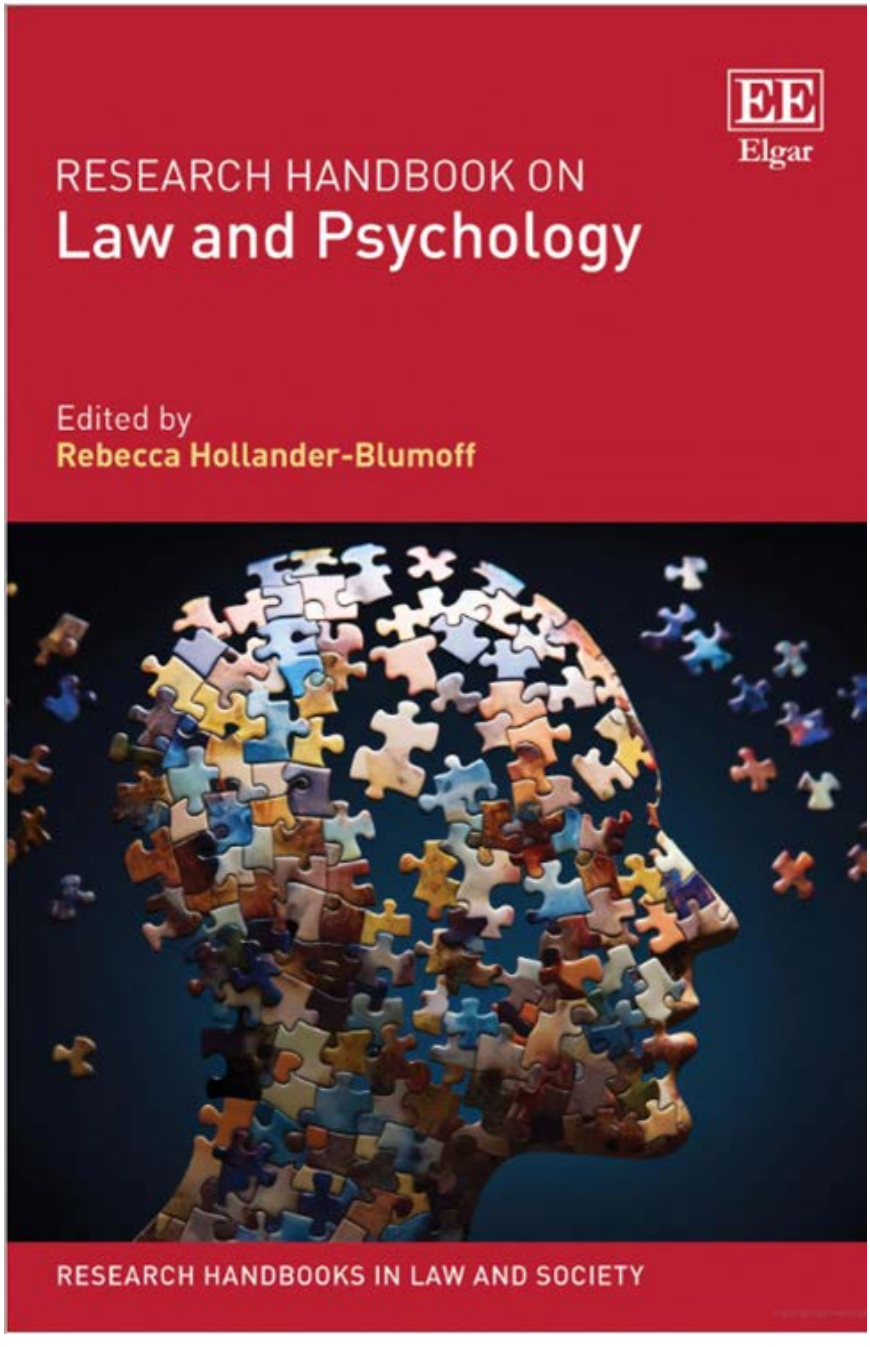

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25. Overcoming identity-based hierarchies: understanding psychological barriers and motivating social justice through intergroup contact

Rachel D. Godsil, Kim Forde-Mazrui and Linda R. Tropp

INTRODUCTION

We begin with what we hope is an uncontroversial premise: every person should be able to expect to be treated with respect and dignity, regardless of the identity groups to which they belong. Our group identities—our race, ethnicity, gender, religion, class background, for example—should not determine our outcomes for health and education, access to opportunities and just treatment, and other conditions that affect our day-to-day experiences and the trajectories of our lives. From the emergence of renowned authors and thinkers, to elected officials in high-level positions, we see examples of people from a range of racial, ethnic, religious, and gender identity groups—and who intersect across these identity groups—who have earned respect and power within our current social and political system. Yet these individual examples of ascension have not translated into broad-scale equality or the elimination of injustices against many identity groups.

In the United States, for example, high-profile events in recent years, including police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many others, and how different groups have experienced the COVID pandemic, have spurred calls to recognize that group identities can have enormous consequences for how people experience, and are treated in, our public systems. Divisions across other lines of identity—with racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, sexism, and anti-LGBTQ+ bigotry being among the most virulent—are also deeply salient in the United States and across a broad range of other countries. Economic inequality in the United States is as stratified as it was in the Gilded Age, and Americans from many walks of life are experiencing an increased sense of hopelessness about the future.

For some, this multifaceted set of challenges makes a compelling case for broad social justice reforms. Yet significant and influential segments of the global population deny or resist the validity of claims of injustice that are associated with group identities. In this chapter, we discuss how group identities shape one's perceptions, experiences, and motivations regarding social justice, and how these perceptions, experiences, and motivations often correspond with one's group status in the social hierarchy (see Blumer, 1958; Bobo, 1999). Privileged status positions in the social hierarchy translate into advantages—such as political and economic advantages, and the power to set societal mores—whereas disadvantages such as being targeted by discrimination and stereotyping serve as obstacles to advancement. All too often, status positions within a given society are determined by racial, ethnic, or religious differences specific to the local social, political, and historical context, as well as categories such as gender, class, LGBTQ+ status, and disability that are salient in most contexts around

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the globe. We also note the intersections of disadvantaged identities can often have especially pronounced effects (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Because the research we share reaches across contexts and national borders, in this chapter we will use the terms "advantaged" and "disadvantaged" to refer to groups (and members of groups) whose specific status contours have thus been societally defined.

We also wish to highlight that status contours associated with group identities, while often deeply entrenched, are not intractable. Identity differences do not, and need not, automatically translate into advantage and disadvantage. Rather, the "we" in a given society can include people across race, religion, and ethnicity. The challenge, then, is how to move toward this ideal—where people of all identity groups are accorded equal dignity and respect—particularly when those in currently disadvantaged identity groups seek to eliminate the status hierarchies borne from differences in identity and intersections of group identities.

Eliminating status hierarchies associated with differences in identity, however, requires both acknowledging the importance of group identities, and recognizing that status hierarchies are forged in close association with group identities. However, extensive literature informs us that many people from historically advantaged groups fail to acknowledge the meaning and value of group-based identities (Apfelbaum et al., 2012) and meet claims of injustice by historically disadvantaged groups with disbelief, disregard, anger, or contempt (Glickman, 2020; Knowles et al., 2014). For example, globally, race is among the most widely salient group identities, and research has revealed that anti-Blackness in particular exists in the vast majority of countries outside of Africa (Coutts, 2020). In particular, white Americans who feel threatened by the potential success and advancement of Black Americans—most notably prominent conservatives in the United States and their supporters—have characterized those who advocate for Black lives as law-breakers and members of hate groups. Several states and localities have also sought to ban discussions of race and racial inequality in public schools that might acknowledge the history and current plausibility of systemic and structural racism in the United States (Alexander et al., 2023; Sawchuck, 2021).

A primary challenge for those seeking to eliminate identity-based status hierarchies and the experiences of injustice associated with those status hierarchies, then, is how to encourage advantaged groups to take seriously the legitimate claims of injustice voiced by disadvantaged groups and, furthermore, to motivate them to take action to address such injustice (see Tropp & Barlow, 2018, for a related argument). Current laws are inadequate. In the United States, civil rights laws, despite their promise, are under-funded by Congress, under-enforced by the Executive branch, and interpreted by courts in a manner increasingly antithetical to social justice (e.g., United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2019; Moyn, 2022). State and local protections vary considerably, from those that are taking proactive measures to address social injustice to those that resist reform or push for reactionary policies. International law and most countries' attempts to create legal redress in response to societal inequalities likewise fall short (e.g., Loeffler & Versteeg, 2018).

We hope in this chapter, first, to further understanding of the psychological barriers that often inhibit members of advantaged groups from recognizing and caring about identity-based status hierarchies. Second, we hope that such understanding will motivate further movement toward eliminating such hierarchies and promoting social justice. As such, we have three objectives. First, in Part I, we explain and document the psychological barriers that can impede how much members of advantaged groups are likely to support social justice reform. Such barriers include ignorance, indifference, skepticism, and resistance to acknowledging and

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addressing societal inequality. They also include uncertainty regarding the proper role for advantaged groups to take in addressing the challenges faced by disadvantaged groups. Our second goal, pursued in Part II, is to highlight a number of psychological processes that, when activated, can facilitate greater motivation for social justice among members of advantaged groups.

Our third goal, emphasized in Parts III and IV, is to provide examples of individual-level and context-level approaches that can encourage social justice reform among advantaged groups and foster their greater motivation for social justice. Exploring the individual level in Part III, greater contact and connections along lines of identity, especially among those with power in relation to those without, have the potential to foster empathy, mutual respect, and a recognition of shared humanity. However, contact between groups that differ in societal status might inadvertently curb support for social change among members of disadvantaged groups by, for example, obscuring the need for social justice reform. This Part will therefore discuss how asymmetries in contact effects should be taken into account and addressed, to ensure that contact between advantaged and disadvantaged groups manifests in ways that ultimately encourage members of both groups to work toward social justice. Addressing the context level in Part IV, we provide examples of social justice reform efforts that would greatly benefit from increased cross-group support. We focus on police reform and racial integration of schools and housing. Directly addressing the risks of police violence is obviously of immediate significance, while educational and residential integration would have long-term effects of building cross-racial understanding, empathy, respect, and concern.

I. PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE MOTIVATION

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes "the inherent dignity and … the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family." Few would disagree explicitly with that statement. Yet many advantaged-group members experience psychological barriers that impede or undermine their actual commitment to the eradication of identity-based status hierarchies and toward social justice reform. This Part identifies and explains some of these barriers, including (A) advantaged-group skepticism about the existence and/or prevalence of social injustice; (B) feelings of threat that advantaged groups may experience when their societal status shifts vis-à-vis disadvantaged groups; and (C) uncertainty over the appropriate role for advantaged groups in advocating for social justice, while respecting the agency of disadvantaged groups. The elucidation of the psychological barriers to recognizing glaring social injustices will, we hope, be of value to the work of overcoming these barriers.

A. Skepticism among Advantaged Groups

Among the most prevalent barriers to addressing identity-based hierarchies and the manifestations of such hierarchies is the disbelief or skepticism that such hierarchies even exist. It is important to recognize, however, that this skepticism exists on a wide spectrum ranging from genuine unawareness from lack of proximity and indifference borne from the luxury of privilege to resistance due to identity-based status threat and hostility and contempt flowing from dehumanization. Unawareness can be addressed by education and exposure to new

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experiences and perspectives, whereas varied forms of resistance are often the underpinnings of hate and identity-based violence.

1. Unawareness

Discrimination doesn't exist, or is a thing of the past …

Advantaged groups are more likely to be unaware that discrimination against disadvantaged groups persists relative to members of disadvantaged groups (Uluğ & Tropp, 2021; Tropp & Barlow, 2018). Many white Americans doubt that racial prejudice and discrimination against people of color still exist (Wilkins & Kaiser, 2014), often assuming that disadvantaged racial groups exaggerate claims of discrimination (see ABC News, 2000; Dover et al., 2014). Those who fall into this group have developed what Richeson and colleagues have named a "mythology" of racial progress that ignores the persistence of racism (Richeson, 2020; Onyeador et al., 2021).

Consider, for example, that even after the highly publicized protests of the summer of 2020, advantaged racial groups diverge from historically disadvantaged groups about the need for continued reform. A year after the racial reckoning of 2020, over 90 percent of Americans believed that progress had been made on issues of race (Pew Research Center, 2021). However, people divide sharply as to how much more needs to be done. Black adults (78 percent) are most likely to believe that a lot more needs to be done, a majority of Hispanic (59 percent) and Asian adults (56 percent) agree, with a lower percentage of white adults (42 percent) agreeing that the country has a lot more to do to achieve racial equality (Pew Research Center, 2021). Among whites, 38 percent say that little more needs to be done and 19 percent say the country does not need to do more to ensure equality for all Americans regardless of racial or ethnic background (Pew Research Center, 2021).

Similar differences exist in other parts of the world. In a 2020 survey of white and Black adults in the UK, Black people were "at least twice as likely as white people to say there is discrimination in British policing and media; [and] three times as likely to think the country has done far too little to address historic racial injustice" (Green, 2020).

Uluğ and Tropp (2021) explain this unawareness with respect to race among members of advantaged racial groups:

> One reason for this limited awareness of racial discrimination targeting other racial groups is that, because of their relative racial privilege, members of advantaged racial groups do not regularly experience the same kinds of mistreatment as those experienced by members of disadvantaged racial groups. Race-based privileges are often invisible to advantaged racial groups, at the same time as they are readily visible and likely to impact the life experiences and opportunities of members of disadvantaged racial groups. (See Case, 2012; Case et al., 2012, 2014; McIntosh, 1989, 2012, 2015)

Indeed, advantaged groups often believe that they are as likely to experience discrimination as disadvantaged groups (Norton & Sommers, 2011) or that racial inequality does not exist (Knowles et al., 2014).

The difference between advantaged- and disadvantaged-group perspectives may result from different reference points in assessing progress (Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006; Brodish et al., 2008). In a study of perceptions of progress toward racial equality in the United States in 2006, Eibach and Ehrlinger posited that some people anchor their ratings in how far a society has come from the past, while others anchor in how far the society has to go to achieve racial

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equality. They found that white participants perceived more racial progress than participants of color and were far more apt to anchor their assessment in how far the United States has come from the past (Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006). Later scholarship has linked perceptual differences to attitudes toward affirmative action (Brodish et al., 2008; DeBell, 2017), decisions about how best to combat racial inequality, and beliefs about whether economic inequality persists (Kraus et al., 2019).

Yet these differences have more nuance than a simple binary. Extending this work, Brodish and colleagues developed a measure of five items rated on a 7-point scale to address the *extent* to which individuals anchored their assessments of racial progress on the past versus the future (Brodish et al., 2008). Relying upon this measure, Brodish and colleagues replicated the finding that white participants perceived more racial progress than participants of color generally; however, their study found that racial prejudice mediated the findings for white participants. Whites lower in prejudice tended to perceive less racial progress and tended to anchor more strongly in an ideal future, in contrast to white participants higher in prejudice who were more apt to anchor their assessment as progress from the past (Brodish et al., 2008). While not a specific finding, Brodish and colleagues hypothesized that lower-prejudiced white participants were more inclined to view progress as gains for society as opposed to losses for themselves (see also Lowery et al., 2006). The variability among white participants in the latter research suggests different trajectories those in advantaged groups can adopt to find commonality of purpose toward a more socially just future (Knowles et al., 2014).

Advantaged-group unawareness of injustice extends beyond race. With respect to disability, LGBTQ+, religion, class, and other social identities, members of advantaged groups may be largely unaware of the various obstacles experienced by those with non-advantaged identities (e.g., UNICEF, 2018).

2. Perceived legitimacy of group disparities

Those people deserve their lot …

Some advantaged-group members translate existing identity-based status hierarchies into deserved hierarchies. They believe that disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged groups are somehow legitimate and attributable to inherent character deficits among the disadvantaged. Such attitudes are exacerbated when members of advantaged racial groups actually dehumanize members of disadvantaged groups (Goff et al., 2008; Kteily et al., 2015), or view disadvantaged groups as "nonentities, undeserving, or expendable" (Opotow, 1996, p. 20). This phenomenon involves ascribing those qualities perceived to be uniquely human (e.g., morality, reasoning) to those in advantaged groups and only lower-order processes (e.g., instinct and drive) to disadvantaged-group members (see Haslam, 2006; Leyens et al., 2007). Members of dehumanized groups are often deprived of basic social considerations (Goff et al., 2014). The work of Goff and colleagues is part of a body of research that shows that dehumanization "uniquely predicted violence and its endorsement" (Goff et al., 2014, p. 527).

B. Status Threat among Advantaged Groups

People like me have worked hard for what we have …

Another source of skepticism regarding social justice efforts among many advantaged-group members is identity-status threat. The threat stems from the belief that the privileged group

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with which they identify will lose power and advantage. They fear the prospect of change and expend significant effort to "preserve their own privileged position" (Tropp & Barlow, 2018; Knowles et al., 2014; Sidanius et al., 2016). Ironically, individuals who are part of a group that is generally economically advantaged may not themselves share in the advantage—so they are acting to preserve advantage to their group over other groups. For example, while poverty rates among white people are lower than people who are Black or Latino, the overall *numbers* of poor white people are significantly larger in every state except Mississippi and Alabama (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). Yet fear of losing status is often acute when demographic shifts take place that cause advantaged groups to begin to lose their numerical majority status (Craig & Richeson, 2014a). This phenomenon is occurring in the United States as whites recognize the changing racial composition of the population (Tropp & Barlow, 2018; Abascal, 2020; Craig & Richeson, 2014a, 2014b; Enos, 2017; Outten et al., 2012). Similarly, support for Brexit by white British people likely harmed economically by it has been attributed to their desire to preserve the ethnic composition of the United Kingdom (Coleman, 2016).

But what about me? …

Identity-status threat need not result only from a desire to maintain group advantage, but might also reflect a fear of being left out of a changing world (see Barsa et al., 2022 for a review). As Plaut and colleagues' research suggests, for some in the advantaged group (white Americans in the studies), multiculturalism is associated with perceived *exclusion* of the advantaged group, rather than *inclusion* of all people (Plaut et al., 2011). When white participants felt included in organizational diversity, they were more likely to support diversity initiatives (Plaut et al., 2011). The worry about being left behind can become defensive and externalized. Recent research reveals that those white people in the United States who become defensive about the change in demographic patterns and with insecurity about the role of United States as the dominant global economic superpower (Mutz, 2018) can be catalyzed to support candidates who endorse authoritarian tactics (Barsa et al., 2022).

C. Defining the Appropriate Role for Advantaged Groups, and Respecting Disadvantaged-Group Agency

It's not my problem and there's nothing I can do about it …

A related challenge is that members of advantaged groups may not feel sufficiently invested in promoting the welfare of disadvantaged groups. They have defined their group identity as distinct from another group, such that the well-being of the other group is not seen as salient. For example, in the United States, researchers have begun to study "racial apathy"—white people who are indifferent or nonchalant about the effects of racial inequality (e.g., Brown et al., 2019). Advantaged-group members may be unmoved because they do not identify with those "other" people, whose life experiences they do not perceive to be personally relevant to them. Beyond those who are completely indifferent, even advantaged-group members who do care enough to support social justice reforms may not feel motivated or efficacious enough to invest the time, money, and effort to advocate or work for such reforms. We note the distinction between "*it's not my problem*"—a lack of motivation—and "*there's nothing I can do about*"—a sense of inefficacy. Both contribute to the failures of social justice reforms, however.

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It's not my place …

Those advantaged-group members who do feel motivated to work for social justice may question whether it is appropriate for them or other members of advantaged groups to play an important role in addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups. The right of disadvantaged groups to speak and decide for themselves is often central to claims of authentic social justice (Penuel & Watkins, 2019). Respecting disadvantaged groups as autonomous moral agents arguably means that they should author their own remedial policies and not be subjected to top-down paternalism (Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Halabi, 2006). Attempting to enlist members of advantaged groups who occupy politically or economically advantaged positions arguably conflicts with respecting the voice and autonomy of disadvantaged groups. However, advantaged groups' respect for the voice and autonomy of disadvantaged groups does not relieve advantaged groups from the responsibility of challenging identity-based status hierarchies. For any form of social justice to be realized, currently disadvantaged people must be well represented "at the table" along with those in positions of power to formulate remedial policies. At the same time, existing status hierarchies and political realities require at least some members of advantaged groups to actively support and participate in addressing national and global inequities. Actualizing the ultimate goal of creating societies in which people consider themselves part of a broader "we" while also holding differences in group identity salient requires *everyone* to be at the table.

We'll save you …

In addition to questions regarding the legitimacy of advantaged-group participation in advancing social justice, we are also sensitive to concerns that members of advantaged racial groups may see themselves as, for example, "*saviors*" as they work to promote the welfare of disadvantaged groups. This mindset is antithetical to the goals of this chapter, which posits that advantaged groups be encouraged to support social justice from a mindset of moral responsibility and widening the circle of moral concern, and not as an act of charity (Stuart et al., 2018). Or, in the words of Nadler (2002), advantaged-group support for disadvantaged groups should be "autonomy-oriented," not "dependency-oriented". As we have noted, we would take this argument a step further to state that part of the goal is to broaden the concept of "we" to include people from many different identity groups (see also Dovidio et al., 2009).

Yet it is critical to acknowledge that advantaged groups have, historically, actively participated in perpetrating injustice, and current generations of advantaged groups benefit unfairly from such injustice. Not surprisingly then, "help" from members of advantaged groups can trigger resentment from members of disadvantaged groups because it may be experienced as reinforcing status differences (Halabi et al., 2021). However, when advantaged-group members feel personally invested and recognize their moral responsibility to effect social change, they are more likely to develop effective responses to the needs of disadvantaged groups (Thomas et al., 2009). Animating social change, then, requires members of advantaged groups to acknowledge and reckon with their relative privilege, and to understand their role in perpetuating social injustice (Case et al., 2012).

If the ultimate goal is for an expansion of the "we" to include people of varying racial and other group identities, this would translate into advantaged groups empathetically recognizing their shared humanity with disadvantaged groups and understanding that helping the latter is not helping "them" but helping "us" (see Tropp & Barlow, 2018). Research supports the proposition that when intergroup contact occurs under optimal conditions, members of different

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groups will, over time, personalize and humanize outgroup members (Cook, 1978; Crisp & Hewstone, 2000)—a key to improving perceptions of and responses to the maligned "other" (Brooks, 2006, p. 412) and creating a more inclusive "we" (Dovidio et al., 2009).

This Part has described various psychological barriers to motivating social justice reform among advantaged-group members, such as ignorance, skepticism, status threat, and uncertainty regarding their proper role. The next Part explains why overcoming these barriers is critical for developing the conditions or "ingredients" that tend to motivate social justice reform, especially the threshold ingredient of awareness of social injustice. Part III will explain how intergroup contact can help to cultivate awareness of injustice and the other ingredients identified in the following Part.

II. INGREDIENTS FOR CATALYZING MOTIVATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

In this Part, we seek to identify the ingredients that tend to motivate people in advantaged groups to pursue social justice, defined as "supporting, and caring for, the basic rights of virtually any group that has been deprived of those rights" (Saguy et al., 2020, p. 155). In this moment in which cross-group hostility and polarization loom large, social psychological research offers insight into the possible ingredients that encourage people in advantaged groups to express concern for the welfare of people in other groups, and to begin to see their fate as linked with people across different group identities. Studies in a wide array of global contexts suggest that the following factors potentially catalyze people in advantaged groups to commit to overcoming status-based hierarchies: (1) awareness of social injustice experienced by disadvantaged groups; (2) empathic concern toward people in disadvantaged groups; (3) moral outrage about the treatment people in disadvantaged groups receive, and (4) a sense of efficacy regarding their ability to effect change.

A necessary ingredient is advantaged-group awareness of social injustice. At least two aspects of extant injustice need to be understood by members of advantaged groups. One aspect involves the prevalence of bias and discrimination against disadvantaged social groups (Perry et al., 2015). Such bias may include overt prejudices (Crandall et al., 2002), as well as subtle or implicit forms of bias (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006), and simple indifference to the disadvantages faced by other groups (Brown et al., 2019; Tropp et al., 2024). A second aspect involves recognizing that injustice takes the form of disparities attributable to past discrimination and to structural barriers—economic, political, educational, and social—that perpetuate and reinforce inequalities over time, including in the present (e.g. Godsil & Waldeck, 2020; Rothstein, 2017; Bobo, 2017).

Empathic concern is another important, contributing ingredient (see Batson, 1990; Zickfield et al., 2017). While awareness of injustice is necessary, it is generally insufficient.

Mere informational knowledge of inequality is unlikely to motivate action (Lowery et al., 2007; Tropp & Uluğ, 2019). Empathic concern goes beyond awareness—when people experience empathic concern, they care about and express concern for the perspectives and experiences of disadvantaged groups, seeing them as human, and as included within a circle of moral concern in which we are psychologically invested (see, e.g., Tropp & Barlow, 2018).

Awareness of injustice and empathic concern, however, may still be insufficient by themselves to motivate action (Thomas et al., 2022). Moral outrage appears to be another

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important ingredient in catalyzing a genuine motivation for social justice, and a conduit that may transform empathic concern into action (Selvanathan et al., 2018). Moral outrage follows when people perceive infringement upon their moral convictions (van Zomeren et al., 2011)—strongly held stances on moral issues tethered to general "higher-order" principles (Tetlock, 2002). As van Zomeren and colleagues have argued, "any violation of a moral conviction therefore motivates individuals who hold them to actively change that situation" (van Zomeren et al., 2011; Skitka et al., 2005; van Zomeren & Lodewijkx, 2005).

In addition to awareness, empathic concern, and moral outrage, research suggests that a sense of efficacy—that is, belief in one's own or one's group's ability to achieve specified goals—also constitutes a key ingredient to promote action toward social change (van Zomeren et al., 2011; Bandura, 2000; Hornsey et al., 2006; Mummendey et al., 1999; van Zomeren et al., 2004). In the context of heterosexuals taking action to promote LGBTQ equality, for example, research revealed that "feeling as though [potential allies] are capable of being good activists may be essential to predicting whether they will risk and engage in collective action" (Jones & Brewster, 2017). As Bandura's work has long recognized, people are not apt to engage in action even for themselves unless they perceive that they have the ability to make a difference (Bandura, 1997). Following this model, robust research has examined the need for people to feel a combination of individual and collective efficacy to spur motivation for social justice action (van Zomeren et al., 2011).

Of the ingredients for social justice motivation described in this Part, awareness of injustice is likely the ingredient most directly impeded by the psychological barriers described in the previous Part. Those barriers—skepticism, resistance, and hostility to acknowledging racial injustice—plainly impede awareness of such injustice. Such barriers also likely impede the other ingredients described here, namely, empathic concern, moral outrage, and efficacy. These psychological conditions are unlikely to develop among advantaged-group members over social injustice if they do not believe such injustice exists. Strategies must therefore be deployed to address both the psychological and structural barriers that curb advantaged-group members' willingness to support social justice efforts. In Part III, we discuss how intergroup contact may be a useful approach for addressing psychological barriers often experienced by advantaged groups as a step toward encouraging their greater support for overcoming identity-based status hierarchies. This will be followed by a discussion in Part IV of legal approaches that may alleviate structural barriers that limit advantaged-group members' awareness or recognition of group inequality and injustice.

III. HOW INTERGROUP CONTACT CAN MOTIVATE SOCIAL JUSTICE EFFORTS

Robust research supports the promising effects of intergroup contact in overcoming the psychological barriers to challenging identity-based status hierarchies and toward social justice described in Part I with the potential to facilitate the motivational ingredients for social justice described in Part II. It is now widely recognized that intergroup contact typically corresponds with a reduction in prejudice and more positive intergroup attitudes, particularly when structured to yield salutary outcomes in relations between groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). This contact research literature shows consistent findings across a range of studies, including experimental (e.g., Page-Gould et al., 2008), longitudinal (e.g., Binder et al., 2009; Swart et al.,

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2011), and meta-analytic studies (e.g., Davies et al., 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). In this Part, we survey important aspects of intergroup contact research and its potential to enhance concern for and motivation to advance social justice among members of advantaged groups.

We caveat the following review. We have organized the benefits of intergroup contact for conceptual convenience. By doing so, we do not mean to imply that such "ingredients" of contact are sharply distinct from one another or that their relationship is causally linear. The dynamics of intergroup contact are complex and interrelated, and much remains to be learned about how they operate.

A. Attitudes and Political Views

Intergroup contact has great potential to shape the attitudes and political views of historically advantaged groups with both short-term and long-term impacts. In a 2018 Pew study, non-Muslim Western Europeans were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "In their hearts, Muslims want to impose their religious law on everyone else in the country" (Gardner & Evans, 2018). In Switzerland—a country with a Muslim population of about 6 percent of the total, more than eight in ten (85 percent) of those who said they knew a Muslim disagreed with the statement, compared with just 48 percent of those who did not know a Muslim. Similar differences were found in the UK (37 percentage points), Austria (35 points), Germany (34 points), Ireland (29 points), Italy (27 points), Denmark (26 points), and France (24 points). The long-term impacts of intergroup contact were powerfully illustrated by a study of the temporary presence of Black soldiers in the UK during World War II which found persistently reduced prejudice among the British population with whom they had contact (Schindler & Westcott, 2021). The researchers found that people currently residing in those areas where more Black troops were posted showed reduced prejudice 60 years after the last troops left. They found that fewer residents in these areas were members of the British National Party (BNP), a far-right political party with racist policy positions, and that residents self-reported warmer feelings toward Black people and lower levels of implicit bias than residents elsewhere in the UK (Schindler & Westcott, 2021).

Because intergroup contact research indicates that prejudice reduction generalizes beyond the specific group members who interact with one another, and even beyond the specific groups involved in the contact, it is unsurprising that research increasingly reveals that such contact can motivate broader attitude change. For example, Pettigrew (2009) found that German citizens' contact with foreigners translated into prejudice reductions toward people who are gay as well as toward those who are experiencing homelessness. A study of contact between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland found a similar extension of reduced prejudice from religious difference to racial difference (Tausch et al., 2011). This transfer occurs through a process of *attitude generalization*—when intergroup contact results in improved attitudes toward one outgroup, the positive attitudes extend and generalize to other outgroups (Pettigrew, 2009; Tausch et al., 2011).

B. Empathic Concern and Motivation

Beyond fostering positive attitudes and egalitarian political values among advantaged groups, intergroup contact has the potential to increase support for social change and to motivate collective action (Tropp et al., 2021; Hässler et al., 2020; Reimer et al., 2017; Tropp & Barlow,

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2018; van Zomeren et al., 2011). In South Africa, for example, white people who reported close, friendly contact with Black people also reported more policy support for educational and economic opportunities for Black South Africans (Dixon et al., 2010). In the United States, longitudinal research shows that larger numbers of interracial friendships predict white people's support for affirmative action over time (Northcutt Bohmert & DeMaris, 2015). Work by one of the authors shows that within the United States, white people's contact with Black people predicts greater willingness to take action to challenge racial inequality and greater retrospective reports of participation in protests for racial justice (Selvanathan et al., 2018).

Moreover, research has begun to elucidate the processes through which intergroup contact can go beyond merely improving intergroup attitudes and toward fostering the critical ingredients underlying motivation to engage in social justice reform. Tropp and Barlow (2018) have identified several related but distinct mechanisms to explain how and why intergroup contact can propel advantaged groups' concern and motivation for social change: "members of advantaged racial groups can develop a greater capacity for caring about the perspectives, experiences, and welfare of members of other racial groups" (p. 195). As we described earlier, a common characteristic of advantage is the invisibility of the role that group identity plays in one's day-to-day life. For members of advantaged groups, a critical component of greater caring about group-based inequities is to recognize the salience and relevance of group identity in the perspectives, experiences, and welfare of those disadvantaged groups with whom they come into contact. As the invisible becomes visible through the cultivation of meaningful experiences with members of disadvantaged groups that encourage genuine concern for their experiences and well-being, advantaged-group members may become more inclined to acknowledge the need for challenging the consequences of identity-based hierarchies (see also Uluğ & Tropp, 2021).

Yet, for this growing awareness of unequal treatment to translate into support for social reform, advantaged-group members must feel personally invested in the lives of the disadvantaged, in ways that transcend their own interests. Recognizing and seeking to change unequal conditions that ostensibly benefit one's own group can be seen to run counter to one's own or one's group interests (Knowles et al., 2014; Sidanius et al., 2016). However, intergroup research has shown that meaningful contact with other racial groups can lead members of advantaged groups to feel that the lived experiences of disadvantaged groups are relevant to their own lives. As emphasized by Wright and colleagues (e.g., Wright et al., 2002, 2005), "forming close relationships with members of other groups can enhance the tendency for people to hold others' experiences and identities within their own circles of inclusion, a process often conceptualized as the 'inclusion of other in the self'" (Tropp & Barlow, 2018, p. 196).

This process, therefore, leads people who have identified as a member of an advantaged group to redefine their group—to include those who would otherwise be seen as "other" (Dovidio et al., 2009). This recognition of the relevance of others' experience can impel action, such as distributing beneficial resources to the group with whom one has contact rather than solely to one's own group (Wright et al., 2005). For example, a person conventionally defined as "white" need not favor policies that predominantly benefit white people over policies that equitably benefit people of varied races and ethnicities. If an advantaged person's sense of "we" is more inclusive and not defined exclusively in terms of their advantaged-group identity, they will likely be more supportive of sharing resources to all in need, regardless of identity (see Dovidio et al., 2009; Jones & Dovidio, 2018). Broadening advantaged-group

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members' sense of "own group" identity to include other, more disadvantaged groups results in a broadening of the circle of human concern.

By shifting conceptions of group boundaries, then, we can begin to shift advantaged-group members' emotional responses to disadvantage and inequality and change their sense of whose welfare and experiences matter. In particular, developing empathy toward other groups is an outcome often related to this broadening of social inclusion and growing psychological investment. One aspect of empathy involves perspective-taking, and research has shown that white students who took the perspective of Black students reported engaging in more action in response to hate crimes directed at Black students on the college campus (e.g., Mallett et al., 2008). Another aspect of empathy involves empathic concern, whereby people express concern for the experiences and welfare of others (e.g., Batson et al., 1997; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Research suggests that white participants with greater empathy regarding the experience of Black people also reported increased outrage about how Black people are treated, which predicted increased support for and engagement in collective action for racial justice (Selvanathan et al., 2018).

While the foregoing research on intergroup contact firmly suggests that intergroup contact can foster many salutary outcomes for relations between groups, not all forms of intergroup contact are equal. On the one hand, by increasing awareness of inequality and empathic concern for disadvantaged groups, intergroup contact carries the potential to reduce advantaged-group ignorance, skepticism, and resistance toward the needs of disadvantaged groups. On the other hand, we are mindful that, depending on the nature and content of the intergroup contact, other less salutary outcomes may result. Negative contact may lead members of advantaged groups to avoid those in other groups, as well as to increasing resistance to recognizing the challenges other groups face (Meleady & Forder, 2019). The harm most antithetical to the goal of eliminating identity-based hierarchies that we are most concerned about is when members of disadvantaged groups experience negative contact with members of advantaged groups—such as experiences with discrimination (Tropp, 2007). Instances of discrimination in relations with advantaged-group members may occur either at the interpersonal level or when navigating social institutions at the structural level (Hayward et al., 2017; Rucker & Richeson, 2021). Moreover, when members of different groups engage with each other, even positive contact experiences may result in less desired change among members of disadvantaged groups than among advantaged groups (Barlow et al., 2012; Binder et al., 2009; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005), likely because of experiences with discrimination that inhibit net positive effects of contact for disadvantaged groups (Tropp, 2007).

Yet other work suggests that, at the same time as positive contact may improve intergroup attitudes, there is a risk that it may *undermine* disadvantaged groups' commitment to social justice by obscuring existing injustices (e.g., Cakal et al., 2011; Dixon et al., 2010; Dixon & McKeown, 2021; Saguy et al., 2009; Tropp et al., 2012). However, emerging research suggests factors that can minimize the risks both of experiences of discrimination and of the "sedative" effects of positive contact. When disadvantaged-group members have contact with advantaged-group members who recognize and challenge inequality, then disadvantaged-group members tend to remain motivated for social justice (e.g., Becker et al., 2013). The content of communication between groups can also matter. Studies from both the United States and Turkey show that, when groups communicate about group differences in power, advantaged-group members reported greater willingness to engage in collective action in solidarity with disadvantaged groups to promote social justice (Tropp et al., 2021).

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For all these reasons, we are mindful of avoiding an overly simplistic view of highly complex and contextual dynamics, and we believe care must be taken in structuring intergroup contact to optimize its benefits while minimizing its potential harms. We are optimistic, however, that, overall, the benefits of positive intergroup contact significantly outweigh its risks. On average, people tend to report more positive contact experiences with members of other groups than negative experiences (Graf & Paolini, 2016; Hayward et al., 2017). Moreover, research continues to suggest that when intergroup contact is ongoing, friendly, and intimate (rather than minimal, hostile, or superficial; cf. Barlow et al., 2012; Paolini et al., 2021; Pettigrew, 1998), it can lead advantaged-group members to gain greater and deeper understanding of the lived experiences of members of disadvantaged groups, which can enhance *internal* motivations to control prejudice and promote a personal commitment to egalitarian values (Tropp et al., 2021; Kunstman et al., 2013). These outcomes hold the potential for creating positive feedback loops which may propel further positive intergroup contact and a sustained commitment to social justice (Plant et al., 2010; Tropp & Dehrone, 2023).

IV. HOW LEGAL REMEDIES CAN PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE

As described above, a substantial body of research suggests that, through intergroup contact, advantaged-group members can recognize the need to address identity-based hierarchies and to work directly with people disadvantaged by such hierarchies to move toward greater social justice. In this final Part, we share social science research suggesting that intergroup contact can in fact encourage reforms at the structural level, both through individuals and institutions.

A. Social Change through Individual Context

Literature has examined factors affecting public opinion and behaviors in civic life, including the development of social policies for equality and inclusion (institutional context; see, e.g., Sullivan et al., 1985; Weldon, 2006), as well as perceived norms for intergroup relations in particular communities or social contexts (social norms; see, e.g., Blinder et al., 2013; Sechrist & Stangor, 2005). And intergroup contact has been shown to be a catalyst for social justice policy change. For example, Steil and Vasi investigated small towns that enacted legislation supportive of immigrants at a time when other similarly situated towns were enacting legislation hostile to immigrants. A salient factor was the relationship between immigrant- and US-born leaders (Steil & Vasi, 2014). In the qualitative research of two communities, Easton, Pennsylvania, and Grand Island, Nebraska, where local officials engaged in robust efforts to support new immigrants, deep and trusted interactions within civil society organizations resulted in meaningful efforts to be inclusive. Steil and Vasi concluded that in these communities, the presence of Latino immigrants was framed through the lens of US-born residents' memories of their own immigrant ancestors and what emerged was "a local collective identity as residents of Easton or Grand Island" (Steil & Vasi, 2014, p. 1141). This new identity was in contrast to the cities that enacted anti-immigrant laws—where genuine contact between native and new residents was rare and transactional. Local officials in these latter communities were influenced by national organizations that framed changing demographics as threats and activated "an otherwise unorganized base" (Steil & Vasi, 2014, p. 1142).

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B. Social Change through Institutional Context

Widening the lens from how individual actions can shape policy, we also lift up scholarship on institutional contexts. That research demonstrates how societal and political institutions—particularly those established through relevant laws and government policies—contribute to shaping public attitudes toward various groups (Weldon, 2006). In other words, how societal and political institutions, and their influential actors, define rules, policies, and standards for conduct that can shape the nature of public discourse and narratives regarding how groups should be treated (Weldon, 2006). Such institutional decisions can also shape how people from different groups are expected to relate to each other (Pettigrew, 1991). How policies are framed, whether as exclusionary or inclusionary, either denying or providing resources to designated groups, can translate into social cues to either exclude or include those groups (Jiménez et al., 2021).

Studies have emerged from Europe and North America indicating how institutional context can shape public attitudes toward historically disadvantaged groups (see de la Sablonnière & Taylor, 2020; Huo et al., 2018; Ofosu et al., 2019; Schlueter & Davidov, 2013). Akin to the findings from Steil and Vasi (2014), Schlueter et al. (2013) linked ratings of immigrant integration policies at the national level from the 2006 Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX, see Solano & Huddleston, 2020) to individual-level survey data gathered through the Eurobarometer (2009, 25 countries) and the European Value Study (2008–2009). In both cases, multi-level models revealed that more inclusionary immigrant integration policies corresponded with lower reported perceptions of threat posed by immigrants among members of the host societies. Similar associations were observed between MIPEX ratings of national immigrant integration policies and public attitudes toward Muslims assessed through the European Social Survey (2014–2015); more inclusionary integration policies were associated with less negative attitudes toward Muslims, an effect that persisted even when statistically controlling for the proportion of Muslim residents in the national context (Schlueter et al., 2020).

In another line of research examining how institutional context can shape attitudes, Ofosu and colleagues (2019) gathered responses to implicit and explicit measures of anti-gay prejudice from approximately 1 million individuals who completed these measures via Project Implicit (n.d.) over a 12-year period. By geo-locating these individuals and tracking the dates of their responses, the authors were able to examine scores on measures of anti-gay prejudice before and after legislation passed legalizing same-sex marriage in each state. Overall, the authors observed that both implicit and explicit forms of anti-gay prejudice tended to decrease in recent years. However, their results also showed steeper decreases in anti-gay prejudice following legalization of same-sex marriage at the state level—a finding the authors replicated using a nationally representative sample from the United States (based on data from the American National Election Studies, n.d.).

C. Intergroup Contact as Means and End to Social Justice Reform

Legal scholarship focusing on intergroup racial contact has been fraught in light of the complex trajectory of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Most powerfully and iconically argued by Derrick Bell (1976) beginning in the mid-1970s, the question of whether educational integration genuinely serves the interests of students of color continues to be contested

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(e.g. Huq, 2021; Brooks, 2006; Johnson, 1993). Relatedly, the harms of gentrification have served to lift up the issue of whether residential integration benefits people of color or whether, instead, communities of color are better served by equitable access to resources and ingroup solidarity (e.g. Johnson, 2019). Despite questions about the benefits of integration, legal scholars—including those who take claims by Bell and other critical race theory seriously—are engaging with what we refer to as "situational inter-group contact" in the forms of residential and educational integration as a means to achieve other forms of social justice reform as well as being ends in themselves.

Michelle Adams (2006) cogently expresses the inadequacy and limitations associated with the traditional integration approach. She argues that the original challenges to segregation were focused on the eradication of white supremacy and that the goal of integration without that focus is deeply inadequate. The inadequacy is manifested in how integration came to be interpreted: "[i]ntegration today is synonymous with 'assimilation,' the process whereby 'a minority group gradually adopts the customs and attitudes of the prevailing culture.'" (Adams, 2006, p. 264). When integration is understood as "assimilation," it is accompanied by an unacceptable identity sacrifice as well as a failure to address related structural inequities (Adams, 2006). Adams calls for "radical integration" which would recognize the need for authentic chosen identity formation rather than the felt need to assimilate into a dominant culture and would demand genuine social, economic, and political enfranchisement (Adams, 2006).

Subsequent research inside and outside of legal academia suggests that racial integration may act as a means to important social justice ends. Consider, for example, policing and education. The relationship between police *reform* and residential integration is based upon the current correlation of residential s*egregation* with police violence (e.g. Bell, 2020). Monica Bell argues, for example, that residential segregation both contributes to and is a consequence of harmful forms of policing (Bell, 2020). This conclusion is based in part on a study of cities with over 100,000 residents. That study found that the most powerful differentiating variable between cities with higher levels of substantiated claims of police brutality and those with lower levels of such claims was the level of racial segregation of Black residents (Smith & Holmes, 2014). In the context of educational reform, the social science literature we cite in this chapter has been relied upon by legal academics (including one of the authors of this chapter) to argue for a research-based focus on educational integration as a means to improving education for all students (e.g., Johnson, 2019; Godsil, 2019; Orfield, 2015). Even in these contested times, the importance of educational integration is moving again into the realm of practice in places varying from New York City to counties in Maryland and Louisiana in which policies have recently been changed to increase diversity in middle and high schools (New York City Department of Education, n.d.).

CONCLUSION

We have sought in this chapter to describe and document psychological barriers to, and motivational catalysts for, disrupting identity-based hierarchies and supporting social justice reform. Barriers that tend to impede these efforts include ignorance, disbelief, indifference, resistance, and contempt by advantaged groups toward injustice experienced by disadvantaged groups, as well as uncertainty over the proper role of advantaged groups in addressing social

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injustice. Conversely, certain psychological states or processes, what we have called "ingredients," can tend to motivate advantaged-group members to take social injustice seriously and take collective action to address it. Such ingredients include awareness of social injustice, empathic concern for those experiencing it, moral outrage at such injustice, and a sense of efficacy that collective action can ameliorate the injustice. Through mental processes not entirely understood, such ingredients tend to create psychological investment on the part of advantaged groups in disadvantaged groups and to spur reform efforts.

We have also described research supporting the promise of intergroup contact to reduce barriers and facilitate the ingredients that tend to motivate social justice reform from advantaged-group members while respecting disadvantaged-group agency. The exact role of these ingredients and the causal relationship between them require continued research. Existing research nonetheless supports that, however the dynamics of intergroup contact operate, such contact tends to have significant benefits for bridging intergroup divides and promoting collective action for social justice.

Intergroup contact research also has important implications for law and policy. We have sketched how intergroup contact tends to motivate not just interpersonal action, but also structural reform efforts by individuals and by institutions. Integrated educational and residential settings, for example, provide promising opportunities for sustained and meaningful intergroup contact (Godsil, 2019) that can, in turn, lead to political action to reduce injustice and further integrate society and its institutions. Other potential settings that could provide such opportunities include the workplace, the military, and other public and private organizations. Although specific policy implications are beyond the scope of this chapter, the research we have reviewed suggests that initiatives designed to facilitate positive intergroup contact are warranted to bridge the bitter divisions and stark inequalities that persist in the United States and the rest of the world.

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