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# Beyond Contact: Intergroup Contact in the Context of Power Relations

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*This work investigated how group-based power affects the motivations and preferences that members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups bring to situations of contact. To measure the preferred content of interactions, desires to address particular topics in intergroup contact were assessed for both experimental groups (Study 1) and real groups (Study 2). As predicted, across both studies, the desire to talk about power was greater among members of disadvantaged than of advantaged groups. This difference was mediated by motivation for change in group-based power. Study 2 further demonstrated that more highly identified members of disadvantaged groups wanted to talk about power more. Members of advantaged groups generally preferred to talk about commonalities between the groups more than about group-based power, and this desire was greater with higher levels of identification. However, perceiving that their group's advantage was illegitimate increased the desire of advantaged group members to address power in intergroup interactions.*

**Keywords:** *group position; group power; change motivation; contact*

For more than five decades now, contact between members of different groups has been considered one of the most effective strategies for improving intergroup relations (Allport, 1954; Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Although, in essence, contact should affect members of both groups involved in the relations, recent evidence indicates that the experiences and consequences associated with contact differ for

members of disadvantaged and advantaged groups (see Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005, for a meta-analysis). Contact is significantly less effective for improving the intergroup attitudes of disadvantaged group members than of advantaged group members. Furthermore, conditions such as equal-status interactions, long thought to be critical for contact to improve intergroup relations, were found to be less important for reducing bias among members of disadvantaged groups. In the current work, we propose that processes associated with group power lead members of disadvantaged and advantaged groups to approach intergroup interactions with different agendas and preferences, which may explain the group-based differences in the effectiveness of contact.

Disparities in economic security, political power, and opportunities for social advancement (Feagin, 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Smootha, 2003) produce different social realities, which substantially shape the everyday lives of members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Demoulin, Leyens, & Dovidio, in press). These group-based realities form the basis for different

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motivations that group members have regarding the status quo. Whereas members of advantaged groups are likely to desire the stability of the social system that benefits them, members of disadvantaged groups are typically more motivated toward social change (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wright, 2001). Group members may further use different strategies to satisfy their motivations regarding the status quo. For example, whereas members of advantaged groups may promote ideas that make social hierarchy seem natural and legitimate (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), members of disadvantaged groups, under certain conditions, may assemble and collectively challenge the status quo (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wright, 2001). We propose that the strategies used by members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups to satisfy their different motivations for social change at a societal level are also manifested at the level of intergroup interactions.

One way that disadvantaged groups can promote social change to improve their group position is to alter public discourse to bring injustice and the illegitimacy of power differences into people's conscious awareness. For example, a major tool used by the civil rights movement in the United States was to explicitly challenge the legitimacy of racial oppression (King, 1964). Similar forms of nonviolent resistance, such as India's struggle for independence and South Africa's struggle to throw off apartheid, were aimed at raising public awareness and attention to the illegitimacy of the status quo. Thus, changes in power throughout the world illustrate that explicitly addressing the illegitimate aspect of group-based power has served the disadvantaged group members' interest in social change. This strategy may also operate at the level of intergroup interactions. Specifically, because of their stronger motivation for social change, members of disadvantaged groups may desire to address issues that challenge group-based power in intergroup interactions more than do members of advantaged groups.

In contrast, one strategy that advantaged groups may adopt to stabilize the power relations at a societal level involves promoting ideological messages that serve to justify the status quo (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; van Dijk, 1993). This strategy can take different forms. For example, members of advantaged groups may support ideologies, such as the Protestant work ethic, that place an individual's motivations and abilities at the center of attention. From this perspective, any individual can be held personally responsible for his or her life outcomes (Christopher & Schlenker, 2005), and processes rooted in power relations (e.g., unequal opportunities) lose their relevance for explaining success or failure.

Another possible way to legitimize and stabilize the status quo, which is considered in this study, is to

emphasize aspects that the groups share (e.g., by stressing occupational, cultural, or national commonalities). For example, the emphasis on the benefits of a color-blind society in the United States (i.e., all Americans regardless of skin color) over issues related to racial disparity reflects a national commonality focus (Daniel & Allen, 1988; see also Verkuyten, 2006). Although the emphasis on commonalities can be functional for promoting a positive shared identity and favorable relations between the groups (Dovidio, Gaertner, Niemann, & Snider, 2001), it may also contribute, perhaps indirectly, to the stability of the status relations by masking group-based identities and privileges (see also Ruscher, 2001). Members of disadvantaged groups, who are motivated to improve their group position when they perceive their disadvantage to be illegitimate (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1999), may be less motivated to act for change when their group identity is less salient to them (see also Wright, 2001). Similarly, members of advantaged groups, who are likely to support practices promoting social change if they perceive their advantaged position as illegitimate (Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003), may be less likely to endorse these initiatives when distinctions between the groups are obscured by a focus on commonality.

Thus, regardless of the particular dimension that is emphasized, because a focus on commonalities is likely to render separate group identities and related power differences less salient, one of its by-products may be the stability of the status quo. We propose that this indirect way for legitimizing power is also manifested in the way members of advantaged groups approach intergroup interactions. Specifically, we hypothesize that members of advantaged groups would prefer to focus on commonalities more than on issues that direct attention to group-based power in intergroup interactions.

We further note that members of disadvantaged groups may not want to avoid addressing commonalities altogether when interacting with members of advantaged groups. Drawing attention to commonalities can be beneficial for disadvantaged groups because it fosters positive connections with those of higher status and greater power in society. In addition, members of disadvantaged groups can sensitize members of advantaged groups to issues of social injustice by emphasizing common connections between the groups while simultaneously making group disparities salient (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Consistent with this notion, for members of disadvantaged groups, the desire to emphasize original group identities in intergroup relations has been shown to coexist with a need to maintain common ties with the dominant group (Dovidio et al., 2001). For example, Moroccans and Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands expressed a desire both to be part of the dominant (host) culture and

to be able to retain their original cultural identity (van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998). In contrast, Dutch respondents preferred that immigrants assimilate to the host culture and abandon their original group identities. Although these responses reflect general tendencies regarding relations between groups in society, they are in line with the pattern we propose with respect to preferred content of interactions: Whereas members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups may differ in their desire to emphasize aspects that are linked to original group identities (such as differences in group power), they can have similar tendencies to focus on aspects that they share (such as national or cultural commonality).

In summary, we posit that group position affects the desired content of intergroup interactions. Because of differences in motivation for social change, we expected that members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups would differ in their desire to direct attention to group-based power. Specifically, we hypothesized that members of disadvantaged groups would have a stronger desire to talk about disparities in group-based power than would members of advantaged groups. We further hypothesized that whereas members of advantaged groups would prefer to focus on commonalities between the groups more than on differences in power, members of disadvantaged groups would show similarly strong desires to discuss both commonalities and group-based power. These predictions were tested with both experimentally created groups differing in power (Study 1) and high- and low-power ethnic groups in Israel (Study 2). Study 2 also examined ingroup identification and the perceived legitimacy of the inequality as potential moderating factors.

## STUDY 1

The goal of Study 1 was to investigate the causal effect of group position (advantaged vs. disadvantaged) on motivation for change in group-based power and on the desire to address power and/or commonalities in intergroup interactions. Participants were randomly assigned to laboratory groups that were given different levels of power. The advantaged group was designated to allocate extra course credits to participants in the session, but the disadvantaged group had no input to this decision. We measured participants' desire for a change in group-based power and their desire to talk about power-related topics (*power talk*) or about topics addressing commonalities between the groups (*commonality talk*) in an anticipated intergroup interaction.

The power-related topics were directly linked to the power manipulation in the study (e.g., talking about the distribution of credits). We chose the commonality-related

topics based on dimensions that were shared across the groups in that particular experimental situation and were unrelated to the power relations (e.g., participating in studies, being assigned to a new group). We predicted that participants in the disadvantaged group would want to talk about power more than would participants in the advantaged group and that this effect would be mediated by the disadvantaged members' greater motivation for change in group-based power. No differences between the groups in the desire to talk about commonalities were expected, but we predicted that advantaged group members would want to talk about commonalities more than about power.

## Method

*Participants and design.* Participants, who earned research credit for their introductory psychology course, were 72 undergraduate students (25 men, 47 women; mean age = 18,  $SD = 2$ ). Each experimental session involved mixed-sex groups of 12 to 17 students.

*Procedure.* The experimenter introduced the study as research on "decision making in groups" and explained that the way people make decisions is influenced by the perceptual styles of overestimation and underestimation. After a brief explanation of each perceptual style, the goal of the research was presented as examining how overestimators and underestimators make decisions in groups.

Participants then performed several numerical estimations of dots projected on a large screen, ostensibly to determine their perceptual style (Gerard & Hoyt, 1974). A research assistant next collected the estimation sheets and stepped outside the room, presumably to determine each person's perceptual style. Participants were actually randomly designated as overestimators or underestimators. While the assistant was out of the room, participants completed a decision-making survey that reinforced the cover story and prevented interaction among them. When the assistant returned to identify participants as overestimators and underestimators, the experimenter left the room to remain unaware of the groups to which participants were assigned. The assistant instructed members of each group to sit together on opposite sides of a large rectangular table.

The experimenter then returned and explained that the study examined how people allocate rewards, and therefore the group that was more accurate on average in the dot estimation task would be assigned to allocate rewards to people from both groups. The assignment of the group (overestimators or underestimators) that was given the role of allocating resources was actually determined randomly. The resources to be allocated were

extra research credits, beyond the number that participants expected to earn for participation in the study. To make the rewards a limited resource, the number of extra credits available was equal to half the number of participants in each session, rounded up to a whole number. Participants were then told that before the allocation of credits would take place, the two groups would engage in a 15-min discussion and that they would get a chance to choose the topics for that upcoming interaction. Participants were then given a questionnaire that included the manipulation checks and measures of change motivation and of the desire to discuss power and/or commonalities.

*Measures.* To test whether the manipulation of group position had the intended impact, participants were asked to indicate which group was “assigned to decide how to allocate credits” and to rate the relative power of the two groups in the study on a scale from 1 (*underestimators have much more power*) to 7 (*overestimators have much more power*), with 4 indicating equal power between the groups.

The assessment of *change motivation*, which was measured with regard to a change in the last stage of the study, when credits would be allocated, involved participants’ agreement (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) with five statements. Three of the statements reflected a desire for change (“If I could I would try to change the other stages in this study so that people from both groups will get the chance to allocate credits”; “I would prefer a change in the procedures of this study because the way it is set up now, the two groups are not equal”; and “I think both groups should have a chance to allocate credits later on in the study”). Two statements represented resistance to change (“I don’t see any reason why the decision-making stage in the study should be designed differently” and “I feel there is no need to change things related to this study”) and were reverse coded.

To measure the desire to talk about group-based power and about intergroup commonalities, participants indicated on a 7-point scale (from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*) how much they wanted to discuss six different topics in the upcoming intergroup discussion. Three of the topics challenged the power relations between the groups (“Discussing the negative aspects of having only one group to make the allocation decisions,” “Discussing ways by which we can try and change the fact that only one group will get to decide how the credits should be allocated,” and “Discussing the unfair procedure the groups went through”), and three addressed shared aspects for the two groups (“Discussing things I have in common with other people in this study, either underestimators or overestimators”;

“Discussing the feeling of being assigned to a new group”; and “Discussing the relationship between real life and the experience of being part of this type of experiment”). The six items measuring the desired content of the intergroup interaction were randomly interspersed in the questionnaire. When asked to write at the end of the session about what they thought the purpose of the study was, no participant suggested any connection among the group assignment, change motivation, and preferred conversation topics.

An exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation on the items representing change motivation, desire for power talk, and desire for commonality talk yielded a three-factor solution (eigenvalues greater than 1), with the corresponding items loading on three separate dimensions (loadings .50 or above). Accordingly, we averaged the corresponding items and constructed a change motivation measure ( $\alpha = .77$ ), power talk score ( $\alpha = .81$ ), and commonality talk score ( $\alpha = .60$ ). Correlations between the three measures are presented separately for advantaged and disadvantaged group members in Table 1. Because participants did not interact with one another in this study, the individual participant was used as the unit of analysis.

## Results

The group position manipulation worked as intended. All participants correctly identified the group that was assigned to allocate the credits. When asked to rate the relative power of the two groups on a scale from 1 (*underestimators have much more power*) to 7 (*overestimators have much more power*), participants saw the group assigned to allocate credits as being relatively advantaged ( $M = 5.64$ ),  $t(71) = 15.57$ ,  $p < .001$ , compared with the scale value of 4 indicating equal power between the groups.

As expected, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the effect of Group Position on change motivation revealed that members of the disadvantaged group were more motivated for change in group-based power than were members of the advantaged group ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $SD = 1.14$  vs.  $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ),  $F(1, 70) = 6.21$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ .

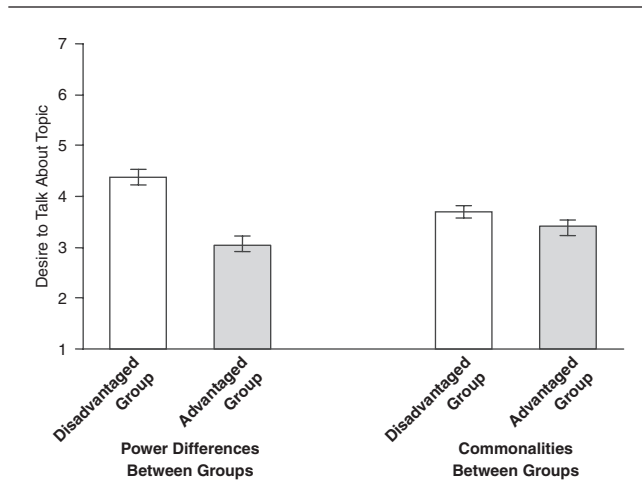
To test the effects of Group Position on the desire to talk about power and about commonalities, the two talking scales were included in a 2 (Group Position: Advantaged vs. Disadvantaged)  $\times$  2 (Talking Scales: Power Talk and Commonality Talk) repeated measures ANOVA. The analysis revealed a main effect for Group Position,  $F(1, 70) = 10.64$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .13$ , indicating that overall, disadvantaged group members wanted to discuss issues more than advantaged group members did ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 0.86$  vs.  $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ).

**Table 1:** Correlations Between Dependent Measures in Study 1

	<i>Change Motivation</i>	<i>Power Talk</i>	<i>Commonality Talk</i>
Change motivation		.22	.00
Power talk	.55**		.58**
Commonality talk	-.28	-.08	

NOTE: Correlations for the disadvantaged group ( $n = 34$ ) are presented below the diagonal, and correlations for the advantaged group ( $n = 38$ ) are presented above the diagonal.

\*\* $p < .01$ .



**Figure 1** Desire to talk as a function of Group Position and Talking Type (Study 1).

The analysis further demonstrated a Group Position  $\times$  Talking Scales interaction,  $F(1, 70) = 7.94, p < .01, \eta^2 = .10$  (see Figure 1). A Tukey honestly significant difference (HSD) procedure for pairwise comparisons revealed that as expected, disadvantaged group members wanted to talk about power significantly more than did advantaged group members ( $M = 4.38, SD = 1.33$  vs.  $M = 3.04, SD = 1.45$ ),  $p < .01$ . The rest of the pairwise comparisons did not reveal significant differences. The means for commonality talk were 3.41 ( $SD = 1.28$ ) for members of the advantaged group and 3.71 ( $SD = 1.19$ ) for members of the disadvantaged group.

We further hypothesized that the difference between members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups in the desire to talk about power would be mediated by change motivation. To test this prediction, we used Baron and Kenny's (1986) test for mediation. As the previous reported analysis showed, Group Position (the independent variable) predicted power talk (the dependent variable),  $\beta = -.44, t = -4.06, p < .001$ , as well as change motivation (the hypothesized mediator),  $\beta = -.29, t = -2.49, p < .05$ . The third regression analysis, in which Group Position and change motivation

were considered simultaneously as predictors of power talk, revealed that change motivation significantly predicted power talk,  $\beta = .35, t = 3.35, p < .01$ . The effect for Group Position was still significant,  $\beta = -.34, t = -3.21, p < .01$ , but reduced compared with when it was the only predictor considered, Sobel  $z = -2.00, p < .05$ . Thus, as expected, change motivation partially mediated the effect of Group Position on power talk.

### Discussion

Study 1 demonstrated that being assigned to a group in a disadvantaged position, compared with a group in an advantaged position, was sufficient to produce differences in the desire to talk about power in intergroup interactions. Supportive of our predictions, motivation for social change partially mediated the desire to address power. As further expected, advantaged and disadvantaged group members did not differ in their desire to address commonalities between the groups.

Although the pattern of means for advantaged group members was in the expected direction, their desire to talk about commonalities was not significantly greater than their desire to talk about power. One reason this effect was not as pronounced as we expected relates to the fact that the relations between the groups were situation based and temporary. Because there would be no extended or future interaction, it is likely that advantaged group members had little interest in maintaining a pleasant atmosphere with the other group (as would occur through commonality talk). In addition, because the assignment of power in this study was a result of the decision of an experimenter who had authority and control in the situation, members of the advantaged group may not have felt the need to stabilize the power relations through commonality talk. In contrast, when enduring relations are involved, members of real advantaged groups are more likely to want to protect and stabilize their group position. As discussed earlier, this goal can be indirectly achieved through emphasizing intergroup commonalities.

### STUDY 2

To explore the generalizability of the findings obtained in Study 1 and to address potential contextual limitations of the power manipulation, in Study 2 we tested our predictions in a naturalistic intergroup context. Participants were members of one of two ethnic groups in Israel, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim. This ethnic distinction is the most prominent one among Israeli Jews, and inequality between the groups is well documented in levels of education, average income, and general prestige—all favoring the Ashkenazim (Smooha, 2003). Members of both groups were asked to rate the

desirability of different discussion topics for a future intergroup encounter. The power-related topics in this study were linked to social disparities between the groups (e.g., differences in income), whereas the commonality-related topics emphasized salient, shared cultural aspects (e.g., music and food). It is important to note that these cultural aspects do not relate or speak to the issue of power differences between the groups.

Our second goal was to further establish the group-based nature of the desires to address power and/or commonalities by examining the impact of ingroup identification on these desires. Among groups in the real world, for which group commitment tends to be higher than in experimental groups (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996), level of identification with one's group systematically influences intergroup behavior (Doosje et al., 1999). Highly identified members of disadvantaged groups are more likely to engage in collective action on behalf of their group (Veenstra & Haslam, 2000), and greater identification among members of advantaged groups is related to greater reaffirming of the group's advantage (Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2003). If, as we hypothesized, the desires to address power and/or commonalities in intergroup interactions are serving group-based needs, we would expect highly identified group members to be most likely to hold those desires. Specifically, we predicted that the desire to address power would be particularly strong among highly identified members of the disadvantaged group, because of their stronger desire for a change in group-based power. Furthermore, if commonality focus represents a way to subtly sustain intergroup hierarchy, more highly identified members of the advantaged group would be expected to have a stronger desire to address commonalities between the groups in intergroup discussions.

Because the participation of members of advantaged groups in the questioning of power may constitute a significant contribution to social change, we also explored factors that may influence them to address group-based power in intergroup interactions. Jost, Burgess, and Mosso (2001) distinguished between group justification motives, a need to develop and maintain a positive image of one's group, and system justification motives, a need to view the status quo as fair and legitimate. Evidence regarding the illegitimacy of the status relations creates an inconsistency between these motives for advantaged group members, who may consequently prioritize the need to restore equity and justice over the motive to protect their group. Thus, although members of advantaged groups may be relatively unlikely to desire change in the status quo, raising their awareness of the illegitimacy of status relations can increase their support for social equality (see also research on collective guilt, e.g., Iyer et al., 2003; Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005). The protest movements we described earlier appeared to

operate in related ways by bringing social injustice to the attention of advantaged group members. Thus, we included a manipulation of legitimacy by presenting participants with an article about Ashkenazim and Mizrahim in which the inequality between the groups was presented as either legitimate (e.g., "Ashkenazim are harder workers than are Mizrahim") or illegitimate (e.g., "Ashkenazim discriminated against Mizrahim").

We expected Ashkenazim's willingness to address power to increase when they perceived their relative advantage as illegitimate rather than legitimate, because of an increase in their motivation for social change. Because members of advantaged groups may look for opportunities to discount the unfavorable information regarding their group, we varied the source of the legitimacy information to be either an ingroup or an outgroup member. We suspected that when unfavorable information comes from a disadvantaged group member, members of the advantaged group may be less affected by it and will perceive it as less credible (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 2004). For members of the disadvantaged group, we expected a stronger change motivation and a stronger desire to talk about power in the illegitimate condition compared with the legitimate condition. This prediction is based on research showing that social change tendencies are facilitated by perceptions of illegitimacy among members of disadvantaged groups (Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993), for whom group-justification motives may overcome system-justification ones under such circumstances (Jost et al., 2001).

### Method

*Participants.* Participants were 137 Israeli Jews. Eighty-one (45 women, 36 men; mean age = 45,  $SD = 16$ ) were born in Asia or Africa or had parents who were born in those continents (referred to as "Mizrahim" in Hebrew); 56 (28 women, 28 men; mean age = 45,  $SD = 17$ ) were born in North America or Europe or had parents who were born in those continents (referred to as "Ashkenazim" in Hebrew). Participants did not receive any incentive for their participation.

*Procedure and independent variables.* All information, manipulations, and measures were delivered through a questionnaire written in Hebrew (the participants' first language). Three Israeli research assistants (one Ashkenazi, one Mizrahi, and one of mixed ethnic origin), unaware of the hypotheses and conditions, distributed questionnaires to people they knew (both Ashkenazim and Mizrahim) in different settings. Participants were informed that the anonymous survey concerned relations between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim and would take no longer than 15 to 20

min to complete. After the research assistant verbally obtained information about participants' ethnic origin, the questionnaires, in which the wording was adapted to address participants from either of the groups, were delivered in envelopes that were color coded for members of each group.

The study was described as dealing with future "discussion encounters" between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim in Israel. It was explained that in order to design the encounters, the investigators would like to learn about the participants' feelings and thoughts toward the other ethnic group. Subsequently, participants were presented with a newspaper article through which the legitimacy of the inequality and source of that information were manipulated. The newspaper name was not identified in order to avoid biased responses due to differential liking of the newspaper.

To stress the inequality between the groups, the opening paragraph of the article described general disparities between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim (e.g., in levels of income and academic achievement, [www.cbs.gov.il](http://www.cbs.gov.il)). The rest of the article included the legitimacy manipulation by providing a quote from a professor explaining why these disparities were either legitimate (reflecting a victim-blame orientation) or illegitimate (reflecting a system-blame perspective). In the Legitimate condition, the professor commented as follows:

There are objective differences between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim. Ashkenazian families have fewer children, so an Ashkenazi child gets more attention and educational support, compared to a Mizrahi child. Further, success and hard work are dominant values among Ashkenazim. . . . Also, the Ashkenazian roots are characterized by higher levels of cultural enlightenment. . . . These factors result in educational and income differences. So the inequality exists, but factors that put sense into it and place it in a logical framework should be considered.

In the Illegitimate condition, the professor quoted in the newspaper article stated the following:

Inequality between the ethnic groups has no justified reason. The Mizrahim who first came to Israel were as educated, but opportunities were blocked for them because Ashkenazim already held the powerful positions. Ashkenazim were always those in power to make decisions and typically chose to hire Ashkenazim over Mizrahim. . . . These factors demonstrate that the inequality originates in unequal opportunities . . . and has nothing to do with ethnic background per se. The ethnic disparities demonstrate clear discrimination.

To vary the group membership of the source of the legitimacy information, the newspaper reporter's name and the commenting professor's name were manipulated to be of

either clear Ashkenazi affiliation ("Stern" and "Klein") or clear Mizrahi affiliation ("Fahima" and "Ohayon"). A pilot test of different names showed that these two were highly identified as Ashkenazi and Mizrahi names, respectively. After reading the article, participants filled out the measures. The questionnaire was then handed back to the research assistant, who gave participants a debriefing form explaining the purpose of the study.

*Measures.* Participants first read a short introduction to the study, followed by the newspaper article. The rest of the questionnaire included the measures in the following order: perceived legitimacy, change motivation, talking scales, ingroup identification, and demographic questions.

The perceived legitimacy of the inequality between the two groups was examined with two questions: (a) "To what extent would you consider the inequality between the groups as justified or unjustified?" and (b) "To what extent would you consider the inequality between the groups as legitimate or illegitimate?" Participants were asked to respond on scales of 1 (*not at all justified/not at all legitimate*) to 7 (*completely justified/completely legitimate*). Responses to these items were significantly correlated,  $r(123) = .64, p < .001$ , and thus were averaged to form a composite legitimacy score. Of the total, 12 participants, 4 Ashkenazim and 8 Mizrahim, did not provide an answer to at least one of these questions, resulting in the reduced degrees of freedom in the reported correlation.

For the measure of change motivation, participants were asked to indicate their agreement (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) with four statements regarding initiatives for change in the power structure between the groups. These four items were as follows: (a) "I believe that as a member of the Ashkenazim (/Mizrahim) group, I should take part in an action toward equality between the ethnic groups"; (b) "Along with the Ashkenazim (/Mizrahim) group, I would participate in a movement aimed at raising awareness to issues of inequality between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim"; (c) "I feel it's my personal responsibility to facilitate equality between the ethnic groups in Israel"; and (d) "I will feel guilty if I won't act for promoting equality between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim." Responses to these items were averaged to form the change motivation score ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

The measures of desire to talk about power and/or about commonalities were based on participants' ratings of interest in discussing nine topics (from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*) if they were to participate in a future intergroup discussion. Five of the topics challenged the power relations between the groups. These topics were (a) "Discussing ways for promoting a more equal distribution of resources between the



groups,” (b) “Discussing ways to advance affirmative action aimed at promoting Mizrahim in the universities and work places,” (c) “Discussing the lowering of taxes to cities in the south periphery of Israel [where many Mizrahim reside],” (d) “Discussing ways by which Ashkenazim can give up powerful positions for promoting Mizrahim,” and (e) “Discussing ways for allocating more resources to schools in the south of Israel [mostly populated by Mizrahim].” Four statements addressed shared aspects for the two groups. These items were (a) “Discussing cultural similarities between the two groups,” (b) “Discussing how Mizrahim and Ashkenazim contribute to the Israeli culture,” (c) “Discussing the origins of the Israeli cuisine,” and (d) “Discussing the origins of Israeli music, from East to West.” Pilot testing among Israeli Jews from both ethnic origins, who were asked to list aspects that the groups share in common, revealed that these shared cultural dimensions were most accessible. Factor analysis demonstrated that these sets of items loaded on two separate dimensions, as expected, and that the items measuring change motivation loaded on a separate, third dimension. Consequently, we averaged the corresponding items and constructed separate power talk ( $\alpha = .78$ ) and commonality talk scores ( $\alpha = .68$ ).

Identification with the ingroup was measured on the basis of participants’ responses (from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*) to three statements: (a) “The group of Ashkenazim (/Mizrahim) is important to me,” (b) “I see myself as having things in common with other Ashkenazim (/Mizrahim),” and (c) “I take pride in being a member of the Ashkenazi (/Mizrahi) group.” Responses were averaged to form the ingroup identification score ( $\alpha = .78$ ). Correlations for all the measures are presented separately for each group in Table 2.

## Results

Preliminary analyses revealed no effects for the Source of Legitimacy across all dependent measures, indicating that participant reactions to the legitimacy information were not affected by the source of that information (either an ingroup or an outgroup member). Therefore, this factor was not included in the analyses subsequently reported. The initial analysis also revealed that Mizrahim were generally more highly identified with their group than were Ashkenazim ( $M = 5.39$ ,  $SD = 1.43$  vs.  $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 1.74$ ),  $F(1, 135) = 31.84$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .19$ , and that identification was not influenced by the manipulations (overall mean = 4.74,  $SD = 1.74$ ).

*Overview of analysis strategy.* After we examined our manipulation check measures, the effects of the independent

variables (Group Position, Identification, and Legitimacy) on the measure of change motivation were assessed. Because the Identification variable is continuous, this analysis was conducted using multiple regression. Next we examined the effects of the independent variables on the desire to talk about power and about commonalities. This analysis was performed using a mixed regression model applied to repeated measures data (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). In contrast to a repeated measures ANOVA, this type of analysis permits testing the effects of a continuous independent variable in a repeated measures design. Finally, we tested the hypothesized mediating role of change motivation on the desire to talk about power in two mediation models, with the latter including identification as a moderating factor (Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005). In all multiple regression analyses, Identification was centered, and Group Position was dummy coded (*disadvantaged* = 0, *advantaged* = 1), as was Legitimacy (*illegitimate* = 0, *legitimate* = 1; Aiken & West, 1991).

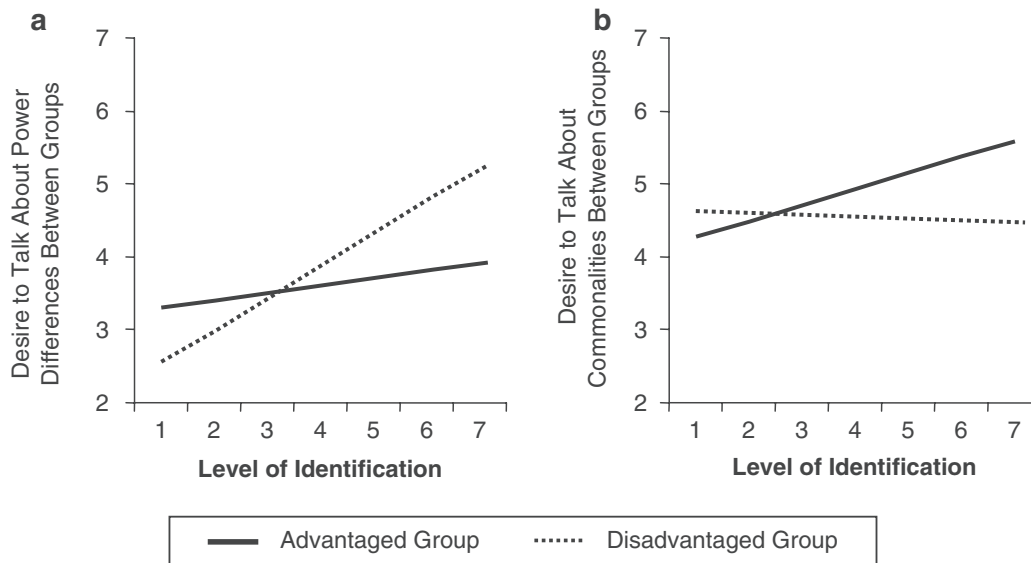
*Manipulation checks.* To evaluate the effectiveness of the Legitimacy manipulation, the legitimacy score was regressed on Group Position, Identification, Legitimacy, and all the corresponding interactions using multiple regression analysis (as described earlier, this analysis involved a smaller number of participants). As expected, participants in the Legitimate condition reported the social inequality as more legitimate ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ) than did participants in the Illegitimate condition ( $M = 2.31$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ),  $\beta = .29$ ,  $t(124) = 3.33$ ,  $p < .01$ . Although there were no main effects for Group Position,  $\beta = .03$ , *ns*, or Identification,  $\beta = .09$ , *ns*, the analysis yielded a Group Position  $\times$  Identification interaction,  $\beta = .43$ ,  $t(124) = 3.17$ ,  $p < .01$ . Simple slopes analyses (Aiken & West, 1991) revealed that more highly identified members of the advantaged group viewed the inequality as more legitimate,  $\beta = .42$ ,  $t(124) = 2.43$ ,  $p < .05$ . Among disadvantaged group members, more highly identified members saw the inequality as somewhat less legitimate, but this effect did not reach significance,  $\beta = -.21$ ,  $t(124) = -1.38$ ,  $p = .17$ .

*Change motivation.* The change motivation score was regressed on Group Position, Identification, Legitimacy, and the corresponding interactions using multiple regression. The analysis revealed a marginally significant main effect for Group Position,  $\beta = -.17$ ,  $t(136) = -1.82$ ,  $p = .07$ , indicating that for the disadvantaged group, change motivation was somewhat stronger ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ) than for the advantaged group ( $M = 2.42$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ). This marginal main effect was qualified by the expected Group Position  $\times$  Identification interaction,  $\beta = -.30$ ,  $t(136) = -2.27$ ,  $p < .05$ . Examination of the simple slopes indicated that as expected, more highly

**Table 2:** Correlations Between Variables in Study 2

	<i>Change Motivation</i>	<i>Power Talk</i>	<i>Commonality Talk</i>	<i>Identification</i>	<i>Perceived Legitimacy</i>
Change motivation		.29*	.19	-.01	-.22
Power talk	.60*		.32*	.13	-.22
Commonality talk	.14	.02		.34*	-.04
Identification	.30**	.45**	.03		.34*
Perceived legitimacy	.08	-.05	-.10	-.14	

NOTE: Correlations for the disadvantaged group ( $n = 81$ ) are presented below the diagonal, and correlations for the advantaged group ( $n = 56$ ) are presented above the diagonal.  
 \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .



**Figure 2** Desire to talk about power (a) and about commonalities (b) as a function of Group Position and Identification (Study 2).

identified members of the disadvantaged group had a stronger change motivation,  $\beta = .37$ ,  $t(136) = 2.59$ ,  $p < .05$ . For members of the advantaged group, level of identification did not relate to their motivation to change group-based power,  $\beta = .06$ ,  $ns$ . Inconsistent with our expectations, legitimacy did not have an effect on change motivation among members of the advantaged group (or on members of the disadvantaged group).

*Power talk and commonality talk.* To test the effects of Group Position, Identification, and Legitimacy on the desire to talk about power and about commonalities, we conducted a mixed regression model (Cohen et al., 2003) with the two talking scales as a repeated measures factor (i.e., Talking Scales) and Group Position, Identification, and Legitimacy as between-group factors.

The analysis yielded a main effect for Talking Scales,  $F(1, 274) = 24.83$ ,  $p < .01$ , indicating that overall, participants wanted to talk about commonalities ( $M =$

4.86,  $SD = 1.60$ ) more than about power ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ). This analysis was qualified by a marginally significant interaction between Talking Scales and Group Position,  $F(1,274) = 3.40$ ,  $p = .07$ .

A Tukey HSD procedure for pairwise comparisons revealed that as expected, members of the disadvantaged group wanted to talk about power significantly more ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) than did members of the advantaged group ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ),  $p < .01$ , who had a stronger desire to address commonalities ( $M = 4.88$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) than power,  $p < .01$ . Group position did not affect the desire to address commonalities, and disadvantaged group members' desire to talk about power ( $M = 4.50$ ) was not significantly different from their desire to address commonalities ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ). This pattern of means supported the predictions.

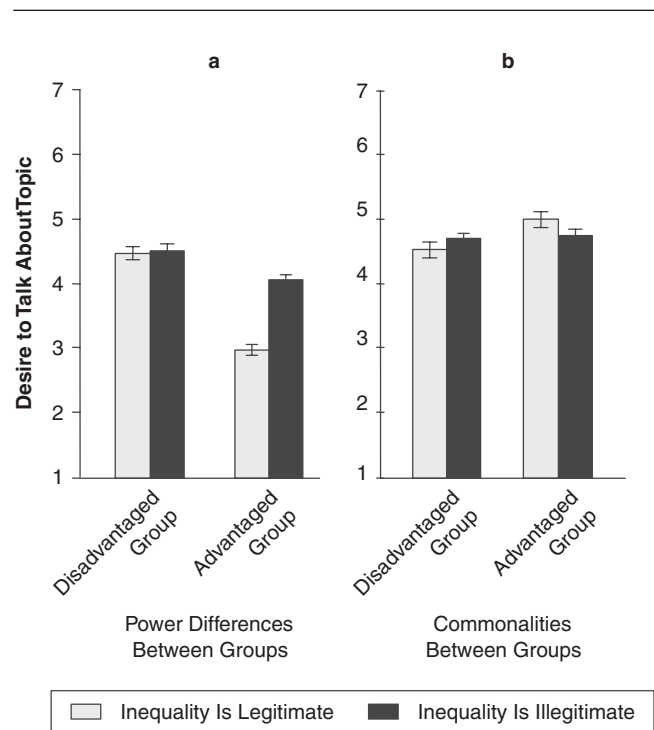
The mixed model analysis further revealed a three-way interaction among Group Position, Identification, and

Talking Scales,  $F(11, 274) = 2.25, p < .05$ . To evaluate this interaction, the effects of Group Position and Identification were examined separately for power talk and commonality talk. Group Position interacted with Identification to predict the desire to talk about power,  $\beta = -.32, t(136) = -2.72, p < .01$  (see Figure 2a). As expected, more highly identified members of the disadvantaged group had a stronger desire to talk about power,  $\beta = .56, t(136) = 4.62, p < .01$ . For members of the advantaged group, Identification did not relate to the desire to address power,  $\beta = .10, ns$ . We further tested for group differences in the desire to address power at high and low levels of identification (Aiken & West, 1991). For low identifiers (one *SD* below the mean), members of the disadvantaged group had somewhat, but not significantly, greater desire to talk about power than did members of the advantaged group ( $t = 1.22, ns$ ). However, for high identifiers (one *SD* above the mean), disadvantaged group members showed a significantly greater preference to address power than did advantaged group members,  $t = 2.05, p < .05$  (see Figure 2a).

For commonality talk, the Group Position  $\times$  Identification interaction did not reach significance,  $\beta = .17, t(136) = 1.31, p = .19$ . Examination of the simple slopes, however, revealed that whereas identification was not associated with disadvantaged group members' desire to talk about commonalities,  $\beta = .04, ns$ , more highly identified members of the advantaged group had a stronger desire to address commonalities,  $\beta = .24, t(136) = 2.16, p < .05$  (see Figure 2b). Tests comparing the responses of advantaged and disadvantaged group members at low and high levels of identification ( $\pm 1$  *SD*) did not reveal significant effects ( $t = -0.26, ns; t = -0.82, ns$ ).

In summary, consistent with the hypotheses regarding identification, the higher the identification of disadvantaged group members with their group, the more they wanted to talk about power. Among advantaged group members, higher identifiers had a greater desire to talk about commonalities.

The mixed model analysis revealed another three-way interaction involving Group Position, Legitimacy, and Talking Scales,  $F(1, 274) = 5.92, p < .05$ . To evaluate this interaction, the effects of Group Position and Legitimacy were examined separately for power talk and commonality talk. For the desire to address power, a Group Position  $\times$  Legitimacy interaction was obtained,  $F(1, 136) = 4.66, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$  (see Figure 3a). A Tukey HSD procedure revealed that as expected, advantaged group members wanted to talk about power more in the Illegitimate condition ( $M = 4.07, SD = 1.17$ ) than in the Legitimate condition ( $M = 2.99, SD = 1.11$ ),  $p < .05$ . Disadvantaged group members' desire to talk about power was comparable in



**Figure 3** Desire to talk about power (a) and about commonalities (b) (+SE) as a function of Group Position and Legitimacy (Study 2).

the Legitimate and the Illegitimate conditions ( $M = 4.48, SD = 1.52$  vs.  $M = 4.53, SD = 1.52$ ). Moreover, there were no differences in the desire to talk about power among advantaged group members in the Illegitimate condition and among disadvantaged group members in the other conditions. Thus, as expected, presenting advantaged group members with information that their advantage was illegitimate resulted in their greater willingness to talk about power, to a level comparable to that of disadvantaged group members. As further shown in Figure 3b, the desire to talk about commonalities was not affected by Group Position or Legitimacy. No other three-way or four-way interactions were obtained.

*Mediation analysis for the effect of Group Position.* To test whether change motivation mediated the effect of Group Position on power talk, we used the same mediation analysis procedure as in Study 1. As the only predictor, Group Position had a significant effect on the desire to talk about power,  $\beta = -.32, t = -3.97, p < .01$ , and on change motivation,  $\beta = -.25, t = -3.05, p < .01$ . Controlling for Group Position, change motivation significantly predicted power talk,  $\beta = .50, t = 6.84, p < .01$ . Finally, controlling for change motivation, the effect of Group Position on preferences to talk about power was still significant,  $\beta = -.20, t = -2.71, p < .01$ , but

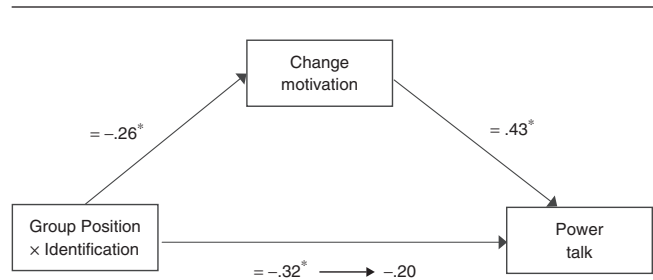
weaker than when it was the only predictor, Sobel  $z = -2.78$ ,  $p < .01$ . Thus, as expected, and supportive of the results of Study 1, change motivation partially mediated the effect of Group Position on power talk.

*Mediation analysis for the effect of Group Power x Identification on power talk.* The previous analysis revealed that among disadvantaged group members, higher levels of identification predicted a stronger desire to talk about power. Consistent with our reasoning that motivation for social change produces the desire to talk about power, we tested whether the Group Position x Identification effect on power talk was mediated by change motivation as well. Therefore, we conducted a mediated moderation analysis that follows the same logic as in the standard mediation model, only that in this case, the independent variable is the interaction term (Group Position x Identification) assumed to cause both the dependent variable (power talk) and the mediator (change motivation; Muller et al., 2005; see Figure 4). Although Table 2 suggests that the association between change motivation and power talk was stronger for members of disadvantaged groups ( $r = .60$ ) than for the advantaged group ( $r = .29$ ), this difference was not statistically significant ( $t = -1.26$ , *ns*), permitting a test of the proposed model.

As previously shown, the Group Position x Identification interaction had a significant effect on power talk,  $\beta = -.32$ ,  $t = -2.72$ ,  $p < .01$ , and on change motivation,  $\beta = -.26$ ,  $t = -2.10$ ,  $p < .05$ . To test for the mediation effect, the power talk score was regressed on the Group Position x Identification interaction and on the change motivation score (with the main effects of Group Position and Identification controlled for; Muller et al., 2005). This regression revealed that when the interaction term was controlled for, change motivation significantly predicted power talk,  $\beta = .43$ ,  $t = 5.98$ ,  $p < .01$ . Finally, when change motivation was controlled for, the effect of Group Position x Identification on power talk became marginally significant,  $\beta = -.20$ ,  $t = -1.94$ ,  $p = .06$ , indicating mediation, Sobel  $z = -1.97$ ,  $p < .05$ . Thus, as predicted, the stronger change motivation of disadvantaged group members who were highly identified with their group served to explain their particularly strong desire to address power in intergroup interactions.

### Discussion

The results of Study 2 provide general support for our predictions. In line with the results of Study 1, but this time involving naturalistic groups, members of disadvantaged groups were more motivated for a change in group-based power than were members of advantaged



**Figure 4** Mediated moderation model testing whether change motivation mediated the effects of Group Position x Identification on power talk (Study 2).

groups, and this difference partially explained the disadvantaged members' greater desire to address group-based power in intergroup interactions. Furthermore, disadvantaged group members who highly identified with their group were particularly interested in talking about power, and this desire was explained by their especially strong motivation for social change. As further predicted, advantaged group members preferred to talk about commonalities more than about power, and the more they identified with their group, the greater was their desire to address commonalities in intergroup interactions. These results suggest that the group-based preferences for the content of contact may serve the different goals of members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups (see Scheepers et al., 2003). Whereas talking about power can enhance the position of disadvantaged groups, talking about commonality may serve to protect the status of advantaged groups.

We note, however, that the results involving identification should be interpreted cautiously because participants completed the identification measure toward the end of the questionnaire. The manipulation of legitimacy did not affect levels of group identification, but it is possible that previous exposure to the other materials (e.g., the change motivation scale) may have strengthened the level of identification for the disadvantaged group, weakened identification for the advantaged group, or both. This methodological issue can be addressed in future investigations by assessing identification first, preferably in an unrelated context.

Although Study 2 fundamentally replicated the group position effects of Study 1, it provided mixed support for our predictions regarding how varying the legitimacy of the inequality might influence the responses of members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Based on previous theory and research (Iyer et al., 2003; Jost et al., 2001), we hypothesized that when faced with information about the illegitimacy of their group's position, members of advantaged groups would be motivated to restore system-level justice, even

at the expense of their group's interests. This prediction was supported by the increased desire of members of the advantaged group to discuss power after learning that their advantage was illegitimate. However, we also expected the change motivation of the advantaged group members to increase after they read information about the illegitimacy of their advantage, but this effect was not obtained ( $\beta = -.10, ns$ ).

One potential reason the legitimacy manipulation affected the advantaged group members' desire to talk about power but not their change motivation relates to differences in the level of commitment to change that these responses represent. Whereas reporting a high motivation for social change can pose a threat to one's sense of social status, an increased desire to talk about power in a hypothetical interaction may represent a lower-cost activity for members of advantaged groups. Moreover, although the topics associated with talking about power addressed inequalities between the groups in a critical way, it is also possible that members of the advantaged group could strategically pursue these topics in a way to make a case for the legitimacy of these group differences.

This perspective offers a less optimistic interpretation of the effects of illegitimacy on the concrete actions of advantaged group members with respect to promoting egalitarian changes. Similarly, research on collective guilt demonstrates that information that aroused collective guilt increased support for reparations for past misdeeds but not for equal opportunity policies that could directly affect the status quo (Iyer et al., 2003). It would therefore be valuable for future research to examine the nature and course of actual interactions between groups and the social consequences of illegitimacy manipulations on members of advantaged groups.

Future research might also include a control condition, in which group members do not feel either advantaged or disadvantaged, so that a baseline level of talking preferences could be obtained. A baseline condition, which can be most easily included with an experimental paradigm, can reveal whether it is the advantaged group members who wish to avoid the discussion of power (as seems to be the case in Study 2) or the disadvantaged group members who have an increased desire to address power.

On the basis of previous research (e.g., Ellemers et al., 1993), we also expected that when presented with information about the inequality as illegitimate, disadvantaged group members would also have a stronger motivation for social change and therefore a stronger preference to talk about power. A possible reason for the lack of these effects is that although disadvantaged group members were affected by the legitimacy manipulation (indicated by differences in perceptions of legitimacy), in an absolute sense they generally perceived the inequality to be illegitimate. That is, in both legitimacy

conditions, disadvantaged group members reported mean ratings below the midpoint of the legitimacy scale. Thus, for members of the disadvantaged group, the differences created by the legitimacy manipulation were primarily in the degree of the illegitimacy of the power relations and, as a result, did not have significant effects on their motivation for change and desire to talk about power.

We also did not obtain effects for the source of the legitimacy information. We expected advantaged group members to be more affected by the illegitimate information when its source was an ingroup, rather than an outgroup, member because of differences in perceived credibility. One possible reason for the lack of the source's influence is that the presumed credibility of the newspaper mitigated a possible source effect. That is, knowing that the article was published in a newspaper and chosen as research material may have led participants to believe the information regardless of the reporter's and the professor's names (used to manipulate the source).

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

The reported studies demonstrated that members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups bring different perspectives to situations of contact. Disadvantaged group members wanted to talk about power differences more than did members of advantaged groups, who preferred primarily to talk about commonalities between the groups. Furthermore, the group-based differences in the desire to address power were generally due to the disadvantaged group members' greater motivation for a change in the status quo. Thus, for members of disadvantaged groups, talking about power is instrumental for achieving a goal derived from group membership. In keeping with this finding, disadvantaged group members who identified more highly with their group had a stronger desire to talk about power differences. Advantaged group members were less motivated for social change and for addressing power, but when led to perceive their advantaged status as relatively illegitimate, they were more willing to talk critically about the power differences between the groups.

These results stress the importance of considering the perspectives of *both* advantaged and disadvantaged group members when studying and designing intergroup interactions. The majority of studies about intergroup contact have looked at the responses of members of advantaged groups (72%; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005), resulting in a relatively limited understanding of how disadvantaged group members are affected by such interactions. As we mentioned earlier, a meta-analysis of the studies that did examine disadvantaged group members found that their attitudes were less affected by contact than were those of

advantaged group members. Despite the richness of the contact literature, few studies provide possible explanations for such group-based responses to intergroup contact. Although one possibility is that members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups typically experience different types of contact, the present research suggests, as another possibility, the role of the content of intergroup interactions. To the extent that the advantaged group steers the interaction to emphasize commonalities while excluding discourse about power disparities, members of disadvantaged groups would likely find the interaction less satisfying and productive than would advantaged group members. This explanation would also account for the finding that a common goal during contact does not predict the effectiveness of contact for members of disadvantaged groups although it does so for advantaged group members (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005).

Under the assumption that a commonality focus may work to stabilize the status quo, we predicted that members of advantaged groups would prefer to address commonalities more than power. Across the studies, however, weaker motivation for changing the status quo was not significantly associated with greater desire to discuss commonalities for the advantaged group. As stated earlier, apart from wishing to maintain their position, other motivations may play into the advantaged group members' desire to talk about commonalities. In fact, those advantaged group members who wish to change the status quo toward equality may also desire to talk about commonalities with the disadvantaged group, because this type of discussion may bring them together in a positive, pleasant way. Future research can help to disentangle the different motivations behind the desire to address commonalities among advantaged groups.

We also acknowledge that the content of contact can take forms other than the two we suggested in this research. Discussions about commonalities can vary in the extent to which original group identities are obscured, and discussions about power may vary in the degree to which they delegitimize power relations. In fact, under naturalistic circumstances, actual discussions that criticize power are substantially limited because of factors that work to justify the social hierarchy (Feagin, 2006; Ruscher, 2001). Instead, a discourse about power may occur in ways that legitimize, rather than criticize, the status quo (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Thus, even if members of disadvantaged groups desire to address issues of power in intergroup discussions, the public discourse surrounding the encounter may considerably limit the opportunities to do so.

In summary, the work we have presented demonstrates that although fostering intergroup contact is an important step toward improving intergroup relations,

it is also critical to understand the different motivations and goals that members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups bring to those situations. Furthermore, theory and research about intergroup contact can benefit from considering the identity functions that contact serves for advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Recognition of the different desires for the content of intergroup interactions is critical for a comprehensive conceptual understanding of intergroup relations and for developing interventions and programs that can enhance communication and reduce conflict in practical ways.

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