

The Promise and Peril of Interethnic Contact in the Everyday Setting

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The Promise and Peril of Interethnic
Contact in the Everyday Setting

PhD Dissertation

Politica

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ISBN: 978-87-7335-312-7

Cover: Svend Siune

Print: Fællestrykkeriet, Aarhus University

Layout: Annette Bruun Andersen

Submitted February 10, 2023

The public defense takes place May 12, 2023

Published May 2023

Forlaget Politica

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Acknowledgement

Writing a PhD not only legitimizes but requires you to spend several years diving into a specific area of burning interest. This is an immense privilege, but the ride toward attaining those extra three letters is a bumpy one, and the learning curve is exceptionally steep. There are so many people I want to thank for the fact that the pages you are now reading exist.

First of all, I want to thank my supervisors, Kim Mannemar Sønderskov, Lasse Laustsen, and Per Mouritsen. Without your tireless efforts and incredibly valuable insights, I am not sure I would have endured the bumpy ride. Kim, you are exceptional. I do not think I have ever experienced you say “no” when I asked for your help or perspectives. Your door has always been open, and you have been ready to discuss whatever obstacles arose along the way. Occasionally, you have been forced to seek help in the popular culture and cite John Lennon to ensure me that the bumpy ride had a destination. You have been both a mentor and my worst critic. The latter, of course, is only a good thing: If I can convince you – and, yes, it does happen from time to time – there is a pretty good chance that I am on the right track. Lasse, you have an extraordinary skill for asking the right, tough questions. You have pushed me to reflect on some of the more fundamental elements in doing research, such as conceptualization and measurement. Your good humor and positive attitude are a blessing, and am I very thankful that you agreed to jump in as a co-supervisor in the middle of the project. Per, I am not only grateful for your deep knowledge of the field and strong theoretical skills that have helped me sharpen the focus and aim of my arguments; I am also deeply grateful for the support you provided on my way into the PhD program. Your help and guidance have meant so much.

I also want to thank my co-authors, Thorbjørn Sejr Guul and Kristian Kriegbaum Jensen. Working with you has been a great inspiration and a lot of fun. It has taught me a lot, not just in terms of narrowing down the focus of a paper and choosing the proper tools to analyze data, but on the art of collaboration more broadly. You are both extremely talented, and I have really enjoyed working with you.

One invaluable aspect of being a PhD student at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, is that one is surrounded by exceptionally friendly, talented, and helpful peers. It is hard to imagine a set of colleagues more willing to invest in and share the ups and downs of the projects that grew out of this PhD dissertation – as well as the projects that never saw daylight. I have spent many hours with several of you drawing models on the white board, discussing how to define concepts, and pushing nerdy, methodological

discussions to their limits. These discussions have unequivocally raised the quality of this dissertation. Even further, all the social interactions during the last years – from countless trips to the coffee machine and walks around the lake, over afternoon football and cold beers, to bed-bunking in Prague and flip cup at Vejle Fjord – have without doubt cushioned the bumpiness of the PhD ride and made it an absolute pleasure to come to the office. I think having such engaged and warm peers is a privilege, not a given, at a workplace. Some of those I have been fortunate to spend a lot of time with include Andreas Jensen, Laurits Aarslew, Matias Engdal, Kristian V. S. Frederiksen, Valentin Daur, Tobias Risse, Jannik Fenger, Dani May, Lea Pradella, Lasse Leipziger, Steffen Selmer, Mathias Bukh, Niels Nyholt, Jesper Rasmussen, Ashraf Rachid, Mathias Rask Jeppesen, Jens Jørund Tyssedal, Aske Halling, Nanna Ahrensberg, and Matilde Jeppesen. In particular, I would like to thank Andreas Jensen and Matias Engdal for the endless hours we have spent trying to gain the edge over our different projects. Those sessions are gold, nothing less. An extra thanks to you, Andreas. In the fall of 2012, we wrote our first assignment together in “Pol intro” and the semester after, we took down Methods II (except we forgot to rotate the factor loadings). A couple of months ago, we came full circle when we started our first joint research project. I learn a lot and it is always a pleasure working with you.

I also thank my former co-students and current political-science friends for all the discussions and stimulating talks we have had over cold beers, badminton matches, and walks. A special thanks goes to Laurits Aarslew, Andreas Jensen and Christian Brinkmann and their families. 11 years ago, we started as political science students in the same classroom here at the department. Today, we arguably drink fewer “meter”, but we keep up the pace of fiercely discussing political-science related issues everywhere we can: on the playground, when we go for a run, or when we stubbornly go to a café with all our children. Our eagerness to discuss occasionally reaches a level where an apology to our female counterparts is in order for our lack of focus on things that ought to have our focus. To all of you: I look forward to many more inspiring discussions in the future.

I would also like to thank the Political Behavior and Institutions section. I clearly remember the first paper presentation I attended; equally nervous to provide input to a senior scholar and equally impressed by the quality of the feedback provided by others (which, of course, only exacerbated the nervousness). The amount of knowledge gathered in one room during a section meeting is overwhelming, and I have been lucky to benefit from extremely competent engagement with my PhD project along the way, both within and beyond the scope of the formal section gatherings. For that, I am deeply grateful. I would also like to thank members at CEPDISC for welcoming me during my

PhD and for providing high-quality feedback on my research ideas. The interdisciplinary approach at the center is extremely compelling, and I am thrilled to have been given the opportunity to finally be a formal member of the center. I would also like to thank the administrative group at the department. Your help in answering questions related to economy, teaching, travelling, language editing etc. is invaluable. I have never left with an unanswered question or the sense that I did not know where to go. I think that is quite remarkable.

Christoffer Green-Pedersen and Helene Helboe Pedersen, you deserve much praise for your exceptional skills as PhD coordinators. Your ability to listen, understand, and act is impressive. Life as a PhD is filled with uncertainty and challenges, and I think you do an outstanding job in doing whatever is possible to ease that uncertainty and reduce the challenges we face. I would also like to thank members at the GovCit project for allowing me a sneak-peak into academia prior to the PhD and for providing encouragement and help during my time as a PhD. A big thanks go to Matthew Wright, who kindly and competently hosted my research stay at University of British Columbia, Vancouver. We had a lot of extremely good talks over several cups of coffee, and your skillful inputs have been a great inspiration. Let's see if we can complete the stairway hike to Grouse Mountain the next time I visit Vancouver. A special thanks goes to Martin Vinæs Larsen, Kristina Bakkær Simonsen, and Kristian Kriegbaum Jensen for continuously providing feedback on the project and advice on life in academia more generally. Your inputs have meant more than you know.

Finally, a deep-felt gratitude goes to my friends and family. You have reminded me about the joys of life outside academia and helped me keep my feet on the ground when it felt shaky, and the foothold was more demanding to maintain. Thank you for your understanding and for your invaluable support. Without it, I would not have been here today. My greatest gratitude goes to you, Stine. I know that having a husband who does research is not the easiest thing in the world. Such a husband is easily distracted, he gets frustrated by his lack of progress, and he has a bad habit of not being able to leave work at the office. Yet, you have always shown endless support and encouragement of my pursuit of the PhD, even in times when it required compromises on your part. You are my rock and a super-mom to our two children, and I feel immensely lucky to have you in my life.

Mathias Kruse

Aarhus, April 2023

Preface

My PhD dissertation, *The Promise and Peril of Interethnic Contact in the Everyday Setting*, consists of two elements: the four research papers listed below and this summary. In this summary, I provide an overview and discussion of the theoretical arguments, the methodological approaches, and the main findings in each of the four papers as well as a theoretical synthesis. Detailed accounts, more specific data descriptions, further analyses, and robustness tests are found in the individual papers.

Paper A. “Closing the Solidarity Gap? How Ethnic Diversity Alters Who We Are Willing to Support” [Online first in *Political Psychology*: <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12859>]

Paper B. “The Correlates of Ethnicity: Why Ethnic Ingroup Members Expect Less Cooperation from Ethnic Outgroup Members” [Working paper]

Paper C. “Ethnic Similarity Increases Well-being: A Local Account “with Thorbjørn Sejr Guul and Kristian Kriegbaum Jensen [Invited for a revise and resubmit at the *American Journal of Sociology*]

Paper D. “Contact with Whom? Childhood Ethnic Composition Affects Immigrant Naturalization” [Working paper]

Chapter 1

Introduction

Throughout human history, and especially in the globalized world of today, human migration has led to encounters between different social groups. Immigration has changed the ethnic composition in many industrialized democracies, and these changes have spurred heated political debate over the consequences of interethnic encounters. “Build that wall” and “Take back control” are but some political slogans of recent time that indicate the high saliency and increasing fear of immigration and ethnic diversity.

Yet, according to one prominent perspective, interethnic encounters need not be perilous. More than 70 years of research on intergroup contact converges towards the main finding that contact between ethnic groups reduces prejudice and promotes social harmony (e.g., Allport, 1954; Brown et al., 2021; Christ et al., 2014; Ramos et al., 2019; for reviews, see Paluck et al., 2019; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Today, contact theory is one of the most prominent social science theories, and promoting contact “has arguably become the foremost strategy for reducing prejudice” (Paluck et al., 2019: 130). The crux of contact theory is not that the mere exposure to members of different ethnic groups has positive consequences (Allport, 1954: chap. 16; Enos, 2017: chap. 2). Indeed, exposure to outgroup members tends to exacerbate ethnic bias (e.g., Condra & Linardi, 2019; Enos, 2014; Hangartner et al., 2019). The key point in contact theory is that actual interactions between different ethnic groups that occur under certain conditions can reduce group-based biases and promote social harmony (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Pettigrew et al., 2011).

In this dissertation, I build on the classic insights in contact theory but aim to broaden our understanding of the role of contact. The dominant approach to studying contact focuses on more intimate and self-reported contact such as having outgroup friends. Though intimate contact is central in fostering attitudinal change (e.g., Amir, 1969; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2011), it may tell us less about the broader consequences of contact occurring in the everyday setting which has been less center of attention and likely has wider implications (e.g., Dixon et al., 2005). Further, relying on self-reported measures of (intimate) contact can pose methodological challenges since those who report having higher levels of contact may be systematically different from those who report having lower levels of contact. Finally, we may acquire a broader understanding of interethnic contact by investigating other outcomes than prejudice.

In this dissertation, I turn to the role of interethnic contact in the everyday setting; what I refer to as mundane interethnic contact. I suggest that contact entails interactions, which distinguishes it from mere exposure, and that mundane contact captures a broader and more representative form of contact because it, unlike intimate contact, does not presuppose stronger (emotional) interethnic bonds. What is more, I investigate the role of objectively measured contact for a series of phenomena that remain less scrutinized in the framework of contact. I do so while focusing on both the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority and by working hard to reduce the challenges of selection. Investigating a more common and frequent type of objectively measured contact while focusing on a diverse set of outcomes provides a strong case for assessing the broader implications of interethnic contact.

Specifically, I pose two questions: i) How does mundane interethnic contact, and information plausibly acquired from such contact, shape prosocial attitudes? and ii) Does mundane contact affect well-being and naturalization? With the first question, I seek to bring contact, and the stereotype-reducing information that such contact may provide, into the broader equation of ethnic diversity and interethnic exposure. With the second question, I seek to plug mundane contact into a larger universe of outcomes. Jointly, answers to these questions will provide a broader understanding of the role of interethnic contact; not just by focusing on everyday interactions but by moving beyond focusing on prejudice as the primary outcome of interest. To answer these questions, I put forth, empirically test, and synthesize four claims, each unfolded in one of the papers (A to D). Claims one and two relate to the first question; claims three and four relate to the second question.

My first claim is that interethnic contact in the everyday setting increases the ethnic majority's solidarity towards ethnic outgroup members (paper A). Specifically, I argue that contact reduces the importance of outgroup cues for solidarity by altering ethnic categorization and challenging deservingness stereotypes, and that this ultimately reduces the ingroup-outgroup solidarity gap. My second claim is that ethnic bias in expected cooperation held by the ethnic majority is explained by more socially contingent factors often perceived to correlate with ethnic attributes and, hence, that information on such social factors reduces ethnic bias (paper B). Note that this claim does not focus directly on contact but zooms in on one potential psychological mechanism through which contact may affect prosocial attitudes. Underlying this claim is the broader argument that contact works, partly, via acquisition of stereotype-countering information (Allport, 1954). The third claim, made by two colleagues and me, is that *intraethnic* contact promotes and maintains the well-being of the ethnic majority as well as the ethnic minority; not in spite of the positive effect expected from interethnic contact, but in part *because* of such

positive effect (paper C). The reason is that a relatively higher share of ingroup members can reduce prejudice held by outgroup members which ultimately improves ingroup members' well-being. My fourth and final claim is that ethnic contact shapes immigrants' and descendants' likelihood of acquiring citizenship either by altering the importance of national identity or by shaping within-ethnic social networks in which information flows more easily (paper D).

To assess these claims empirically, I combine survey and register-based data while employing both observational and experimental designs to causally identify the main effects of interest. One essential element in the dissertation is that I predominantly focus on children and adolescents in the Danish school setting (papers A, C, and D). Focusing on the school setting is essential for five reasons. First, it enables me to measure mundane contact objectively rather than subjectively. In three papers, I use Danish registry data and calculate the ethnic compositions at the cohort level (paper D) and classroom level (paper A, C, and D); highly disaggregate settings in which cross-student interactions are inevitable. Second, cross-student interactions in school exactly constitute a mundane, universal, and politically scalable type of contact (e.g., Elwert et al., 2020). Third, contact in school comes a long way in complying, in a natural and less idealized way, with Allport's conditions for contact to have positive effects. Fourth, childhood and adolescence are important periods in life where values and attitudes likely crystalize (Alwin & Krosnick, 1991; Jennings & Markus, 1984). Early-life experiences with outgroup members appear to have long-lasting consequences into adulthood (e.g., Billings et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2021; Eger et al., 2021; Gamoran et al., 2016; Goldman & Hopkins, 2020; Kustov et al., 2021; Ramos et al., 2019) and potentially outweigh the importance of cross-ethnic experiences that take place later in life (Goldman & Hopkins, 2020). Fifth and finally, the school setting allows me to use different sources of quasi-random assignment of students. In these cases, those who have more contact are *not* necessarily systematically different from those who do not have contact. This alleviates the often held challenge to more credibly isolating the *causal* effect of interethnic contact.

The main findings are the following. In terms of the first claim, I find that higher levels of classroom ethnic diversity – that is, higher levels of everyday interactions with ethnic outgroup members – increases ethnic majority members' solidarity towards immigrants, specifically by altering negative deservingness stereotypes, but does not shape solidarity towards ethnic minorities. In terms of the second claim, I find that, in the absence of relevant information, members of the ethnic majority expect that ethnic outgroup members are less likely to cooperate than ingroup members. Once information is avail-

able about varying social factors and these do not correlate with ethnic attributes, ethnic bias in expected cooperation is reduced and, in some cases, explained away. In sum, these findings generally support claims one and two and suggest that interethnic contact, in contrast to interethnic exposure, can play a positive role in alleviating ethnic bias in prosocial attitudes. In terms of the third claim, we find that ethnic similarity increases well-being for both the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority; or reversely, that interethnic contact reduces well-being for both groups. It likely does so by reducing exposure to prejudice and partly by increasing a positive self-concept. In terms of the fourth claim, I find that interethnic contact decreases the likelihood for descendants and immigrants to naturalize. This negative effect seems to be driven by the relative absence of *intraethnic* interactions than by the presence of *interethnic* interactions. These findings suggest that interethnic contact may work more indirectly as well and that a more ethnically homogenous environment is important in fostering certain sociopolitical outcomes. This supports claims three and four.

In synthesizing these results, the broader conclusion of the dissertation emerges: The *same type* of contact under the *same conditions* in the *same country* has divergent consequences. This suggests that a different type of query may be relevant to the study of interethnic contact, namely *what* contact does and does not promote. To understand the fact that the same type of everyday contact has divergent consequences, I propose a new theoretical framework that points to the following: Interethnic contact may simultaneously improve *interpersonal* phenomena and impede more *intrapersonal* phenomena. On the one hand, contact can promote intergroup solidarity and reduce outgroup prejudice; and relevant information, plausibly acquired from such contact, reduces ethnic bias in expected cooperation. I categorize these as interpersonal outcomes. On the other hand, the same type of contact reduces well-being and naturalization, which I generally categorize as intrapersonal outcomes. This pattern indicates that there are both advantages and disadvantages to mundane interethnic contact depending on the (type of) outcome of interest. This points to a potential new dilemma for integration policies that pose questions like: Is it more important to foster interethnic solidarity than well-being?

Overall, in building, testing, and synthesizing the four claims, I provide a broader theoretical contribution to the long-standing political and academic debate about the consequences of interethnic encounters for diverse societies. I do so by devoting attention to a more common and scalable type of contact; by focusing on a series of different outcomes; by focusing on both the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority; by working hard on causal identification; and by predominantly focusing on children and adolescents who experience

interethnic encounters in a formative period in life. Jointly, these findings provide a broader and more nuanced understanding of the seemingly paradoxical nature of interethnic contact in everyday life.

The remainder of this summary is structured as follows. In chapter 2, I present the theoretical framework of the dissertation in which I discuss the definition and delineation of (mundane) interethnic contact and unfold the four claims. Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach with a focus on describing and comparing the setting, designs, identification strategies, and measures used to test each of the four claims. In chapter 4, I present the main findings, and in chapter 5, I synthesize the findings and propose a new theoretical framework for understanding the role of interethnic contact. I close with a concluding discussion in chapter 6.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework of the dissertation. The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I discuss the concept of (mundane) interethnic contact. In the second part, I present the four claims about the role of such contact. I conclude with a chapter summary.

2.1. Defining Interethnic Contact

In this first section, I discuss what I mean and do not mean by contact generally and mundane contact specifically; I describe when contact is thought to have positive effects; I discuss the concept of *intraethnic* contact as the flip-side of interethnic contact; and I discuss the concept of ethnicity in the framework of *interethnic* contact.

What Is Contact?

Despite the longstanding academic and political focus on intergroup contact, the concept of contact is rarely defined in formal terms. Gordon Allport, who laid the foundation for modern contact theory, understood contact in a rather broad sense as the mere association of people from different social groups (see e.g., Allport, 1954: 262 ff.). In this understanding of the concept, there are a host of different kinds of contact occurring in a variety of settings under a variety of circumstances among a variety of different people. Despite this broader conception, I believe there are theoretical and analytical reasons for using the general concept of contact in a narrower sense such that it is conceptually distinct from what I refer to as exposure (see more below).

I understand intergroup contact not merely as an assembly of different social groups but as the interaction between members of different social groups. *Cambridge Dictionary* defines an interaction as “a situation where two or more people or things communicate with or react to each other”. Though formal definitions of intergroup contact are rare, more recent scholarship seems to agree that a sense of interaction between groups is important to encapsulate contact (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011: 13; Hewstone, 2015: 431). For example, in a critique of studies using measures of macro-level diversity to tap intergroup contact, Miles Hewstone states that intergroup contact is something that contains “cross-group face-to-face interaction” (Hewstone, 2015: 431).

Further, Hewstone argues that to measure contact, “one must report the extent to which members of different groups engage in *positive* contact”

(Hewstone, 2015: 431, *italics mine*). Yet, an exclusive focus on interactions that are per definition positive implies a risk of tautology: If intergroup contact is per definition positive, and interactions that are negative are not contact, we come very close to implying the results of such contact from the outset. Though this perspective is not necessarily dominant, it is essential for conceptual rigor and theoretical clarity that the concept of contact be defined independently of the outcomes that it is expected to affect. Hence, while I define the general concept of contact as intergroup interactions, I make no assumptions about the valence or forms of such interactions.

More importantly, I focus on mundane contact in this dissertation. By mundane contact, I mean interactions between members of different social groups that occur in the everyday setting. Such interactions may come in different shapes, have varying intensity and duration, and take place in different environments such as in school, in the workplace, or in the football club. Whereas intimate contact is more extensive, deep, and implies stronger (emotional) bonds between those interacting, mundane contact can be more casual such as talking to or working with members of other ethnic groups. The distinction between intimate and mundane contact is not clear-cut, and mundane contact may eventually evolve into more intimate contact. The key difference, however, is that though mundane contact may increase the opportunities for more intimate contact, it does not presuppose the formation of stronger bonds between members of different groups such as those that categorize friendships. These considerations help guide the selection of a realistic setting in which mundane interactions take place as well as the specific measurements thereof as well (see further discussion in chapter 3).

Finally, in the classic formulation of contact theory, contact occurs face-to-face between members of different social groups. In our modern, technological world, new forms of contact have emerged such as virtual, imagined, vicarious, and extended contact (for an overview, see Dovidio et al., 2017). Though I do build on certain new aspects of contact in the dissertation (cf. paper A), actual face-to-face interactions remain essential in my understanding of interethnic contact.

Contact Is Not Exposure

Contact, thus defined, is different from mere exposure to outgroup members (Enos, 2017). The key purpose of the following brief discussion is to situate the study of contact generally, and mundane contact specifically, in the broader debate about the consequences of interethnic encounters.

By exposure, I mean observations of members of different social groups. In contrast to an interaction, an observation can be made by a single individual and from a distance. Hence, exposure is in principle passive; it happens *to* an individual rather than *between* a set of individuals. Observations of outgroup members is often based on visual appearance or what I refer to as direct exposure. Such observation entails face-to-face encounters between members of different ethnic groups with the absence of actual interactions (e.g., Condra & Linardi, 2019; Enos, 2014; Enos, 2017; Hangartner et al., 2019). Citizens may also be more indirectly exposed to outgroup members. For example, a large and sudden influx of immigrants in a country, state, or even municipality does not necessarily imply that citizens have more face-to-face encounters with immigrants in their everyday lives (e.g., Dinesen & Sønderskov, 2015: 555). When such changes take place, however, increased political attention and media debate that can spur ingroup favoritism (e.g., Alesina & Glaeser, 2004). In this case, citizens can observe changes in the ethnic composition indirectly, for example via the media, even if they are not personally subject to physical changes in their local surroundings.

On the mechanistic side, exposure and contact may operate in different ways. According to classic theories predicting conflict, exposure to outgroup members can increase antipathy through a range of different mechanisms such as competition (e.g., Blalock, 1967; Sherif et al., 1988), feelings of threat (e.g., Blumer, 1958; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007), positive ingroup-evaluation (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987), or because the mere presence increases outgroup saliency and activates predisposed negative outgroup stereotypes (e.g., McGuire et al., 1978; Enos, 2017). Intergroup contact, on the other hand, is expected to decrease group-based biases by improving outgroup information and knowledge, reducing outgroup threat and anxiety, and increasing perspective taking and empathy (for reviews on mechanisms, see for example Dovidio et al., 2017; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

Hence, the type of interethnic encounter – exposure or contact – may have divergent consequences. Allport clarified this more than 70 years ago when he distinguished between superficial contact – what I refer to as exposure – and more direct and extended contact occurring under certain conditions (Allport, 1954: 263-264). Ryan Enos recently rephrased this main point:

When we consider Allport's argument in its proper breadth – that interpersonal contact diminishes group-based bias but that, in the absence of interpersonal contact, the presence of an outgroup increases group-based bias – we can more easily reconcile the seeming contradiction that a large, proximate, and segregated group can cause greater group-based bias. In part, it is simply because, with segregation, there is a large, nearby group but little or no interpersonal contact between oneself and members of that group (Enos, 2017: 49).

Though evidence remains mixed, studies of context effects – which often tap some aspect of interethnic exposure – tend to find a negative impact of the interethnic encounter for outcomes such as solidarity, trust, cooperation, and prejudice (e.g., Alesina et al., 1999; Condra & Linardi, 2019; Dahlberg et al., 2012; Dinesen & Sønderskov, 2015; Enos, 2014; Enos, 2016; Gilens, 1999; Halla et al., 2017; Hangartner et al., 2019; Luttmer, 2001; Putnam, 2007; Schmidt-Catran & Spies, 2016; Sherif et al., 1988 for reviews, see Alesina & Stantcheva, 2020; Dinesen et al., 2020; van der Meer & Tolsma, 2014; Stichnoth & Van der Straeten, 2013).¹ Reversely, studies that measure some aspect of interethnic contact (under favorable conditions) tend to find positive effects of the interethnic encounter. This pattern replicates both in non-randomized studies (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2011) and in recent experimental studies (Paluck et al., 2019; see also Nathan & Sands, 2023). Even further, studies have shown that interethnic contact may bounce off the negative effects of exposure (e.g., Stolle et al., 2008).

In figure 2.1, I summarize what I take to be the general conceptual distinction between contact and exposure and relate it to examples of (the contextual level of) measurement and typical theoretical support. The two concepts may overlap empirically, and grey zones exist for deducting whether exposure or contact takes place. For example, some indicate that a context such as the local neighborhood, where interactions are voluntary rather than mandatory, can represent a case of exposure (Dinesen & Sønderskov, 2015) whereas others suggest that the presence of outgroup neighbors entails interethnic interactions (e.g., Brown et al., 2021; Schönwälder et al., 2016).² Thus, the key aim of

¹ For examples of divergent results, see Oliver and Wong (2003) on prejudice in neighborhoods, Brady and Finnigan (2014) on public support for social policy, Letki (2008) on social cohesion, Hooghe et al. (2009) and Marschall and Stolle (2004) on social trust, and Kustov and Pardelli (2018) on support for public outcomes. See also Cools et al. (2021) as well as Pottie-Sherman and Wilkes (2017) for reviews on support for anti-immigrant parties and anti-immigrant sentiment, respectively, that report null effects or mixed findings.

² Brown and colleagues show that neighborhood exposure early in life is related to an increase in Democratic partisanship later in life, thus supporting the predictions in contact theory. Yet, as they argue and show, the positive effect of neighborhood exposure is driven by the closest neighbors rather than the more aggregate racial context. Hence, though contact is voluntary in the neighborhood setting, the authors indicate that intergroup interactions are likely to be the underlying driver: “... the size of these effects may be within an expected range for the treatment on children given the intense interpersonal contact possible when interacting with neighbors” (p. 4-5).

the figure is not to suggest that grey zones do not exist but to provide a heuristic for situating the study of contact, and mundane contact, in the broader debate about the consequences of the interethnic encounter. The figure indicates that mundane contact is different from mere exposure because it involves interactions. Since mundane and intimate contact both involve interactions, the difference between them is more likely a matter of degree than of kind.

Figure 2.1. Different Types of the Interethnic Encounter

Type of interethnic encounter	Exposure [<i>observation</i>]		Contact [<i>interaction</i>]	
Sub-type of interethnic encounter	Indirect exposure	Direct exposure	Mundane contact	Intimate contact
Examples of (level of) measurement	Country – Region – Municipality – Local venue – Neighborhood – Work place – School – Roommates – Friendship – Marriage			
Typical theoretical support	Ingroup favoritism/ Conflict theories		Contact theory	

When Is Intergroup Contact Expected to Have Positive Effects?

Contact, as I define it, is not positive per definition. However, it is often debated that contact is more likely to have a positive effect if a specific set of conditions for the contact situation are met. As famously argued by Allport, four conditions are expected to increase the likelihood that contact between groups reduces prejudice (see also Pettigrew, 1998). These conditions have been important in selecting the setting in this dissertation – the school setting – that papers A, C, and D focus on (see more in chapter 3). In the following, I will briefly describe these conditions.

The first condition is equal status: There should be equal status between members of different social groups such that they expect and perceive equality in the contact situation. Intergroup contact that involves group hierarchies in which some groups have higher status than others will not necessarily be able to break group-based stereotypes. For example, in a company, contact between a low-positioned ethnic minority group and a high-positioned ethnic majority group is less likely to produce positive effects compared to a situation

where an ethnic majority and an ethnic minority group at the same employment level interact.

The second condition is common goals: Members of different groups should actively work towards achieving the same ends. Sports teams are often used as a core example of a situation in which team members depend on each other to achieve something they all want regardless of ethnic affiliations (for recent work, see e.g., Lowe, 2021; Mousa, 2020).

The third condition is cooperation: The contact situation should be cooperative rather than competitive. Whereas competition can strengthen group-based biases and foster animosity (e.g., Blumer, 1958; Lowe, 2021; Sherif et al., 1988), cross-group cooperation in which groups depend on each other is expected to ease prejudice against “them”.

The fourth condition is supportive authorities: Contact is more likely to be positive if authorities broadly understood can surveil the contact situation and potentially sanction norm-violations. As Allport proposes, “[t]he effect [of positive contact] is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by intuitional supports (i.e., by law, custom or local atmosphere)” (Allport, 1954: 281).

Though highly influential and often cited, the role of these conditions is still debated. According to one meta-review, the conditions appear to be facilitating rather than necessary (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). This conclusion is mainly based on cross-study rather than within-study comparisons. In a more recent review, a key conclusion is that there is a dearth of empirical studies that systematically investigate these causal relevance of these conditions (Paluck et al., 2019). As the authors conclude, “no randomized study with over-time outcome measurement has systematically varied, as part of its experimental design, Allport’s facilitating conditions” (p. 153). Despite the lack of empirical evidence, there remain theoretically valid reasons to believe that these conditions increase the likelihood that interactions across groups have positive effects.

Intraethnic Contact as the Flip-Side of Interethnic Contact

So far, I have focused on the broader concept of and conditions around (mundane) interethnic contact. However, an additional dimension is included in this dissertation: the *contrast* to interethnic contact. In papers C and D, I focus on the flip-side of interethnic contact using the terms “ethnic similarity” (paper C) and “ethnic enclaves” (paper D). Both concepts refer to *intraethnic* contact, that is, contact with people who resemble each other along some ethnic trait(s).

In strict conceptual terms, the opposite of *having* intergroup contact is *not having* intergroup contact, and this, in principle, need not reveal anything

about the type of interactions that one otherwise has. Yet, when studying the relative distribution of different ethnic groups in a confined space – which is a key approach in this dissertation (see more in chapter 3) – relatively more contact with outgroup members typically implies relatively less contact with ingroup members (Blau, 1977). For example, if the relative size of ethnic group B increases in a given space, the relative size of ethnic group A decreases, all else equal. For group A in this scenario, interethnic contact increases, whereas intraethnic contact decreases. Stated differently, more *interethnic* contact comes at the expense of more *intraethnic* contact for members of group A. This distinction is further relevant in cases where both the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority are of interest. The reason is that interethnic and intraethnic contact tend to be orthogonal for the majority and minority: More interethnic contact for the majority tends to imply less interethnic contact for the minority – and vice versa.

Thus, when I investigate the role of interethnic contact in this dissertation, I am also interested in its contrast: *intraethnic* contact. The main reason is that the two concepts and empirical phenomena are logically intertwined. Even when the relative concentration of ingroup vis-à-vis outgroup members is not perfectly negatively correlated (see for example paper D), focusing on ethnic similarity rather than “non-contact” is analytically helpful. This enables a more nuanced theoretical discussion of the role of contact. Further, from a political perspective, it is key to understand the flip-side of the interethnic encounter when discussing policies of integration and segregation. The reason is that the higher levels of integration often imply that one is at the same time surrounded less by ethnically similar others.

What Is Ethnicity?

One final relevant distinction is the specific focus on *ethnic* groups, not just any social group. In this dissertation, I understand ethnic groups as social groups in which membership is based on attributes (believed to be) related to descent (e.g., Chandra, 2006). Descent is broadly understood, and descent-based attributes include a person’s name, her country or region of origin, skin tone, language, hair color etc. Importantly, I do not view ethnicity as having an innate or inherent essence; a biological and essentialist perspective typically held in earlier studies on race and ethnicity. Indeed, there is little evidence that it is genetically meaningful to divide the world into “races” or “ethnic” groups. On the contrary, studies show that the genetic variation is much larger within than across human populations (e.g., Rosenberg et al., 2002; Yudell et al., 2016). Further, the genetic clustering that exists does not fall into

discrete categories but is continuous and shaped over historically long time (e.g., Tishkoff & Kidd, 2004).

This fact does not imply that social categorizations along lines of descent are never psychologically real. Humans may have an evolutionarily acquired tendency to divide the world into “us” and “them” (Greene, 2014; Olsson et al., 2005; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001), and though the question of who constitutes “them” is historically contingent (e.g., Kurzban et al., 2001), certain descent-based social categories remain salient in contemporary societies. Nor does this imply that differences across socially constructed descent-based categories do not exist. Discrimination based on ethnic or racial cues, for example, is real (e.g., Pager & Shepherd, 2008; Quillian et al., 2017). Hence, even though certain ethnic characteristics, such as country or region of origin, are not genetically real, such demarcations can appear psychologically meaningful in distinguishing a constructed “us” from a constructed “them”.

Specifically, in papers A and B, I use names and immigrant status as ethnic attributes of hypothetical persons, and in papers A, C, and D, I rely on the ethnic background of students in the classroom or school cohort (see more in section 3.3). That is, in this dissertation, I focus specifically on descent-based categories grounded in region or country of origin as well as broader distinctions between the ethnic majority and non-native/non-Western minorities. Though it makes little sense in genetic terms to cluster people with a non-Western background, for example, such broader ethnic categories may not only constitute an ethnic “them” that stands in opposition to a native “us” from the perspective of the majority ingroup; it may be meaningful for defining minority citizens’ identities as well. Such a broader, common ingroup identity could come about if ethnic minorities share the same experiences and feel a significant sense of similarity simply by being an ethnic minority, even if they do not share the same history, language, or country of origin (on the common ingroup identity model, see e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). For example, it is common in public discourse on policies and events related to immigration to divide immigrants into few groups or lump them all together in one. Non-Western ethnic minorities in particular are more likely to face criticism in European public debates and to be politicized as a coherent group (Mouritsen et al., 2019). If societal devaluation is the perceived message of such public discourse, non-Western minorities could feel a shared fate and identify with each other (see more in chapter 3).

2.2. The Role of Interethnic Contact: Four Claims

Having laid the conceptual groundwork, I now present the four theoretical claims of the dissertation. As will be clear, I do not imply that mundane interethnic contact necessarily operates beyond the general mechanisms specified in contact theory. Indeed, in several cases, I build on the classic arguments and try to apply these in the study of a more generalizable and less selective type of contact while focusing on outcomes less studied in the contact theoretical framework. Specifically, claims one and two focus on the role of mundane interethnic contact – and information plausibly acquired from such contact – for prosocial attitudes. By prosocial attitudes, I mean attitudes related to benefiting other people such as “helping, sharing, donating, cooperating, and volunteering” (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986: 710). I focus specifically on prosocial attitudes directed towards ethnic ingroup and ethnic outgroup members. With these two claims, the main aim is to improve our understanding of the psychological mechanisms in mundane interethnic contact and ethnic bias, and to scrutinize the dominant finding in the literature that ethnic diversity and prosocial attitudes are necessarily incompatible.

Claims three and four make predictions about the effect of mundane interethnic contact, as well as its logic opposite – *intraethnic* contact – on two far less studied phenomena in the framework of the interethnic encounter: well-being and naturalization. The main aim here is to delve into less charted territory and investigate the extent to which interethnic contact affects outcomes that are less directly related to intergroup attitudes and behavior. Since each claim is unfolded in depth in each of the four papers, I will focus on sketching the crux of the arguments in this summary and discuss them in the broader framework of the dissertation.

One final meta-point is in place. In this summary, I use the concept of “contact” as the overarching framework to connect the four theoretical claims. In the different papers, however, I rely on slightly different concepts that more specifically relate to the contextual ethnic composition of interest. In paper A, I use the concept of “ethnic diversity” to target the literature on diversity and solidarity. In paper C, we use the concept of “ethnic similarity”, and in paper D, I talk about “ethnic enclaves”, which is the terminology used in the field of naturalization and immigrant integration. Despite these seemingly different concepts, the underlying nature of the interethnic encounter is the same across all three papers: they capture everyday interactions within and across ethnic groups. Choosing slightly different concepts in each of the papers, thus, mainly serves as a communicative strategy to tap more directly into the relevant literatures.

Claims #1 and #2: Interethnic Contact Shapes Prosocial Attitudes

Broadly speaking, the first two claims I make is that interethnic contact can play a positive role in promoting prosocial attitudes by providing counter-stereotypical information. These claims are at odds with most prior studies. Indeed, the interethnic encounter in the shape of interethnic exposure is often found to impede prosocial behavior and attitudes. Studies show that ethnic and racial outgroup members are often perceived to be less deserving of help and support than ethnic ingroup members (e.g., Gilens, 1999; Harell et al., 2016; van Oorschot, 2008) and that ethnic diversity impedes solidarity (e.g., Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Dahlberg et al., 2012; Luttmer, 2001; Schmidt-Catran & Spies, 2016). Likewise, studies show that ethnic diversity challenges cooperation and the production of public goods (e.g., Alesina et al., 1999; Baldwin & Huber, 2010; Banerjee et al., 2005; Miguel & Gugerty, 2005) and that the lack of cross-group cooperation is driven by differences in ethnicity (e.g., Habyarimana et al., 2009; see also Balliet et al., 2014; Enos & Gidron, 2018; Fershtman & Gneezy, 2001; Romano et al., 2017; Romano et al., 2021). This points to the progressive's dilemma, namely an inherent conflict for progressive citizens who both favor immigration or diversity, on one hand, and support prosocial policies on the other. This suggests that ethnic diversity in itself poses a challenge for prosocial attitudes and behavior (e.g., Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Putnam, 2007).

Yet, it need not be ethnic diversity per se that challenges prosocial attitudes. One implication of the above discussion is that situations that promote interethnic *contact*, rather than mere exposure, potentially reduce group-based biases and therefore lead to higher, not lower, prosocial attitudes. Hence, the first claim I make is that, from the perspective of the ethnic majority, interethnic contact can promote rather than impede intergroup solidarity (cf. paper A). More specifically, the claim is that interethnic contact reduces the importance of outgroup cues for solidarity by altering ethnic categorization and challenging deservingness stereotypes, and that this ultimately reduces the solidarity gap between “us” and “them”. I define “solidarity” as an agent’s willingness, as well as the behavioural manifestations of such willingness, to support or contribute to benefiting another person or group within the same imagined community as the agent.

Contrary to interethnic exposure, interethnic interactions may reduce the saliency of and division between “us” and “them”. One of the classic ideas in contact theory is that contact increases information and knowledge about outgroup members, thereby reducing prejudice (Allport, 1954; Dovidio et al., 2003 ; Pettigrew, 1998). Acquiring more knowledge can discredit empirically

false, negative stereotypes and make “them” appear more similar to “us”. According to the decategorization model, for example, contact can decrease the saliency of group identities because people acquire new information about members of other groups in the contact situation. Such information individuates outgroup members so that they are seen more as individuals rather than members of a specific ethnic group. Another route through which contact can alter social categorization is recategorization (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2010; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Rather than perceiving different people as belonging to different ethnic groups, interethnic contact may foster a broader and more inclusive “we” in which former ethnic outgroup members are included. In this case, the general distinction between “us” and “them” loses its psychological significance, and ingroup benefits will extend to former outgroup members. Further, such contact is likely to reduce negative stereotypes about outgroup members that are prevalent in cases of intergroup exposure. That is, interactions with “them” alter the importance of ethnicity and correct outgroup stereotypes such as “outgroup laziness”, which, ultimately, renders outgroup cues less relevant as deservingness heuristics. This is the crux of the first claim: that interethnic contact can reduce the importance of ethnic cues in deservingness decisions thus reducing the solidarity gap between “us” and “them”.

From a broader perspective, my second claim is an extension of the first: Stereotype-reducing information about outgroup members can reduce the relative importance of ethnic cues for prosocial attitudes. Stated differently, ethnic cues may be most relevant in situations where such information about “them” is absent. In these cases, it may be rational, albeit potentially incorrect, to rely on ethnic cues and broader generalizations at the group level. Reversely, when groups interact, more knowledge becomes available which may reduce the importance of ethnic cues.

Specifically, in the second claim, I argue that ethnic bias in expected cooperation is explained by a series of social factors that are often perceived to correlate with ethnic group membership (cf. paper B). I define “cooperation” as a personally costly act that improves (or is expected to improve) the joint benefits of the collective to which the agent belongs, and “expected cooperation” as the expectation that others will cooperate. To provide some context for this claim, a core reason that cooperation and public goods provision can be challenging in ethnically heterogeneous societies is that members of different ethnic groups expect each other to defect, that is, refrain from reciprocating cooperative acts (Habyarimana et al., 2007, 2009). In other words, ethnic groups select different cooperative strategies depending on whom they are supposed to cooperate with. Ethnic ingroup members are expected to cooper-

ate, which makes it rational to cooperate with ingroup members. Ethnic outgroup members, on the other hand, are expected to defect, which makes it rational to avoid the cooperating enterprise with outgroup members to minimize the risk that one will bear the burden in producing a collective good. This not only demonstrates the vital importance of expectations in cooperation (Axelrod & Hamilton, 1981; Fischbacher et al., 2001; Herrmann & Thöni, 2009; Thöni & Volk, 2018); strategy selection based on expectations to outgroup members creates a self-fulfilling prophecy that can drive down cooperation in multiethnic settings.

Yet, this does not explain *why* ethnic outgroup members are expected to cooperate less than ethnic ingroup members. One plausible explanation is that people expect outgroup members to defect more than ingroup members primarily when they have no or little alternative information available. In these cases, people can rely on stereotypes at the group level to infer the likelihood that an outgroup member will cooperate. In line with models of statistical discrimination (Phelps, 1972; Arrow 1972; see also e.g., Guryan & Charles, 2013; Quillian & Midtbøen, 2021), ethnic cues may thus serve as placeholders of information that would be relevant to determine the likelihood that an outgroup member will cooperate or defect. Hence, ethnic bias in expected cooperation could be explained by a series of social factors often perceived to correlate with ethnic group membership. In paper B, I suggest that three social factors may explain why the ethnic majority expects less cooperation from outgroup members: socio-economic status, cultural values, and civic behavior. The overall argument is the following: a) When information is sparse, ethnic cues are important, and outgroup members are thus expected to cooperate less than ethnic ingroup members; b) each of the three social factors in themselves have a causal effect on the expectation that an individual will cooperate; and c) once one or more of these factors are available and no longer correlate with ethnic group membership, ethnic bias in expected cooperation will be reduced.

For the purpose of this summary, I will refrain from describing each argument in detail (see instead paper B). What is important from the broader point of the dissertation, however, is that such stereotype-reducing information may be acquired via interethnic contact. To be clear, in isolation, this second claim neither theorizes about nor measures the effects of mundane interethnic contact. Rather, the broader assumption underlying the second claim is that contact increases information and knowledge about “them”. This idea was key in the classic version of contact theory (Allport, 1954) and is fairly agreed upon today, though the magnitude of such cognitive versus more affective mechanisms may vary (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Hence, when members of different ethnic groups interact in the everyday setting, particularly if these interac-

tions are repeated, they typically learn more about one another. More specifically, I assume that contact occurring under favorable conditions is more likely to provide stereotype-reducing than stereotype-increasing information (see section 3.2 for a further discussion). Though such interactions need not provide stereotype-reducing information, the general finding in the contact literature seems to suggest that contact typically reduces rather than increases prejudice. Hence, the argument that the correlates of ethnic group membership explain ethnic bias in expected cooperation should be seen as a way to move closer towards understanding how information, plausibly acquired via mundane interethnic contact, can shape prosocial attitudes.

Taken together, the two claims suggest that interethnic contact plays a positive role for prosocial attitudes that are often argued to deteriorate in face of increasing ethnic diversity. It does so by reducing the importance of ethnic categories and challenge negative stereotypes.

Claims #3 and #4: Contact Shapes Well-Being and Naturalization

The third and fourth claim I make is that interethnic, and intraethnic, contact shapes well-being and naturalization. Specifically, the third claim is that interethnic contact reduces well-being. Or stated differently, that *intraethnic* contact – that is, ethnic similarity – improves well-being (cf. paper C). I understand well-being as more than the mere absence of mental illness (Jahoda 1958; Ryff, 1989b; Ryff & Singer, 1996). In a broad sense, it refers to “optimal psychological functioning and experience” (Ryan & Deci, 2001: 142) and thus captures both a sense of feeling good and being able to function effectively (Huppert & So, 2013). Two dominant approaches to well-being exist: *subjective* well-being, with philosophical roots in hedonism and a focus on (domain) satisfaction and positive/negative emotions (Diener, 1984; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Kahneman & Deaton, 2010); *psychological* well-being, with philosophical roots in eudaimonia³ and a focus on six components, one being positive relations (Ryff, 1989a, 1989b, 2014). Despite a “clash of paradigms” (Ryan & Deci, 2001: 146), a more recent trend suggests that both perspectives capture important aspects of human well-being (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2008; Su et al., 2014; Huppert et al., 2009). I rely on a broader concept of well-being.

As we argue in paper C, the main claim is that ethnic similarity in the local setting fosters well-being for both the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority

³ In general, this position entails living in accordance with one’s “true self” – one’s *daimon* – which means that one strives towards and has the things in life that are worth having (Waterman, 1993; Telfer 1980); not because they bring joy but because they offer meaning to one’s life.

by improving a positive self-concept and reducing exposure to prejudice. Hence, intraethnic contact works in two ways: by increasing factors that are conducive to well-being and by reducing factors that are detrimental to well-being. In terms of the former, we specifically argue that ethnic similarity others helps to fulfill a need for recognition and a positive self-concept (e.g., Honneth, 2012). Similar others may to a larger extent share a person's norms, cultural practices, interests, and world views. Interacting with similar others, thus, affirms that one is valuable. Further, such social affirmation may operate at the group level as well. A positive self-concept depends on the extent to which the group one feels a psychological connection to is positively distinct from other groups (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Interacting with ethnically similar peers increases the likelihood of obtaining such positive distinctiveness and, through that, a more positive self-concept.

Intraethnic contact may also work by protecting against or even reduce exposure to prejudice. Ethnic similarity – or consonance, as Rosenberg (1979) puts it – can work as a shield against outgroup prejudice but may also reduce prejudice held by the outgroup in accordance with contact theory. The following simplistic and stylized example explains why. Imagine two equally sized ethnic groups in a social space: group A and group B. If the relative size of group A increases such that members of group A have more contact with more ethnically similar peers, this logically implies that the relatively fewer members of group B have more contact with members of group A (e.g., Blau, 1977). If such interactions occur under favorable conditions, the classic version of contact theory predicts that prejudice held by members of group B against members of group A will diminish. Stated differently, as intraethnic contact increases for members of group A, these members face not only relatively fewer but also less prejudiced outgroup members. Since experiencing racism and prejudice tends to impede well-being (e.g., Priest et al., 2013), reducing the potential for such experiences is another route via which similarity may improve well-being. This indicates that intraethnic contact may be important for well-being, not in spite of but partly *because* of the positive effects expected by contact theory. Hence, this third claim does not compete with the first and second claim. Rather than being mutually exclusive, the claims can be simultaneously true.

My fourth and final claim is that ethnic contact can affect immigrants' likelihood of acquiring citizenship (cf. paper D). Given the short format of paper D and that this claim is theoretically more ambiguous than the claims presented above, I will provide a bit more theoretical grounding for the specific arguments here. Specifically, I propose three ways in which ethnic contact can affect naturalization. First, from a contact theoretical perspective, it is plausible that contact with the ethnic majority has a positive effect on citizenship

acquisition. The key reason is that interactions with the ethnic majority, and mainstream society more generally, can increase belonging in society and the feeling that one is a part of the collective “we”. Stated in reverse, the ethnic enclosure hypothesis proposes that immigrant segregation increases within-group interactions at the cost of social contact with the native population, thus heightening, rather than reducing, the importance of ethnic identities (Portes, 1984). As Liang writes in the American context, “[t]he more within-group interactions immigrants have, the more likely their ethnic identity will be reinforced and the less likely they will be to become U.S. citizens” (Liang, 1994: 410). In essence, a higher level of national identity is likely to increase the inclination to formalize this “we” via naturalization, and such national identity is more likely to be fostered by interacting with the ethnic majority and mainstream society. Indeed, in a recent survey conducted in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden among young adults of immigrant or descendant background, the most important reason for applying for citizenship across all three countries was that respondents “felt they belonged” (Erdal et al., 2019: section 4.3).

The opposite perspective, however, is also plausible. According to theories of intergroup conflict and competition, the boundaries between “us” and “them” mainly become salient in cases of integration rather than segregation; that is, when different groups meet (e.g., Blumer, 1958; Olzak, 1983; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Hence, in cases of segregation where one is to a larger extent surrounded by likeminded peers, the importance of ethnicity is less pronounced. It is only in the interaction with “them” that ethnic identities become important. In other words, “[i]t is only when minorities start to abandon their internal colonies, neighborhoods, and enclaves and compete directly with other groups that awareness of racial and cultural differences will be heightened ...” (Portes, 1984: 385).

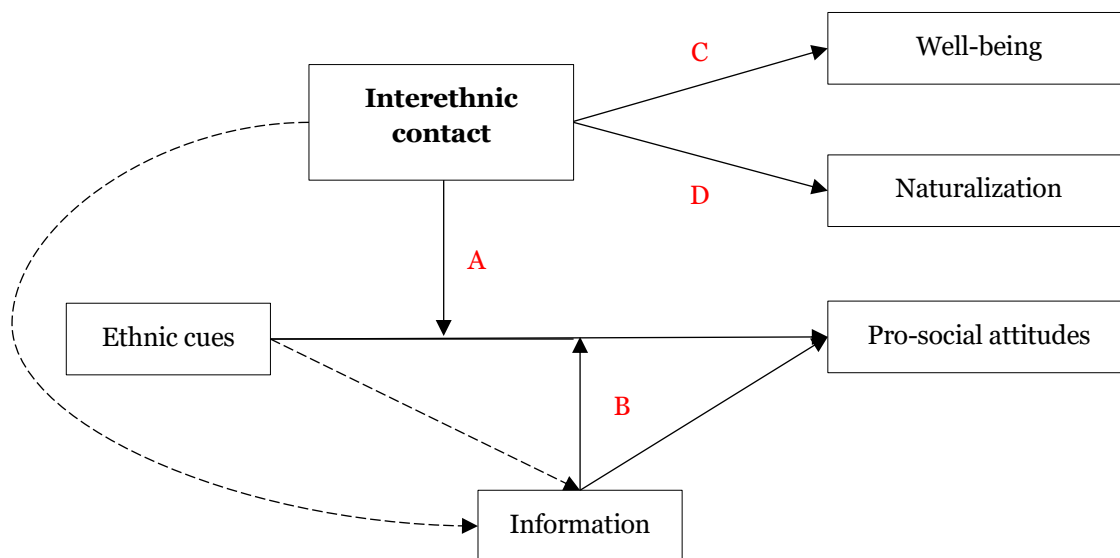
Finally, a third argument is that citizenship acquisition is to a lesser extent a product of contact with the ethnic majority per se but more product of contact with same-ethnic peers, that is, members of the same ethnic enclave. One explanation is that immigrants and descendants in ethnic enclaves can rely on similar others for support and to disseminate information (e.g., Abascal, 2015). From a broader perspective, support and cooperation tends to travel more easily within than across ethnic groups (e.g., Romano et al., 2021). From a more practical perspective, same-ethnic peers may share information about opportunities in society. For example, ethnic enclaves have been found to increase immigrant and minority earnings partly because ethnic networks help disseminate job information (e.g., Damm, 2009; Sanders & Nee, 1987). In terms of citizenship, ethnic enclaves may improve information about the benefits of citizenship and the process to acquire it (e.g., Bloemraad, 2006). A

second explanation with focus on identification reverses the competition perspective and holds that ethnic awareness is less pronounced in settings of segregation. If national identification is higher, not lower, in cases of segregation, the inclination to naturalize should increase (e.g., Abascal, 2015).

2.3. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the theoretical framework of the dissertation. I have defined mundane interethnic contact as everyday interactions between members of different ethnic groups and presented four claims about the role of interethnic, as well as intraethnic, contact. In claims one and two, I have argued that interethnic contact, and information plausibly acquired through such contact, improves rather than impedes prosocial attitudes towards out-group members by reducing the importance of ethnic categories and counter-ing negative stereotypes. In claim three, I suggested that intraethnic contact likely improves well-being. Or stated in reverse, that interethnic contact decreases well-being. Finally, in claim four, I proposed three competing ways in which interethnic, as well as intraethnic, contact can affect the likelihood that immigrants and descendants naturalize. Figure 2.2 summarizes the theoretical model of the dissertation and places each of the four papers within it.

Figure 2.2. The Theoretical Model of the Dissertation



Note: Red letters place the specific papers in the model. Dashed lines indicate assumed causal relationships.

Chapter 3

Methodological Approach

In this chapter, I discuss the broader methodological approach to investigating the four theoretical claims. I start by discussing the dominant approach to the study of contact before arguing for the importance of focusing on (objective) contact in the everyday setting – particularly the school setting. Next, I present, compare, and discuss the different research designs with a focus on the strategies used to identify the causal effect of interethnic contact and ethnic cues. Finally, I describe the operationalization of the key concepts in this dissertation focusing on the measurement of mundane interethnic contact and the four primary outcomes.

3.1. Studying Interethnic Contact in the Everyday Setting

In social psychology, the dominant strategy for studying contact is based on subjective self-reported frequency and quality of interactions with outgroup members. Studies employing this strategy often, though not exclusively, focus on more intimate contact. Friendship formation in particular has been proposed as essential for prejudice reduction given its intimate character and has for this reason received much attention (e.g., Pettigrew, 1997; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). As Pettigrew (1997: 173) argues: “Friendship across group lines has special importance. It involves long-term contact rather than brief first encounters. It is likely to meet all the key conditions of the contact hypothesis. And it occasions affective as well as cognitive processes”. The importance of interethnic friendship was echoed in a recent review: “Overall, the evidence has been supportive [of the contact hypothesis], but researchers identified additional prerequisite features for successful contact. Particularly important are the opportunity for personal acquaintance between the members ... and the development of intergroup friendships” (Dovidio et al., 2017: 607-608). Studying more intimate contact is important because it provides a most-likely case to find support for the arguments in contact theory given the intensity and depth of the interactions. Stated differently, if more intimate contact did not improve intergroup relations, it would be unlikely that any form of contact should. Further, in terms of measurement validity, using self-reported measures to capture contact appears to be a valid strategy. It explicitly and directly asks respondents to indicate the extent to which they interact with

outgroup members. There is thus a high resemblance between the concept and the measurement of contact as I have defined it.

Yet, this strategy also faces challenges. The first challenge is that studies of self-reported intimate contact may capture a less representative form of contact (e.g., Dixon et al., 2005). For example, the seventh round of the European Social Survey from 2014 contained a question on whether respondents were close friends with people from a different race or ethnic group. Across the 21 countries sampled, only 13.76% stated that they had several close outgroup friends, with Sweden at the top end of the distribution (26.30%), Denmark around the cross-country average (10.16%), and Hungary at the lowest end of the distribution (3.17%)⁴. Further, self-reported interethnic friendship tends to be inflated (e.g., Jackman & Crane, 1986) which implies that the reported distribution of interethnic friendship is likely biased. Hence, interethnic friendship is not very common in general and is less common than within-group friendship (see for example Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011: chapter 8 for a discussion). In contrast to the prevailing strategy, Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux (2005) instead argued for the importance of studying contact in the everyday setting to avoid focusing on contact under “utopian” and less generalizable conditions. As they claim:

[T]here is a gulf between the idealized forms of contact studied by social psychologists and the mundane interactions that characterize most ordinary encounters between groups. When it is conjured into existence, “optimal contact” usually takes the form of short-lived laboratory analogues or highly localized interventions in the field. These interventions may be successful in creating small islands of integration in a sea of intolerance, but they are unrepresentative of wider processes of contact and desegregation ... In focusing on rarefied forms of interaction, social psychologists have inadvertently widened the gap between theory and practice in contact research (Dixon et al., 2005: 700).

Though I do not view outgroup friendship as “utopian”, the general idea of studying interethnic encounters in the everyday setting is essential. Not only because contact in the everyday setting occurs among the broader population

⁴ The item (“dfegcf”) contains three categories on the number of outgroup friends: “Yes, several”, “Yes, a few”, and “No, none at all”. The cross-country distribution on this measure is as follows: 13.76%, 34.60%, and 51.64%. That is, more than half of the populations on average report not having any outgroup friends at all, and the next 30% report only having few outgroup friends. The Swedish population has the lowest level of people saying they do not have any cross-group friendship (31.17%), Denmark is again around the cross-country average (43.98%), and Poland at the top end of the distribution (79.68%).

under non-idealized circumstances, but because the formation of self-reported, intimate contact is a quite selective process. This is the second challenge: In most observational studies – which dominate the field (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) – self-reported contact is not randomly assigned. Given that people are more inclined to seek out those who resemble themselves (McPherson et al., 2001), those who report having interethnic contact are likely systematically different from those who do not report having such contact. Though studies have used less intimate and more general measures of contact, these measures are often based on subjective, self-reported contact as well (see e.g., the measure by Islam & Hewstone, 1993; see also Lolliot et al., 2015 for an overview of different contact measures). Studying self-reported contact is highly important and provides nuances and insights that more objective measures are not able to do. Still, in so far as those who report having and not having contact are systematically different, it requires strong empirical designs to isolate the *causal* effect of contact. Hence, focusing on intimate and self-reported contact may both face challenges in regard to representativity and ecological validity as well as to selection.

In contrast to this dominant approach, I focus on interethnic contact occurring in the everyday setting by studying the objective ethnic composition in a confined social space. Whereas using more objective measures of the ethnic composition is dominant in studies on interethnic exposure,⁵ it is less common in the study of contact⁶. Studying contact in the everyday setting is important because such interactions are more common among the broader population and, thus, have greater implications than more rare types of contact. This approach safeguards against studying only those who choose to engage in (long-term) interethnic friendship as well as studying contact occurring under more unrealistic conditions. Instead, it focuses on contact occurring in ecologically valid situations. Studying contact in the everyday setting is also important because it may ease some of the challenges to self-reported contact.

⁵ These studies typically measure the ethnic composition using administrative or geocoded data at rather aggregate levels, such as the country, regional, state, municipal, or census tract level (in the study of diversity and solidarity, for example, see Brady & Finnigan, 2014; Dahlberg et al., 2012; Eger, 2010; Eger & Breznau, 2017; Fox, 2004; Schmidt-Catran & Spies, 2016). Note that other studies have moved to a less aggregated setting that more directly measures direct interethnic exposure (e.g., Condra & Linardi, 2019; Dinesen & Sønderskov, 2015; Enos, 2014). For a recent review, see also Nathan and Sands (2023).

⁶ Recent examples using the ethnic composition to study contact has focused on the composition of college roommates (e.g., Laar et al., 2005), in the work place (e.g., Andersson & Dehdari, 2021), in the army (e.g., Finseraas & Kotsadam, 2017; Samii, 2013), and in the classroom (e.g., Elwert et al., 2020; Scacco & Warren, 2018).

Specifically, using objective measures erases bias by individual preferences to consciously or unconsciously overreport such contact. Further, focusing on the objective ethnic composition in certain social settings may be less distorted by selection thus providing more credible causal estimates of contact (see section 3.2). The flipside to these strengths, however, is that the mere presence of outgroup members does not necessarily entail more interactions. Indeed, different ethnic groups may be proximate yet segregated (e.g., Enos, 2017). The remedy to this specific challenge is to carefully select an everyday setting in which interactions are inevitable. As I argue in the next paragraphs, this is one of the key reasons for focusing specifically on the (Danish) school setting in papers A, C, and D.

The School Setting

There are five reasons why I predominantly focus on the school setting in this dissertation⁷. The first reason is that students in the same classroom and the same cohort are not merely exposed to one another but interact with each other repeatedly on a daily basis in an everyday setting. Recall that I do not assume any specific type or valence of these interactions, but simply imply that people communicate with or react to each other in some way or the other. In contrast to the municipality or the state level where a higher concentration of outgroup members need not translate into actual cross-group interactions, students in schools engage in mandatory activities such as group work, ple-

⁷ I am by no means the first to study the ethnic composition in the school setting which has priorly been studied in the fields of sociology (e.g., Agirdag et al., 2010; Janmaat, 2014; Sigelman et al., 1996; Smith et al., 2016), economy (e.g., Hoxby, 2000; Sacerdote, 2014), and (social) psychology (e.g., Horowitz, 1936; Juvonen et al., 2006; McGlothlin & Killen, 2010). Yet, the approach I take is not common and holds a series of advantages. I focus specifically on the framework of contact and measure the ethnic composition at highly disaggregate levels (the classroom or cohort level) which is essential to capture actual interactions. Further, I use objective and precise measures of the ethnic composition and rely on a series of different designs to isolate the *causal* effect of such contact. This combined approach stands in contrast to most other school studies. Some of these studies do not focus on the framework of contact; others tend to use self-reported measures of the ethnic composition; several studies measure the ethnic composition at the school level rather than at a within-school level; and only few studies use designs that may credibly identify the *effect* of interethnic contact (see e.g., Elwert et al., 2020; Hoxby, 2000). Prior school studies are highly important, and this dissertation seeks to contribute to the contact side of this debate by adding a strong focus on (level of) measurement and causal identification.

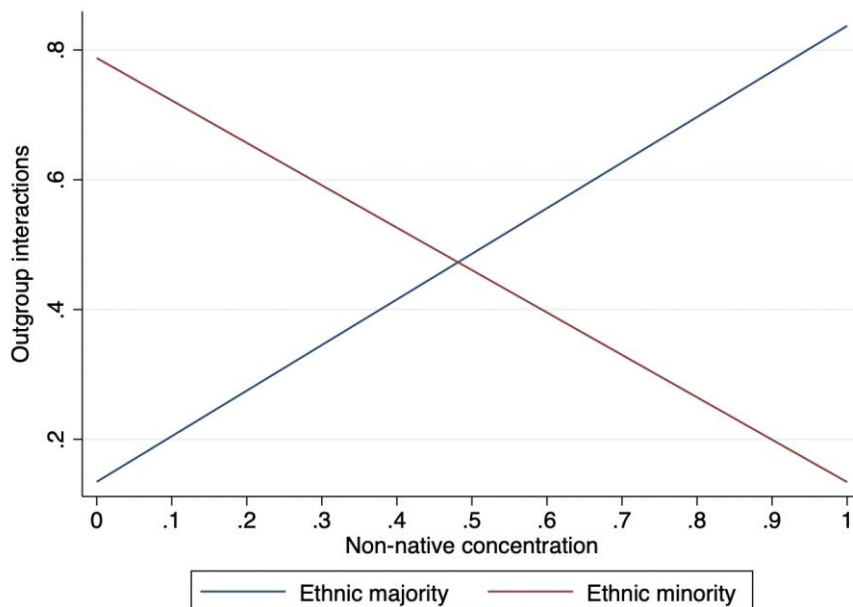
num discussions, group presentations, and sports activities. This is particularly the case in the Danish school system. There are around 21 students, on average, in Danish classrooms, who, by default, spend five to seven hours with each other every day for ten years. Hence, if students with different ethnic backgrounds are present in the same classroom, interethnic interactions in some forms are unavoidable (see e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006: 755)⁸. Though interactions at the cohort level may be slightly more avoidable compared to interactions in the classroom (see more in this chapter and paper D), it seems unlikely that no interaction occur among students in different classrooms in the same school cohort. Further, scholars have used low-aggregate social units such as the workplace (e.g., Andersson & Dehdari, 2021) or the classroom setting (e.g., Elwert et al., 2020; Scacco & Warren, 2018) to assess the role of interethnic contact.

The argument that cross-group interactions take place in the Danish school setting has empirical backing. For example, in a survey that I conducted among Danish high school students – a school setting in which students stay in the same classroom with the same peers as well – the classroom ethnic composition was strongly correlated with school-related outgroup interactions such as talking to each other, eating lunch together, and doing group work together. As figure 3.1 shows, the higher the concentration of non-native students in the classroom, the more outgroup interactions from the perspective of the ethnic majority, and vice-versa for the ethnic minority. The fact that the correlations are not perfect may suggest that cross-group interactions likely occur across classrooms as well. That is, even if there are fewer outgroup members in the specific classroom, there may be outgroup members in the broader cohort with whom one can interact as well. Further, mundane contact also seems to be related to more intimate contact in the school setting. As I show in the end of paper A, more ethnic outgroup members in the elementary school classroom also increases the degree to which members of the ethnic majority have friends from the ethnic outgroup. This finding is generally aligned with prior studies on school ethnic composition and cross-race friendship development (e.g., Sigelman et al., 1996; Joyner & Kao, 2000; Quillian & Campbell, 2003; Smith et al., 2016). Taken together, these observations provide empirical reassurance that different forms of cross-group interactions do in fact occur in the Danish school setting. As discussed above, however, using

⁸ One of the criteria for including studies in Pettigrew and Tropp’s famous meta-review on intergroup contact was that “the intergroup interaction must be observed directly, reported by participants, *or occur in focused, long-term situations where direct contact is unavoidable (e.g., small classrooms)*” (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006: 755, italics mine).

objective measures of the ethnic composition in the classroom and cohort to capture mundane contact avoids the common pitfalls of self-reported measures of (intimate) contact.

Figure 3.1. Correlation between Non-Native Concentration and Outgroup Interactions



Note: The figure is based on the bivariate association between the share of non-native students in the high school classroom and an index of different types of outgroup interactions in school (scaled 0-1). The sampled students were in their third and final year in high school. N = 667.

The second reason for focusing on the school setting is that this setting comes a long way in complying with Allport's facilitating conditions for contact to have *positive* effects. Students in school have equal status, at least formally. Though status differences may occur as a product of socially constructed hierarchies within the student body, both majority and minority students *de jure* have the same status in the (Danish) school setting. Students also cooperate towards common goals, such as doing group work, conducting presentations, and graduating. Finally, different authorities in the school setting, i.e., teachers, principals, and, in Denmark, a ministry, structure and surveil the school day. In paper A, I discuss how the school setting complies with Allport's conditions in more depth.

Third, and importantly, the school setting complies fairly well with these conditions without being an unrealistic or utopian setting. On the contrary, the school setting constitutes a universal, everyday setting for real-world contact to unfold. In most countries, school is mandatory, and practically all citizens will be shaped by the institution and their peers. This not only makes school an interesting side for more mundane contact within and across ethnic groups to unfold; it investigates contact in a setting that is more generalizable

and where potential interventions are politically scalable (see e.g., Elwert et al., 2020).

The fourth reason is that the particular focus on the interethnic encounter in the formative years is crucial. Recent studies show that the ethnic composition experienced during childhood and adolescence has long-lasting effects into adulthood (Billings et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2021; Eger et al., 2021; Gamoran et al., 2016; Goldman & Hopkins, 2020) and appears more important than the ethnic composition experienced in adulthood (Goldman & Hopkins, 2020). This is in line with the more general literature on political socialization, which argues that political attitudes and values are shaped and crystalize in these “impressionable years” (e.g., Alwin & Krosnick, 1991; Jennings & Markus, 1984). Though focusing on children and adolescents is relevant in itself, these perspectives suggest that it is also important to study childhood ethnic compositions in order to understand attitudes and behavior in adulthood.

The fifth reason is that the school setting offers sound opportunities for making better *causal* claims of the effects of interethnic contact. In the next section, I discuss this point in depth by describing and comparing the different designs and identification strategies in each of the four papers.

3.2. Design and Identification

Investigating the causal role of contact is no easy task. People tend to select whom to interact with, and the implication is that those who have higher levels of interethnic contact differ in systematic ways from those who have lower levels of interethnic contact. It is therefore challenging to conclude that differences in outcomes for those with high and low contact are caused by the level of contact and not by alternative factors.

In formal terms, the causal effect can be defined as the difference in potential outcomes for unit i , that is, the difference between the outcome of unit i in case of treatment (Y_{1i}) and the outcome of unit i in case of no treatment (Y_{0i}). Given that only one of these outcomes materializes under the laws of physics, we *infer* causal effects by comparing the outcome of one entity who experiences a “treatment” with the outcome of another entity who does not experience that “treatment” or experiences it to a lesser extent. Thus defined, differences in outcomes between a treatment and a control group are products of two factors: a) differences across the two groups in the explanatory parameter of interest (i.e., their “treatment status”) and b) selection bias. Selection bias is caused by differences in pre-treatment factors between the two groups that correlate with the explanatory parameter of interest and are related to the

outcome. In the study of interethnic contact, selection could occur if (the parents of) those with higher levels of contact also tend to have higher levels of education, tend to be politically more left-leaning, and are younger than those who have lower levels of contact. The general challenge of selection is that we do not have comparable entities. When multiple parameters vary between two groups, it is impossible to detect which parameter is driving the potential differences in outcomes. Hence, to properly identify the effect of interethnic contact, one has to minimize, and in the best case erase, bias caused by such selection.

Reducing Selection Bias in the Study of Interethnic Contact

In the study of interethnic contact – in which the golden standard, random assignment, can be ethically challenging and practically impossible – one solution to the selection problem is to take advantage of settings where contact occurs quasi randomly. That is, to use cases where people have less, and ideally no, discretion in choosing with whom they interact. I focus on the Danish school setting in three of the papers in this dissertation and rely on different sources of variation in the ethnic composition that is much less sensitive to selective patterns by students and parents. In the following, I present and compare the main identification strategies in these papers.

In paper A, I combine a survey experiment conducted among Danish 9th-grade students (see more below) with observational data on the ethnic composition in their classrooms. Specifically, I rely on variation in the ethnic composition arising across 9th-grade classrooms within the same school in 2019 to investigate whether ethnic diversity moderates the way people use ethnic cues in making solidary judgements. That is, ethnic cues are the main independent variable, and classroom ethnic diversity is the moderator in paper A. Whereas parents have significant discretion in choosing the specific school they send their children to, discretion is much smaller when it comes to the composition of a specific classroom in a specific school. In Denmark, classes are composed in a process of random factors and active balancing in which school leaders and teachers try to avoid a disproportionate number of, say, girls or boys in a classroom. The implication is that the variation between classrooms in the same cohort within the same school is more a product of idiosyncratic differences and, thus, offers a sense of quasi-random variation less tainted by selection (see also Junge, 2021). One might fear that by 9th grade, the ethnic composition has had nine years to diverge systematically across classrooms. However, according to appendix S11 in paper A, there is little evidence of systematic classroom trajectories over time. Formally, relying on within-school-across-classroom variation holds constant all school invariant factors such as

school culture, school size, and school economy that heavily reduce selection bias.

In paper C, in which two colleagues and I estimate the causal effect of the classroom ethnic composition on students' well-being between 2015 and 2017, we replicate this school fixed effects approach. Two differences between this paper and paper A are worth highlighting. First, we focus on all students from 4th to 9th grade, not only 9th-grade students. Second, this paper is based on panel data, which introduces time as a new dimension. These two features add new challenges as well as new tools to identifying the causal effect of inter-ethnic, and intraethnic, contact. The core challenge is that classroom ethnic composition and well-being may now be correlated with unobserved factors related to grade level and time. To tackle these challenges, we introduce grade and year fixed effects in the baseline model. Further, the main advantage of increasing the spatial and temporal scope is that we can use two alternative identification strategies: one that compares the classroom ethnic composition across siblings in different cohorts, and one that compares students with themselves over time. In these two additional strategies – family and student fixed effects – we isolate different types of variation in the classroom ethnic composition that are difficult for students, parents, and teachers to shape. In the family FE-model, we use variation in the classroom ethnic composition arising across non-twin siblings, thus holding constant all family-invariant factors such as family size, residential ethnic composition, parenting style, and resources at home. In the student FE-model, we use variation in the classroom ethnic composition arising within students over time, that is, we rely on smaller and incremental changes in the ethnic composition occurring over the three-year period of study in the same classroom. In this stringent model, we are able to account for family factors as well as for all student-invariant factors such as personality and genetics. Combining these three strategies – school, family, and student FE – makes it possible to estimate the causal effect of contact on well-being using different sources of quasi randomly assigned variation.

In paper D, I investigate the relationship between the cohort-level ethnic composition of immigrants and descendants during their time in school and their likelihood of acquiring citizenship between 1991 and 2018. This paper takes a slightly different approach than papers A and C. First, I argue more thoroughly for one specific identification model, namely one that compares non-twin siblings who attend different cohorts in the same school (for related approaches, see for example Hoxby, 2000 and Sacerdote, 2014). The family FE-model performs well in reducing selection bias generally. Yet, it is particularly relevant in this study because within-family factors are highly predictive of citizenship acquisition. Beyond the importance of holding constant family-

specific factors, one key reason that the school FE-model is less credible in this paper is that the study spans 28 years.⁹ The simple school FE-model allows for comparisons across cohorts in very different periods and hence does not sufficiently account for time-variant factors. Unlike the school FE-model, the estimates in the family FE-model are virtually insensitive to the inclusion or exclusion of observable covariates. This suggests that it may also be insensitive to relevant *unobservable* pre-treatment factors which would imply that selection bias is eliminated (see further discussion in paper D). Second, as stated, the ethnic composition is primarily measured at the cohort level rather than the classroom level, because it, in combination with the family FE-approach, strengthens causal identification. Which school cohort a person becomes a part of is almost entirely based on their year of birth and marginally on within-family preferences. Yet, when we compare siblings across adjacent cohorts, year of birth is exogenous to the cohort-level ethnic composition, and within-family preferences are held constant by design. Measuring the ethnic composition at the cohort level, however, may reduce measurement validity if actual interactions are slightly more avoidable at the cohort rather than classroom level. To circumvent this challenge, I replicate, and corroborate, the analyses in paper D using the classroom as level of analysis (see more in subsection 3.3 and paper D).

In sum, in papers A, C, and D, I minimize selection bias by relying on different types of within-school variation in the ethnic composition that are quite insensitive to selective preferences held by students or parents. Though it is always challenging to rule out selection bias completely in observational studies, these strategies serve as significant improvements in the study of inter-ethnic contact.

Erasing Selection Bias in the Study of Ethnic Cues

One of the aims of this dissertation is to understand the psychological mechanisms underlying the effect of interethnic contact on prosocial attitudes. To this end, I designed two survey experiments: one vignette survey experiment that is used in combination with registry data on the classroom ethnic composition (paper A) and one conjoint experiment (paper B). The key strength of the experimental approach is the random assignment of treatments. If implemented correctly, random assignment of treatment across groups ensures that the groups of comparison are the same, on average, on all pre-treatment fac-

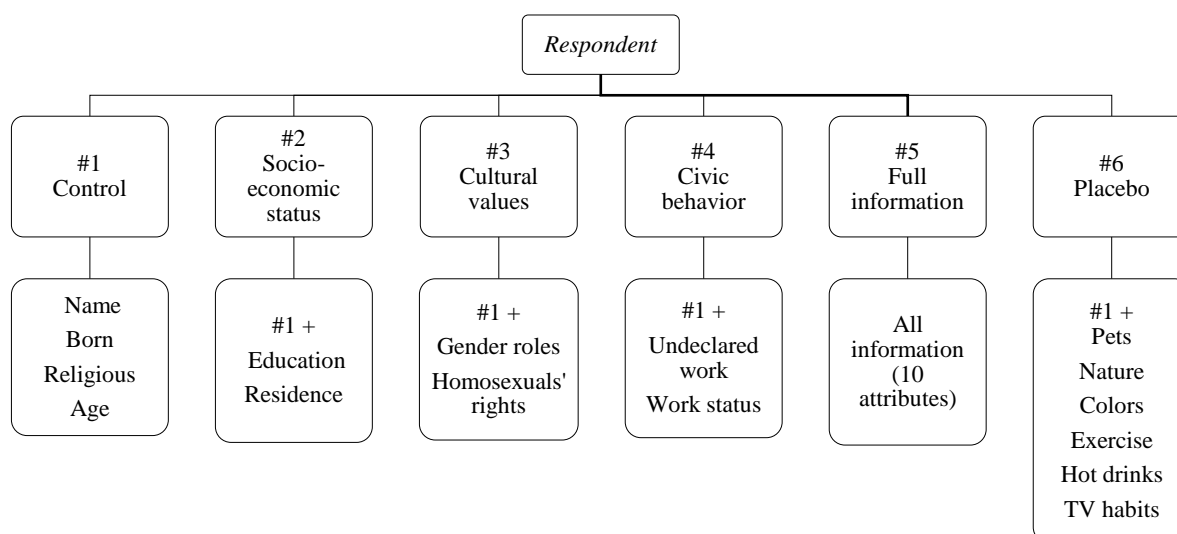
⁹ Given that citizenship acquisition on average occurs after school has ended, a student FE-approach is not suitable as the primary identification strategy.

tors. That is, selection bias is erased from the equation, and the only explanation of differences in outcomes between the comparison groups is the difference in treatment status.

In paper A, the treatment is the ethnic cues of a young boy in need. Specifically, 9th-grade students were presented with one of three different vignette stories about a recipient whose ethnic background and immigrant status were randomly assigned. One vignette told the story of a young boy with an ethnic Danish background born in Denmark; another vignette told the same story of a young boy with Middle Eastern background born in Denmark; and the final vignette told the same story of a young boy with Middle Eastern background born abroad. In accordance with a large literature on ethnic discrimination (e.g., Neumark, 2018; Pager & Shepherd, 2008; Quillian et al., 2017), I use the boy's name to signal ethnic background. The key identifying assumption in this survey experiment is that there are no average pre-treatment differences between the three groups. Given that these three vignettes are randomly assigned across students, the three treatment groups balance on a series of covariates, suggesting that there is no selection into the groups, and that the differences in solidarity can be attributed solely to the ethnic background and immigrant status of the recipient.

Paper B takes the same point of departure as paper A in disentangling the underlying dynamics of ethnic bias. This paper diverges from paper A by focusing on expectations about cooperation rather than solidarity and by focusing on the specific role that stereotype-reducing information, plausibly acquired via interethnic contact, can play in reducing ethnic bias. Specifically, I designed a novel version of the public goods game, which I incorporated in a conjoint experiment and fielded among adults in Denmark. The classic public goods game is a behavioral game in which each participant is endowed with an amount of money that they can either keep or place in a public pool. The public pool is then multiplied by a positive factor and distributed equally back to all participants. From a self-interest perspective, it is rational to keep all money for oneself and receive money from the public pool that other participants have paid for; from a collective point of view, the optimal strategy is to place all the money in the common pool thus maximizing the collective good. In this alternative version of the public goods game, I do not ask participants to play the game but to *observe* a series of hypothetical players who play the game and make decisions about which player they believe will give most to the public pool and how much they believe each player will give to the common pool. I use these as measures of *expected* cooperation (see further details in paper B).

Figure 3.2. Study Design of Paper B



I plug this game into a conjoint setup. In public goods games that study ethnic bias (e.g., Enos & Gidron, 2018), participants have some information about the other players. I replicate this approach by providing the following information to all participants: the player's ethnic background (Danish/Middle Eastern), immigrant status (born in Denmark/born abroad), religiosity (religious/not religious), and age (30-65). The exact level of these attributes is randomly assigned *within* participants, and, thus, using the tools in conjoint analyses makes it possible to estimate the average marginal component effect of each trait – with ethnic background and immigrant status as the key traits of interest. Further, I build into this setup a novel between-subject feature: some participants receive more and/or another type of information than others. Whereas some participants only receive the above background information about the players, others receive information about the players' socio-economic background, their cultural values, or their civic behavior – or all. Hence, randomization occurs on two levels in this study – within as well as between individuals – and the causal estimates of interest are the total effects of ethnic cues on expected cooperation as well as the extent to which these effects are explained by more socially contingent factors that are often perceived to correlate with ethnic background. From the perspective of identification, it is crucial that the potential mediators are not merely observed but actually randomly assigned to avoid re-opening the backdoor to selection bias. Figure 3.2 presents the study design of paper B (table 1 in paper B presents the specific attribute values for each attribute).

One broader point is worth highlighting. By design, the attribute levels on the (perceived) social factors – socio-economic status, cultural values, and civic behavior – are randomly assigned independent of the ethnic attributes

of the players. The implication is that these social factors no longer correlate with ethnicity. When estimating the effects of ethnic cues, this merely implies that these social factors are explicitly held constant, on average. Technically, this is similar to the standard approach in audit and correspondence studies on discrimination that vary the ethnic or racial cues via a name while holding constant a host of other potentially relevant factors (for reviews, see e.g., Neumark, 2018; Pager & Shepherd, 2008; Quillian et al., 2017; Quillian & Midtbøen, 2021). This is methodologically essential to more credibly isolate the effect of ethnicity from its (perceived) correlates (e.g., Barlow & Lahey, 2018; Dafoe et al., 2018; Gaddis, 2017; Landgrave & Weller, 2021). Further, in testing models of statistical discrimination in which the type of information varies, such information is randomly assigned across the ethnic cues. This, too, is imperative if one seeks to separate the effects of information from the effects of ethnicity to understand the mechanisms underlying discrimination in more depth.

Table 3.1. Overview of Research Designs and Data in the Four Papers

	Key explanatory variable(s)	Dependent variable	Design	Year(s)	Ethnic group	Sample	Data source
Paper A	Ethnic cues (X) Classroom ethnic composition (Mod.)	Solidarity	Survey experiment + School FE	2019	Ethnic majority	9 th -grade students in Danish schools (stratified sampling) N = 1,055	Cross-sectional survey data combined with registry data
Paper B	Ethnic cues (X) Information cues (Med.)	Expected cooperation	Conjoint experiment	2022	Ethnic majority	Adults in Denmark (18-65 years) N _{individuals} = 4,368 N _{observations} = 65,520	Cross-sectional survey data
Paper C	Classroom ethnic composition (X)	Well-being	School FE Family FE Student FE	2015-2017	Ethnic majority Ethnic minorities	4 th - to 9 th -grade students in Danish schools N _{observations} = 685,476	Panel survey data combined with registry data
Paper D	Cohort-level ethnic composition (X)	Citizenship acquisition	Family FE	1991-2018	Ethnic minorities	0 th - to 9 th -grade students in Danish schools N _{observations} = 430,248	Registry data

Despite the methodological necessity, the fact that ethnic attributes and the social factors are on average uncorrelated in paper B could imply that the information that respondents receive is unrealistically positive if such correlations actually exist in the real world. One implication from the broader framework of contact is the following: To the extent that ethnic attributes and these social factors do in fact correlate, interacting with outgroup members will not necessarily provide stereotype-reducing information. Rather, prior stereotypes could be validated or reinforced. On the other hand, such correlations are never perfect. This means that it is possible to interact with ethnic outgroup members who do not confirm the negative stereotypes. More importantly, to the extent that these correlations are *perceived* rather than statistically correct, interacting with ethnic outgroup will precisely be able to provide information that corrects empirically false perceptions. Further, even when negative stereotypes are (partly) statistically correct, contact may provide stereotype-reducing information if people held *stronger* negative stereotypes prior to the contact situation. In this case, contact would not erase but adjust such stereotypes. Still, in stating that the design in paper B tells us something about the potential psychological mechanisms of interethnic contact, I assume that contact occurring under favorable conditions is likely to provide some type of stereotype-reducing information. Though this is not a given, the fact that contact typically reduces rather than increases negative stereotypes suggests that this assumption is not implausible. It remains an assumption, nonetheless.

Table 3.1 presents an overview of the research designs and data sources in the four papers in the dissertation. As the figure indicates, two of the papers focus on the ethnic majority (paper A and B), one paper focuses on the ethnic minority (paper D), and one paper focuses on both groups (paper C). Whereas several of the papers converge in terms of the setting and the explanatory variable(s) of interest, the papers diverge in terms of the outcome of interest. In the next section, I describe and discuss how I specifically measure interethnic contact as well as the different outcomes.

3.3. Measurement

Mundane Interethnic Contact: Different Indices for the Same Concept?

In papers A, C, and D, I rely on Danish registry data and calculate a variety of objective measures of the ethnic composition in the school setting to measure mundane interethnic – and intraethnic – contact. These measures include,

e.g., the share of students with a non-native, non-Western, or MENA background, as well as more refined measures of ethnic fragmentation.¹⁰ The measures are calculated based on all students in the classroom or cohort, which means that they are highly precise as well as objective and unbiased by individual preferences or systematic non-response that might occur in surveys. Using this framework, mundane interethnic contact increases with the proportion of ethnic outgroup members, whereas intraethnic contact increases with the proportion of ethnic ingroup members (e.g., Blau, 1977).

In theory, these measures draw the ethnic ingroup-outgroup boundary differently. For example, the non-native concentration measure uses a wide definition of the minority that includes all those who do not have an ethnic Danish background according to Statistics Denmark's definition¹¹. That is, non-native minorities are assumed to constitute a coherent outgroup to the ethnic majority as well as a coherent ingroup to people with a non-native background. In contrast, the non-Western concentration measure draws the ethnic boundary along a non-Western rather than non-native line.¹² Though a crude distinction between the ethnic majority and (non-Western) minorities may appear overly simplistic, these broader categories may be psychologically real both as an "outgroup" to the ethnic majority and as an "ingroup" to ethnic minorities as discussed in the definition of ethnicity in section 2.1.

Given the conceptual difference underlying these measures, it is intriguing to use them to test different theoretical mechanisms. For example, in theory, measures of ethnic fragmentation capture the *spread* of different ethnic groups in a given social space rather than the concentration of, and hence contact with, a particular ethnic group (e.g., Koopmans & Schaeffer, 2015). However, in the Danish setting, these measures correlate extremely highly, which makes it impossible isolate one theoretical mechanism from another (see also Dinesen & Sønderskov, 2015). To illustrate this point, table 3.2 replicates the

¹⁰ Specifically, ethnic fragmentation is calculated as $1 - \sum_{i=1}^N s_{ij}^2$, where s_{ij} is the share of ethnic group i in classroom j , and ethnic groups are defined as country of origin. Statistics Denmark defines country of origin as follows: Country of origin is the parents' (firstly the mother's) country of birth. If the birth country is Denmark, country of origin is defined as the parents' country of citizenship.

¹¹ In the Danish context, the ethnic majority is defined, according to the definition by Statistics Denmark, as persons who have at least one parent who is both born in Denmark and has Danish citizenship. Hence, the concentration of non-native students is in some sense a residual category.

¹² According to Statistics Denmark, non-Western countries include all other countries than the EU27, the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway, San Marino, Switzerland, and the Vatican State.

correlation matrix from paper C. The correlation between a measure of the share of non-Western students, the share of non-native students, and the ethnic fragmentation, all measured at the classroom level, is between 0.94 and 0.98. That is, they are statistically indistinguishable and simply measure the relative presence of minority students. Such high correlations are not necessarily a Danish phenomenon but a more general statistical artefact occurring in settings where the ethnic majority is sizeable. As Schaeffer (2013) argues: “If the majority share is too large in even the most diverse cities and regions, and if the sample does not cover contextual units with diverse and contextual units with polarized ethnic compositions, the competing indices are indistinguishable even from the mere percentage of minorities” (p. 756). Table 3.2 shows that the ethnic majority indeed is by far the dominant ethnic group in Danish classrooms constituting approximately 90% of all students.¹³ For these reasons, I generally use the different measures of the ethnic composition to assess the robustness of the results rather than to test competing theoretical explanations.

Table 3.2. Mean, standard deviation and correlation matrix of different measures of the ethnic composition

	Mean	SD	Correlation matrix			
			1	2	3	4
(1) Share of non-Western	0.09	0.14	1.00			
(2) Share of non-native	0.10	0.14	0.98	1.00		
(3) Ethnic fragmentation	0.17	0.19	0.94	0.96	1.00	
(4) Share of co-ethnic	0.83	0.27	-0.66	-0.68	-0.70	1.00

Note: N = 677,028.

In one instance, however, it is possible to distinguish measures of ethnic contact statistically. In papers C and D, data is sufficiently detailed to calculate, and use variations in, the share of students who have the same ethnic background, operationalized as the country of origin, rather than simply the relative size of minority students with a non-native or non-Western background. From an ethnic majority perspective, this measure is trivial. From the ethnic minority perspective, however, it allows for a much more fine-grained operationalization of the ethnic ingroup. Even if broader minority identities exist, there are vast cultural and religious differences between minority groups.

¹³ Based on administrative registry data from 2015-2017.

Hence, the ties between individuals of same ethnic background may be stronger and more clearly encapsulates an ethnic ingroup from a minority perspective. As table 3.1 shows, this concentration measure of co-ethnics is statistically more distinct with a Pearson's r correlation between -0.66 and -0.70 in a sample of both majority and minority students (paper C) and a correlation around -0.56 in a sample of minority students at the cohort level (paper D).

As this brief discussion hints, I am not interested in interethnic contact from the perspective of one particular ethnic group. In paper A, I study ethnic majority students' contact with ethnic minority students broadly defined; in paper C, we focus on inter- and intraethnic contact of both ethnic majority and ethnic minority students; and in paper D, I focus on solely on the ethnic composition of students with a minority background. In some instances, I operationalize the ethnic group in broad terms, for example as native vs. non-native students, and in other instances, I operationalize the ethnic group at the country-of-origin-level. In all papers, however, I either explicitly or implicitly imply that the broader distinction between the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority is often relevant. This is expressed both in the construction of the measures and in the sample selection.

Finally, it is noteworthy that measures of the ethnic composition are often orthogonal for the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority. For example, from the perspective of students with an ethnic majority background, interethnic contact increases with the proportion of non-native or non-Western students. From the perspective of students with an ethnic minority background, interethnic contact increases as the proportion of non-native or non-Western students *decreases*; that is, as the proportion of majority students increases. Further, interethnic contact generally occurs at the expense of intraethnic contact. For example, a higher proportion of non-majority students implies more out-group contact for majority students while at the same time reducing ingroup contact, that is, contact with other majority students – and vice versa from a minority perspective.

Outcomes

In each of the four papers of the dissertation, I focus on different outcomes. In paper A, I concentrate on solidarity. To measure solidarity, I created an index based on two survey items that capture willingness to support from a generalized and a personalized perspective. These items are intended to capture two attitudinal aspects of supporting others: an abstract idea about who we ought to help in more general terms and a direct, personal willingness to make an effort to support others.

In paper B, I focus on another dimension of prosocial attitudes: cooperation. I specifically focus on *expected* cooperation, that is, predictions made about other ingroup and outgroup members' cooperative behavior. As described above, I rely on the public goods game-setup in which a series of players decide how much money (if any) they want to put into a common pool. In the public goods game, giving (more) money to the public pool is interpreted as an act of cooperation, whereas giving no (or little) money to the public pool is interpreted as an act of self-interest (e.g., Baldassarri, 2015; Enos & Gidron, 2018; Grossman & Baldassarri, 2012). To measure *expected* cooperation, respondents observe a series of hypothetical players and make predictions about the extent to which they put money into the common pool. Specifically, respondents were asked two questions. The first question is a forced choice question in which they must choose the one person (out of three) they expect will give most to the common pool. This forced choice technique is one oft-used approach in the conjoint experimental setup (e.g., Hainmueller et al., 2014). The second question is continuous and asks respondents to assess how much each hypothetical person in the game will give on a scale from 0 DKK to 1.000 DKK with 100 DKK (around 15 USD) as the interval. This provides a 10-point measure that is customary in the conjoint experiment and the standard approach in the public goods game.

In paper C, well-being is the primary outcome of interest. To measure students' well-being, we use the mandatory National Well-being Survey, which has been conducted in Denmark since 2015. There are two versions of the survey: a simplified version conducted in 0th to 3rd grade and a full version conducted in 4th to 9th grade. We rely on the latter survey, because it contains several items that relate both to domain-specific satisfaction concerning the school and the class and to positive relations with other students – both of which constitute relevant dimensions of well-being. We theoretically derive seven relevant items (see more in the appendix to paper C) that are collapsed into one single well-being index. This index is standardized with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

Finally, in paper D, I turn to an essential aspect of political behavior among ethnic minorities: the acquisition of Danish citizenship. Whereas papers A, B, and C use novel (A and B) or existing (C) survey data to measure respondents' subjective perceptions, paper D measures actual behavior. The paper focuses on immigrants and descendants who did not have Danish citizenship in the first observable school year. Using the Danish registries, I follow the same individuals over time and observe changes in their citizenship status. Specifically, the acquisition of Danish citizenship is measured as a dichotomous variable in which 0 indicates that the person did not acquire Dan-

ish citizenship between 1991 and 2018, and 1 indicates that the person did acquire Danish citizenship in the given time period. Table 3.3 provides an overview of the operationalization of the key outcomes.

Table 3.3. Operationalization of Outcomes

Concept	Item(s)/Source	Measure(s)
Solidarity <i>[Paper A]</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “To what extent do you think that one ought to make an effort to improve the conditions for this group of people?” 2. “To what extent are you willing to give away some of your money or some of your time to improve the conditions for this group of people?” <p>[answered on a 1 to 5 point Likert scale]</p>	<p>Index, FL^a [0.89]</p> <p>Scaling: 0 (low) to 1 (high)</p>
Expected cooperation <i>[Paper B]</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Which of these persons do you think give most to the common pool?” 2. “How much do you think each of these persons give to the common pool?” <p>[answered on a scale from 0 to 1,000 DKK, with 100 DKK (around 15 USD) as the interval]</p>	<p>Item 1 = Forced choice [0.1]</p> <p>Item 2 = Continuous measure [0-10]</p>
Well-being <i>[Paper C]</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Are you happy about your school?” 2. “Are you happy about your class?” 3. “How often do you feel safe in school?” 4. “Do you feel lonely?” 5. “I feel that I belong to my school” 6. “Most students in my class are friendly and helpful” 7. “Other students accept me the way I am” <p>[answered on a 1 to 5 point Likert scale]</p>	<p>Index, FL^a [0.65; 0.80]</p> <p>Scaling: 0 (low) to 1 (high), <i>standardized</i></p>
Citizenship acquisition <i>[Paper D]</i>	Citizenship status, based on the Danish register “STATSB” (1991-2018)	<p>0 = Not Danish citizenship</p> <p>1 = Danish citizenship</p>

^a FL = Factor loading(s)

Chapter 4

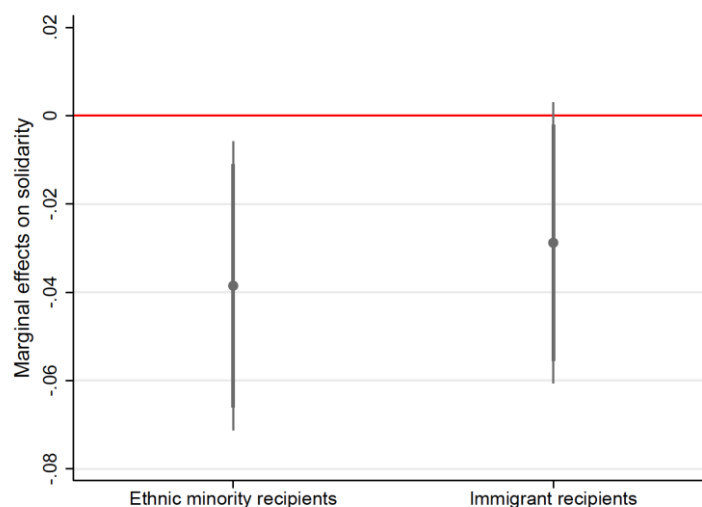
Findings

In this chapter, I present the empirical findings of the dissertation. I assess each theoretical claim in turn and leave the broader syntheses of the results to chapter five. Since each paper discusses the results and their robustness in depth, I focus on discussing the overall findings in this chapter.

4.1. Claim One: Intergroup Solidarity

The first claim is that interethnic contact reduces the solidarity gap between “us” and “them” by altering ethnic categorization and deservingness stereotypes. In figure 4.1, I present the results of the vignette survey experiment conducted among 9th-grade students with an ethnic majority background. To recap, students were randomly assigned to assess their solidarity with a recipient with an ethnic Danish name (Dennis), with an ethnic minority recipient with a Middle Eastern name (Muhammed), or with an immigrant recipient with a Middle Eastern name (Muhammed). “Ethnic minority” is operationalized as being born and raised in Denmark, whereas “immigrant” is operationalized as being born abroad. The results show that solidarity towards ethnic outgroup recipients is lower, on average, than to solidarity towards the ethnic ingroup recipient (baseline). The solidarity gap exists for both the ethnic minority as well as immigrant recipients although the average majority-immigrant gap is only statistically significant at the 0.10-level.

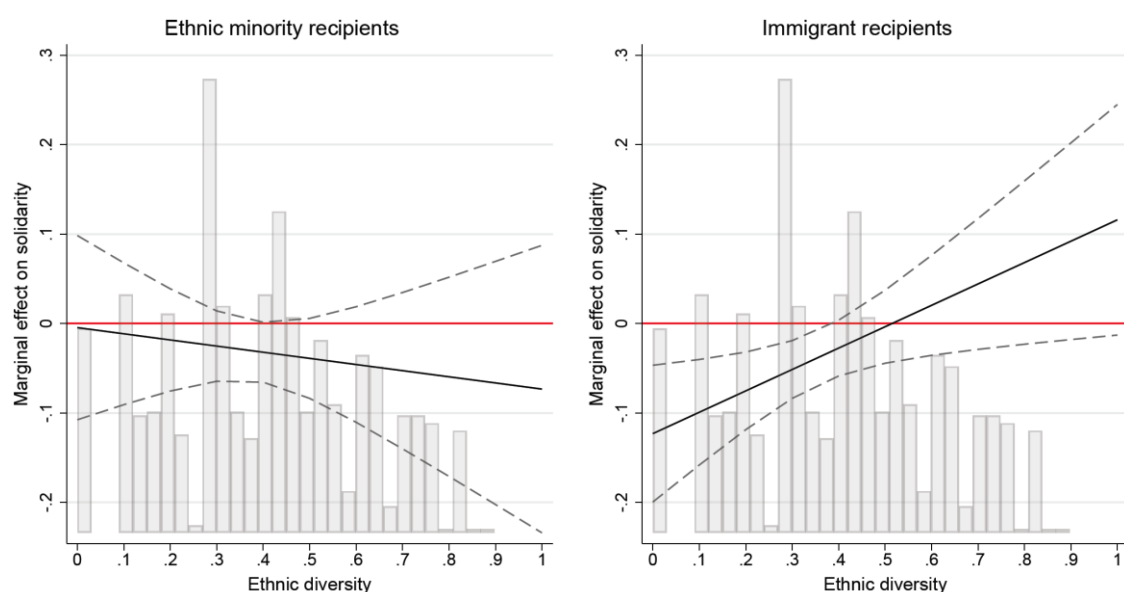
Figure 4.1. Marginal effects of recipient cues on solidarity



Note: The figure presents between-respondent point estimates with 90% and 95% confidence intervals. The reference category is ethnic-majority recipients. N = 1,055.

More importantly, however, the solidarity gap depends on the classroom ethnic diversity; that is, it depends on the extent to which ethnic majority students have contact with ethnic outgroup members. The dominant finding in the literature on ethnic diversity and solidarity is that diversity tends to impede solidarity. Yet, as figure 4.2. shows, this is not the case in the school setting where interethnic contact, rather than interethnic exposure, takes place. In the school setting, the majority-minority gap is unaffected by the level of classroom ethnic diversity, whereas higher levels of diversity improves solidarity towards immigrants, thus closing the majority-immigrant solidarity gap. As I discuss and empirically corroborate in paper A, the key reason solidarity increases particularly towards immigrants is that immigrants are more likely to face negative deservingness stereotypes of laziness and that such negative stereotypes are reduced at higher levels of ethnic diversity.

Figure 4.2. Marginal effects of recipient cues on solidarity across different levels of ethnic diversity



Note: The dotted lines report the 95% confidence interval. In both graphs, the reference category is an ethnic-majority recipient group. Bars show the raw distribution of ethnic diversity. $N = 1,055$.

In sum, increasing levels of ethnic diversity at worst plays no role and at best improve intergroup solidarity. Hence, under conditions of contact, the interethnic meeting may both actively improve intergroup solidarity or bounce off the negative effects of exposure (in related fields, see e.g., Stolle et al., 2008). These findings lend partial support for the first theoretical claim in the dissertation and no support for the dominant argument that ethnic diversity reduces solidarity. Further, the findings indicate that mundane

interethnic contact not only reduces the importances of ethnic categories but also alters solidarity by correcting negative deservingness stereotypes.

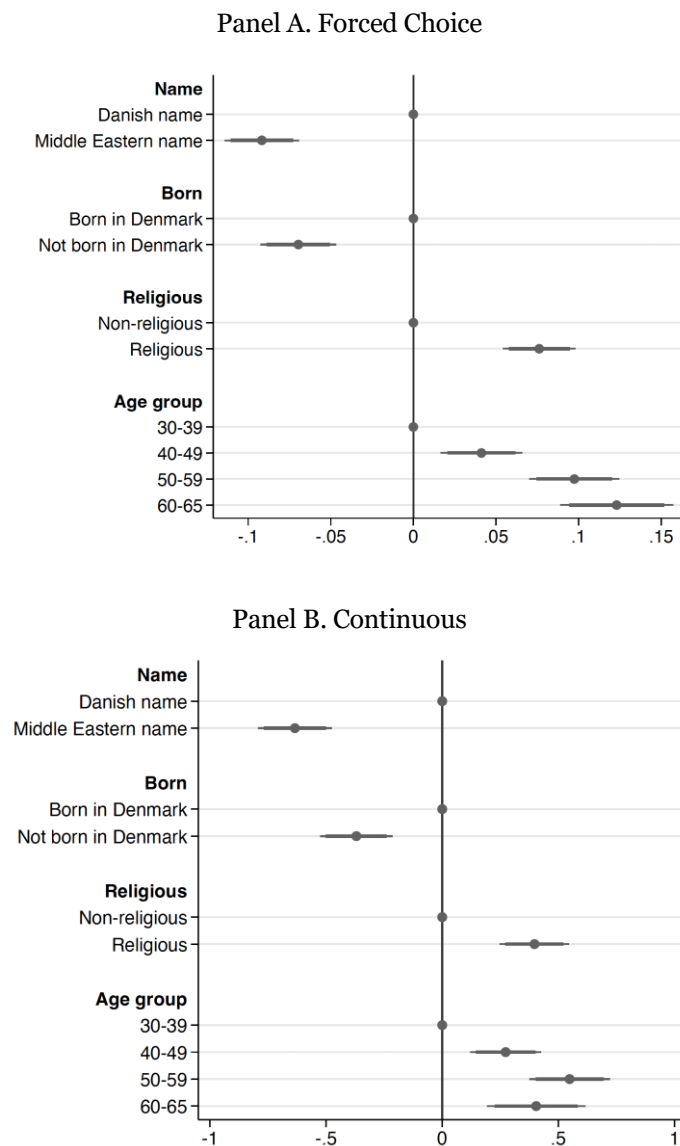
4.2. Claim Two: Expected Cooperation

Broadly reiterated, the second claim is that relevant information about out-group members, plausibly acquired via interethnic contact, reduces the relative importance of ethnic outgroup cues for prosocial attitudes. Specifically, the claim is that ethnic bias in expected cooperation is explained by the (perceived) correlates of ethnic group membership. This claim can be distilled into three empirically testable components which, as I will show, all find empirical support:

- i. When information is sparse, members of the ethnic majority expect less cooperation from ethnic outgroup members than from ethnic ingroup members
- ii. Socio-economic status, cultural values, and civic behavior each have a direct causal effect on the expectation that an individual will cooperate.
- iii. Once one or more of these factors are available and no longer correlate with ethnic group membership, ethnic bias in expected cooperation held by members of the ethnic majority is reduced.

Figures 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 show the results related to each of these three components. Figure 4.3 presents the results of the control condition in the conjoint experiment. Here, respondents only have access to the name and immigrant status as well as two background attributes (religiosity and age) of the hypothetical players in the public goods game. The figure shows that members of the ethnic majority indeed expect less cooperation from ethnic outgroup members than from ethnic ingroup members. That is, when information is scarce and ethnic attributes may be perceived to correlate with other social factors, ethnic bias is substantial. This empirical pattern neither depends on the operationalization of expected cooperation, forced choice or continuous measure, nor the type of outgroup cues, a name or immigrant status. This provides support for the first component of the general claim in statistical as well as substantial terms. For example, compared to people with ethnic Danish names, people with Middle Eastern names are expected to be 9.75 percentage points less likely to cooperate. This corresponds to a change of 0.2 standard deviations arising merely from the change in a name.

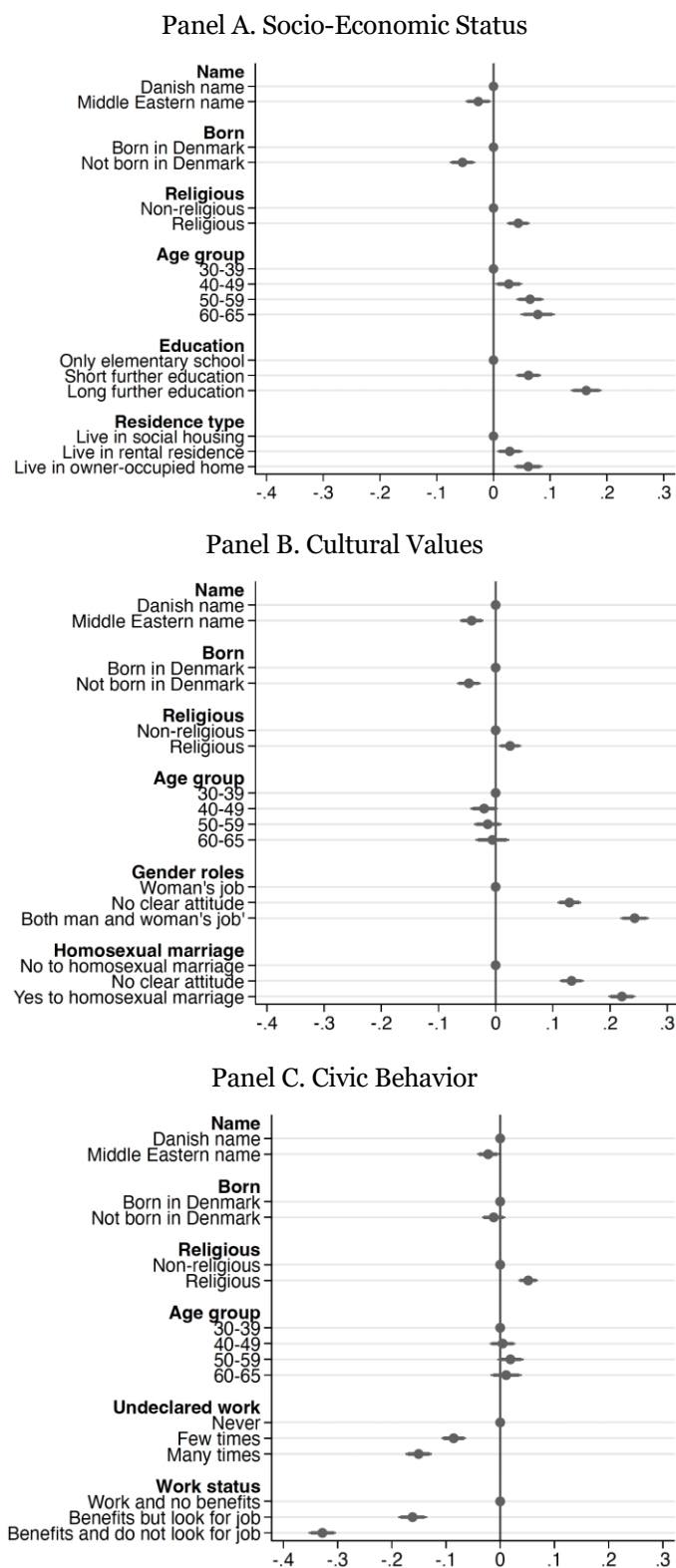
Figure 4.3. Average Marginal Component Effects of Ethnic Cues on Expected Cooperation, Control Condition



Note: The figure presents within-respondent point estimates with 90% and 95% confidence intervals for the forced choice measure (panel A) and the continuous measure (panel B). $N_{\text{effective}} = 11,040$.

Figure 4.4 shows the direct effect of each of the three social factors – socio-economic status (panel A), cultural values (panel B), and civic behavior (panel C) – on expected cooperation. For each social factor, I use two attributes to avoid dependency on a single aspect of the complex phenomena. Further, the number of attributes and levels of each attribute is constant to ensure comparability across the different information treatments. Socio-economic status is operationalized as education level and type of residence, the latter which is a proxy for wealth.

Figure 4.4. Average Marginal Component Effects of Socio-Economic Status, Cultural Values, and Civic Behavior (Forced Choice)



Note: Panel A shows the results from the socio-economic status-condition; panel B the cultural values-condition, and panel C the civic behavior-condition. The figure presents within-respondent point estimates with 90% and 95% confidence intervals for the forced choice measure in the socio-economic, cultural values, and civic behavior conditions. $N_{\text{effective}} = 10,980, 10,860, \text{ and } 10,695$ respectively.

Cultural values are operationalized as attitudes towards gender roles¹⁴ and homosexuals' rights¹⁵. Civic behavior is operationalized as the person's work status¹⁶ as well as the extent to which the person has conducted undeclared work (see more in appendix D in paper B).

The figure provides support for the second component of the general claim: All three families of explanations have a strong, direct causal effect on the expectation that a person cooperates. Though the attributes within each family have varying impact, the effect of all six attributes is in the expected direction. Hence, people with higher socio-economic status, more progressive cultural values, and norm-compliant civic behavior are more likely to be perceived as cooperators than people with lower socio-economic status, more regressive cultural values, and norm-deviant civic behavior.

Figure 4.5 supports the third and last component of the second claim. Panel A in the figure shows the average marginal component effects of a name and immigrant status across the different information conditions.¹⁷ As panel A shows, ethnic bias in expected cooperation is reduced and ultimately erased once information about social factors is available and these social factors are uncorrelated with ethnic cues. In terms of the name of the recipient, bias is reduced more or less to the same extent across the three different types of information. That is, both information about socio-economic status, cultural values, and civic behavior reduces the likelihood that ethnic outgroup members are less likely than ethnic ingroup members to cooperate. Panel B shows the average marginal component interaction effects, that is, it estimates the *difference* in expected cooperation from ingroup vs. outgroup members when each of the information conditions is compared to the control condition. As panel B shows, the differences in panel A are statistically significant at the 0.05 alpha level.

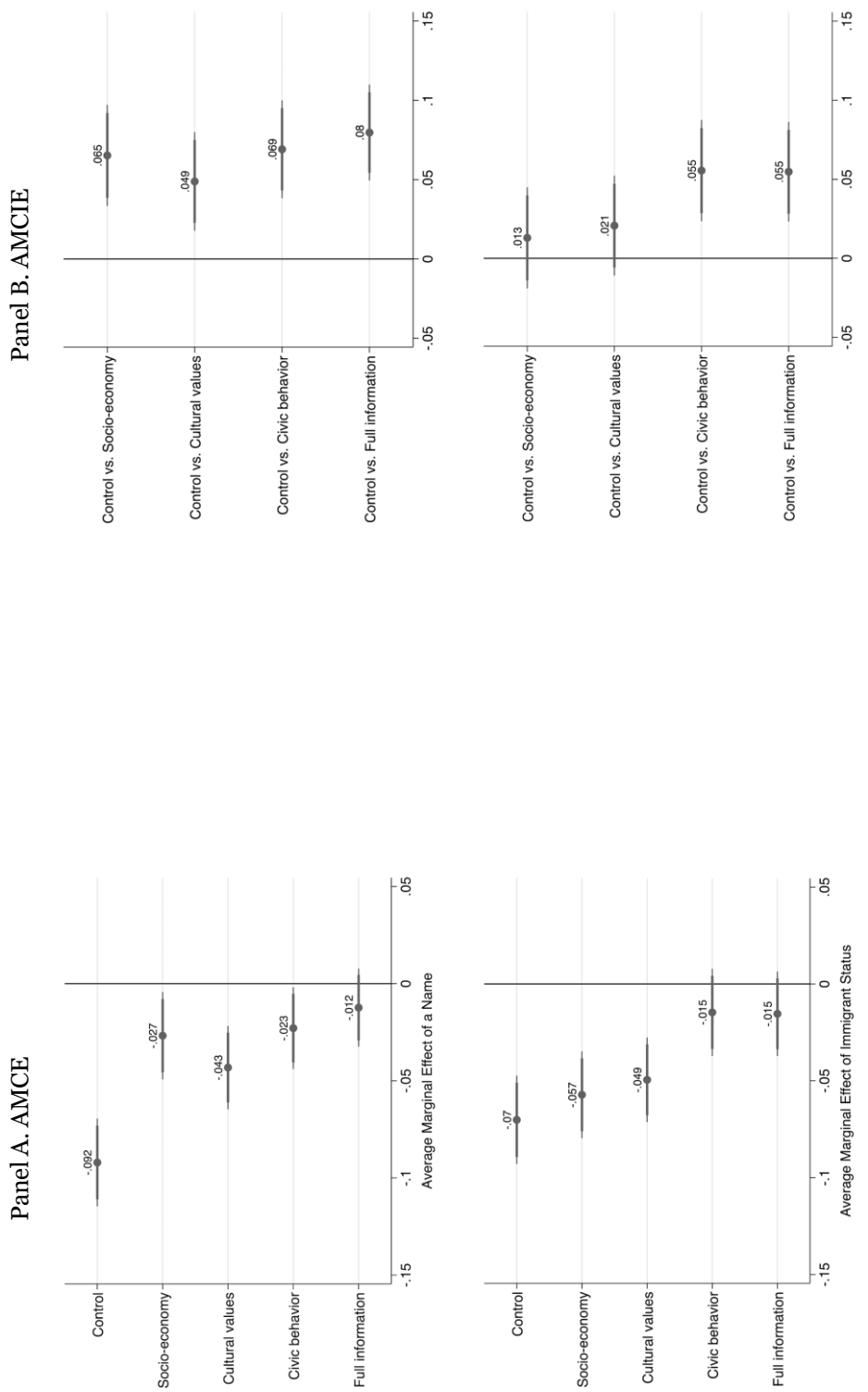
¹⁴ Specifically, whether it is only the woman's job to take care of children and duties in the household, or both the woman and man's job.

¹⁵ Specifically, whether homosexuals should have the right to marriage or not.

¹⁶ This item has the following three categories: Has a job and does not receive welfare benefits; Receives welfare benefits but works hard to find a job; Receives welfare benefits and is not looking for a job.

¹⁷ Note that the assignment of information condition is randomized across rather than between respondents thus erasing any potential demand effects.

Figure 4.5. Average Marginal Component Effects and Average Marginal Component Interaction Effects of Ethnicity and Immigrant Status across Between-Respondent Treatment Conditions (Forced Choice)



Note: In panel A, the reference category is participants with an ethnic Danish name. In panel B, the reference category is the control condition x Middle Eastern name and the control condition x not born in Denmark, respectively. Panel A presents within-respondent point estimates and panel B presents between-respondent point estimates with 90% and 95% confidence intervals. $N_{\text{effective}} = 54,360$.

Though the same pattern replicates in terms of immigrant status, bias is primarily reduced once information about civic behavior is available. This pattern corroborates the findings related to claim one about contact and solidarity: Particularly in the case of immigrants, stereotypes are related to societal norm violation such as being “lazy” welfare consumers. Yet, once civic behavior is not correlated with immigrant status, and information is available, the expectation gap between “native Danes” and immigrants is reduced significantly and substantially. In fact, there are no statistically detectable cooperation gap in the civic condition and full information conditions.

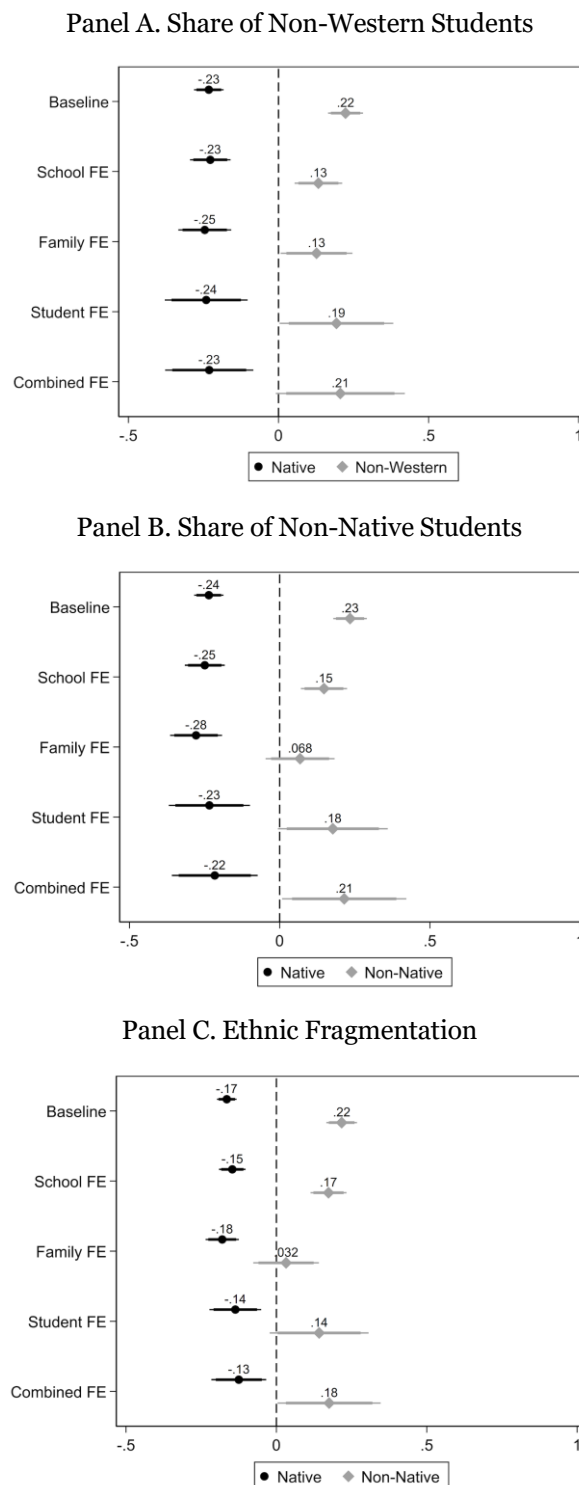
Overall, there is strong support for the second claim of the dissertation. Though there is an ethnic bias in expected cooperation, such bias is explained by the (perceived) correlates of ethnic attributes. In broader terms, this shows that relevant information about outgroup members – plausibly acquired via interethnic contact – reduces the relative importance of ethnic outgroup cues for prosocial attitudes.

4.3 Claim Three: Well-Being

The third claim is that *intraethnic* contact – what we call “ethnic similarity” in paper C – increases well-being. We find strong support for this claim among both ethnic majority and ethnic minority members. Figure 4.6 shows the effect of ethnic similarity across different identifying strategies and measures of similarity. For example, panel A shows the effect of ethnic similarity using a native/non-Western distinction to capture similarity.¹⁸ Specifically, we calculated the proportion of students with a non-Western background in the classroom such that higher scores indicated: a higher proportion of ethnically similar peers from the perspective of students with a non-Western background and a lower proportion of ethnically similar peers from the perspective of students with an ethnic majority background. Panel A shows that a higher concentration of non-Western students in the classroom increases minority well-being and reduces majority well-being. Reversely, a lower concentration of non-Western students in the classroom increases majority well-being and reduces minority well-being. That is, ethnic similarity fosters well-being for both groups. This main finding replicates across the different identifying models. In substantial terms, a min-max change in classroom ethnic similarity increases well-being with around 0.23 and 0.25 standard deviations among native students and between 0.13 and 0.23 among non-Western students.

¹⁸ The category “native” refers to the ethnic majority population and not indigenous populations.

Figure 4.6. The Marginal Effect of Classroom Ethnic Composition on Well-Being for Native and Non-Western/Non-Native Students across Different Model Specifications

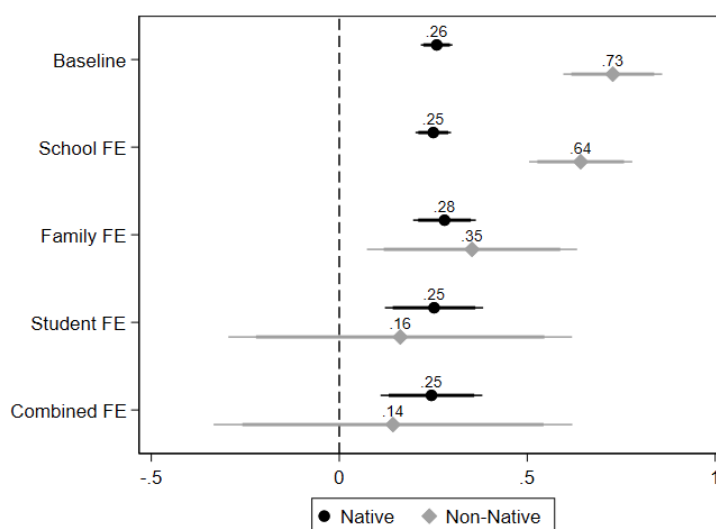


Note: Students with a Western background are not included in panel A. The “Baseline” model includes all covariates as well as cohort and year fixed effects. The following three models add school, family and student fixed effects respectively. The last model includes both school and student fixed effects. All models are based on linear regressions. Standard errors are clustered at the classroom level in all models. Bars show 90% and 95% confidence intervals. The estimates report differences in well-being measured in standard deviations from a min-max change in the classroom composition. N = 677,028 in panel A and N = 685,476 in panels B and panel C.

Using a more realistic change in the ethnic composition, a standard deviation change in ethnic similarity increases well-being with approximate 0.03 standard deviations (see figure 4 in paper C).

The results also generally replicate when we use different ways to measure intraethnic contact. This is the case in both panel B and C where measures of the non-native concentration as well as an ethnic fragmentation measure are used. Further, as figure 4.7 shows, it is also the case when the minority ingroup is defined not in broader categories but as the share of co-ethnic students in the classroom defined along lines of country of origin. More variability exists across the identifying models, and the statistical uncertainty is naturally higher particularly in the student FE-model and combined FE-model. Still, the point estimates are in the expected direction in all models and even in the more stringent student FE-model, the point estimates have a similar size as those presented in figure 4.6.

Figure 4.7. The Marginal Effect of Increasing Share of Co-Ethnics, Defined by Country of Origin, in the Classroom on Well-Being for Native and Non-Native Students across Different Model Specifications

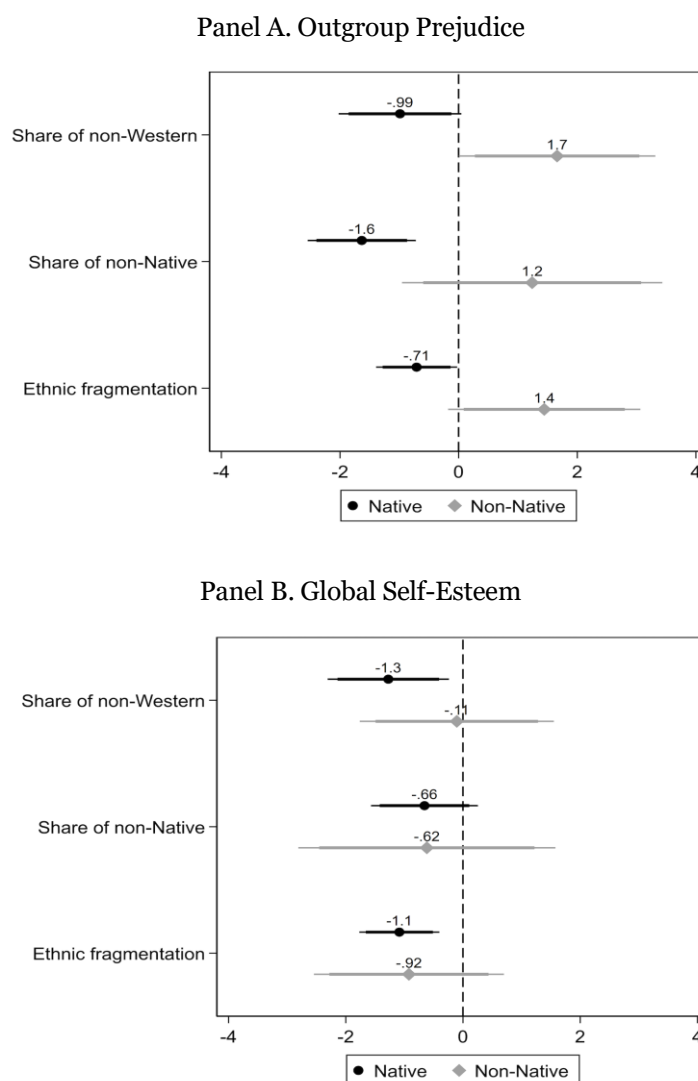


Note: The baseline model includes all covariates as well as cohort and year fixed effects. The following three models add school, family, and student fixed effects, respectively. The last model includes both school and student fixed effects. All models are based on linear regressions. Standard errors are clustered at the classroom level in all models. Bars show 90% and 95% confidence intervals. The estimates report differences in well-being measured in standard deviations from a min-max change in the share of co-ethnics. N=685,476.

Finally, the effect of ethnic similarity on well-being is quite similar for both majority and minority students. That is, ethnic similarity is not more important in fostering well-being for the ethnic minority than for the ethnic majority. That said, exploratory evidence suggests that a somewhat different psychological mechanism may explain this positive effect for the two groups. As

panel B in figure 4.8 indicates, ethnic similarity strengthens ethnic majority students' positive self-concept – which is argued to improve well-being – whereas the self-concept of minority students is at best unrelated to ethnic similarity. Further, as panel A shows, for both the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority, ethnic similarity reduces exposure to prejudice which is expected to improve well-being. That is, as the share of ethnic ingroup members increases, prejudice held by the ethnic outgroup decreases in line with the predictions in contact theory.

Figure 4.8. The Marginal Effect of Classroom Ethnic Composition on Outgroup Prejudice and Self-Esteem for Native and Non-Native Students



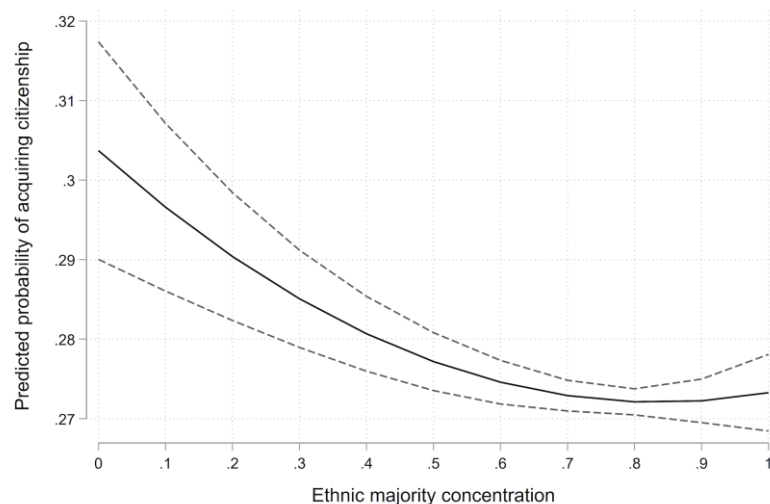
Note: The estimates report differences in prejudice and self-esteem (standardized) based on different measures of the classroom ethnic composition across students with a native and non-native background. Both panels are based on linear regressions with standard errors clustered at the classroom level. The estimates are calculated based on a school FE-model including respondent, parent, and classroom level covariates. Bars show 90 percent and 95 percent confidence intervals. N=1,779 in panel A and N=1,814 in panel B.

In sum, mundane *intraethnic* contact fosters well-being. Or stated reversely; interethnic contact reduces well-being. That is, in contrast to having more interethnic interactions, being surrounded by ethnically similar peers plays a positive role both for the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority.

4.4. Claim Four: Naturalization

The fourth and final claim is that ethnic contact in childhood affects immigrant and descendants' likelihood of naturalizing. To test this argument, I compared non-twin siblings who went to the same school but attended different cohorts between 1991 and 2018. The result of this family FE-model is presented in figure 4.9. The figure shows that a higher proportion of ethnic majority students at the cohort level reduces immigrant and descendants' likelihood of obtaining citizenship. Though the negative effect decreases in size, these findings quite firmly reject the contact theoretical predictions that naturalization is fostered when immigrant and descendants have more contact with the ethnic majority.

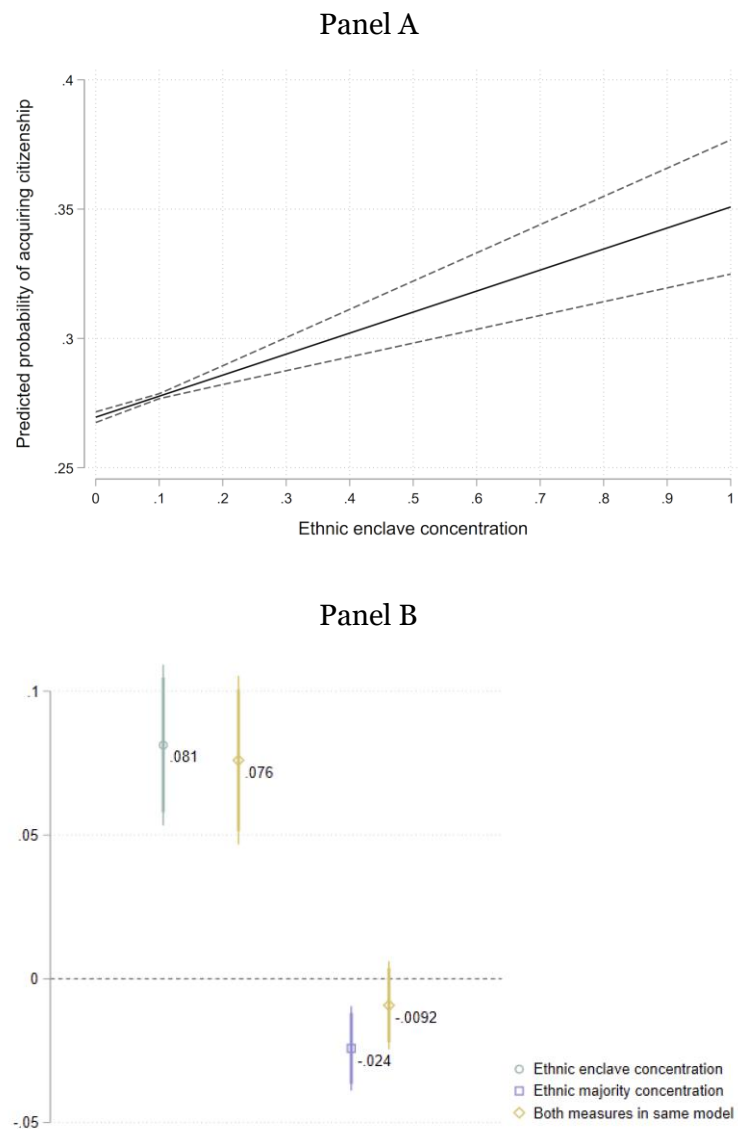
Figure 4.9. The Predicted Probability of Acquiring Citizenship as a Function of the Cohort-Level Ethnic Majority Concentration in School



Note: The figure is based on a school x family fixed effects model. Time fixed effects as well as covariates at the student, parent, and cohort level are included. Dotted lines show the 95% confidence interval. Nobservations = 430,248.

Rather, naturalization is either fostered in settings with likeminded others (the ethnic enclave perspective) or impeded in settings with more dissimilar others (the conflict theoretical perspective). In figure 4.10, I test the ethnic enclave perspective more directly and try to differentiate it from the conflict theoretical perspective. Specifically, I measure ethnic enclaves as the proportion of students in a school cohort who originate from the same country.

Figure 4.10. The Predicted Probability of Acquiring Citizenship as a Function of the Cohort-Level Ethnic Enclave Concentration in School (panel A) and the Linear Effects of Ethnic Enclave Concentration and Ethnic Majority Concentration on Citizenship Acquisition (panel B)



Note: The figures are based on a school x family fixed effects model. Time fixed effects as well as covariates at the student, parent, and cohort level are included. Bars show 90% and 95% confidence intervals. Nobservations = 430,248.

The figure supports the ethnic enclave perspective: There is a positive, linear effect of attending a school cohort with relatively more same-ethnic peers compared to attending a school cohort with relatively fewer same-ethnic peers. Importantly, these results replicate when ethnic enclaves are measured at the classroom level in which the measurement validity of contact is plausibly higher. Further, as panel B shows, the effect of the ethnic enclave concentration measure is larger than the effect of the ethnic majority concentration measure; a pattern that replicates when both measures are standardized. Once both measures are included in the same model, the effect of ethnic majority

concentration drops in size and becomes statistically significant. This suggests that the causal effect may be driven more by the presence and absence of same-ethnic peers than by the presence or absence of ethnic majority peers. Taken together, these results suggest that *intraethnic* contact, rather than interethnic contact, not only promotes well-being but also plays a positive role in leading immigrant and descendants on the path to naturalization.

4.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have put the four claims of the dissertation to an empirical test. The findings generally present a nuanced picture of the role of interethnic contact in the everyday setting. Whereas interethnic contact and information about outgroup members, plausibly acquired in the interethnic meeting, can improve prosocial attitudes, interethnic contact reduces well-being and decreases chances for immigrants and descendants to acquire citizenship. In the next chapter, I discuss and synthesize these findings.

Chapter 5

A Theoretical Synthesis

In this chapter, I seek to deepen our understanding of the findings above by exploring and synthesizing the results through a new, theoretical lens; one in which I distinguish between *interpersonal* and *intrapersonal* outcomes.

5.1. The Paradoxical Role of Interethnic Contact

What the findings above jointly imply is that interethnic contact in the everyday setting may simultaneously promote societally valuable outcomes while at the same time impeding others. One critique of this conclusion, however, is that the results in the different papers are products of systematic differences in the study setup and that the findings across the papers are ultimately challenging to compare. Yet, this seems to be an unlikely interpretation. Without doubt, as I have discussed, the type of the interethnic encounter and the conditions surrounding it can be relevant. However, all the papers in this dissertation that directly measure some aspect of interethnic contact focus on contact occurring among children and adolescence in the school setting in Denmark (A, C, and D). The fact that these cross-study factors – type of contact, conditions for contact, and country setting – are constant alleviates much of the concern that the findings should be products of variation in these study factors. On the contrary, what the findings point to more generally is that the *same type* of contact occurring under the *same conditions* in the *same country* has divergent consequences. Stated differently, it suggests that interethnic contact is not merely “good” or “bad” but depends on the phenomenon of interest.

This broader conclusion adds a new element to the debate about the role of the interethnic encounter. Rather than focusing on the conditions for contact or the specific type of interethnic encounters, the findings point to the importance of a different type of query, namely *what* contact does and does not promote. The importance of this query, however, reveals little in substantial terms about the role of interethnic contact. How can we understand the somewhat paradoxical findings that the same type of contact under the same conditions has divergent effects? In the following, I explore and apply a new theoretical framework in which I distinguish between *interpersonal* and *intrapersonal* outcomes. This, I argue, may provide a lens to scrutinize *what* contact affects and in which direction.

A New Theoretical Framework: *Interpersonal* and *Intrapersonal* Phenomena

By *interpersonal* phenomena, I refer to behavior, attitudes, and feelings directed towards other individuals, in this case members of different ethnic groups. Interpersonal phenomena, thus defined, relate to the *alter*, that is, they are other-regarding. By *intrapersonal* phenomena, I refer to behavior, attitudes, and feelings related to oneself. The intrapersonal domain relates to the *ego*, that is, they are self-regarding. The distinction between interpersonal and intrapersonal phenomena is naturally fuzzy, and the categories should be seen as opposite poles on the same continuum rather than as discrete classifications with clearly identifiable boundaries.

The distinction between interpersonal and intrapersonal phenomena constitutes the first dimension of the theoretical framework. The second dimension is the degree to which the effect of interethnic contact is positive or negative. Like the interpersonal-intrapersonal distinction, the effect of contact is continuous such that an outcome can be more-or-less rather than either-or. The second dimension captures the certainty with which we can say that the contact effects are positive or negative. In this regard, it is worth clarifying what I mean when I say that contact has a negative effect. There are two possible interpretations. The first is that more contact with ethnic outgroup members has a direct negative effect. This is one of the arguments we make in paper C, in which we suggest that ethnic similarity improves well-being by reducing exposure to prejudice. Here, actual contact with outgroup members is expected to be a key driver. The second interpretation is that relatively more contact with outgroup members reduces contact with ethnic ingroup members, and that it is to a larger extent the presence of ingroup members rather than outgroup members that has a causal effect. In this case, interethnic contact has an indirect, negative effect. This is the second argument we make in paper C – that ethnic similarity increases a positive self-concept – as well as the finding in paper D – that ethnic enclaves have a positive effect on naturalization. In the theoretical framework, the “negative effect” of contact includes both interpretations.

In figure 5.1, I map the theoretical framework and relate it to the findings in the dissertation. The distinction between interpersonal and intrapersonal outcomes is placed on the horizontal axis; and the distinction between positive and negative effect of interethnic contact is placed on the vertical axes. Words in red reflect the findings in each of the four papers and indicate a fairly coherent pattern: Interethnic contact improves more *interpersonal* outcomes at the cost of more *intrapersonal* outcomes.

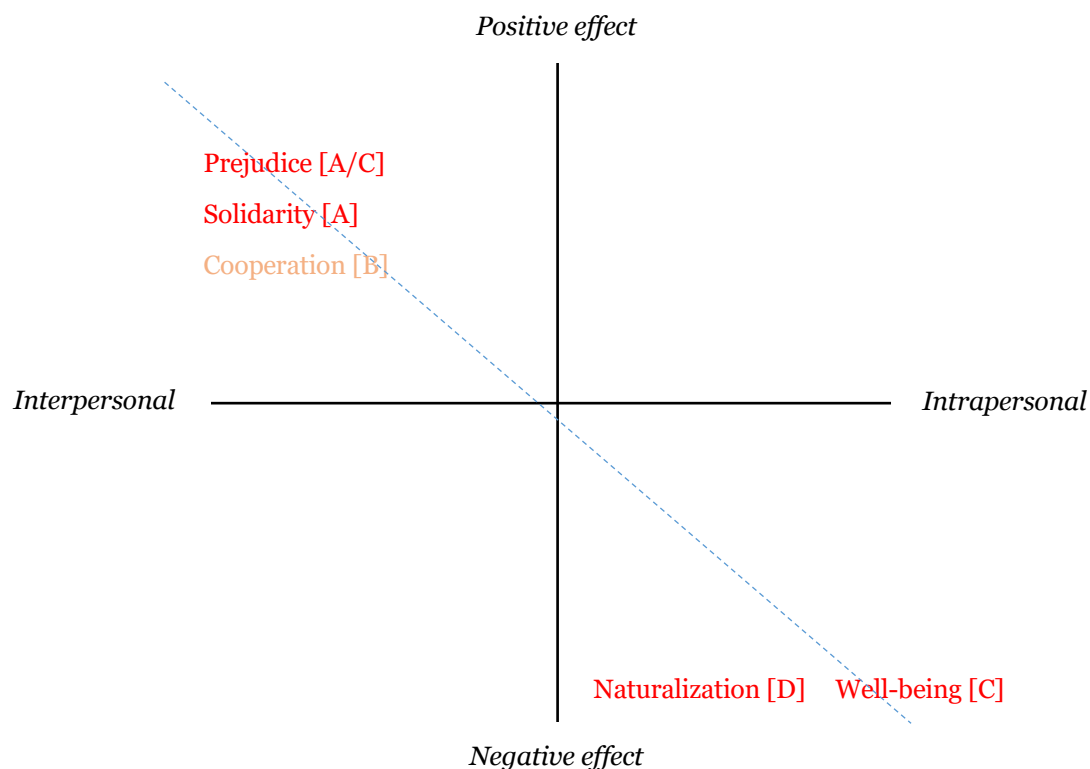
First, interethnic contact increases solidarity towards immigrants and reduces outgroup prejudice (paper A and C), and information plausibly acquired via interethnic contact diminishes outgroup bias in expected cooperation (paper B). Intergroup solidarity, outgroup prejudice, and expected cooperation quite clearly constitute interpersonal outcomes. These findings are all placed in the interpersonal end of the interpersonal-intrapersonal dimension and are placed as moderately positive on the positive-negative effect dimension.

There are different reasons why these findings are not placed at the top of the positive-negative-effect dimension. In terms of solidarity (paper A), the finding that contact increases intergroup solidarity applies to immigrants but not to ethnic minorities. Though the effect of interethnic contact does not seem to reduce solidarity towards the ethnic minority and though the positive effect towards immigrants is sizeable, it only partly supports the claim that contact increases intergroup solidarity. In paper A and in paper C, we further show that interethnic contact reduces outgroup prejudice. The reason these findings are not presented as a perfect sign of positive contact effects is simply that the statistical uncertainty related to the estimates of ethnic minority prejudice against members of the ethnic majority is fairly large (see figure 4.8). Still, these general findings resonate well with the classic contact theoretical prediction and the empirical findings corroborating that prediction. Finally, though the conclusion in paper B is clear and consistent, these findings are not placed in the top of the framework either. Besides the fact that interethnic contact is not directly measured in this paper, the key reason is that paper B may overestimate the degree to which information on more malleable social factors acquired in the real world closes the expected cooperation gap. In the paper, the ethnic cues and the social factors are uncorrelated, on average. Yet, as discussed in section 3.2, this may be unrealistically positive if such correlations do in fact exist. Though it is not unlikely that interethnic contact will typically provide stereotype-reducing information, and though the results in paper A directly show that contact does partly seem to shape prosocial attitudes via stereotype reductions, paper B risks overestimating the gap-closing effect occurring via real-world contact. For this reason, the findings are placed more modestly in the framework. These reservations notwithstanding, the general pattern in this dissertation is that interethnic contact generally seems to promote interpersonal outcomes.

Second, and in contrast, interethnic contact reduces well-being (paper C) as well as naturalization (paper D). Both of these phenomena are predominantly intrapersonal outcomes that are related to and acquire meaning for the individual. Note that naturalization may also signal a closing or blurring of the psychological gap between the ethnic majority and the immigrant naturalizing

as well as signal societal integration (or assimilation). Still, the proof of national belonging and potential advantages of citizenship are primarily related to the individual naturalizing. For these reasons, naturalization is defined as an intrapersonal phenomenon but plotted at the less extreme end of this continuum in figure 5.1. Note also, as discussed, that the negative effect of contact may be more indirect in the case of well-being and naturalization. Though we do find indications that there is a direct negative effect of interethnic contact in paper C, there is empirical evidence that naturalization, for example, is driven more by the positive role of ethnically similar others than by the negative of role of ethnically dissimilar others. Though it is essential to theoretically disentangle these two drivers, they will often be intertwined empirically. Taken together, a higher share of ethnic outgroup members generally seems to impede more intrapersonal outcomes.

Figure 5.1. Theoretical Framework of Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Outcomes



Note: Red colors reflect the findings in each of the four papers in this dissertation. Letters in brackets refer to the specific paper in the dissertation. The word “cooperation” is in yellow because I do not directly measure interethnic contact in paper B.

One relevant question is the extent to which the pattern in figure 5.1 correlates with the ethnic group studied in each of the papers in this dissertation. Indeed, the claim that contact improves interpersonal outcomes and impedes more intrapersonal ones could be confounded by systematically focusing on either

the ethnic majority or the ethnic minority. There is some initial truth to this claim: The finding that interethnic contact improves solidarity and that more relevant information closes the cooperation gap between “us” and “them” is based on samples of the ethnic majority only, whereas the finding that contact impedes naturalization is based, logically, on analyses of descendants and immigrants. However, paper C includes both the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority and not only shows that ethnic similarity improves well-being to the same extent in both groups but also suggests that such similarity affects out-group prejudice in both groups. That is, in this paper, we find within-study support for the idea that interethnic contact impedes well-being (an intrapersonal phenomenon) while simultaneously decreasing prejudice (an interpersonal phenomenon) among both the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority. The idea that contact reduces prejudice held by the ethnic majority is further corroborated in paper A. Hence, from the perspective of the ethnic majority, the interpersonal-intrapersonal pattern seems quite consistent: Interethnic contact partly increases solidarity (and expected cooperation) and reduces outgroup prejudice while at the same time reducing well-being. The pattern seems to replicate from the perspective of the ethnic minority as well: Contact seems to reduce prejudice while at the same time impeding well-being and naturalization. In sum, even when the results are split based on the ethnic group studied, there is support for the pattern that contact promotes outcomes that occur *between* persons and impedes outcomes occurring *within* persons.

Note that this framework does not necessarily compete with the predictions made in contact theory. First, the classic version of contact theory only operates at the interpersonal dimension of the theoretical framework. Second, the findings in this dissertation that are related to the interpersonal end of the spectrum are in line with the predictions in contact theory. Hence, in the left-hand side of the spectrum, this framework suggests that the positive predictions made in contact theory also apply to other interpersonal outcomes – such as solidarity. What the interpersonal-intrapersonal distinction further adds, however, is the possibility of a broader and more nuanced understanding of the consequences of interethnic contact. Indeed, by focusing on contact primarily as an empirical phenomenon, rather than a theory, the findings in this dissertation show that interethnic interactions may both promote and impede socio-political outcomes. That is, even *within* the realm of contact, where the interethnic encounter is characterized by interactions rather than exposure, there appears to be two sides to the story.

I by no means intend to imply that this interpersonal-intrapersonal distinction is more relevant than other distinctions related to the interethnic encounter. Nor do I intend to imply that this distinction will perfectly predict

how the real world unfolds. It is primarily a theoretical framework that presents, by definition, a simplified structure to make sense of interethnic contact, and to which there will likely be outliers and deviations from the general pattern. What I do intend to imply is that the distinction between interpersonal and intrapersonal outcomes may provide a theoretically relevant lens that helps to further our understanding of the complex nature of intergroup integration. The framework is exploratory and more systematic (meta)evidence is needed to corroborate it. Besides systematic literature reviews, one way to test this framework more directly would be to investigate different types of outcomes based on the same data. The exploratory character of the theoretical framework notwithstanding, the cross-study empirical pattern in this dissertation points to a potential new dilemma for integration policies: the trade-off between improving intergroup relations and fostering aspects related to individual flourishing. In the next and final chapter, I will return to the political implications of these findings.

Chapter 6

Concluding Discussion

In this final chapter, I wrap up and present the main conclusions of the dissertation. I summarize the key findings and discuss their potential limitations and broader implications.

6.1. Summary of the Findings

In the dissertation, I have investigated the broader role of interethnic contact in the everyday setting for a series of phenomena from the perspective of both the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority while working hard to improve causal identification. Specifically, I have developed, tested, and synthesized four theoretical claims that were examined using survey and registry data in observational as well as experimental designs. The four claims were driven by two specific questions. The first question was how mundane interethnic contact, and information plausibly acquired from such contact, shape prosocial attitudes. By developing and testing two claims, I found that interethnic contact increased the ethnic majority's solidarity towards immigrants but not towards ethnic minorities (paper A) and showed that ethnic bias in expected cooperation is explained by a series of correlates of ethnic attributes (paper B). More specifically, the findings showed that interethnic contact reduces the saliency of (some) ethnic cues and challenges negative deservingness stereotypes that are often powerful in shaping welfare attitudes of the public (e.g., Aarøe & Petersen, 2014; Gilens, 1999). They also showed that more malleable social factors such as socio-economic status, cultural values, or civic behavior explain why the ethnic majority expects ethnic outgroup members to be less cooperative. Though the information acquired in paper B may be slightly more positive than the information acquired via real world interethnic contact, there are reasons to believe that such contact does indeed provide stereotype-reducing information. Taken together, these findings generally indicate that interethnic contact, and information plausibly acquired via such contact, can promote prosocial attitudes towards ethnic outgroup members.

The second question concerned the extent to which mundane interethnic contact affects well-being and naturalization. By testing two additional claims, I found that *intraethnic* contact quite consistently increased well-being by minimizing exposure to prejudice and improving a positive self-concept (paper C) as well as increased immigrants' and descendants' likelihood of naturalizing (paper D). Stated in reverse, interethnic contact seems to reduce well-

being and naturalization. This shows that the same type of contact that can foster prosocial intergroup attitudes simultaneously impedes well-being and naturalization. Note that, in the latter case, contact may operate more indirectly as well. That is, rather than being the main driver of well-being and naturalization, higher levels of interethnic contact may operate by reducing contact with same-ethnic peers in relative terms. Though it is theoretically important to distinguish the negative effects of interethnic contact from the positive effects of intraethnic contact (see e.g., paper D), the practical implications of broader policies of integration or segregation often tend to be the same whether it is the presence of “them” or the presence of “us” that is the driver. Taken together, these findings suggest that interethnic contact may not only foster but also (indirectly) impede sociopolitical outcomes.

To sum up, the *same type* of contact occurring under the *same circumstances* in the *same country* appears to have divergent effects. These results led me to develop a new theoretical framework in which I distinguish between *interpersonal* outcomes and *intrapersonal* outcomes. The former are in essence other-regarding, the latter self-regarding. Based on this framework, the broader conclusion of the dissertation emerges: Interethnic contact seems to promote more interpersonal outcomes *and* impede more intrapersonal outcomes. This poses a new type of dilemma for policies of integration to which I will return shortly.

6.2. Potential Limitations

Before discussing the broader implications of the dissertation, it is important to note that there are potential limitations to these conclusions. Given that I have predominantly focused on children and adolescents in Danish schools, one potential limitation is generalization: Do findings based on this specific population in this specific setting in this specific country tell us something more broadly? In the following, I discuss each aspect in turn – population, setting, and country – before turning to two further points worth highlighting: the concept and measurement of mundane interethnic contact and the tentative nature of the new theoretical framework.

Does the study of children and adolescents tell us something more broadly? In many aspects, children and adolescents are different from adults. Adolescents live at home with their parent(s), they interact less with the wider society and its institutions, they are figuring out who they are, and a series of life choices are still ahead. These facts seem to suggest that studying children and adolescence is qualitatively different from studying adults. On the other hand, a key tenet in studies of political socialization is that these “impressionable years” are formative, that is, it is in these years that attitudes and values

are shaped and crystalized (Alwin & Krosnick, 1991; Jennings & Markus, 1984). Though the life of children and adolescents may be different from the life of adults, this need not imply that adolescents and adults make sense of the social and political world in qualitatively different ways. Indeed, the idea that attitudes and values crystalize in childhood and adolescence implies not only that adolescents likely have coherent perspectives on complex socio-political matters but also that such attitudes and values are fairly sticky. If this is the case, studying attitude formation and behavior in these years is particularly important and likely tells us something about attitudes among adults as well.

For example, as I show in appendix S10 in paper A, teenagers (15-19 years old) and adults in Denmark have quite similar views on a range of topics. As I clarify in the paper, this does not suggest that adolescents and adults have the same knowledge and experience to draw on but rather that adolescents may have coherent intuitions regarding sociopolitical topics that do not necessarily differ from the intuitions of adults. Particularly the racial and ethnic composition in childhood seems to have consequences into adulthood (e.g., Billings et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2021; Eger et al., 2021; Gamoran et al., 2016; Goldman & Hopkins, 2020; Kustov et al., 2021; Ramos et al., 2019). Some studies suggest that the ethnic composition experienced during childhood is more important for attitudes in adulthood than the ethnic composition experienced in adulthood (Goldman & Hopkins, 2020). For these reasons, I believe that studying children and adolescents is important in itself and tells us something more broadly about attitude formation. This assumption is not directly tested in the dissertation, and, hence, some reservation is in order in terms of generalizing the findings to the adult population.

A related question is whether studying the school setting tells us something more broadly. On the one hand, school is undeniably a unique, highly institutionalized setting in which students spend a great deal of their time over many years. Teachers structure and supervise most of the day, and students have no formal status differences. Students often interact in cooperative ways in group work and classroom discussions. From this perspective, the findings in the school setting may be less generalizable beyond that setting. It may be comparable to other settings in some respects and diverge in others. Yet, even if the school setting were unique, this setting is also highly universal. As Elwert and colleagues (2020: 7) note “... almost all members of a birth cohort must attend school”. Interethnic interactions in school, thus, occur in a mundane setting under scalable conditions among virtually the entire population. So even if the school setting is viewed as unique, the findings in this dissertation have broad implications given the universality of the school setting cross-nationally.

On the other hand, the school setting could also be seen as merely one type of context in which everyday interactions occur. From this perspective, the school setting is comparable to other everyday settings where cross-group interactions take place such as the workplace (e.g., Andersson & Dehdari, 2021), the army (e.g., Finseraas & Kotsadam, 2017), the football club (e.g., Mousa, 2020), or the dormitory (e.g., Laar et al., 2005). Though the intensity of contact may differ in different settings, there are valid reasons to perceive the school, and particularly the classroom, as merely one venue where social interactions unfold. One theoretically guided reason is that (some of) Allport's conditions for optimal contact are present in the real world elsewhere than in the school. From this perspective, the findings and mechanisms in this dissertation need not be confined to the school setting but may apply more generally to other settings that foster mundane interethnic contact. Still, in the absence of direct cross-setting evidence, this remains an assumption in this dissertation.

Do studies conducted in Denmark tell us something more broadly? In this dissertation, I have focused on the Danish case in all the papers. The key reason is that it increases cross-study comparability and because Danish registry data makes it possible to objectively and precisely measure the presence of ethnic ingroup and outgroup members at the cohort and classroom level. From one perspective, Denmark is special. Denmark is a small country with a large welfare state and a historically homogenous population. The Danish society offers all residents free education, health care, and social benefits, and interethnic hatred and violence have remained low compared to other countries. The first immigrants arrived in the 1960s and today, approximately 14% of the Danish population are immigrants and descendants mainly from non-Western countries. Far-right political parties gained public support and political legitimacy fairly quickly, and the most dominant far-right party acted as parliamentary support from the beginning of the 2000s. Since then, Denmark has developed some of the world's most restrictive citizenship criteria and installed policies that make it difficult to enter and stay in Denmark.

Several of the above trends, however, occur cross-nationally. For example, waves of migration during the second half of the 20th century and the first part of the 21st century have changed the ethnic composition and given rise to populist far-right parties in many European countries. Access to citizenship has been restricted in several countries as well, though with varying speed and intensity (e.g., Joppke, 2007). From a more theoretical perspective, ingroup favoritism does not seem to be culturally conditioned but appears to be a rather universal human trait (e.g., Balliet et al., 2014; Greene, 2014; Romano et al., 2017; Romano et al., 2021). In a similar vein, the effects of interethnic con-

tact do not seem to be confined to certain countries but appear fairly consistent across cultural settings (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). I do not intend to claim that the country of study is never relevant in the investigation of interethnic contact. Indeed, histories of slavery, violence, and segregation as well as specific ethnic cleavages are important to take into account. Yet, even in conflict-ridden contexts, contact may play a role (e.g., Mousa, 2020; Samii, 2013; Scacco & Warren, 2018) which suggest that local conditions for the interethnic encounter may be more relevant than the broader country setting. From this perspective, it is not self-evident that mundane interethnic contact should operate substantially differently in other national settings. That said, stating that studying children and adolescents in the Danish school setting is relevant beyond the specific population, site of study, and country setting is ultimately an empirical question that requires some reservation.

Beyond the limitations of generalizability, two points are worth highlighting. The first relates to the concept and measurement of mundane interethnic contact. One potential critique against the measurement of contact in this dissertation is that the mere presence of ethnic ingroup or outgroup members in a confined social space is not necessarily contact. The main reason is that one cannot infer (intimate) interactions from the mere presence of outgroup members. First, there is a “leading the horse to the water”-problem in which those with high levels of prejudice refrain from interacting with outgroup members even if such contact opportunities are present. Second, and more generally, the inclination to seek out likeminded others (e.g., McPherson et al., 2001) may imply that ethnic groups segregate *within* the confined social space such that no cross-group interactions occur. Both objections are important. Indeed, as I have discussed, the mere observation of outgroup members is not likely to have the same consequences as interactions between members of different ethnic groups. Hence, in cases where cross-group interactions are voluntary, the mere presence of outgroup members need not imply more interactions.

Yet, in this dissertation, I have focused on contact in an everyday setting where interactions are not voluntary. Recall that I define interethnic contact as interactions between members of different ethnic groups. Thus defined, contact does not necessitate the formation of more intimate contact, such as friendship, and there are no further restrictions on the type or valence of these, potentially more casual, interactions. Contact, thus defined, is unavoidable for students who are present in the same classroom (see e.g., the inclusion criteria in Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006: 755). Even if students were segregated in all extra-school activities, this fact implies that it is generally not possible for students to escape interactions with their peers within the classroom. Further, as I have discussed in chapter 3, using the classroom and cohort setting makes it possible to rely on contact that is far less a product of selection. That is, the

“leading the horse to the water” challenge is minor to non-existent given that students, in the designs utilized, rarely choose their own classmates or peers in the cohort. Critics could also object that real contact needs to be intimate. Yet, in this case, the practical implications of contact is strongly reduced. More importantly, in several cases, I find direct support for the general predications in contact theory even in a setting where cross-group interactions are not necessarily intimate.

The last point worth highlighting is that the proposed interpersonal-intrapersonal framework is tentative and needs more systematic scrutiny. Though I believe that the cross-study similarities in this dissertation makes a good case for building the framework, the current empirical evidence supporting it is naturally thin. More work is needed to assess the extent to which prior studies map onto this framework. This requires systematic reviews of different literatures that investigate the effects of contact as well as work that directly tests this framework using the same data. We do find some within-study evidence of the framework in showing that contact reduces prejudice but also reduces well-being and, partly, self-esteem (paper C). Still, we need more studies that specifically test the effects of contact on interpersonal and intrapersonal outcomes.

6.3. Implications

The above reservations notwithstanding, the findings in this dissertation have important implications. The first part of the conclusion – that interethnic contact, and information plausibly acquired via such contact, can improve prosocial attitudes towards ethnic outgroup members – challenges the idea that ethnic diversity per se undermines prosociality. That is, it challenges what is often referred to as the progressive’s dilemma in which progressive citizens are forced to choose between supporting immigration or solidary policies since these are ultimately incommensurable. As paper A shows, ethnic diversity in the shape of interethnic contact partly increases rather than reduces such solidarity by reducing outgroup prejudice. Second, as paper B shows, information on more malleable social factors reduces the role of ethnic cues in explaining prosocial attitudes. Indeed, these findings suggest that it is not ethnic diversity per se that reduces prosociality but negative ethnic stereotypes and diversity without contact, that is, segregation. These conclusions are aligned with the general predictions in contact theory. They corroborate studies of more intimate contact showing that intergroup friendship, for example, reduces prejudice. Yet, these findings also indicate that the positive effect of mundane contact, and information plausibly acquired via such contact, ex-

ceeds the realm of prejudice, and exists for intergroup solidarity and, assumedly, cooperation as well; outcomes typically found to deteriorate in the inter-ethnic encounter.

Yet, in the same breath, the second part of the conclusion is that the same type of contact (indirectly) reduces well-being and immigrant naturalization. These findings may neither support nor reject the classic version of contact theory in so far as the aim of contact theory is to explain the relationship between contact and interpersonal outcomes. In terms of well-being, however, we argue and partly empirically corroborate that ethnic similarity improves well-being by reducing prejudice held by the outgroup. This suggests that the negative effect of interethnic contact for well-being is in fact compatible with the general predictions in contact theory. In terms of naturalization: To the extent that majority contact is expected to increase citizenship acquisition by fostering a stronger national identity – an inclusive “we” – the findings in paper D reject aspects of contact theory. Though I reject the theoretical argument derived from contact theory that more majority contact should improve naturalization, I am not able to directly test whether the proposed contact theoretical mechanisms are in play. The key point is, however, that even if some of these findings have less direct implications for the classic version of contact *theory*, they have quite substantial implications for understanding the broader role of contact as an *empirical phenomenon*. Whereas the findings in paper A and B challenge the progressive’s dilemma, the second conclusion introduces a new dilemma: the trade-off between promoting interpersonal versus intrapersonal outcomes. Hence, though mundane interethnic contact may play a positive role in reducing the psychological gap between “us” and “them”, ethnic homogeneity appears important to improve aspects more directly related to “me”.

It is worth noting that it is not self-evident that the paradox of mundane interethnic contact would replicate in the framework of intimate, or generally self-reported, contact. For example, it is not theoretically clear why having more outgroup friends should reduce well-being. If people generally tend to select their friends *because* such friendship maintains or improves well-being, then the ethnic composition of one’s friends should play little role for well-being. Further, one could even argue that having more outgroup friends could be related to *higher* levels of well-being in contrast to the findings in paper C, for example if having outgroup friends opens the door to new perspectives and ways of life conducive for well-being or because of selection. If this is the case, mundane and intimate contact are not only different in terms of representativeness and ecological validity but may operate differently in the intrapersonal sphere.

From a political perspective, the paradox of interethnic contact in the everyday setting poses demanding questions such as: Is it more important to foster intergroup solidarity than well-being? My intention here is not to suggest that one type of outcome is necessarily more important than the other. The answer to such questions is beyond the realm of empirical scrutiny and rests on normative evaluations and political conviction. My intention, however, is to point out that such trade-offs likely exist, and that this is important to be aware of when designing policies of integration. It suggests that integration projects such as demolition of housing, bussing of school children, and managing of the school ethnic composition may hold a promise to reduce interethnic bias to the extent that such (geographical) changes lead to actual interethnic interactions. Yet, relocating the minority population into majority-dominant settings at the same time risks reducing well-being (see also Damm et al., n.d.) and naturalization. Given that it is often the minority population that experiences the largest changes in their local environment through such policy changes, this trade-off may be particularly relevant from a minority perspective though the trade-off exists for the ethnic majority as well.

There is an extra layer of complexity to this dilemma and thus to (local) policies of integration: Higher levels of interethnic contact from the perspective of the ethnic majority typically implies lower levels of interethnic contact from the perspective of the ethnic minority, and vice versa. At least in a confined social space where it is not possible to alter the absolute number of group members, it may be challenging to increase interethnic – or intraethnic – contact for members of the ethnic majority and minority simultaneously. Put in a stylized way, changing the ethnic composition and the level of contact may improve interpersonal outcomes while reducing intrapersonal outcomes from the perspective of one group, but would do so in opposite direction from the perspective of the other group. This added complexity indicates that a political “quick fix” to this new dilemma is unlikely. Yet, at the same time, it implies that a relatively balanced environment in which both interethnic and intraethnic contact takes place may approach a sense of equilibrium; one in which members of different ethnic groups will enjoy some of the advantages of having contact with ethnically similar as well as ethnically dissimilar people. Though such a case of integration would not maximize any of the outcomes dealt with in this dissertation for any of the groups, it might be a case in which it is possible to reap the benefits while minimizing the losses of ethnic integration.

Overall, this dissertation offers a new perspective on the longstanding political and academic debate about the consequences of interethnic encounters for diverse societies. The conclusion that the same type of interethnic contact may simultaneously promote and impede different sociopolitical outcomes is

both theoretically novel and politically essential to understand the consequences of interethnic contact and, thus, (local) policies aimed at promoting integration. This provides a broader and more nuanced perspective on the paradoxical role of interethnic contact in everyday life. In times of increasing ethnic diversity and political polarization, knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of mundane interethnic contact is essential to help lay the foundations of a more evidence-based public debate.

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English Summary

According to one of the most prominent social science theories, contact between members of different social groups can improve intergroup relations. This lesson from contact theory has important implications in times of increasing immigration and ethnic diversity cross-nationally. It suggests that, under certain circumstances, interethnic interactions are essential in alleviating ethnic bias and promoting aggregate social harmony.

In this dissertation, I build on the classic insights in contact theory but seek to broaden our understanding of the role of contact. First, whereas the majority of prior empirical work relies on self-reported and more intimate contact, I turn to the role of objectively measured interethnic interactions occurring in the everyday setting – particularly the school setting. Contact in the everyday setting is not only less studied but is more common and has wider social and political implications. Second, I specifically focus on the role of such interethnic contact for a series of phenomena that have been less scrutinized in the framework of contact. I do so while focusing on both the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority and while working hard on causal identification. Jointly, these approaches provide a strong case for assessing the broader implications of interethnic contact.

By developing, testing, and ultimately synthesizing four claims unfolded in four papers, I find that the same type of contact occurring under the same circumstances in the same country has divergent consequences. On the one hand, more interethnic contact – measured objectively as the presence of ethnic outgroup members in the classroom – not only seems to reduce prejudice in line with contact theory but partly increases intergroup solidarity. Further, stereotype-reducing information, plausibly acquired via interethnic contact, reduces the importance of ethnic cues for expectations of cooperation. Whereas prior work tends to show that solidarity and cooperation deteriorate in the presence of “them”, these findings suggest that actual interethnic interactions can play a positive role in reducing ethnic bias in prosocial attitudes. On the other hand, *intraethnic* contact – measured objectively as the presence of ethnic ingroup members in the classroom and school cohort – fosters well-being and increases the likelihood that immigrants and descendants naturalize. Stated differently, interethnic contact promotes prosocial attitudes but simultaneously reduces well-being and naturalization.

In synthesizing these paradoxical findings, I propose a new theoretical framework to understand the broader implications of interethnic contact. I suggest that interethnic contact may promote more *interpersonal* outcomes,

such as solidarity, prejudice, and expected cooperation. Yet, interethnic contact may also impede more *intrapersonal* outcomes such as well-being and naturalization; not necessarily in spite of but partly because of the positive effects of cross-group contact. Though this framework is tentative, this points to a new dilemma and trade-off to interethnic contact and policies of integration.

Dansk resumé

Ifølge en af de mest prominente socialvidenskabelige teorier kan kontakten mellem medlemmer af forskellige sociale grupper forbedre relationen på tværs af grupper. Denne indsigt fra kontaktteorien er central i en tid, hvor indvandring og etnisk diversitet er stigende på tværs af landegrænser. Implikationen er, at interetniske interaktioner, der forekommer under bestemte betingelser, kan spille en væsentlig rolle i at mindske etnisk bias og promovere social harmoni.

I denne afhandling bygger jeg på de klassiske indsigter i kontaktteorien, men jeg forsøger samtidig at udvide vores forståelse af, hvilken rolle kontakt kan spille i en bredere forstand. Hvor størstedelen af tidligere studier anvender selvrapporteret og ofte mere intime former for interetnisk kontakt, retter jeg mig mod, og måler objektivt, en form for kontakt, der forekommer i hverdagsomgivelserne – specifikt i skolen. Kontakt, der forekommer i hverdagen, er ikke kun mindre belyst, men er samtidig mere almindeligt forekommende i den bredere befolkning. Af den grund har denne type af kontakt mere vidtrækkende sociale og politiske implikationer. Udover at fokusere på hverdagskontakt, retter jeg blikket mod en række fænomener, der er mindre belyste i et kontaktteoretisk perspektiv. Det gør jeg samtidig med, at jeg studerer kontakt både fra et etnisk majoritets- og minoritetsperspektiv og forsøger at identificere de *kausale* effekter af kontakt. Til sammen gør disse tilgange det muligt at vurdere de bredere implikationer af interetnisk kontakt.

I afhandlingen opstiller, tester og syntetiserer jeg fire påstande, som er udfoldet i fire artikler. Den generelle konklusion er, at den samme type af kontakt, der finder sted under de samme betingelser i det samme land, har forskelligartede konsekvenser. På den ene side reducerer interetnisk kontakt – målt objektivt som tilstedeværelsen af udgruppemedlemmer i klasseværelset – ikke blot fordomme i tråd med de klassiske fund i kontaktlitteraturen, men øger delvist solidariteten med udgruppemedlemmer. Derudover mindsker stereotyp-reducerende information betydningen af etniske karakteristika for borgeres tilbøjelighed til at anskue udgruppemedlemmer som samarbejdsvillige; information, der med stor sandsynlighed tilegnes gennem interetnisk kontakt. Hvor tidligere studier ofte viser, at solidaritet og samarbejde forværes i mødet med ”dem”, peger disse fund på, at det at have egentlige interaktioner med etniske udgruppemedlemmer kan spille en positiv rolle i at forstærke, snarere end reducere, tilbøjeligheden til at ville hjælpe og forvente samarbejde fra ”dem”. På den anden side viser resultaterne i denne afhandling, at *intraetnisk* kontakt – målt objektivt som tilstedeværelsen af etniske indgruppemedlemmer i klasseværelset og på skoleårgangen – kan fremme

trivslen og øge sandsynligheden for at indvandrere og efterkommere opnår statsborgerskab. Disse fund peger på, at etnisk homogenitet i nogle henseender kan spille en central rolle. Kontakten mellem medlemmer af forskellige grupper ser altså både ud til at promovere prosociale holdninger, men mindsker på samme tid borgernes trivsel og sandsynlighed for at naturalisere.

Gennem en syntese af disse fund foreslår jeg en ny teoretisk ramme til at forstå de bredere implikationer af interetnisk kontakt. Jeg indikerer, at interetnisk kontakt på den ene side ser ud til at promovere mere *interpersonelle* fænomener, såsom solidaritet, fordomme og forventet samarbejde. På den anden side ser interetnisk kontakt ud til at mindske mere *intrapersonelle* fænomener såsom trivsel og naturalisering; ikke nødvendigvis på trods, men delvist som følge af de positive effekter ved tværgruppekontakt. Disse konklusioner peger på et nyt dilemma og trade-off ved interetnisk kontakt og integrationspolitik.