kind of relationship one desires for the two groups.

Tropp et al. (2017) also conceptualize reconciliation in behavioral terms, querying participants on their direct participation in reconciliation activities. Other examples of measures that explicitly focus on participants' desire to be part of macrolevel change include assessments of support for policies that would grant greater rights, freedoms, and political power to the outgroup (see Shani & Boehnke 2017; Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017). Future research should continue to engage these and other measures that tap participants' willingness to consider and support meaningful change in the intergroup relationship. In addition, it is also noteworthy that in the studies presented in this issue, support for reconciliation was operationalized in a wide variety of ways, with relatively little overlap. This perhaps is evidence of not only the complexity and breadth of this concept but also lingering ambiguity in its meaning (see Nadler, 2012). Thus, it may be valuable to consider carefully, and state explicitly, one's definitions of the term, and perhaps even more important, to consider how participants in different intergroup contexts understand concepts like "reconciliation."

Finally, we describe the use of these measures as a *first step* because, although they focus on the need for macrolevel change, they also represent measures of change at the microlevel—change in the attitudes and intentions of individuals. The larger challenge is to be able to offer evidence that contact has influences beyond the desires and intentions and even the behaviors of individuals and to show that it contributes to actual changes in the structural and institutional (macrolevel) relations between the groups (see Pettigrew, 1998). This is, of course, an enormous challenge, but if one is going to make strong claims about value of contact, it behooves one to have evidence that it plays at least some role in the actual prevention or deescalation of conflict and/or the building of a meaningful peace (see Kelman, 2010).

What Kind of Peace Is Being Sought?

To this point, our discussion of levels of analysis and the contrasting of high-conflict with lower-conflict intergroup contexts has led to the suggestion of a need for a closer examination of the connection between contact and macrolevel change. However, this analysis also leads us to consider the equally important question of whether a particular level of social change is actually most desirable or important. Of course, most advocates and researchers would not be satisfied with change solely at the microlevel. If changes in the heads of individuals do not lead to measurable change even in their own interactions with outgroup members (mesolevel change), there would be little benefit to anyone (except perhaps to the individual who has changed). However, it may be less obvious that improvements at the macrolevel are necessarily always more important to people than is change at the mesolevel. In fact, the question of which level might be seen as most important by those living in given societies may be directly connected to the level of open hostile intergroup conflict within that society. The dominant focus on meso- and microlevel change found in much of the cross-group contact literature may have emerged because both the researchers and the participants in this research were members of societies that are largely free of open hostility and direct violence.

However, before exploring this claim, it would be valuable to broaden our discussion of the meaning of peace. Like others (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Tropp, 2015; Wagner & Hewstone, 2012), we have initially contrasted contexts that lack open hostility with those described as "relatively peaceful." Although this broad distinction can be useful, it also obscures critical complexities in the meaning of peace and of violence. We eluded to one important distinction in the initial paragraph of this article, one best represented by Galtung's (1969) distinction between *negative* and *pos-*

itive peace and between *direct* and *structural* violence (see also Jackman, 2001). A peace that involves the absence of overt direct acts of physical violence perpetrated by recognizable human agents represents what Galtung labeled *negative peace.* This narrow view of peace can be contrasted with the much broader concept of "positive peace," which in addition to lacking *direct* violence, is also free of *structural* violence in the form of systemic group-based inequalities and oppression that leads to physical and/or psychology harm. Thus, what have been described as "relatively peaceful societies" may be contexts that have negative peace, because they show low incidence of direct violence, but nonetheless they may lack positive peace if high levels of structural violence prevail. The meaning of peace is made even richer by Galtung's (1990) concept of cultural violence, which is any aspect of culture that justifies direct and structural violence.

Thus, the proposition is that contact researchers' strong focus on meso- and microlevel concerns result, in part, because work on contact developed and has been carried out primarily in societies characterized by negative peace. These intergroup contexts lack the clear evidence of the presence and power of structural and cultural violence (macrolevel phenomena) that is provided by widespread direct violence. Thus, the macrolevel structures that sustain inequality and harm may remain relatively opaque, allowing beliefs in meritocracy and democracy to thrive and systemic group-based differences in even health and mortality to be largely seen as unfortunate accidents of circumstance beyond anyone's control (see Jackman, 2001).

In these contexts of negative peace, however, what will be more obvious are individual acts of overt discrimination, especially individual acts of direct violence (mesolevel phenomena). With the institutional causes of discrimination and violence obscured, the explanations for these acts of discrimination are likely to be found within the individual actor-microlevel explanations (see Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Ross, 1977). Thus, in societies with low levels of direct violence—"relatively peaceful societies"—the problems that emerge between groups may be more likely to seen by members of these societies as problems of individual attitudes (microlevel) and acts of discrimination (mesolevel). However, when negative peace is lost and there is widespread direct violence, the systemic nature (macrolevel) of the problem can hardly be ignored. Thus, it is perhaps quite reasonable that those seeking solutions to the problems of intergroup conflict in societies lacking negative peace might be more likely to see the problems in macrolevel terms, whereas those living in societies marked by negative peace may be more inclined to focus on the meso- and microlevel manifestations of intergroup conflict.

Further, the explanation for this difference in focus may not be purely cognitive. There may be motivational reasons for focusing on the need for harmony within personal relationships. People live much of their lives through their interpersonal interactions and relationships with individuals who share their physical spaces. Although the content and nature of these individual interactions with others are influenced by broader inequalities between groups and by institutional and cultural rules, in societies free of direct intergroup violence people are likely to experience these interactions as primarily interpersonal. In addition, in societies relatively free of direct violence, daily cross-group interpersonal exchanges can often be comfortable, civil, and even warm and intimate.

In addition, there are clear benefits of harmony in people's interpersonal lives. If they like, feel close to, and interact easily with others in their local world, their life is decidedly better than if their daily interpersonal interactions are effortful, uncomfortable, and lack basic elements of respect and liking (e.g., Headey, Veenhoven, & Wearing, 1991; Myers & Diener, 1995). Thus, it may be that, in intergroup contexts relatively free of direct violence, the friendliness of one's daily interactions may be more important to one's general happiness and well-being than whether an interacting partner belongs to a group with more or less social status, opportunities, or material resources. In this case, people might not be willing to trade existing positive friendly mesolevel interactions for macrolevel social change that reduced group-based inequality but would be associated with tense or even negative interpersonal interactions (something Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, described as harmonious inequality).

Of course, as research by Saguy and colleagues (2009) shows, this preference for positive interpersonal relations is much stronger for those who enjoy a structural advantaged position, compared to those who are disadvantaged, and it is undeniable that members of low-power groups will be more likely to be dissatisfied with the current social system (e.g., Ron et al., 2017; Saab, Harb, & Moughalian, 2017; Saguy & Kteily, 2014; Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017; Wright & Baray, 2012). However, in the absence of direct violence and open hostility, even disadvantaged group members may at times privilege positive interpersonal relations over group-based equality. For example, a teenage daughter with a warm, loving relationship with her sexist father may prefer to live with the consequences of the obvious inequality of the male-female relations within her home in order not to jeopardize the psychological closeness and positive interpersonal experiences with her father; in this case, her concerns about maintaining positive mesolevel relations outweigh macrolevel inequality. Similarly, Indigenous Canadian teenagers, despite being acutely aware of the inequalities and oppression faced by their group, may choose to avoid discussing these issues with their White peers in order not to undermine existing positive interpersonal relationships.

Thus, in intergroup contexts marked by negative peace, there may be both cognitive and motivational reasons for both advantaged and disadvantaged group members to be more attuned to interpersonal acts of discrimination (mesolevel phenomena) and to see these as motivated primarily by forces within the offending individuals (microlevel phenomena). Therefore, it should not be surprising that contact research in these contexts would be focused on building positive cross-group interactions and reducing negative attitudes as the primary outcomes of interest.

Conversely, when macrolevel structural inequalities are combined with widespread direct violence, when even negative peace is lost, people are much less likely to experience positive interpersonal interactions, and certainly they cannot be anticipated or expected. It will be much more difficult to construct cross-group interactions that ignore, even temporarily, the macrolevel intergroup conflict. Thus, interpersonal harmony is no longer pitted against structural inequality, and most members of the society will therefore see less value in mesolevel solutions and will recognize that institutional rules and political and cultural ideologies are at the heart of the problem. Thus, we again see the benefits of research like the projects described in this collection. By focusing on intergroup contexts that have experienced direct violence and

open intergroup hostility, they make apparent to both researchers and practitioners the critical need to chart clear connection between contact and meaningful change in larger social institutions and more global ideologies that guide macrolevel intergroup relations (see Pettigrew, 1998; Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017).

Application to Structured Contact Interventions

These different-level models of cross-group contact are also reflected in interventions designed to take advantage of contact as a means of reducing conflict (see Ben David et al., 2017; Shani & Boehnke, 2017). In fact, contemporary debates around planned encounters between Jews and Arabs in Israel appear to closely revolve around the issue of whether the focus should be on micro- and mesolevel processes or more directly on macrolevel concerns. Interventions in which participants from the two sides are brought together in structured interactions have been ongoing in Israel for almost three decades. Some of these planned encounters are designed in ways that are consistent with traditional intergroup contact interventions, focusing on harmony and seeking to create positive interpersonal relationships and feelings of closeness. Maoz (2011) has labeled these *coexistence models* and describes them as emphasizing interpersonal similarity, cultural communalities, and cooperation. These encounters often are quite explicit about their focus on individual relationships and reducing the salience of group identities. Halabi and Sonnenschein (2004) described one example where the facilitators stressed that participants

> spoke for themselves and not in the name of a group and that they should direct what they said to someone specific. . . . When a participant spoke in the first person plural ("We . . ."), we corrected him or her, noting that he or she was not a spokesperson for a group. (p. 49)

Although there is evidence for the effectiveness of these kinds of encounters at reducing prejudice, some researchers have pointed to evidence that because these interventions fail to interrogate the structural realities in which the conflict exists, they at best leave unchallenged structural inequalities and historical legacies that sit at the core of the conflict. At worst, these encounters have been accused of reproducing the power asymmetries of the larger conflict (e.g., Hammack, Pilecki, & Merrilees, 2014; Maoz, 2011).

Other models of planned encounters focus more directly on macrolevel issues and seek to explicitly generate dialogue around the negative aspects of the intergroup relationship, including power asymmetries (see Ben David et al., 2017; Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017). Some even invite open confrontation, encouraging participants to represent the interests of their group rather than see themselves as distinct individuals and to actively debate historical and contemporary injustices and divergent conflict narratives (see Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004; Hammack et al., 2014; Zuñiga, Naagda, & Sevig, 2002). Clearly, those adopting these confrontational approach are willing to sacrifice, at least temporarily, harmony at the interpersonal level in an effort to explore openly the conflict at the intergroup level. Although these models have been applauded for focusing attention on injustices and discrimination, they also run the risk of alienating some participants, because exposing systemic intergroup inequality can be distressing and even painful, especially for members of advantaged groups (see Maoz, 2011). In addition, although confrontation interventions focusing on macrolevel injustices and on competing conflict narratives can have empowering effects on low-status groups, they may do less to assist in the construction of a new understanding of the intergroup relationship that includes future cooperation and peace (e.g., Hammack et al., 2014).

Given the benefits and concerns with these two forms of planned encounters, the two alternative models described in the current issue are particularly exciting. The first describes a model that combines longitudinally the mesolevel-microlevel approach and the macrolevel approach (Shani & Boehnke, 2017). This seems a useful strategy, and the data from a large sample of both Arabs and Jews support the claim that this approach was able to have positive effects on microlevel outcome (greater empathy and hope and less hatred and threat); on mesolevel outcomes (greater interest in future personal contact); and on macrolevel outcomes, with Jews showing increased support for policies that would extend equal rights to Palestinians and Palestinians indicating greater support for inclusion of the outgroup.

The second novel intervention (Ben David et al., 2017) encouraged Jewish participants to consider their own group's, as well as the Palestinian outgroup's, understanding of the intergroup conflict. By examining the two groups' competing conflict narratives with other ingroup members, those using this intervention could examine macrolevel processes while avoiding the threatening experiences associated with direct intergroup confrontation. The results seem promising because participants showed a better understanding of the competing narratives, greater empathy, and more willingness to apologize to the outgroup.

Again, this trilevel model of intergroup relations provides a valuable tool for considering the nature and outcomes of these different models of conflict interventions. As in previous examples, one can see that cross-group contact can be structured in ways that focus attention on processes at particular levels and that this choice can have important implications for both the experiences of the participants and the likely outcomes.

In summary, Pettigrew's (1996) distinction between microlevel, mesolevel, and macrolevel phenomena offers a useful perspective for organizing some of the important distinctions within the contact literature. It clarifies the distinction between two quite different views of optimal cross-group contact. Mesolevel-focused contact emphasizes reducing the salience of group differences, talking about commonalities, creating interpersonal harmony, forming cross-group relationship, and reducing acts of interpersonal discrimination. This view of contact has, not surprisingly, emerged as the central focus in work done primarily in intergroup contexts that include meaningful group-based inequality and resulting structural violence but have relatively little direct violence and open intergroup hostility. On the other side, macrolevel-focused contact is marked by maintaining the salience of collective identities; talking about differences and inequalities; openly considering conflicting group narratives; and examining policies, practices, institutions, and norms that perpetuate conflict. This approach is less concerned with interpersonal relationships and more focused on negotiating a new, less conflictive intergroup relationship. Not surprisingly, the need for both kinds of cross-group contact increases in contexts with direct violent and hostile intergroup conflict, but it is the need for contact that includes a focus on macrolevel concerns that is perhaps most apparent.

Contact and the Conflict Continuum

Like others (e.g., Hewstone et al., 2014; Wagner & Hewstone, 2012), we introduced this special issue with the claim that most contact research has been done in societies that for the most part have achieved negative peace, where there is evidence of structural and cultural violence but little direct violence. This was contrasted with the paucity of contact research in intergroup contexts that lacked even negative peace, where there exist high levels of direct violence and open expressions of intergroup hostility. Although useful, this dichotomization of intergroup contexts into those with versus those without negative peace may be a misrepresentation. Discussions of conflict escalation-deescalation make clear that conflict is much more appropriately seen as a continuum, not focused exclusively on the presence or absence of negative peace but including a full recognition of the need for positive peace. Further, a particular intergroup context at a particular point in time can be understood to fall somewhere on the spectrum from a complete lack of structural, cultural, and direct violence to open warfare and active killing of outgroup members.

Perhaps this point may initially seem somewhat trivial. However, there are numerous important implications of conceptualizing intergroup conflict as a continuum. One implication is implied in a point made by Techakesari and colleagues (2017)—that conflict and peace may indeed not be wholly antagonistic. Rather than peace being the absence of conflict, a peaceful intergroup context may be one that allows enough conflict to expose and contest structural and cultural violence that results from group-based inequalities, encourage vigorous negotiations of disagreement, and create social change. This, in turn, dramatically changes the framing of responses to conflict. Rather than being something to be prevented, avoided, and terminated as quickly as possible, conflict is now seen as something that must be monitored and managed to reduce escalation beyond some optimal range but also might need to be cultivated and nurtured, should it fall below this optimal range.

This offers a much more productive understanding of a number of relationships. We later discuss what this means for the relationship between contact and conflict at length, but first we note that this offers a valuable perspective on the relationship between intergroup harmony and collective action—actions taken by group members designed to improve the status of their ingroup (see Saab et al., 2017; Techakesari et al., 2017; Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017). Research and theorizing on the topic of collective action has, for the most part, implied (or even openly stated) that collective action by disadvantaged groups is a good thing, that it is necessary to create social change that reduces intergroup inequalities (see Wright, 2009b). However, collective action is at its core confrontational and conflictual and thus is at odds with another desirable state—intergroup harmony (see Wright & Baray, 2012). However, with a view of conflict as a continuum rather than a dichotomous either/or phenomenon, one can see calls for collective action as efforts to cultivate and nurture needed conflict when the levels have fallen so low as to allow structural and cultural violence to grow and flourish. Thus, defining *peace* as some optimal level of conflict allows some forms of collective action, at some points in time, to be cases of conflict in the pursuit of peace.

Positive Contact as Cooperation or Conflict

This idea that the optimal level of conflict may not be none at all also has important implications for contact. It makes one aware that cross-group contact might be understood not only as a potential agent of conflict prevention, deescalation, and reconciliation but also as an opportunity to nurture, enhance, and maintain adequate conflict to undermine structural violence and facilitate just distribution of power and resources. Thus, when intergroup tensions are rising too rapidly or arise after a period of escalated and destructive conflict, a society may need the kind of cross-group contact that focus on interpersonal harmony and relationship building—the kind of contact that we described as mesolevel contact in the previous section—as well as contact that deals directly with solutions to the problematic relationship at the macrolevel. However, if one wishes to avoid these destructive and violent conflicts, contact during periods free of direct violence and open hostility might not only be directed at maintaining harmony but might also need to include contact that exposes structural and cultural violence, together with the macrolevel institutional inequalities that cause it. In this case, contact would include explicit spaces for confrontation, disagreement, and contesting of the intergroup relationship.

Negotiation as Both Contact and Conflict

This also points out another avenue to broaden and deepen thinking on contact across group boundaries. There may be benefits to considering more directly the ways that intergroup negotiations can be understood as cases of intergroup contact (see Saguy & Kteily, 2014, for one discussion). For example, negotiations between nations, regional or local political negotiations, or workers-unions and management negotiations, might all be seen as examples that could be productively considered under the umbrella of contact. In these cases, individuals (or small groups of individuals) from different groups interact with each other in service of negotiating elements of their intergroup relationships. These, then, are truly *intergroup* contact experiences.[1] A primary issue during these interactions is how to monitor and manage the conflict in such a way that allows each side to actively present its own agenda and to contest the agenda of the other, while at the same time ensuring that the conflict remains productive and goal-directed.

There is a large literature on this particular form of intergroup contact-conflict (e.g., Galluccio, 2015; Goldman & Shapiro, 2012), and a full discussion of the connections between theories of intergroup negotiations and intergroup contact theories is far be-

[1] Elsewhere, Wright (2009a) has argued that the term *intergroup* contact does not properly represent much of what has been studied in the intergroup contact literature. Consistent with social identity theory, the term *intergroup* should be reserved for contexts in which people are interacting *in terms of* their group memberships (see Tajfel, 1982). Accordingly, intergroup interactions occur when one's *collective* identity is the salient self-representation and actions are guided by knowledge of the group norms for how *we* interact with *them*. Much of the "intergroup" contact literature has focused on contexts where personal identities are the dominant self-representation and in situations constructed to reduce thoughts about the normative relationship between the two groups. Thus, these contact situations are decidedly not intergroup in nature and should more accurately be described as *cross-group* contact—a more general term that does not assume the level of identity that is guiding the interaction.

yond the scope of this article. However, even a cursory consideration makes apparent that considering intergroup negotiations as a special case of intergroup contact could provide important insights into both. For example, several articles in this issue describe the benefits of preconflict contact (Abrams, Van de Vyver, Houston, & Vasiljevic, 2017; Voci, Hadziosmanovic, Cakal, Veneziani, & Hewstone, 2017; see also Oliner & Oliner, 1988; Wagner & Hewstone, 2012) as a means of reducing the intensity of subsequent conflict or speeding the pace of reconciliation following intergroup conflict. This finding is consistent with work in intergroup negotiations, where the outcomes of past interactions serve as a key determinant of the success of subsequent negotiations. It is interesting that, in the case of group negotiations, successfully negotiating a position that meets the needs of both sides not only makes future negotiated agreements more likely (e.g., Pruitt & Kim, 2004) but it also may provide an opening for positive interpersonal relationships between negotiators from the two sides. For example, one at times hears of international leaders who become friends or mutual admirers (e.g., Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and American President Ronald Reagan) after having negotiated a contentious international agreement (the Canada–United States Free Trade Agreement). It may be that in these cases, rather than interpersonal closeness leading to more positive intergroup attitudes, it is the successful negotiation of an intergroup dispute that leads to the feelings of interpersonal closeness and admiration.

This could mean that one might want to consider an alternative causal model to the one tested in most intergroup contact research, including a number of the articles in this collection (Čehajić-Clancy & Bilewicz, 2017; Shani & Boehnke, 2017; Tropp et al., 2017; Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017). Current models describe how positive feelings for the contact partner and changes in intergroup attitudes lead to support for macrolevel social change. A negotiation model would test the reverse prediction that producing successful macrolevel change leads to improved intergroup attitudes and feelings of interpersonal closeness. Of course, the real truth is likely to be that these influences are bidirectional and that there exists a feedback loop that allows for causal effect in both directions.

In another example, work in the negotiation literature has considered the importance of "readiness" as parties decide whether or not to enter negotiations (e.g., Pruitt, 2015). This work is clearly relevant to discussion within the contact literature of willingness to engage in contact. As Ron et al. (2017) recognize, this is an area that is of critical importance for contact theory but has received considerably less attention than have investigations of the processes during contact and its subsequent outcomes. The negotiation literature could make a number of interesting contributions to this discussion, in part because of its strong focus on macrolevel (structural) influences on the relations between groups, including a recognition that forces outside the two-group conflict (e.g., third parties, broader social climate) can influence motivations to engage in interactions or negotiations with outgroup members.

Task-Oriented-Goal-Directed Contact

In addition, compared to the contact literature (for an interesting exception see Stürmer & Benbow, in press), the literature on group negotiations gives even greater weight to the ways that interactions across group boundaries are motivated by pragmatic concerns, thus describing them as more task-oriented-goal-directed than social. This view of cross-group contact may be particularly relevant in high-conflict situations, where at the very least the possible reduction in the psychological, physical, and financial costs of the conflict may represent a key motivator for interacting with outgroup members (Ron et al., 2017). In negotiation theories, this pragmatic motive for engaging with the outgroup is seen as particularly critical and is highlighted in what is referred to as "a mutually hurting stalemate" (e.g., Pruitt, 2015, p. 123). The idea is that negotiations become attractive when both groups recognize that the conflict has become highly costly and is at a point where it cannot be escaped by further escalation. Thus, representatives of the two groups are pushed into structured intergroup contact as a way to avoid the costs of continued conflict.

That a mutually hurting stalemate is necessary may be somewhat extreme when one is considering the motives of those who are not designated representatives of their groups and are not assigned the task of negotiating an end to the conflict. However, a more general recognition that intergroup contact may be motivated by pragmatic self-interest (in this case, collective self-interest) seems valuable. If the two groups can come to see that their differing goals may not be as conflictive as they first appear, cooperative contact may allow them both to achieve these goals more effectively. In this case, intergroup contact can lead to a win-win solution. Even when the two groups' collective self-interests do conflict, structured contact (i.e., negotiations) could lead to a compromise that allowed both groups to achieve part of their desired outcomes.

However, the broader point that group goals and pragmatic group-level self-interest can be a key motive for engaging in contact should also be a reminder that it might be useful to structure cross-group contact around solutions to shared (and somewhat costly) collective problems. This harkens back to Muzafer Sherif's (1958) concept of superordinate goals and the classic Robbers Cave study (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). Postconflict contact can be most effective at improving intergroup relations when it involves structured tasks that serve shared interests and require the cooperative participation of both groups. Thus, it may be that goal-directed-task-oriented contact could be most effective at producing positive cross-group interactions and a reduction in animosity, especially following open hostile intergroup conflict.

This focus on shared goals and task-oriented contact as a basis for positive intergroup contact may also be useful when considering coalitions and alliances that form between previously antagonistic groups. One example of this can be found in an alliance that has recently emerged in Canada between Indigenous peoples (also known in Canada as First Nations) and non-Indigenous environmentalists. There is a long history of oppression and conflict involving non-Indigenous Canadians and First Nations communities. Recently, this conflict has often been manifested in deputes between First Nations and governments or mining, oil, lumber, and other extraction industries, because they seek to exploit First Nations's land. For the most part, the struggle of First Nations communities was of only passing interest to most non-Indigenous Canadians. However, recently, because the goal of First Nations communities to protect their traditional lands has dovetailed with the values and interests of non-Indigenous environmentalists, a strong and effective alliance has begun to emerge. Their shared

commitment to protecting the natural environment and the more specific goal of fighting against extraction industries, pipelines, and the governments who support these activities represents a shared superordinate goal and has created spaces for mutually respectful and pleasant cross-group interactions.

Although there is currently no published research examining the impact of this new avenue for cross-group contact, the anecdotal evidence has appeared to support the predictions of contact theory. One now sees prominent environmentalists singing the praises and lauding the power of Indigenous leaders (Suzuki, 2015). One sees environmentalist organizations that are dominated by White Canadians asking Indigenous leaders to speak at their rallies, posting videos of Indigenous "land-defenders," and lauding the insights and traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples (Johnson, 2016). Thus, the emergence of a superordinate goal created opportunities for task-oriented-goal-directed contact that has dramatically changed the power relations between the groups (macrolevel change), the dynamics of interpersonal interactions between individual members of the two groups (mesolevel change), and the attitudes of many non-Indigenous Canadians (microlevel change).

The potential power of successful goal-directed contact experiences, such as successful negotiations or engaging other superordinate goals, makes good sense when one considers some of the psychological variables that have been shown to mediate the contact-reconciliation relationship. Increases in trust (De Tezanos-Pinto, Mazziotta, & Feuchte, 2017; Tropp et al., 2017; Voci et al., 2017) and hope for future success (Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017), as well as reductions in feelings of threat (Abrams et al., 2017; Shani & Boehnke, 2017) and intergroup anxiety (Čehajić-Clancy & Bilewicz, 2017), are all likely to be strongly influenced by successful completion of a shared task. Again, these cross-group interactions, which may initially be motivated primarily by collective self-interests and which involve practical goal-directed behavior, may not only lead to solutions to structural problems but also produce positive representations of the outgroup and its members.

Desirable High-Conflict Contact and Controlling Hostility?

Finally, one might consider one other intriguing cross-group contact context that on the surface may have little to do with the kinds of conflicts described in the other articles in this issue. However, it is an intergroup contact situation that is explicitly designed to ensure conflicting group goals, requires vigorous open intergroup competition, and in some of its forms accepts even direct interpersonal violence. These conflicts, however, seldom escalate beyond the confines of the contact situation, and the two groups willingly return and participate again and again. This is the case of competitive team sports. Like international or union-management negations, competitive sports might not be thought of as intergroup contact. Nonetheless, they meet the basic requirements. They are structured interactions where, like other contentious intergroup negotiations, individuals act as representatives of a highly relevant social category. Obviously this context is less consequential than are negotiations between hostile ethnic, political, national, or even management-union groups. However, just as laboratory research analogs of real-world conflict and intergroup contact can appear quite artificial, competitive sports may appear to have little in common with more consequential intergroup conflicts. Also like laboratory analogs, however, the highly controlled nature of this particular form of cross-group contact may provide interesting insights into how it is possible to manage highly conflictive cross-group contact situations.

Often, highly competitive team competitions can lead to one of two different relationships between individual members of the two groups and between the groups more generally. In some cases, the results are rivalries that are couched in hostility, distrust, and animosity, but they can also produce rivalries that are expressed in terms of respect, even admiration, for the opponent and genuine positive anticipation of the next interaction. What variables might predict the emergence of admiration and respect versus hostility and hatred? One possibility is the presence of clear rules. It is not surprising, given the highly conflictive nature of this cross-group contact context and the intensity with which participants are expected to engage in the conflict, that team sports usually end up with an enormous list of clearly articulated, widely communicated, and consensually shared rules—as well as "'neutral" referees. The degree to which the other team is seen to have adhered to the agreed-upon rules seems critical. When the outgroup is seen to have competed hard and followed the rules of the conflict, they are likely to be respected and admired. When they have been seen to have benefited from violating the agreed-upon rules, then the intergroup relationship is likely to be dominated by hostility.

This offers an important insight for other intergroup contexts where cross-group contact involves competitive or incompatible goals. Rather than trying to stifle the conflict, it may be more useful to ensure that there are clearly communicated and mutually agreed-upon rules that govern when and how contentious ideas should be raised and addressed. It may also be that there are more things that could be added to the understanding by including these kinds of intergroup relationships under a broadened umbrella of cross-group contact. More generally, we are also proposing that the application of contact theory to conflict situations might benefit from broadening the range of contexts that are considered. These other contexts, like negotiations and even competitive sports, may strengthen theory, offer novel hypotheses, and perhaps even suggest elements of more effective contact-based interventions.

What Is Positive and Negative Contact?

This focus on goal-directed cross-group contact also has implications for the distinction between positive and negative contact. One of the important additions to the contact literature has been a more systematic consideration of the impact of negative contact. The idea is that positive and negative interactions with outgroup members may have independent effects on attitudes and subsequent behaviors (e.g., Graf, Paolini, & Rubin, 2014; Mazziotta, Rohmann, Wright, De Tezanos-Pinto, & Lutterbach, 2015; Paolini et al., 2014). However, for the most part the positive-negative distinction has focused on social elements of an interpersonal interaction. Thus, disagreement, contending, and discomfort would describe negative contact. Of course, if one is observing an interaction in terms of the degree to which it reflected interpersonal warmth, then this operationalization of negative contact is entirely reasonable. However, in a number of the contributions to this issue, negative contact is operationalized in terms of the degree to which a participant was personally impacted by direct intergroup

violence (Abrams et al., 2017; De Tezanos-Pinto et al., 2017; Tropp et al., 2017; Voci et al., 2017). In this case, *negative contact* is not defined in terms of negative interpersonal interactions but rather in terms of how the intergroup conflict itself had intruded on the participant's life. Again, the recurring point is that considering context lacking in negative peace leads to the consideration of a wider range of ways that contact, in this case negative contact, can be understood.

In addition, one might again consider cross-group contact situations that are more goal-directed (e.g., negotiations or alliances), where evaluations of the quality of the interaction are less likely to be based on social concerns and questions of interpersonal warmth. Doing so may lead to a more nuanced view of negative (and positive) contact. For example, if the valued goal of both groups is to negotiate a new intergroup relationship, then an open discussion of group differences and the opportunity to disagree and contest the position presented by the other might be exactly what participants are seeking. Concerns by the other about the need to show interpersonal warmth and engage in overtly friendly behavior may be seen as distracting and inappropriate. This is reminiscent of work by Bergsieker, Shelton, and Richeson (2010). Their research showed that because African Americans and Latinos entered interactions with Whites with the goal of being seen as competent and worthy of respect, they were put off by the overly casual and friendly behavior of White interaction partners who were trying to meet their own self-presentational goals of being liked.

The key point here is that for these minority participants, friendliness and warmth by the outgroup member, which might seem very positive to an outside observer, is experienced as exactly the opposite because it is inconsistent with the desired outcomes of the interaction. Similarly, if a group's goal is to express its discontent with the current intergroup relationship and to negotiate a new one, it may engage in behaviors that do not appear to be very positive. However, if the other party shares the same goal, these behaviors may be recognized as precisely the behaviors that are needed to achieve the goals of both parties. Again, using the perhaps most extreme case of competitive team sports, if one team were to engage in openly friendly, conciliatory, and cooperative behavior during the intergroup interaction, this would of course ruin the game entirely and would be seen as highly negative. Thus, studying a broad range of forms of cross-group contact may provide valuable insights into the broader range of goals that group members may bring to cross-group interactions and in so doing offer more tools for cultivating the kind of contact that will produce the most critical outcomes.

Conclusions

Intergroup contact has and will continue to play a meaningful role in the reduction of intergroup conflict. We have proposed here that cross-group contact can be productively examined using a model that differentiates processes and outcomes that are primarily contained in the heads of individuals, such as stereotypes, prejudice, attitudes, and emotions (microlevel); processes and outcomes that occur in the interpersonal interactions between members of different groups (mesolevel); and processes and outcomes at the level of broader social structures and institutions that determine and guide the broader relations between the groups (macrolevel). We have argued that studying contact in high-conflict social contexts, those that lack both positive and negative peace, offer special insights and focus attention on the need for contact theory and research to continue to expand its focus to better understand the ways that contact can (and cannot) have a positive influence on macrolevel phenomena. Although contact theory has provided an enormous amount of evidence and clear recommendations for ways to improve the attitudes (microlevel) and behaviors of individuals (mesolevel), it offers less in terms of explaining how these important positive changes will translate into macrolevel solutions.

In addition, we have examined some of the perhaps less apparent benefits of taking seriously the idea that intergroup conflict is best conceptualized as a continuum rather than a dichotomous contrast between the existence or lack of particular kinds of peace (negative or positive) or the presence or absence of particular kinds of violence (direct, cultural, or structural). Thus, where a particular intergroup relationship at a particular point in time falls on a broad continuum of conflict will likely determine not only the level of need for cross-group contact but also the form that that contact should take. In addition, the more fluid continuum of conflict makes one aware that rather than thinking of conflict as something that must necessarily be avoided, prevented, and halted as quickly as possible, one can consider that conflict needs to be monitored and managed. This also raises the possibility that one's understanding of contact processes and outcomes might be valuably enhanced by an incorporation of ideas from work on conflict negotiation and a general broadening of the types of intergroup encounters that are considered relevant to intergroup contact theory.

In short, contact theory and research has much to offer efforts in conflict reduction and reconciliation. The articles included in this collection offer compelling evidence of this. It is our expectation that the utility and influence of this work will continue to grow as research continues to deepen our understanding of this critical issue.

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