Review

Intergroup contact in the context of gender. A critical review of the literature and opportunities for future research

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Abstract
Compared to other intergroup contexts, gendered contact is more prevalent yet relatively understudied in contact research. We critically review available studies examining cross-gender contact—including contact between women and men, and contact involving genders outside of the gender binary—and its impact on outgroup attitudes and support for social change. We then outline future directions for gendered contact research with a focus on (a) assessing interpersonal and intergroup dynamics within cross-gendered relationships; (b) understanding the conditions that facilitate gendered contact that is both harmonious and support social change toward gender equality; and (c) conceptual and methodological considerations necessary to study gendered contact. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical importance of gendered contact research for advancing intergroup contact theory and gender equality.

Despite considerable advances in the rights of women and gender-minoritised individuals, progress toward gender equality has stalled or reversed in key areas such as economic and political empowerment, domestic violence, and the division of care. Notable examples include the regressive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the gendered division of unpaid and paid labour (A. N. Fisher & Ryan, 2021), recently imposed restrictions on reproductive rights in countries such as the United States (US) and Poland, and the rise of antitrans legislation across the world. Meanwhile, public support for gender equality

has been faltering, with more people, including some women, believing it has gone too far and is discriminating against men (e.g., Campbell et al., 2024; Zehnter et al., 2021).

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To explain the persistence of gender inequalities and opposition to gender equality initiatives, past research has focused on factors such as the endorsement of traditional gender roles (A. N. Fisher & Ryan, 2021; A. N. Fisher et al., 2024; Mikołajczak et al., 2022), underlying ideologies (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996; Jost & Kay, 2005), perceived threat to men's status (e.g., Lisnek et al., 2022; Mikołajczak & Becker, 2022), and the broader social context (Ryan & Morgenroth, 2024). In this review, we argue that an important factor that could explain the stagnation of progress toward gender equality but has not yet, to our knowledge, received sufficient attention in the literature are the social interactions and relationships between different genders, that is, intergroup contact.[1]

Individuals of different genders, particularly women and men, have numerous opportunities for contact and interaction—in their everyday lives and across their lifespans. Indeed, cross-gender contact is so common in daily life that not having contact rather than having contact with other genders is considered unusual. For example, movements like Men Who Go Their Own Way (MGTOW) and the feminist Four Nos (4B) are timely examples of individuals abandoning the pursuit of cross-gender contact in the form of romantic relationships (albeit for very different reasons; e.g., C. Jones et al., 2020; Lee & Jeong, 2021).

Contact between different genders is not only ubiquitous, but it is often also close, lasting, and meaningful. This intimacy and resulting interdependence are usually considered the two hallmarks of gendered relations between men and women (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001; Moss-Racusin, 2021). From early life, most people have close relationships with other genders as family members, friends, or partners, relying on one another for psychological, social, and financial support. Many (typically heterosexual) men and women also form close romantic relationships, make reproductive choices, and share households and finances with one another.

Intimate cross-gender bonds in romantic and familial relationships are often the most meaningful and long-lasting connections with cross-gender outgroup members. So why don't these close ties lead to support for gender equality? Evidence from other intergroup contexts suggests that this interpersonal cross-gender harmony may paradoxically hinder progress toward broader social equality (Reimer & Sengupta, 2023; Saguy et al., 2009; for a similar argument, see Radke et al., 2016).

Despite the prevalence of cross-gender contact, surprisingly few intergroup contact studies have focused on gender (for some recent exceptions, see Sobol-Sarag et al., 2023; Vázquez et al., 2021). Historically, this omission is somewhat understandable given the initial research impetus on improving relations between isolated and hostile groups, typically in ethnic or racial contexts. Gender relations are often considered highly distinctive from other intergroup contexts in at least two ways (e.g., Abrams, 1989; Radke et al., 2016). First, within the gender binary, most women and men are already in contact with one another, and gendered attitudes are often positive (e.g., Eagly et al., 1991), thus typical contact interventions might not be directly applicable. Secondly, gendered contact may be seen as being shaped by interpersonal rather than intergroup processes. If, following this logic, gender relations lack the intergroup aspect, intergroup theory might have little explanatory power in this context. Thirdly, the prevalence of cross-gender contact raises practical and methodological questions of whether it is possible to separate the effects of individual cross-gender interactions and interpersonal relationships to measure their impact in any meaningful way.

Despite the uniqueness of gendered contact, we believe that intergroup contact theory, combined with recent advances in contact research, is well-suited to studying sexism and gender inequalities. First, we argue that most cross-gender contact, even within close relationships, involves both interpersonal and intergroup dynamics and that future research should establish their unique role in cross-gender contact effects. Second, while cross-gender contact is common, its quality and content vary greatly. We know from other

intergroup contexts that this variability influences both outgroup attitudes and support for social change (e.g., Hässler, Ullrich, Bernardino, et al., 2020; Hässler, Ullrich, Sebben, et al., 2022; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Reimer & Sengupta, 2023). Future research should examine conditions that facilitate harmonious and equality-supporting gendered contact. Finally, future studies should consider conceptual and methodological advancements needed to study gendered contact. For example, by embracing innovative methodologies, such as combining established experimental methods with relatively novel methods such as daily diary studies, experience sampling, and network analysis (for a similar argument applied to the study of intergroup contact more generally, see O'Donnell et al., 2021).

In the following sections, we describe the heterogeneity of cross-gender relations as the necessary context to understand the nuances in studying cross-gender contact. We then summarise insights from, and key omissions in, the current cross-gender contact research[2] and the broader contact literature, which we consider particularly pertinent to understanding gender attitudes and support for gender equality. Next, we outline three key directions for future gendered contact research, signposted above. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical importance of cross-gender contact research for advancing (a) intergroup contact theory and (b) gender equality.

Heterogeneity of Cross-Gender Relations

While contact between different genders, particularly women and men, is often positive and voluntary, there is a significant variability in its quality, with many instances of involuntary and negative contact. This negative contact occurs across different contexts and varies in frequency and severity, from street and technology-mediated harassment to intimate partner violence. Importantly, women and gender-minoritised individuals are more likely to experience physical and sexual violence from someone they know, such as an intimate male partner or family member,

friend, a hook-up, or an acquaintance, rather than from a stranger (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023; Layard et al., 2022).

Similarly, while contact between women and men is more common than in other intergroup contexts, gender segregation persists in various domains and life stages. For example, many workplaces remain highly segregated by gender, both vertically—with men more likely to work in highly paid, higher status positions, and women more likely to work in low-paid, lower status positions—and horizontally, with many occupations and industries remaining either male- or female-dominated (e.g., Blau & Kahn, 2017). This segregation leads to negative evaluations of women who break gender norms by becoming leaders or entering male-dominated industries (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008; Stuhlmacher & Poitras, 2010). These women often face discrimination (e.g., Dresden et al., 2018), which further reinforces gender segregation by pushing them out of those sectors and roles.

Looking across the lifespan, gender segregation typically starts in early childhood, with pre-school age girls and boys segregating by gender during playtime, and persists through elementary school (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1987). Consequently, cross-gender friendships are relatively rare compared to same-gender friendships (DiDonato & Strough, 2013; Mehta et al., 2017) and less intimate forms of cross-gender contact (Hofstra et al., 2017), especially in early childhood and elementary school (Maccoby, 1988) and in mid to late adulthood when many people tend to focus on finding long-term partners and childrearing (Kalmijn, 2002; Mehta & Strough, 2009). Notably, some forms of cross-gender contact influence the likelihood of others. For example, among heterosexual individuals, cross-gender friendships are often viewed as conflicting with romantic relationships (in line with the notion that men and women can't ever be "just friends"; e.g., McDonnell & Mehta, 2016). At the same time, cross-gender friendships are frequently formed through the romantic partner's social network (Kalmijn, 2002) and are more common among

people with other-gender siblings (Kovacs et al., 1996).

Gender segregation also varies where gender intersects with other factors such as ethnicity, religiosity, and sexual orientation. For example, Muslim youth living in Western countries who often attend public coeducational schools are expected to avoid other genders in nonformal Islamic education settings (Altinyelken, 2022) and nonfamilial contexts more generally (Zaidi et al., 2014). As a result, those who adhere to cultural norms are not only less likely to have romantic heterosexual relationships before marriage (Zaidi et al., 2014) but also have fewer cross-gender friends (Kretschmer, 2024). Conversely, young sexually minoritised men are more likely to have more cross-gender than same-gender friends (Diamond & Dubé, 2002), and sexually minoritised individuals in general are also more likely than heterosexual individuals to have cross-gender best friends (Baiocco et al., 2014).

Recent evidence suggests that gender segregation is either replicated or further enhanced through technology-mediated cross-gender contact. For example, studies show that political journalists almost exclusively engage with and amplify the voices of same-gender peers on social media (Usher et al., 2018), and online dating algorithms, while increasing opportunities for interpersonal contact more generally, might be reducing the racial heterogeneity of intimate cross-gender interactions (Ranzini & Rosenbaum, 2020).

For cisgender men and women (i.e., those whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth), cross-gender contact with trans and gender-diverse individuals is less common and typically less close. Trans and gender-diverse communities are both numerically and socially minoritised, with attitudes and behaviours toward trans and gender-diverse people being markedly more hostile than those toward cisgender individuals (Casey et al., 2019; International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association [ILGA] Europe, 2023). Such social stigma often discourages them from disclosing their gender identities, limiting the intergroup contact experiences for the cis-gender majority (Hoffarth & Hodson, 2020).

Due to multiple interdependencies from cross-gender contact, intergroup attitudes between men and women are ambivalent rather than unequivocally hostile. Men's attitudes toward women are often positive but paternalistic (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994; Jackman, 1994). Ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001) describes how these benevolent attitudes cement gender inequalities by offering women perceived privileges. This idealised view of gender relations reinforces sexist dating scripts (Alba et al., 2023), justifies interpersonal violence from men, particularly if they have prior contact with the affected women (Abrams et al., 2003), and reduces women's willingness to engage in collective action for their rights (Becker & Wright, 2011). Ambivalent sexism theory also explains how men with close positive relationships with women (e.g., partners or daughters) might express hostility toward women who defy traditional gender norms such as women who have casual sex, child-free women, or feminists. It also suggests that traditional gender roles are reinforced by women's ambivalent attitudes toward men, viewing them positively as protectors and providers but negatively when they take on stereotypically feminine tasks or occupations (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005; Glick & Fiske, 1999).

Cross-Gender Contact and Outgroup Attitudes

According to the intergroup contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), positive intergroup contact reduces prejudice, particularly when it meets four optimal conditions: equal status within the contact situation, common goals, cooperation, and institutional support (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). This effect has also been found in the context of gender. Studies show that men who have optimal contact with women in general hold more favourable attitudes toward them (Vázquez et al., 2021), and that men with optimal contact with counter-stereotypical women[3] are less likely to endorse hostile sexism and accept rape myths (Taschler & West, 2017). Similarly, men in the military who had optimal contact with female peers we are less likely to disavow feminine traits, more likely to agree that men and women should

share household chores equally, and less likely to discriminate against a woman aspiring for a leadership role (Dahl et al., 2021; Finseraas et al., 2016). Male managers who had high-quality contact with female peers held more positive attitudes toward women as managers (Bhatnagar & Swamy, 1995; Duehr & Bono, 2006), and male voters who had contact with women chief councillors rated prospective women candidates as more effective than those without cross-gender contact did (Beaman et al., 2009). Conversely, female students who interacted with male students who were acting sexist (vs. neutral) in a simulation game experiment showed more progressive gender role attitudes (Dworkin & Dworkin, 1983).

A recent review of contact-based interventions (including personal, vicarious, electronic, and imagined contact) aiming to reduce LGBTIQ+ related stigma, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination largely confirmed the positive effects of contact (Tran et al., 2023). Similarly, studies indicate that direct, media, electronic, virtual, and imagined contact with trans and gender-diverse individuals can be effective at reducing genderism and transphobia (Amsalem et al., 2022; Boccanfuso et al., 2021; Broockman & Kalla, 2016; Fine et al., 2023; Massey et al., 2021; Walch et al., 2012), increasing perceived likeability and hireability (Moss-Racusin & Rabasco, 2018, Experiment 2), and increasing empathy, affiliation, and cooperation in interactions with a transgender individual (Crone et al., 2023). In sum, the available evidence supports predictions of the intergroup contact hypothesis, particularly from cross-gender contexts resembling "typical" intergroup contexts in which contact is relatively rare (such as contact between cisgender men and women and transgender or gender-diverse individuals, and contact with women in nonstereotypical gender roles).

Intimate Cross-Gender Contact

While cross-gender contact can take many forms varying in duration, frequency, closeness, and level of commitment, most of the intergroup contact literature to date has focused on more superficial forms of contact, somewhat neglecting its more intimate forms (see Marinucci et al., 2021). Intimate intergroup contact can be defined as "close and meaningful interaction or relationship with an outgroup member, likely to involve repeated contact and reciprocal self-disclosure and trust" (Marinucci et al., 2021, p. 65). Based on this definition, intimate cross-gender contact can range from friendships through different types of familial ties to heterosexual romantic relationships, with the latter often considered the "ultimate" form of intimate relationship that one can have.

When considering optimal contact conditions for prejudice reduction, intimate contact can be seen as an ideal form of contact as it is typically voluntary, positive, and cooperative (Bagci et al., 2021; Paolini et al., 2021). Cross-group friendships are arguably one of the most egalitarian forms of intimate contact and the only type of intimate contact that has received considerable attention in the broader contact literature to date (for some exceptions, see e.g., Graf et al., 2020; Paterson et al., 2015, 2019). Indeed, a meta-analysis of the effects of cross-gender friendship indicates that intimate contact reduces prejudice more strongly than more superficial contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), particularly in the context of groups based on nationality, religion, and sexual orientation (Davies et al., 2011).

The evidence further suggests that intimacy might have a protective function against the adverse effects of negative contact. Those who report negative intimate contact hold less negative outgroup attitudes than those who report negative superficial contact (Graf et al., 2020). Moreover, the beneficial effects of positive intimate contact on outgroup attitudes are similar in magnitude to the detrimental effects of negative superficial contact, potentially offsetting its negative impact (Fuochi et al., 2020). Contrary to this evidence however, other studies indicate that the relative strength of positive and negative effects of intimate contact could be context-dependent. For example, low satisfaction in cross-political romantic relationships (but not cross-political

friendships) is associated with more negative outgroup attitudes (Buliga et al., 2021). Findings from interpersonal literature also indicate that intimacy may amplify instances of negative contact due to its greater psychological significance in close relationships, for example, negative interactions such as abuse of self-disclosure and coercive or threatening behaviour that violate the mutual trust established in a relationship (W. H. Jones & Burdette, 1994).

Studies of intimate cross-gender contact within friendships show that children with primarily cross-gender friends are less likely to endorse gender stereotypes than children with primarily same-gender friends (Kovacs et al., 1996). Similarly, having cross-gender friends in early adulthood is associated with more egalitarian gender role attitudes among men (but not among women; Kalmijn, 2002). However, the link between cross-gender friendships and gender attitudes is likely bidirectional, pointing to a self-selection bias, with girls and boys with more gender egalitarian attitudes more likely to choose other-gender friends (Halim et al., 2021; Kalmijn, 2002; Lenton & Webber, 2006).

While studies on cross-gender friendships mainly replicate findings observed in other intergroup contexts, evidence for heterosexual romantic relationships, which are often less egalitarian than friendships, points to the opposite effect (cf. Endendijk, 2024). Indeed, heterosexual romantic relationships are one of the key sources of men's and women's adoption of sexism (M. I. Fisher & Hammond, 2019). Men may endorse benevolent sexism because it facilitates intimate relationships with women that satisfy their caring, sexual, and reproductive needs. Women in turn may find benevolent sexism appealing because it comes with a promise of security and power within a relationship, which they might lack in other domains (Hammond & Overall, 2017). This promised satisfaction of important relationship needs explains why women who are in heterosexual romantic relationships might be more likely to endorse benevolent sexism, even at the expense of their career aspirations and success in other domains (Moya et al., 2007).[4]

Unlike adult women, adolescent girls with more heterosexual relationship experience are also more likely to endorse hostile sexism (de Lemus et al., 2010). As the authors speculate (p. 217), this happens because intimate contact in romantic relationships might expose girls to boys' gender attitudes, which tend to be more hostilely sexist than those endorsed by girls. Overall, findings suggest that heterosexual relationships are dominated by, and further reinforce, men's point of view, privilege, and unequal status of genders in society.

Within the familial sphere, studies suggest that mothers of sons are less feminist and more traditional in their gender roles than mothers of daughters (Sun & Lai, 2017; Warner, 1991; Wesley & Garand, 2021). This may be due to concerns that gender equality initiatives could disadvantage their sons (though this proposition has not been empirically tested). The available evidence for fathers is mixed. While some studies find that having a daughter reduces traditional gender attitudes (Borell-Porta et al., 2018; Shafer & Malhotra, 2011), others show the opposite effect (Perales et al., 2018).[5]

Likewise, studies of families with mixed-gender siblings show equally mixed results, pointing to more gender-typical behaviours either among children with same-gender siblings (e.g., Rust et al., 2000; van der Pol et al., 2016) or among children with siblings of another gender (e.g., Abrams, 1985; Leventhal, 1970). This indicates that some forms of intimate cross-gender contact might sometimes reinforce rather than reduce traditional gender attitudes and outgroup prejudice.

Cross-Gender Contact and Social Change

While intergroup contact often improves outgroup attitudes (Paluck et al., 2019; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), recent evidence points to the "ironic" effects of harmonious contact on addressing group inequalities (e.g., Saguy et al., 2009). For minoritised group members, positive contact with advantaged groups can blur the group boundaries, reduce recognition of

personal and ingroup injustices (Dixon et al., 2010; Saguy et al., 2009; Tausch et al., 2015), legitimise group differences (Sobol-Sarag et al., 2023), lower anger about inequality (Hayward et al., 2017), and lower collective action intentions (e.g., Wright & Lubensky, 2013). These effects occur also for intimate intergroup contact: disadvantaged group members with cross-group friends are less likely to support social change (Hässler, Ullrich, Bernardino, et al., 2020). Conversely, for advantaged groups, positive contact, especially through friendships, is associated with higher support for social change (e.g., Górska & Tausch, 2023; Hässler, Ullrich, Bernardino, et al., 2020).

These effects have also been found in cross-gender contact. Men with positive cross-gender contact were more likely to recognise women's disadvantage and support women's rights, while women with positive cross-gender contact were less likely to see themselves as disadvantaged and to engage in collective action (Vázquez et al., 2021). Similarly, heterosexual men with positive contact with feminist women showed greater solidarity with feminists and were more aware of male privilege (Wiley et al., 2021), and male judges working with female colleagues were more likely to hire women as court clerks (Battaglini et al., 2023).

In the context of romantic heterosexual relationships, women with high-quality contact with their partners were more accepting of gender inequality, both at home and societally (Sobol-Sarag et al., 2023). In the context of cross-gender friendships, in an unpublished study reported by Droogendyk (2015), women with male friends supportive of women's rights were less likely to engage in collective action.

In the context of parenthood, mothers of sons were less supportive of women in politics than were mothers of daughters (cf. Prokos et al., 2010; Wesley & Garand, 2021). Conversely, fathers of daughters were more likely to support gender equality policies, such as pay equity, paid maternity leave, or workplace sexual harassment policies (Sharrow et al., 2018; Warner & Steel, 1999); vote liberally on reproductive issues (Washington, 2008) and gender issues more generally (Glynn & Sen, 2015); support fictional and

actual female candidates (Greenlee et al., 2020); and hire more women (Calder-Wang & Gompers, 2021; Ronchi & Smith, 2021). However, these "daughter effects" may only apply to first daughters (e.g., Greenlee et al., 2020; Ronchi & Smith, 2021), sons (Prokos et al., 2010), or may disappear when more robust analytical methods are applied (Ashton et al., 2023; Clayton et al., 2023; Costa et al., 2019: Green et al., 2023).

Overall, evidence suggests that positive cross-gender contact with men, especially in romantic relationships, reduces women's support for progressive social change. This happens because romantic relationships prioritise relational, sexual, and reproductive needs over group-level (and individual) needs for respect and empowerment and broader gender equality (e.g., Sanchez et al., 2012). The gender inequalities and status quo are further reinforced under the guise of what heterosexual women and men typically consider to be attractive in a romantic partner and what role they are expected to play within heterosexual relationships: Men are more desirable when they are agentic and dominant, while women are more desirable when they are communal and submissive (e.g., Ahmetoglu & Swami, 2012; Sanchez et al., 2012). Those who deviate from these highly unequal norms and scripts are punished by being seen as less attractive, limiting their chances of fulfilling relational (and reproductive) needs.

A recent meta-analysis confirmed that intergroup contact is associated with lower perceived prejudice, collective action, and support for reparative policies among disadvantaged groups (Reimer & Sengupta, 2023). Negative intergroup contact has shown to be a stronger (positive) predictor of support for social change than positive contact, as it draws attention to group injustice and increases support for actions to redress it (Reimer et al., 2017). In line with this finding, women who had positive contact with men were more likely to support women's rights when recalling personal experiences of gender discrimination (Vázquez et al., 2021, Study 2a), and those who focused on a negative interaction with their male partner were less likely to accept unequal household labour (Sobol-Sarag et al., 2023, Study 2).

While negative contact with advantaged groups can motivate disadvantaged groups to challenge inequalities it may also harm relational cross-group relationships. To address this limitation the integrated contact–collective action model (ICCAM; Hässler et al., 2021) identifies conditions where positive intergroup contact does not reduce the disadvantaged group's motivations to challenge existing inequalities. According to the ICCAM, this happens when contact satisfies the disadvantaged group's need for empowerment, the advantaged group's need for moral acceptance (or liking), and addresses the existing inequalities (politicised contact). In other words, disadvantaged group members who feel listened to and perceived as competent by advantaged group members, and who can discuss group inequalities with them, do not experience the sedative effects of positive contact. Studies corroborate the importance of addressing inequalities during contact to maintain support for social change among both disadvantaged and advantaged groups (e.g., Becker & Wright, 2022; Becker et al., 2022; Cocco et al., 2024; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Saguy et al., 2009).

A multinational study confirmed that positive contact with cis-heterosexual individuals generally reduces support for social change for those with minoritised LGBTIQ+ identities (Hässler, Ullrich, Bernardino, et al., 2020). However, this effect reversed when the contact empowered LGBTIQ+ individuals by making them feel heard and competent (Hässler, Ullrich, Sebben, et al., 2022, Study 2). For the cis-heterosexual majority, positive and intimate contact with LGBTIQ+ individuals was associated with higher support for progressive social change, especially when their need for acceptance was met.

Gaps in the Current Understanding of Cross-Gender Contact Effects and Constraints on Generality

In summary, various forms of cross-gender contact, including workplace interactions, friendships, fatherhood of daughters, and parasocial contact with trans and gender-diverse individuals are linked to lower endorsement of traditional gender roles and harmful group attitudes. However, some forms of positive cross-gender contact, such as heterosexual romantic relationships and motherhood of sons, are associated with higher support for traditional gender roles and attitudes, contradicting past research.

A limitation of existing research is that studies often infer contact quality from the fact of having a romantic partner or a child, which may reflect negative rather than positive contact. Similarly, most studies only speculate about the possible mechanisms such as men's increased sensitivity to women's disadvantage through having a daughter, and very few assess the impact of contact quality on support for social change. Additionally, most research focuses on Western samples, limiting generalisability to other cultural contexts, and very few of the reviewed studies consider intersectionality.

Opportunities and Challenges for Future Cross-Gender Contact Research

What Is the Role of Interpersonal and Intergroup Dynamics in Cross-Gender Contact?

As we indicated in the introduction, gender relations are often viewed as distinct from other intergroup contexts, shaped more by interpersonal than intergroup processes (for similar arguments applied to the analysis of the impact of intergroup relations between men and women on the social construction of gender identity across the lifespan, see e.g., Abrams, 1989; and barriers to women's engagement in collective action against sexism, Radke et al., 2016). This perspective assumes that interpersonal and intergroup dynamics are mutually exclusive, which is a common belief in the intergroup literature (Gangi & Soliz, 2016).

Contrary to this dichotomising assumption, we believe that most cross-group interactions include both interpersonal and intergroup

elements. Greater intimacy in these relationships does not negate intergroup influences (for a similar argument applied to intimate intergroup contact more broadly, see also Dragojevic & Giles, 2014; Gangi & Soliz, 2016). For example, a father can be close to his daughter while interacting with her based on gendered beliefs.

These two propositions are supported by studies demonstrating that social identities and their associated power dynamics are embedded in even the most intimate forms of intergroup contact, such as those within families and friendships (e.g., Killian, 2001; Soliz & Harwood, 2006; Soliz & Rittenour, 2012; Williams & Thurlow, 2005). For example, grandchildren view their grandparents as either part of their ingroup (family) or an outgroup (older adults), depending on the salience of group categories (Soliz & Harwood, 2006).[6] Additionally, despite the perception that close relationships lack intergroup dynamics, research indicates that recognising different social identities, like ethnicity in interracial marriages (Killian, 2001) or sexuality in queer families (Soliz et al., 2010), is essential to interpersonal closeness (e.g., Diggs & Clark, 2002; Gangi & Soliz, 2016). In other words, these relationships are close, in part, because of the presence of intergroup processes within them.

Similarly, research indicates that the positive impact of cross-group friendships on outgroup attitudes is due both to interpersonal processes (like developing intimacy, affection, trust, and self-disclosure) and intergroup processes (such as discussing group issues and communicating respect). While interpersonal processes are crucial early in these friendships, intergroup processes become more important as the relationships deepen (Chen & Graham, 2015; Davies & Aron, 2016; Grütter & Tropp, 2019; Pettigrew, 1998).

Given the evidence, we believe that the key research question is not whether cross-gender contact involves intergroup processes, but when these processes become prominent in interpersonal cross-gender relationships. This is particularly important given that focusing solely on interpersonal aspects of the relationship may reduce the salience of group identities, leading to a lower impact on outgroup attitudes (Brown & Hewstone, 2005) and support for social change. For example, intimate intergenerational contact within families involving personal communication of social support and self-disclosure often decreases group identity salience, emphasising family identity. In contrast, group identities become more salient with communication that either under- or overaccommodates group differences (e.g., talking patronisingly; Shepard, 2001), or activates group stereotypes (e.g., discussing health issues; Soliz & Harwood, 2006). Another way group distinctions emerge, for example within multilingual families, is through code-switching,[7] such as alternating between two or more languages in a conversation (Ng & He, 2004).

Future research should explore factors that increase gender identity salience in cross-gender interactions, helping to generalise the attitudes from an individual to the larger outgroup. Given that gender is a prominent social category (e.g., Maccoby, 1988), we believe it may be highly salient in close personal relationships. References to gender norms, beliefs, customs, or social signifiers like clothing and bathrooms could all heighten gender identity salience in everyday contact situations. Additionally, the gender composition of groups (e.g., Oakes et al., 1991; van der Pol et al., 2016), family attitudes and social norms (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1990), and certain interpersonal processes, such as discussing gender-specific experiences, may also make gender more prominent in these interactions. Individual experiences of gender inequalities or politicised contact could further emphasise these distinctions.

Future studies should also investigate how the salience of gender identities in cross-gender contact is influenced by the strength and content of those identities. People who strongly identify with their social group are more likely to find their group identity salient (e.g., Leach et al., 2008), and women with a strong gender identity are more likely to perceive ambiguous prejudice cues as discrimination (Major et al., 2003). This could impact how they experience cross-gender contact and their outgroup attitudes and support for social change (e.g., Mikołajczak et al., 2022).

Another related question concerns social categorisation in cross-gender relationships. Research suggests that positive contact can reduce prejudice by either reducing the salience of group identities (decategorisation) or by shifting from a "us versus them'" orientation to a more inclusive common identity ("we" orientation; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010). This recategorisation is common when contact is cooperative and involves shared goals (Gaertner et al., 2016), such as intimate contact. For example, multiethnic families often form an inclusive family identity that embraces group differences (Soliz et al., 2009). More research is needed to determine if similar processes occur in cross-gender relationships and how they affect intergroup outcomes.

What Conditions Facilitate Cross-Gender Contact That Is Both Harmonious and Support Social Change Toward Gender Equality?

As we have highlighted, cross-gender contact is important for well-being and, for the most part, unavoidable, but can reduce women's (and minoritised genders') motivation to change the status quo (e.g., Sobol-Sarag et al., 2023; Vázquez et al., 2021). So, how can we achieve cross-gender contact that is both harmonious and support social change toward gender equality? Guided by the ICCAM's predictions (Hässler et al., 2021), we call for more studies examining cross-gender contact focusing on the illegitimacy of group inequalities (politicised contact), and contact that empowers women and gender-minoritised individuals.

Preliminary evidence suggests that women's direct and imagined contact with feminist men at work is associated with feelings of empowerment and respect (Cheng et al., 2019; Moser & Branscombe, 2022), and a perception of more gender-equal norms (Moser & Branscombe, 2022). However, male allies might also reduce women's motivation to challenge workplace inequalities. Future studies should examine how politicised contact can boost support for social change among women and minoritised genders, and how this interacts with positive contact in various cross-gender relationships, such as romantic couples or supervisee–supervisor dyads.

If politicised contact increases support for social change among women and minoritised genders, future research should address two questions: (a) how to communicate gender inequalities within various cross-gender interactions and relationships, and (b) how to do so while maintaining interpersonal harmony and minimising the threat to men (e.g., Becker & Barreto, 2014). Although discussions of negative life experiences, sexual matters, political issues, and inequality are often avoided in families and romantic relationships (e.g., Guerrero & Afifi, 1995; Riedijk et al., 2024), intimate cross-group contact may actually facilitate these conversations (Hughes et al., 2020).

Close relationships with high intimacy and investment in each other's well-being can provide a safe space for meaningful discussions about group inequalities. Additionally, although politicised contact is often seen as conflicting with harmonious relationships (e.g., Rudman & Fairchild, 2007), it might, in fact, foster relational closeness if both parties consider each other's perspectives and affirm their group identities (in the context of multiethnic families, see Soliz et al., 2009). For example, heterosexual men who view their female partners as feminists report greater relationship satisfaction (Rudman & Phelan, 2007).

Future research should explore when high-quality and politicised cross-gender contact promotes support for social change. For example, while contact with minoritised group members in elevated social positions is associated with lower outgroup prejudice (in the context of contact between Arab doctors and Jewish patients in Israel, see Weiss, 2021), it is unclear if it also encourages social change or triggers resistance. Men interacting with women in higher social roles, such as supervisors or higher earners, may believe gender inequality is no longer an issue or feel threatened, leading to reduced contact quality or avoidance (e.g., A. N. Fisher & Stinson, 2020; A. N. Fisher et al., in press; Schreiber et al., 2024). However, positive and politicised contact with

women in equal or higher status roles could challenge gender stereotypes, promoting positive attitudes and social change.

Two key moderating variables needing further examination in cross-gender contact are gender prototypicality and subtyping. In other intergroup contexts, positive contact with atypical group members is less effective at improving attitudes (Brown & Hewstone, 2005). Cross-gender contact might require more nuance than the simple focus on prototypicality since individuals are often categorised into specific gender subtypes (e.g., Becker, 2010; Cameron & Lalonde, 2001; Neji, 2021; Six & Eckes, 1991; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). For example, women are often morally typecast as either "right" (e.g., romantic partners, mothers) or "wrong" (e.g., feminists or women in leadership; Glick & Fiske, 1996), which could limit the generalisation of positive attitudes from individual women to women as a group (i.e., the primary transfer effects of contact).

Other key moderating factors of cross-gender contact needing consideration include the type of contact (in terms of valence, frequency, and intimacy), group identification, and ideology, each of which determines whether contact is a bridge or a barrier to group equality for both advantaged and disadvantaged group members (Hässler et al., 2021). For example, negative contact with men might increase women's support for social change (Sobol-Sarag et al., 2023; Vázquez et al., 2021), but harm interpersonal harmony. The mobilising effect of negative contact seen in other intergroup contexts (e.g., Reimer et al., 2017) might be also more limited in gender relations due to interdependencies between genders (for a similar argument, see Radke et al., 2016).

More research is also needed to deepen our understanding of intimate cross-gender contact such as parenthood and mentorship, where strong communal bonds, responsibilities for the welfare of others, and a motivation to noncontingently respond to their needs (Mills & Clark, 1982; Mills et al., 2004) might hinder challenging gender inequalities among women and minoritised genders, especially when advancing gender equality is perceived as harmful to significant others. Online groups like "Mothers of Sons," formed by mothers of college-age sons protesting sexual consent laws on campuses, are one such example. Conversely, these relationships could motivate men to address gender inequalities if they negatively impact important women in their lives.

Further, future studies should examine gendered contact more broadly, comparing the relative influence of cross-gender and same-gender contact on intergroup outcomes (for a similar argument applied to intergroup research more generally, see Dovidio et al., 2017). For example, daughters of mothers with benevolent sexist views often adopt similar beliefs (Montañés et al., 2013), boys who have a brother (vs. a sister) are more likely to be socialised into and display typically masculine behaviours (Endendijk et al., 2014; van der Pol et al., 2016), and men's same-gender friendships shape their romantic relationships with women (Flood, 2008). Thus, same-gender peer exposure might limit the positive effects of cross-gender contact, in line with the "hydraulic effects" observed in other contexts (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2017; Levin et al., 2003).

Studies show that having more cross-gender and fewer same-gender friendships is linked to lower sexism and more positive gender attitudes (Kovacs et al., 1996), especially in men (Halim et al., 2021; Jenkins et al., 2023). Similarly, working in a majority-female mixed-gender team is associated with lower modern sexism and implicit gender bias among men (Wang & Zhang, 2020). However, these "hydraulic effects" can also be negative, for example, mothers are more likely to endorse traditional gender roles depending on the number of sons relative to daughters (Downey et al., 1994). Conversely, in some cases, same-gender rather than cross-gender contact might have a more beneficial effect on outgroup attitudes. For example, in a recent experiment, men who had technology-mediated, power-focused contact with other men (through likes, replies, and retweets to gender equality tweets), but not contact with women, were more supportive of gender equality policies and collective action addressing gender inequalities (Roden

et al., 2021). Understanding what makes cross-gender or same-gender contact more impactful in changing attitudes and supporting social change (and, importantly, the direction of that impact) is crucial.

An important question in cross-gender contact research, related to group identification and ideology, is who benefits the most from such interactions in terms of improved outgroup attitudes and increased support for gender equality? Evidence suggests that cross-gender contact is particularly impactful for individuals with high outgroup prejudice (in the context of contact with transgender women, see Boccanfuso et al., 2021), low feminism (in the context of heterosexual romantic relationships; Sobol-Sarag et al., 2023), high dissatisfaction with their gender (in the contect of cross-gender friendships; Endendijk, 2024), and conservative worldviews (Contu et al., 2023; Van Effenterre, 2020). However, more longitudinal studies are needed to establish causal links between contact and intergroup outcomes among these subgroups.

What Conceptual Considerations and Methodological Advances Are Necessary to Study Cross-Gender Contact?

Finally, researchers should consider how to reliably measure cross-gender contact due to its ubiquity and heterogeneity. Future studies should capture the complexity, daily fluctuations, and interplay of different cross-gender interactions and relationships. This is crucial as various types of contact, like cross-group friendships and heterosexual romantic relationships, can have opposing effects on outgroup attitudes. Researchers should assess whether various types of cross-gender contact, differing in valence, volition, and intimacy, reinforce or suppress each other. For example, are voluntary forms of cross-gender contact like friendships or romantic relationships more impactful than involuntary forms like workplace interactions? How do these interactions affect views on gender roles and equality across different domains, such as work and personal life? These questions are crucial for advancing theory and informing policy.

Similarly, more research is needed to understand how past cross-gender contact influences future interactions and intergroup outcomes, and at what developmental stage these effects are strongest. For example, many romantic relationships evolve from friendships (Stinson et al., 2022), which are typically more egalitarian, and studies on ambivalent sexism indicate that men in their 20s and 30s, who arguably have had more opportunities for different types of intimate relationships with women than school-aged boys, are more likely to hold more complex gender attitudes comprising both hostile and benevolent sexism (Masser & Abrams, 1999). Additionally, evidence from other intergroup contexts shows that a history of positive contact "buffers" against the detrimental impacts of current negative contact (Paolini et al., 2014), and that contact tends to predict positive outgroup attitudes more strongly in middle to late childhood than in adolescence (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011).

To improve the ecological validity of cross-gender contact research, it is important to consider intersectionality within social interactions. Gender groups are not homogenous (e.g., Mikołajczak et al., 2022), and an individual's status and privilege are relative within multiple intersecting social identities (e.g., Figgou et al., 2023). For example, a Black cisgender woman interacting with a White trans man hold both disadvantaged and advantaged statuses. The salience of different group identities, the associated norms, and shared group memberships can influence how individuals perceive contact (e.g., Zaidi et al., 2014), the quality of their interactions (e.g., Diamond & Dubé, 2002), and the resulting intergroup outcomes.

Researchers should also consider the role of technology-mediated contact between genders in shaping outgroup attitudes and support for social change. For example, recent evidence suggests that online communities discussing "echo-chambered" topics like feminism or abortion tend to be segregated by gender (Geiss et al., 2022),

which limits the opportunities for power-focused contact between genders and likely reinforces negative attitudes. Research also indicates that time spent playing video games and watching television and YouTube—all of which often include gender-stereotypical portrayals—is associated with the endorsement of traditional masculinity (favouring dominance, toughness, and emotional detachment) and avoidance of femininity among adolescent girls and boys (Scharrer & Warren, 2022). While likely having both negative and positive impacts on intergroup outcomes (e.g., Roden et al., 2021), the online context may be particularly important for understanding the effects of gendered contact (or lack thereof) among young people, whose social and cultural lives in large part occur online (e.g., Andreassen et al., 2017).

Following more general critiques (e.g., O'Donnell et al., 2021), we also call for more experimental and longitudinal studies on cross-gender contact to establish causality, as most existing research is cross-sectional. While some effects have been confirmed in the lab (Sobol-Sarag et al., 2023; Vázquez et al., 2021) and field experiments (Dahl et al., 2021; Finseraas et al., 2016), or longitudinally (Borell-Porta et al., 2018; Halim et al., 2021; Perales et al., 2018; Shafer & Malhotra, 2011; Wiley et al., 2021), the results are sometimes inconclusive (Borell-Porta et al., 2018; Perales et al., 2018; Shafer & Malhotra, 2011) or show bidirectional links between contact and attitudes rather than clear unidirectional effects (Halim et al., 2021). Establishing causality is essential, as recent evidence from other intergroup contexts shows limited changes in outgroup attitudes over time due to contact (e.g., Friehs et al., 2024; Hodson & Meleady, 2024; Sengupta et al., 2023). This suggests that less prejudiced individuals may seek more and better intergroup contact. In cross-gender interactions, this self-selection bias might mean, for example, that more egalitarian men simply have more and higher quality interactions with women.

Alternative explanations for these null findings could be that contact needs to be intimate to influence attitudes and behaviour, or that the effects of contact are short-lived. For example, a recent longitudinal study using 2-week intervals found that cross-group friendships, but not generic contact, positively impacted Poles' support for Ukrainian refugees (Górska & Tausch, 2023). Future research should examine how different durations and types of cross-gender contact, as well as gradual and rapid changes within cross-gender relationships, affect outgroup attitudes and support for social change. For example, longitudinal evidence indicates that those in heterosexual romantic relationships become gradually more traditional in their gender-role behaviours over time after they become parents (Endendijk et al., 2018; Grinza et al., 2017). Longitudinal assessments of contact should also consider the possible temporal interplay between contact and perceptions of intergroup threat (Abrams & Eller, 2017). For example, involuntarily celibate (incel) men who lack romantic and/or sexual contact with women in the present are tend to experience threats to their masculinity and imagine future contact with women in the form of violent rape fantasies (Scaptura & Boyle, 2020). Additionally, exploring longitudinally the impact of parasocial (imagined or technology-mediated) cross-gender contact on in-person interactions and outcomes, especially for nonbinary and young people, could inform interventions involving these groups.

Some of the methods that could be used to provide more in-depth insights into these reciprocal and temporal links between different types of cross-gender contact include relatively novel methods (in the context of intergroup contact) such as daily diary studies, experience sampling, and network analysis, and more traditional methods like experiments and random intercept cross-lagged panel models (for an overview of methodological advances in contact research, see O'Donnell et al., 2021).

What Can Intergroup Contact Researchers Gain From Looking at Gender Relations?

The prevalence and diversity of contact between different genders, especially cisgender men and women, offer a unique context to study how intergroup contact affects persistent inequalities.

Future research on gendered contact could contribute to intergroup contact literature by (a) deepening understanding of contact effects in intimate relationships, (b) identifying optimal and boundary conditions for these effects, and (c) exploring how past experiences and different types of contact affect one another and support for social change.

As discussed earlier, intimate contact is underexplored in intergroup relations (Marinucci et al., 2021). Most studies focus on acquaintanceship or cross-group friendships (e.g., Davies et al., 2011), overlooking deeper forms of intimacy such as romantic relationships, parent–child bonds, and familial ties (see Radke et al., 2016). These relationships are crucial for studying intergroup dynamics due to their importance and longevity (Soliz & Rittenour, 2012). Gender relations offer a valuable opportunity to explore intimate contact in relationships where one partner assumes high responsibility for the other's needs (e.g., parenthood), or where both partners are mutually involved (e.g., friendships, romantic relationships).

Gender relations also offer insights into how social and cultural norms influence intimate intergroup contact, especially within highly scripted social roles like romantic relationships or parenthood. Research shows that positive intergroup contact can change norms for intergroup behaviour (e.g., Gómez et al., 2011; Paluck, 2009), and that contact within highly scripted social roles can reduce anxiety about interactions (Avery et al., 2009). However, norms within cross-gender contact such as heterosexual dating scripts often reinforce stereotypic attitudes and maintain group inequalities (e.g., Sanchez et al., 2012).

Similarly, the diversity of gender relations allows the study of intergroup contact effects under various statuses, common goals, cooperation, and authority support configurations. For example, while women are generally disadvantaged compared to men, individual men often interact with women in equal or higher positions (e.g., women leaders or high-earning partners). Although optimal contact conditions proposed by Allport are considered essential for (or, at

least, facilitating) intergroup effects (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), few studies have systematically tested or experimentally manipulated them (for a similar argument, see Paluck et al., 2019; for some recent exceptions, see Di Bernardo et al., 2022; Grütter & Tropp, 2019; Sobol-Sarag et al., 2023).

Lastly, intergroup contact research has been criticised for focusing too narrowly on single-factor explanations (e.g., looking at one type of contact at a time without considering the broader contact context), overlooking the complexity of contact effects (e.g., Boin et al., 2021; Dixon et al., 2005; Pettigrew & Hewstone, 2017). Gender relations provide a promising way to deepen our understanding of contact effects, given the diversity and varying duration, frequency, valence, and intimacy of cross-gender interactions throughout life.

What Can Gender Equality Practitioners Learn From Looking at Cross-Gender Contact Research?

As noted earlier, although individuals of different genders have numerous opportunities for contact, gender segregation (and discrimination of underrepresented genders that goes hand in hand with it; e.g., Dresden et al., 2018) in specific domains and at various life stages persists. Two institutional settings in which cross-gender contact interventions seem especially promising to improve outgroup attitudes and increase support for gender equality are education and the workplace.

Interventions in school settings. High-quality cross-gender contact in early and middle childhood, such as cross-gender friendships, is crucial for boys to prevent the development of group stereotypes, sexist attitudes (e.g., Karpiak et al., 2007), negative cross-gender contact experiences in later life, and gendered academic and career choices reinforcing occupational gender segregation. For girls, early cross-gender friendships may have long-term economic benefits as men are more likely to hold power, and personal networks create

leadership opportunities (e.g., Yang et al., 2019). High-quality cross-gender contact also has positive effects on the well-being of individuals from minoritised groups, such as young people with LGBTQI+ identities (e.g., Baiocco et al., 2014).

While providing more opportunities for cross-gender contact through mixed-gender activities (e.g., sports), gender-specific scholarships, and coeducational initiatives, successful interventions should also consider that children and youth tend to spontaneously choose same-gender peers (Mehta & Strough, 2009), especially if they endorse sexist attitudes (Keener et al., 2013), and that prevalent social and cultural norms proscribe cross-gender friendships (e.g., Kretschmer, 2024), particularly in adolescence (Martin et al., 2017; Paluck et al., 2019). To counteract these tendencies, it is thus important to create opportunities for extended positive contact and mutual understanding and respect while addressing social norms. Based on the available evidence from other intergroup contexts, to avoid the sedative effects of positive commonality-focused contact on girls' support for social change (and that of gender-minoritised children and youth), successful contact interventions should also provide opportunities (as well as the necessary tools) to discuss gender prejudice and group inequalities. Given that most adolescents maintain contact with their peers online (e.g., Van Zalk et al., 2014), effective interventions should also consider how to model positive norms of behaviour within online peer interactions. Next to peer impacts, gender equality practitioners should also consider how parental attitudes shape young children's formation of gender attitudes and feminism.

Workplace interventions. Cross-gender contact interventions could reduce horizontal gender segregation in hyper-masculine sectors (Dahl et al., 2021; Finseraas et al., 2016), where men have limited opportunities to interact with women of equal status. Policies used to address vertical segregation across workplaces, such as leadership quotas for women, might also improve perceptions of women leaders and outgroup attitudes (Battaglini et al., 2023; Beaman et al., 2009; Taschler & West, 2017), though more longitudinal and experimental research is needed.

However, quotas alone might not reduce gender prejudice and occupational segregation if they do not foster positive cross-gender interactions. According to the ICCAM, quotas could hinder social change if the contact they facilitate focuses on commonalities rather than addressing power disparities and group-based needs. Workplaces should ensure the quality of contact and challenge organisational gender norms that limit the impact of these interventions (e.g., Hall et al., 2022; Moser & Branscombe, 2022). More evidence is needed, however, to understand how gender diversity in organisations shapes interactions, and when women and gender-minoritised individuals in power positions are perceived as nonthreatening to men, reducing potential backlash.

Interventions improving attitudes toward gender-minoritised individuals. Imagined or mediated contact interventions with minoritised genders (e.g., through television, video games, or virtual reality) might be an important first step towards improving outgroup attitudes (Tran et al., 2023), especially for those with little real-life contact (Schiappa et al., 2005). These interventions might benefit people prone to prejudice (Hodson, 2011; Turner et al., 2020), while minimising the psychological burden on minoritised individuals in face-to-face contact encounters (e.g., Trail et al., 2009). However, mediated contact often has smaller effects than direct contact (Lemmer & Wagner, 2015). Also, all contact interventions could backfire if the contact they facilitate is not positive. Thus, any direct contact should be accompanied by regulations protecting gender-minoritised individuals from discrimination in the settings in which it occurs. Attitudes toward gender-minoritised individuals might also improve through secondary transfer effects from contact with similar, less stigmatised groups (e.g., minoritised sexualities such as gays or lesbians, though this has yet to be tested in this context; Pettigrew, 2009; Tausch et al., 2010).

Interventions in close relationships. Contact interventions aiming to increase support for gender equality where the contact quality is high, such as heterosexual romantic relationships or familial ties, can be paradoxically more challenging as

raising awareness of inequalities might disrupt harmony in these important bonds. Effective strategies should therefore foster discussions of gender inequalities without harming relationship quality. These targeted approaches should be complemented by broader interventions that raise awareness of gender inequality and social scripts in intimate cross-gender relationships (e.g., Sanchez et al., 2012), and by involving men in promoting gender equality (Becker et al., 2013; Subašić et al., 2018; Wright & Lubensky, 2013).

Limitations of gendered contact interventions. Future cross-gender contact interventions may face limitations, as effects observed so far in laboratory settings have been "modest" (e.g., Vázquez et al., 2021). Even intense interventions, such as working and living together for a few weeks, show short-lived effects (Dahl et al., 2021), indicating that sustained, meaningful contact is needed for lasting impact. It is also unclear if contact effects from hyper-masculine settings like the military apply to other male-dominated industries, or if they play out for contact with men in female-dominated fields. Research from other intergroup contexts offers mixed findings on how the amount of prior contact affects the impact of new contact on outgroup attitudes (MacInnis & Page-Gould, 2015; Page-Gould et al., 2022; Voci et al., 2017). Future studies should examine how factors like contact frequency, quality, initial gender attitudes, volition, and gender subtyping influence cross-gender contact effectiveness (e.g., Neji, 2021).

Conclusion

Harmonious relationships between individuals from different genders, such as within heterosexual couples and familial ties, could be an important factor that reduces support for gender equality among women and minoritised genders. While we still need to understand when, how, and for whom gendered contact can lead to equitable outcomes, recent intergroup contact research offers hope for achieving group equality while maintaining interpersonal harmony in cross-gender relationships.

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Notes

1. Across the paper, we consider gender to be nonbinary and inclusive of trans individuals (i.e., individuals whose gender does not match the sex they were assigned at birth) and gender-diverse individuals, including those identifying as nonbinary (i.e., neither male nor female), gender fluid (i.e., not having a fixed gender), multigender (i.e., having more than one gender), or agender (i.e., having no gender; LGBT Foundation, 2023).

2. We note that most evidence on intergroup contact outside of the gender binary comes either from studies looking at direct contact with LGBTQI+ individuals—with a caveat that trans and gender-diverse individuals are typically only a small fraction of the studied samples and their relationship with the cis-heterosexual majority is often markedly different (Fassinger & Arseneau, 2007)—or studies looking at imagined or technology-mediated contact with trans and gender-diverse people.

3. Defined as "women in positions of power or authority, or women who are more senior than you occupationally" (Taschler & West, 2017, p. 476).

4. We acknowledge that there are competing theoretical approaches to explaining why romantic cross-gender relationships arise despite gender

inequalities (e.g., Buss & Schmitt, 2011; Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; Rich, 2007; Wood & Eagly, 2012; Zhu & Chang, 2019). However, establishing which one of them is most robust and whether (and what qualities of) intimate cross-gender contact is biologically determined versus socially constructed is beyond the scope of this review.

5. A possible explanation for the observed differences is that the latter study only considered the gender of firstborn children as the independent variable, while the former two looked at having at least one daughter.

6. Similar contextual effects have been observed in experimental studies looking at the impact of the salience of gender versus age categories on the behavioural choices of preschoolers (Grace et al., 2008).

7. That is, "the temporary adjustment of behaviours in an interaction to accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behaviour" (Molinsky, 2007, p. 624).

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