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advocates of particular models of identity draw attention to perceived limitations in the collective views of others and seek to supplant these with their own. It was such progress—and the problematization of race psychology—that led to prejudice being identified as a research topic in the first place (Reynolds et al. 2012). Likewise, the success of Dixon et al.’s own leadership will hinge on whether it motivates researchers to interrogate their own “attitude problem” or else cling to their prejudices (and the identities that underpin them) ever more strongly.

Of babies and bathwater, and rabbits and rabbit holes: A plea for conflict prevention, not conflict promotion

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Hewstone 2005; Hodson et al. 2013) is as important as promoting perspective-taking or increasing the complexity of outgroup images—is arguably more relevant than emphasizing collective action. Likewise, in our current work in multietnic schools in the north of England (the scene of riots in 2001), we see the primary goal being one of promoting positive coexistence through contact, rather than of encouraging further disturbances. As academics, we consider it unwise to encourage collective action that will exact unknown and potentially negative impact on others (typically, not ourselves). In the wake of the Arab Spring of 2011 it may be tempting to “ignore struggles” to bring about social change. Yet we find ourselves thinking of Alice’s rash journey to Wonderland, compelling us to urge strong caution before going down this particular rabbit hole without seriously considering the potentially negative consequences of encouraging intergroup conflict in the name of social change.

Dixon et al. are right to point to the two models of social change and the possible tensions between them. However prejudice reduction and collective action need not be conceptualized as zero-sum goals. If, as the authors contend, contact is negatively associated with precursors of social change, then it is incumbent upon the field to harness the power of contact to induce change in the dominant group without blunting the subordinate group’s striving for equity. There was, after all, a middle ground on this topic. Minority is convinced to change their out-group evaluations and when theory is widespread normative support for change. Contact can therefore facilitate social change by bringing majority members to understand the world from the perspective of the disadvantaged minority (Jeffries & Rasform 1969; Mallet et al. 2008). It is important, therefore, not to underplay the great successes of intergroup contact. Even knowing about or observing intergroup contact is associated with reduced prejudice (Turner et al. 2007; Wright et al. 1997), and recent longitudinal and multilevel analyses show that contact typically drives effects at the neighborhood level (not simply at the individual level; Pettigrew et al. 2007). In contrast to alternative interventions, contact effects generalize, from individual out-group members to the out-group as a whole (Brown & Hewstone 2005), and from views of a primary outgroup to secondary outgroups (Tausch et al. 2010). Such research implies that with contact’s “secondary transfer effects” ally the target authors’ concerns that, for members of a minority group, contact with the majority group negatively impacts attitudes toward other minorities.

Although contact is only part of the solution, not the solution, its role remains essential. As social psychologists, we see great value in exploring the potential of multiple forms of intergroup contact to impact multiple outcomes, via multiple mediating processes, at micro- meso- and societal-levels (Pettigrew 1996; Wagner & Hewstone 2012). This view does not negate or deny the importance of collective action, but rather sets the record straight
about what contact can achieve and situates contact-based attitude change and social change as complementary (not inherently conflicting) objectives.

The politics of moving beyond prejudice
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Abstract: Dixon et al. have highlighted the importance of a political conceptualisation of intergroup relations that challenges individualising models of social change. As important as this paper is for the development of critical debates in psychology, we can detect at least three issues that warrant further discussion: (a) the cultural and historical conditions of structural inequality and its perception, (b) the marginalisation of post-colonial works on collective mobilisation, and (c) acknowledging the complex perspectives and politics of those targeted by prejudice.

Before and beyond the existence of psychology as a science, revolutionaries of all times – Spartacus, Robespierre, Lenin, Mao Ze-dong, Lumumba, Malcolm X, Mandela, and leaders of anti-colonial movements – knew that one needs a dedicated group of people to attempt and sometimes succeed in overthrowing an institutionalised social structure of oppression and discrimination. They also knew that dominant classes would not cede power voluntarily. Their struggle was directed against a well-organised culturally given and their subordinated status appears historically disadvantaged. Their struggle was directed against a well-organised culturally given and their subordinated status appears historically disadvantaged.

Prejudice becomes an issue as soon as societies are more or less divided and resources are structurally gives the complex political identities and multi-faceted political ambitions of the structurally disadvantaged (cf. Bourdieu 2000).

Nevertheless, we applaud the attempt by Dixon et al. to highlight the individualisation of prejudice within psychology. Indeed, there is a long history of the individualisation and psychologicalisation of prejudice that has excluded more political psychological accounts that may be better equipped to tackle social inequalities and promote social change (Elcheroth et al. 2011). Hence, it is troubling to see this marginalisation occurring in this very paper with the omission of relevant theories on collective mobilisation and group solidarity based on the works of Biko, Fanon, and other post-colonial others, which does not aim for social change per se. Conflating these as dealing with the relationship between advantaged and disadvantaged groups belittles and simplifies the complex political identities and multi-faceted political ambitions of the structurally disadvantaged (cf. Bourdieu 2000).

In our recent research (on development in Tanzania and South Africa, Kessi 2011), community art projects focused on heritage families in the UK: Howarth et al. forthcoming; representations of the veil in India and Indonesia, Wagner et al., forthcoming), we have documented how individuals and groups challenge stigmatising representations of development, of race, and of Islam and forge positive emotions towards self and others in these communities. As a result, we see how our research participants have developed a consciousness of their self as agents of change, which was reinforced through the networks of social solidarity forged through the collective activities and the positive recognition that they received from community members. These examples demonstrate that prejudice reduction and collective mobilisation can go hand in hand and do not necessarily draw on competing psychological processes as Dixon et al. argue.

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In our opinion, juxtaposing the collective action model and the prejudice reduction model as models of social change constitutes a confusion in conceptual levels of analysis. The first deals with collective action to abolish structural conditions of which historical revolutions are a more extreme example. The latter is a humanist attempt at smoothing daily social encounters with (constructed) otherness, which does not aim for social change per se. Conflating these as dealing with the relationship between advantaged and disadvantaged groups belittles and simplifies the complex political identities and multi-faceted political ambitions of the structurally disadvantaged (cf. Bourdieu 2000).

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Furthermore, when these authors discuss the findings of prejudice reduction programmes and show that these can sometimes lower support for antidiscriminatory measures, they attribute a false consciousness in the sense of “They should know better that they are being discriminated against!” This is a problematic move that diminishes the perspective and policies of those categorised as “disadvantaged” and overlooks the ideological and intersectional construction of advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Their analysis implies that there are always clearly divided and competing groups: men and women; blacks and whites; Jews and Arabs. This reifies social categories, obscures the intersectionality of all social groups, and loses a perspectival approach that recognises that these are located, socially constructed and ideologically maintained (Gillespie et al., forthcoming).

Dixon et al. have developed an important political conceptualisation of intergroup relations that challenges individualising models of prejudice and social change. However, we suggest that there are a number of problems with this analysis: first, the