Interracial contact and constructions of racial inequality and justice in post-apartheid South Africa

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Introduction

The contact hypothesis holds that interaction between members of different groups tends to improve intergroup relations, particularly if contact occurs under certain ideal conditions (Allport, 1954). The hypothesis has had a long career in social psychology, marked by periods of scepticism and hope, uncertainty and confidence. Although acknowledging its potential benefits, early reviews pointed to the erratic and context specific effects of contact, the difficulty in establishing the ideal conditions for contact in ordinary settings, and the failure of interpersonal attitude changes to generalise to intergroup attitudes (e.g. Amir, 1969; Stephan, 1978; Hewstone & Brown, 1986). More recently, however, the literature has entered a buoyant and optimistic phase in its development, epitomised by Pettigrew and Tropp’s landmark reviews (e.g. Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2006).

Based on comprehensive meta-analyses of the contact literature, Pettigrew and Tropp have concluded that: (1) contact improves prejudice in the overwhelming majority of cases; (2) its effects often generalise beyond the immediate contexts of interaction to shape the wider patterning of intergroup attitudes; (3) such effects are facilitated by, but not necessarily contingent upon, situational factors such as equality of status between participants; and (4) that they hold not only for ethnic and racial prejudices, but also for other forms of prejudice (e.g. homophobia, ageism and xenophobia).

Although they concede that contact has a more beneficial impact on the majority group prejudice than on minority group prejudice, and that its effects on affective measures of prejudice are stronger than its effects of cognitive measures of prejudice, Pettigrew and Tropp present a robust case for its general efficacy as a means of transforming intergroup prejudice in divided societies. This sentiment has been echoed by a number of other commentators. The contact hypothesis is now firmly established as “…one of psychology’s most effective strategies for improving intergroup relations” (Dovidio, Gaertner & Kawamaki, 2003, p. 5) and is widely commended as the definitive example of how social psychology can inform public policy.

Objectives and rationale

As a model of social psychological change, the contact hypothesis proposes that the rehabilitation of the prejudiced individual is a sine qua non for reducing intergroup conflict and discrimination. From this perspective, contact ‘works’ primarily by decreasing the extent to which individuals endorse outgroup stereotypes, whilst increasing the extent to which they hold positive intergroup emotions such as liking and empathy. The cumulative effect of regular, positive interactions with others, the argument goes, is to make society more tolerant and equitable. Conversely, by isolating us from one another, systems of segregation create the social psychological conditions for intolerance and discrimination.

Although this model of social change has much to recommend it, some commentators have highlighted its potential limitations, which arguably reflect the deeper limits of the so-called ‘prejudice problematic’ in social psychology (e.g. Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2005; Jackman & Crane, 1986; Reicher, 1986). A reduction in individuals’ prejudice towards others, such commentators suggest, does not necessarily lead them to acknowledge material inequality at an institutional level. Nor does it necessarily encourage them to embrace the kinds of concrete policy initiatives and forms of collective action that are required to reduce material injustice. As Wright and Lubensky observe, contact may help us to ‘think nicer thoughts and feel positive emotions’ (in press, p.18), but questions remain about its capacity to promote structural change in a broader sense.
Jackman and Crane’s (1986) seminal critique of the contact hypothesis addressed precisely this issue. Based on an analysis of national survey data collected in the US in the mid-1970s, they found that physical proximity to, and contact with, black people had a significant but uneven relationship with different kinds of racial attitudes. Contact was a good predictor of the whites’ emotional acceptance of black people, but a poorer predictor of their support for race-targeted interventions in the domains of housing, schooling and employment. Discussing this pattern of results, Jackman and Crane criticised the model of prejudice that informs contact research. The problem with this model, they argued, is that it treats prejudice primarily as an expression of ignorance and ‘parochial negativism’ rather than a rationalization of collective political interests. In contrast to this view, Jackman and Crane (1986) advocated that researchers adopt a political conception of intergroup attitudes, acknowledging how members of historically advantaged groups may resist attempts to alter the broader material and status hierarchy, even if they become more ‘tolerant’ in emotional terms.

The work of Jackman and Crane formed the point of departure for the present program of research, which explored the relationship between interracial contact and white and black South Africans’ attitudes towards political transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. As well as using standard measures of prejudice, the research employed two broader indices of individuals’ political orientations: (1) their perceptions of distributive justice in a changing South Africa and (2) their support for a range of government interventions designed to reduce material inequalities.

To date, the impact of interracial contact on the political orientations of white South Africans remains unclear, and the present research explored two distinctive hypotheses derived from the contact literature. The first hypothesis was that contact has limited impact on whites’ attitudes towards distributive justice and race-targeted policies -- an idea compatible with Jackman and Crane’s (1986) argument that such attitudes express a deep-seated ideological defence of racial privilege (c.f. Blumer, 1958). The second, and opposing, hypothesis was that interracial contact has a positive relationship with whites’ support for race-targeted policies and readiness to acknowledge distributive injustice in post-apartheid South Africa. This is in line with Pettigrew’s (1998) claim that contact prompts a critical re-evaluation of ingroup privilege and a heightened awareness of, and sympathy for, the deprivation suffered by minority status groups.

In general, there has been far less research conducted on the role of contact in shaping the intergroup attitudes of historically disadvantaged groups. Thus, at the outset of our research, the effects of contact on the political orientations of black South Africans were more difficult to anticipate. On the one hand, we felt that contact with materially advantaged white South African might heighten Black South Africans’ awareness of the material injustice suffered by their group and, by implication, strengthen their support for race targeted policies of restitution (e.g. by increasing the likelihood of negative social comparisons, c.f. Poore et al., 2002). On the other hand, because it increases their sense of solidarity with White South Africans, we felt that interracial contact might reduce black South Africans’ acknowledgement of material injustice and support for race-targeted policies. As will become apparent later in the report, this second possibility became increasingly central as our research progressed. It highlighted for us some conceptual and applied tensions between two models of social change in social psychology: a model grounded in the psychology of prejudice reduction and a model grounded in the psychology of collective action.

### Research context: Attitudes towards racial inequality and political transformation in post-apartheid South Africa

Most research on the effects of interracial contact has been conducted in the US. South African society, where present research was conducted, provides a relevant, timely and distinctive context of comparison. Similar to America during the 1950s and 1960s, South Africa has recently undergone a period of profound social and political transformation. In a relatively brief space of time, the civil rights of black citizens have been radically extended under a new constitution, the country’s first
democratic government has come to power, and the long era of state-enforced segregation has ended. During the same period, the ANC government have implemented various policies designed to redress the injustices of the past, including quota systems in education and sport, affirmative action in the workplace, economic incentives for black businesses, and a rolling program of land restitution. The nature of everyday relations between groups has also been radically altered by the fall of apartheid, with substantial desegregation occurring, for instance, in institutions of education, leisure and employment. Research conducted in the post-apartheid era suggests that emerging forms of racial contact are having a positive impact upon race attitudes, encouraging reconciliation between historically divided communities (e.g., Gibson, 2004; Holtman, Louw, Tredoux & Carney, 2005).

The present study contributed to this literature on contact and social psychological change in South Africa. It focused on the role of contact in shaping the attitudes of members of historically advantaged and disadvantaged groups towards political transformation in post-apartheid society. The terms ‘advantaged’ and ‘disadvantaged’ are perhaps more apposite in the South African context than the usual distinction between ‘minority’ and ‘majority’ groups. Unlike African Americans in the US, for example, Black South Africans represent a sizeable majority of the county’s populations. Moreover, they now predominate in positions of political power in the country and are increasingly leaders in industry and the public sector. At the same time, black South Africans remain the country’s most underprivileged group and continue to suffer most from apartheid’s legacy. In comparison to other groups, black South Africans are more likely to be unemployed, malnourished, living beneath the poverty line, and living without access to basic amenities such as electricity and potable water. White South Africans, on the other hand, though forming a numeric minority of the country’s population (10%<), retain considerable advantages in terms of indicators such as monthly income, access to healthcare, residential wealth and education. This pattern of deprivation and privilege forms the political backdrop to our research.

### Table 1  Some survey demographics in relation to national demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National Demographics (&gt;18 years old)</th>
<th>Survey 1</th>
<th>Survey 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>31 109 000</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>34.6 (SD =12)</td>
<td>34.8 (SD = 12.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Black 23 446 000 (75.4%)</td>
<td>1556 (81.2%)</td>
<td>596 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White 4 102 000 (13.2%)</td>
<td>361 (18.8%)</td>
<td>173 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male 15 501 000 (49.8%)</td>
<td>921 (48%)</td>
<td>372 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female 15 608 000 (50.2%)</td>
<td>996 (52%)</td>
<td>390 (52%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Methods

In our original funding proposal, we planned to conduct a single questionnaire survey, which recruited a probability sample of Adult (>18) black and white South Africans. As a result of devising efficient protocols for collecting our data and recruiting an exceptionally hard-working and committed team of data gatherers, we were ultimately able to complete two surveys within the project timetable. The first was conducted in 2006 and yielded a sample of 1917 respondents; the second was conducted in 2007 and yielded a sample of 769 respondents. Inevitably, the extra time spent on data collection
has slowed the development of our analysis of results. However, we feel that advantages of conducting survey 2 outweigh the costs (e.g. in terms of replicating and refining core findings).

Samples
Table 1 above summarises the two samples in terms of basic demographics of age, gender and race. Note that the present research focused on contact between Black and White South Africans. Thus, we did not include respondents who self-identified as members of other race categories within our final samples (e.g. Coloured and Indian respondents). As the Table 1 shows, whites were somewhat over-represented relative to national demographics derived from the 2001 census. The survey samples also departed from national demographics in terms of some socioeconomic indicators. Notably, people with tertiary levels of education were somewhat over-represented. Moreover, and despite this over-representation of educated people, both samples also tended to be poorer in terms of the percentage of people earning less than R1000 per month (i.e. nationally, 17% versus about 36% in Survey 1 and 38% in Survey 2).

We do not have space here to elaborate on the degree to which our samples matched the national population. Suffice it to say that both surveys were successful in recruiting a very broad spectrum of black and white South Africans, and they yielded samples that roughly matched national demographics on several key dimensions. However, we would not claim that our samples are nationally representative in a formal sense.

Research design and procedure
Both studies employed computer-assisted telephone survey protocols. Drawing on a randomly generated, screened, database of cellular phone numbers, a team of multilingual research assistants interviewed respondents in their preferred language. In an initial phone call, interviewers informed respondents that their phone numbers had been randomly selected and asked if they would be willing to participate anonymously in an interview about ‘race and transformation in South Africa’. Respondents who agreed to participate were then called back and interviewed by a research assistant who was proficient in their preferred language. Interviews lasted between 15 and 35 minutes. All responses were captured using questionnaire software, which organised and stored data within a shared Access database.

Questionnaires
The questionnaire instrument used in study 1 was designed, inter alia, to measure respondents’ self-reported contact (quality and quantity), attitudes towards various principles and policies designed to achieve racial justice in post-apartheid South Africa (See Figure 1 below), and constructions of distributive justice. The distributive justice measure was based on an adaption of the widely used Cantrill ladder. Respondents were asked to rank their own (and other groups) in terms of where they currently stand on a 10 rung ‘ladder’ of socioeconomic status in South Africa and also where they ‘ought to’ stand if they lived in a fair society.

For the purposes of replication, the questionnaire used in study 2 measured a similar set of variables, but also contained measures of racial prejudice (i.e. the Social Distance Scale and a Race Stereotyping scale), perceptions of levels of personal and group racial discrimination, and perceptions of interracial competition for material resources in post-apartheid South Africa. In addition, survey 2 used a better measure of contact, replacing four item scale used in survey 1 with a seven item scale that included measures of perceived contact quality such as friendliness, cooperativeness, equality, and closeness. Further details on each questionnaire and on the reliability and validity of the measures used are available on request.

Limitations
Before outlining our key results, we wish to acknowledge some methodological and empirical limitation of our surveys. Perhaps the most important, our data set simplifies the multiracial realities of South African society. In our collecting and analyzing survey data, we have treated black-white
relations as the paradigm case. We feel this is justified to some extent. In modern South African history, whites are undoubtedly the group who have benefited most and blacks the group who have suffered most from apartheid’s legacy of racial inequality. Exploring changing relations between these two groups, then, is an important research problem in its own right. Even so, we would concede our work has left unanswered a series complex (and equally important) questions about the role of varying kinds of contact on the political attitudes of South African’s ‘other’ race groups, notably members of social categories formerly classified as ‘Coloured’ and ‘Indian’ during the apartheid era.

In addition, our telephone survey methodology clearly has limitations as well as strengths. Although an efficient method of gathering data, it imposes fairly severe limitations in terms of the length and complexity of the survey instrument that can be used and in terms of the overall representativeness of the sample recruited.

Results

Data analysis in the surveys explored the interrelations between qualitative and quantitative contact predictors and various measures of prejudice, intergroup threat, distributive justice, discrimination, and policy attitudes. As a preliminary step, we shall provide some general descriptive and comparative analysis. We shall then summarise our main findings to date, exploring what we see as an interesting disjunction between our findings for white and black South Africans. We wish to point out that our analysis is in still very much in a process of development, and we are currently re-visiting some of our data using structural modelling techniques.

The racial patterning of policy attitudes and perceptions of distributive justice

The central outcome variables in our research measured: 1) support for various kinds of race-targeted policies implemented by the ANC government to address apartheid’s legacy of racial inequality; and 2) constructions of racial injustice and discrimination in post-apartheid South Africa. Figure 1 below summarises and compares black and white attitudes towards various principles and practices of racial equality (Survey 1). Figure 2 depicts the racial patterning of perceived distributive injustice in post-apartheid South Africa, measured in terms of the discrepancy between groups’ current and rightful socioeconomic standing (Survey 2).

These figures encapsulate some aspects of the racial organisation of political attitudes in post-apartheid South Africa that were central in our research. On the one hand, although a very low proportion of members of either race group oppose the principle of equality in the domains of education, land and employment (5%<), a significantly higher percentage of whites than blacks oppose policies designed to implement these principles. Figure 1 indicates that the policies of establishing educational quotas in schools, government appropriate of land for redistribution and affirmative action in the workplace attract highest levels of white opposition. Black opposition to race-targeted policies is substantially lower than that of whites, which is perhaps unsurprising given that blacks are the intended beneficiaries of such policies. Nevertheless, one should acknowledge that a substantive minority of blacks fail to support race-targeted policies such as educational quotas and affirmative action.
Figure 1 White and black attitudes towards principles and practices of racial equality in post-apartheid South Africa

Note: From bottom to top within each domain, results are presented for a principle of equality, a compensatory practice and a preferential practice (e.g. for the domain of Education, school desegregation is the principle, compensatory education is the compensatory practice, and educational quotas is the preferential practice)
Figure 2  Perceptions of material injustice in post-apartheid South Africa

Figure 2 depicts the racial organisation of perceptions of socioeconomic injustice in post-apartheid society. It shows a strong main effect for race of target, with both blacks and whites rating the socioeconomic situation of black South Africans as less fair than the situation of white South Africans. There is also an interaction effect. Black respondents rate the extent of injustice faced by fellow black South Africans as more severe than white respondents do. Moreover, whereas white respondents view the white group as suffering some level of socioeconomic injustice in the ‘new’ South Africa, black respondents on average view white South African’s as ‘over-benefited’ (e.g. enjoying a higher socioeconomic status than they deserve).

We have here, then, a fairly predictable pattern of interracial perceptions and attitudes towards some key aspects of political transformation in South Africa. The main aim of our analysis was to explore how interracial contact -- and associated variables such as prejudice and intergroup threat -- shape these kinds of political attitudes. As the impact of contact was racially differentiated in important ways, we shall summarise our key results for black and white South Africans separately.
The promise of integration: The effects of contact on the policy attitudes and justice orientations of white South Africans

Our main findings regarding the effects of interracial contact on white South Africans’ political attitudes provide grounds for optimism. To summarise, our initial results suggest that:

- As in most other research on the contact hypothesis, the quality and quantity of interracial contact was negatively associated with both cognitive and affective measures of white prejudice towards black people.
- Interracial contact also predicted whites’ attributions concerning material injustice and discrimination in South Africa. Specifically, the more contact that white South Africans’ reporting having with black South Africans, the less they perceived their own group to be unjustly deprived, the less they perceived themselves personally as victims of racial discrimination, and the less they perceived other whites as victims of discrimination. This pattern of results is in line with Pettigrew’s (1998) idea that contact can prompt members of historically advantaged groups to re-evaluate the legitimacy of their advantage.
- As Table 2 below illustrates, contact was negatively associated with whites’ opposition to a variety of race-targeted policies of redress, including affirmative action, racial quotas in schools, land appropriation, and initiatives to improve job skills. Contrary to Jackman and Crane’s (1986) analysis, then, we found some evidence that contact can promote greater acceptance of concrete interventions designed to accomplish social change in the ‘new’ South Africa.

One must be careful not to over-state this line of argument. As the effect sizes in Table 2 indicate, we are dealing here with moderate to small effects; moreover, significant associations between contact and policy support arise for some policy types and not others. Even so, our results show that contact has the potential to alter even the so-called ‘stubborn core’ of whites’ resistance to political transformation, shaping both their constructions of distributive justice and their orientations to race-targeted interventions designed to eradicate inequality. We are currently exploring the social psychological processes that mediate the relationship between contact and policy attitudes, using structural modelling techniques. Our preliminary analyses suggest the effects of contact on whites’ policy attitudes are partially mediated by intergroup threat and perceptions that whites’ material ‘entitlements’ are being unjustly violated in post-apartheid society.

Ironies of integration: Effects of contact on the justice orientations and policy attitudes of black South Africans

Although its effects on standard indices of prejudice were uniformly positive in our surveys, our findings suggest that contact may have a somewhat paradoxical impact on black South Africans’ political attitudes. Our initial results can be summarised as follows:

- We found that interracial contact was associated with reductions in blacks’ stereotypes of white people; it was also associated with more positive emotional attitudes towards white people. As in previous research, the contact-prejudice relationship was smaller for black respondents than for white respondents.
- In terms of attributions concerning material injustice in South Africa, however, contact seemed to produce a series of ‘ironic’ effects (at least from one political perspective). Specifically, the more contact that black South Africans’ reported having with white South Africans, and the more positive the quality of such contact, the less they perceived black South Africans to be unjustly deprived in the new South Africa. This effect emerged across a range of measures of perceived injustice, including ratings of personal discrimination, group discrimination, and relative socioeconomic deprivation.
As Table 2 below indicates, the relationship between contact and policy attitudes was also reversed for black South Africans. Whereas contact tended to decrease whites’ opposition to race targeted policies, it tended to increase blacks’ opposition (or else have no effect on such attitudes). For example, contact was positively associated with black opposition to affirmative action, land appropriation and land compensation.

Table 2: The relationship between contact and blacks’ and whites’ support for race-targeted policies in post-apartheid South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White respondents</th>
<th>Black respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 361)</td>
<td>(n = 1556)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensatory education</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald χ²</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>.595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land compensation</td>
<td>-.33</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald χ²</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land appropriation</td>
<td>-.52</td>
<td>48.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald χ²</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job skills training</td>
<td>-.6</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald χ²</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative action</td>
<td>-.4</td>
<td>7.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald χ²</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*R estimates in this table are root values of the Nagelkerke pseudo R².
How should we interpret this relationship between contact and blacks’ political attitudes? Two different kinds of explanations are worth noting here. First, our results could be viewed as illustrating a process of attitudinal ‘accommodation’ on the part of Black South Africans. That is to say, just as contact encourages whites to recognise material injustice and to support policies designed to address this injustice, so contact encourages black South Africans’ to adjust their political attitudes in the reverse direction. This kind of accommodation might be viewed as a positive sign that mutual solidarity is developing, with each group recognising more fully the needs and fears of the other group.

A very different interpretation might highlight the role of contact in undermining black South Africans’ collective commitment to political change, i.e. by diminishing their readiness to recognise injustice and support the practical interventions necessary to implement racial equality. From this perspective, our results could be cast in a negative light, e.g. as illustrating a form of political and ideological cooption. As the initial stage of our analysis has come to an end, we have become increasingly interested in exploring this second line of explanation, which, in our view, foregrounds some of the tensions that mark the relationship between two approaches to understanding the problem of social change in social psychology. Both are valid and legitimate approaches in their own right; however, we believe that they entail quite distinct, and in some respects antithetical, social psychological processes. In our concluding section, we develop this idea a little further and outline some of our plans to extend the analysis of our survey data sets.

Concluding reflections

Amicable relations among racial and ethnic groups can exist alongside grossly unjust inequalities of opportunities and outcomes. Ceteris paribus, harmonious race relations and unprejudiced attitudes might be worthy goals -- but only if other things are equal, or nearly so. (McConahay, 1978, p.77).

In this excerpt from the introduction to his review of the social psychological literature on educational desegregation, McConahay highlights the importance of distinguishing racial equality from prejudice reduction. However worthwhile in its own right, he suggests, the creation of ‘amicable relations’ does not guarantee that equality of opportunities and outcomes have been achieved. Indeed, racial injustice may not only ‘coexist’ with positive intergroup attitudes, but also such attitudes may become part of the very ideological process through which the status quo is entrenched. Mary Jackman famously developed this thesis in ‘The Velvet Glove’, which explored the mechanisms through which ‘paternalistic’ relations may come to underpin systems of racial and gender domination.

The design of our surveys affords us the opportunity to explore the interrelations between social psychological processes rooted in two rather different intellectual traditions of research on social change; that is, research focused on the reduction of prejudice and research focused on the promotion of change at an institutional or structural level. The first tradition typically studies the transformation of individuals’ affective responses, stereotypes and behaviours and concentrates on understanding (and altering) the social psychology of members of historically advantaged groups. Research on the contact hypothesis represents the definitive example of work in this tradition. The second tradition, by contrast, typically studies collective struggles to alter wider status relations and institutional arrangements and concentrates on understanding (and altering) the social psychology of members of historically disadvantaged groups. Research on the relationship between collective action, social identity and sense of injustice illustrates work in this tradition.

The relationship between these two traditions of social psychological research on social change is rarely considered systematically (though see Wright & Lubensky, 2008). Researchers often seem to presume that they work synergistically to promote social and political change. They suppose, for example, that improving whites’ attitudes towards blacks (e.g. via interracial contact) has a beneficial
'knock on' effect on racial equality at a structural level (e.g. by reducing our willingness to engage in, or support, discriminatory practices). Our survey data confirm that this is partly true. For example, they suggest that interracial contact not only increases the degree to which white South Africans ‘like’ black South Africans, but also the degree to which they acknowledge the existence of racial inequality and support government interventions to reduce such inequality.

Our results for black South Africans, however, suggest that the relationship between the two traditions may be more complicated. The irony of integration is that it encourages black people to ‘like’ white people more, whilst reducing their willingness to recognise and collectively resist structural inequality. Discussing this paradox, Wright and Lubensky (2008) argue that the social psychological processes that underpin blacks’ willingness to engage in collective action are diametrically opposed to the processes that underpin prejudice reduction. Thus, for example, prejudice reduction requires blacks to develop more positive emotional attitudes towards whites. Collective action, conversely, becomes more likely if blacks view whites in a more negative way, i.e. as ‘oppressors’. Similarly, prejudice reduction typically involves diluting the salience of racial identity via strategies such as decategorization, cross-categorization or the creation of common ingroup identities – strategies that have featured prominently in the literature on the contact hypothesis. Research on collective action, by contrast, suggest that collective action to change the status quo is more likely when minority group members have a strong, clearly bounded, sense of group identity.

Table 3: Interrelations between contact and whites’ and blacks’ perceptions of blacks’ relative deprivation in post-apartheid South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Prejudice</th>
<th>Black injustice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>-.27*</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>-.37*</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice</td>
<td>-.44*</td>
<td>.47*</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black injustice</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>-.38*</td>
<td>-.25*</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: blacks above the diagonal, whites below the diagonal

*=p<.01

We do not have space here to develop this comparative analysis (see Wright and Lubensky’s, 2008) excellent discussion). Consider as a closing illustration, however, the simple pattern of correlations summarised in Table 3 above. This is based upon data gathered during our second survey and indicates the kinds of relations that we are interested in modelling in the next stage of our analysis of our current survey data sets (and in future empirical research). As is apparent, whites’ contact with blacks is negatively associated with prejudice and intergroup threat and, crucially, positively associated with recognition of the material injustice suffered by black people in the ‘new’ South Africa. Contact in this case has an unequivocally positive impact on whites’ orientations to social
change. The pattern for blacks is similar in that contact is again negatively associated with racial prejudice and intergroup threat; however, note that it is also negatively associated with blacks’ recognition of black injustice. Moreover, whilst reductions in intergroup threat and prejudice are associated with increases whites’ recognition of racial inequality, they tend to be associated with decreases in blacks’ recognition of inequality. In this case, then, contact and prejudice reduction has potentially ‘ironic’ effects on blacks’ orientation to social change.

Future research priorities

Constructing a theoretical model of how, when and why integration may have such complex and ‘ironic’ effects on minority group attitudes, as well as specifying its implications for our understanding of the social psychological dimension of political transformation, will be the central theme in the next stage of our analysis. In part, this goal will be achieved by further analysis of our existing data sets, which include potential mediators such as strength of group identity, stratification beliefs, and perceptions of intergroup threat. We are also planning to conduct some further (and related) survey work that focuses on the nature and causes of the so-called ‘principle-implementation gap’ in attitudes towards racial equality; that is, work that attempts to account for why acceptance of the ideal of racial equality is so often offset by resistance to concrete policies designed to realise this ideal.

It is worth noting here that other research teams are currently pursuing similar lines of analysis. In their recent experimental work, for example, Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio & Pratto (forthcoming) suggest that contact may produce so-called ‘false’ expectations amongst members of disadvantaged groups that they will be treated fairly by members of historically advantaged groups. In addition, of course, the work we have presented in this report clearly resonates with research on Systems Justification Theory (Jost, Banaji & Nozek, 2004), which has explored, among other things, how minority group members may come to hold ideological beliefs that sustain the status quo.

Activities, outputs and impacts

To date, the project has produced two research papers. One has been published in Psychological Science and another is about to be submitted to the American Journal of Political Science. We are currently completing a third paper, which we intend to submit to Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin towards the end of the summer.

We have also disseminated the research via conference presentations delivered to the BPS Social Section Conference (2006) and the EAESP Conference (2008). The latter was a particularly valuable experience as we participated in a symposium on ‘Obstacles to Social Change’ organised by Tamar Saguy and Nicole Tausch. The group of co-presenters at the symposium now have plans for submitting our work collectively for consideration as a potential special issue of the Journal of Social Issues.

Finally, the principal investigator has been invited to deliver a keynote address at next year’s BPS social section conference. The present funded research will be discussed as an integral part of this address.

References


