



Prospects and Pitfalls of Peacemaking and Peacebuilding Mechanisms

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Making and keeping peace

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of peacekeeping in reducing violence and maintaining peace
(Walter, Howard & Fortna 2021)

But, how?

Theories of peacekeeping effectiveness highlight different mechanisms:

- Reducing information problem
- Managing commitment problem
- Increase cost of violence
- Raising the benefits of peace



What peacekeepers need to resolve

1. Information asymmetry:

- Actors have private information about their capabilities and resolve – and incentives to bluff
- Peacekeepers can provide reliable information

2. Commitment problem

- Actors cannot trust the other party to stick to a deal in the future, in particular if power relations change
- Peacekeepers can act as a guarantor

3. The cost of conflict

- The bargaining range (what actors are willing to settle for) is also affected by the cost of war and benefits of peace
- Peacekeepers increase the bargaining range by changing the cost calculus

Manage information and commitment problem

Peacekeepers provide credible information:

- Collect information through patrols and local presence
- Monitor compliance with ceasefires: report violations
- Mediate both locally and at elite-level

and provide security during fragile transformation:

- disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs
- Buffer zones



These activities help build trust and allow actors to lay down their arms

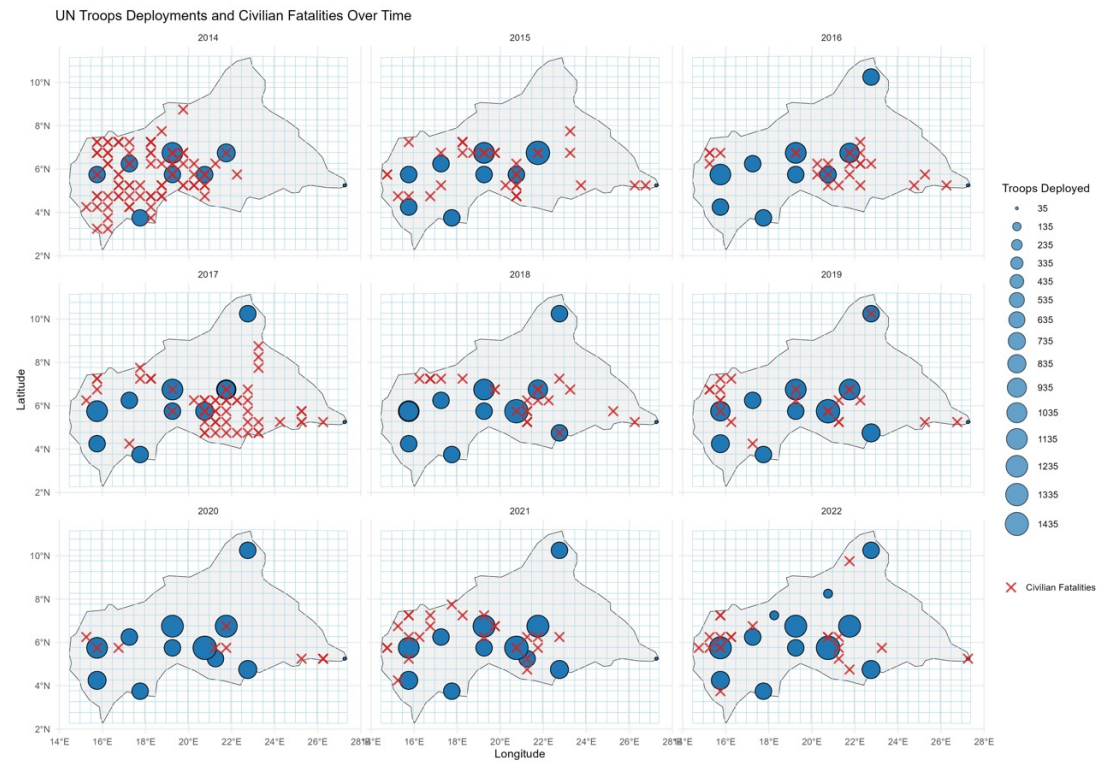
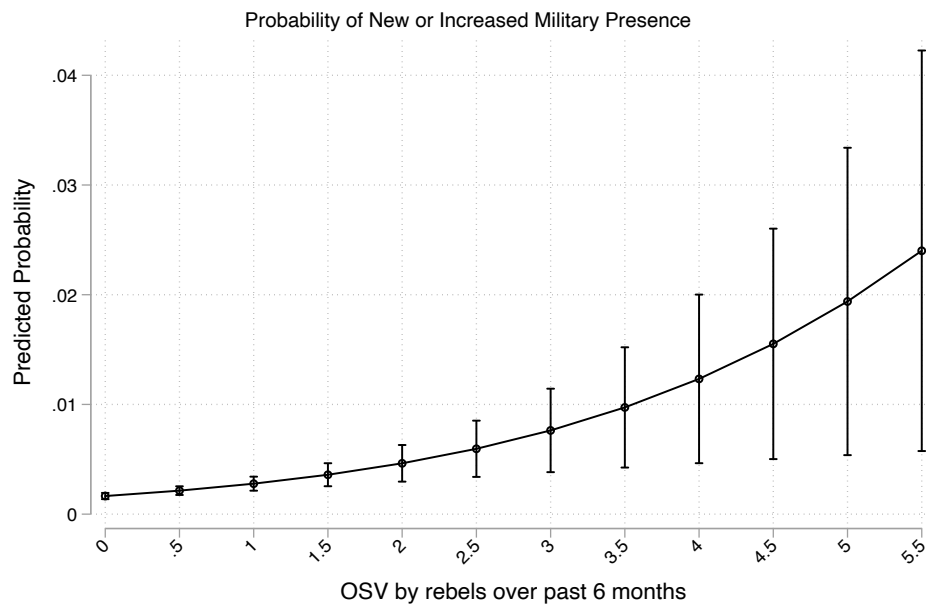
Deterrence: increasing the cost of violence

Peacekeepers increase the military and political costs of violence by:

- Separating combatants and maintaining buffer zones
- Disarming, demobilizing, and providing security to combatants
- Verifying compliance and reporting on violations of combatants with peace processes
- Policing and providing security behind frontlines



Credibility requires responsiveness



Responsiveness \neq enforcement!

(Hultman & Corsant-Colat 2025)

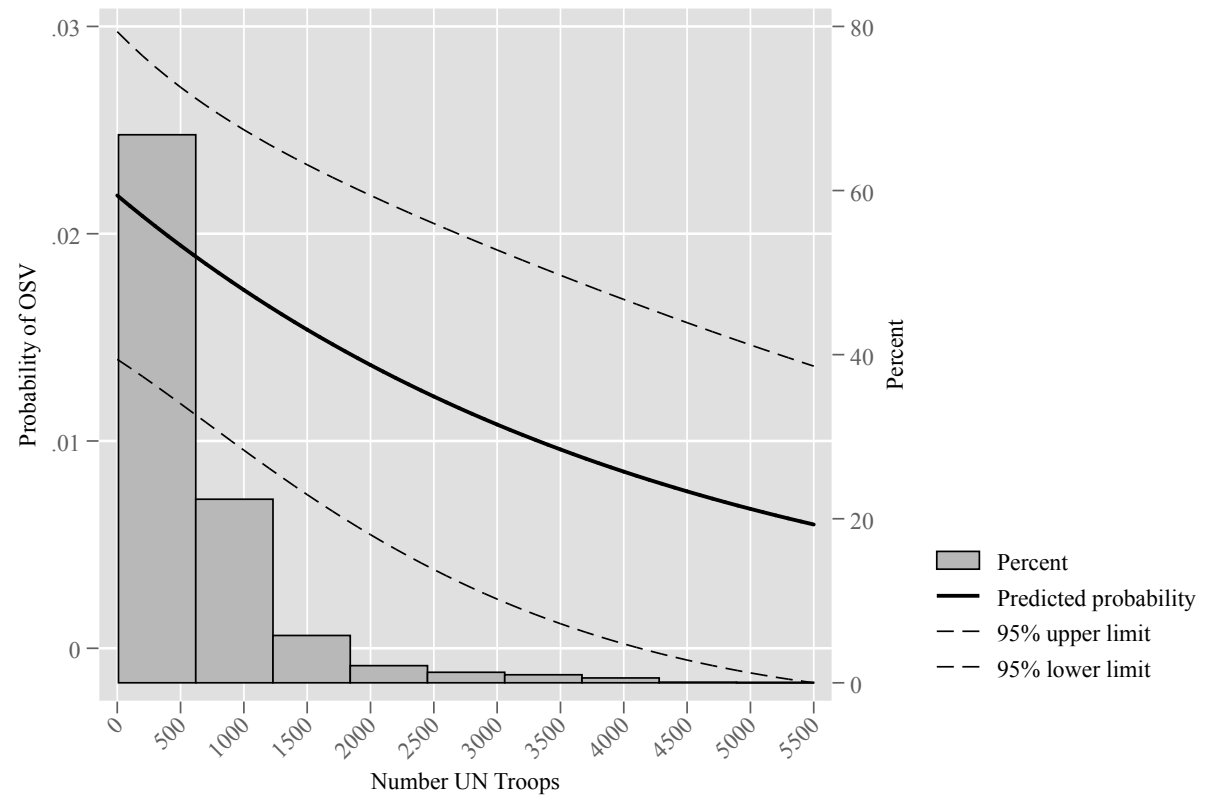
Presence reduces violence

Studies have shown that violence is lower in areas where peacekeepers are present

- Even if peacekeepers are selecting into locations where risk of violence is high

Effectiveness depends on troop size and accessibility

(Fjelde et al. 2019; Ruggeri et al. 2017; Cil et al. 2020)



From peacekeeping to peacebuilding

The quality of democracy increases as a result of:

- Democracy mandate
- Civilian peacekeepers
- Democracy activities

(Blair et al. 2023)



Peacekeepers also:

- Contribute to local economic development

(Cil et al. 2025; Bove et al. 2021)

- Improve the rule of law

(Blair 2020)

- Reduce intergroup conflict/tensions

(Nomikos 2022; Duursma 2022)

Peacekeeping-peacemaking dilemma

- Potential trade-off: Short-term conflict management vs. long-term conflict resolution
- The idea is that interventions may in fact prevent parties from solving the information problem
 - Freezing the conflict: lower willingness to sign an agreement
 - Enforced agreement: solutions less stable as the bargaining failure is not truly resolved
- Tension between credible deterrence and local legitimacy
 - Managing armed actors versus local population



Contact and Conflict

Salma Mousa, Assistant Professor of Political Science, UCLA

How can we build social cohesion after conflict?



Institutional and *grassroots* interventions can help build social cohesion



Institutional: power-sharing arrangements, rule of law, legal protections for minorities, job creation



Grassroots: intergroup contact, perspective-taking, empathy education




Intergroup contact can reduce prejudice, forge friendships, and improve intergroup relations



Generally positive effects (Lowe 2025; Paluck, Green & Green 2019)

Durkheim 1897; Gilligan, Pasquale, & Samii 2013; Sambanis 2016; Walter 1997; Cilliers, Dube & Siddiqi 2016; Fearon, Humphreys & Weinstein 2009; Allport 1954; Paluck, Green & Green 2018; Burns, Corno & La Ferrara 2015; Carrell, Hoekstra & West 2015; Rao 2019; Barnhardt 2009;



The frontier of contact research

But many open questions...

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Application to conflict settings?

Which conditions matter?

- Cooperative
- Endorsed by communal authorities
- Equal power status

Do light-touch variations have the same effects?

- Exposure
- Parasocial contact
- Perspective-taking

When do effects generalize?

Does any of this affect violence?

Intergroup contact and prejudice

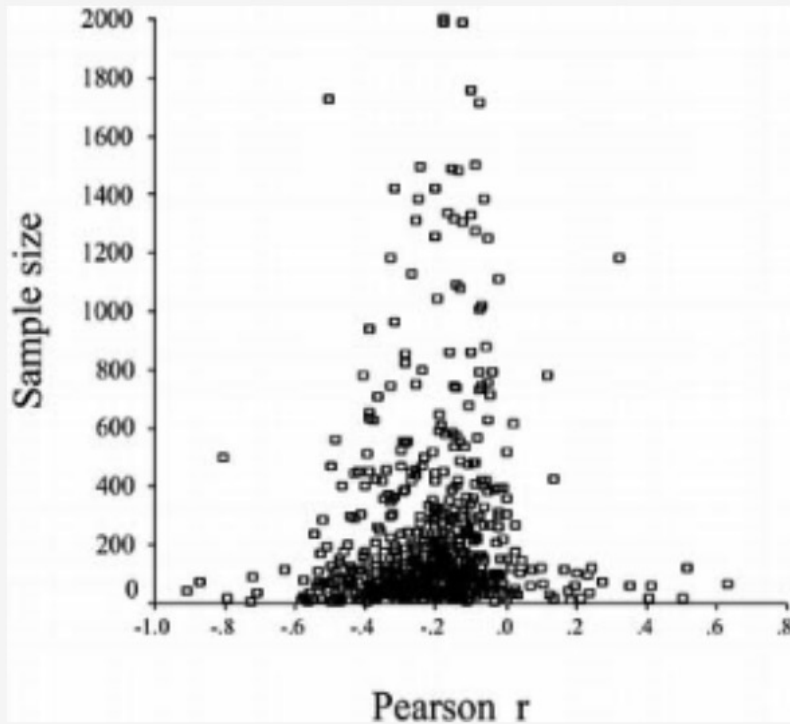
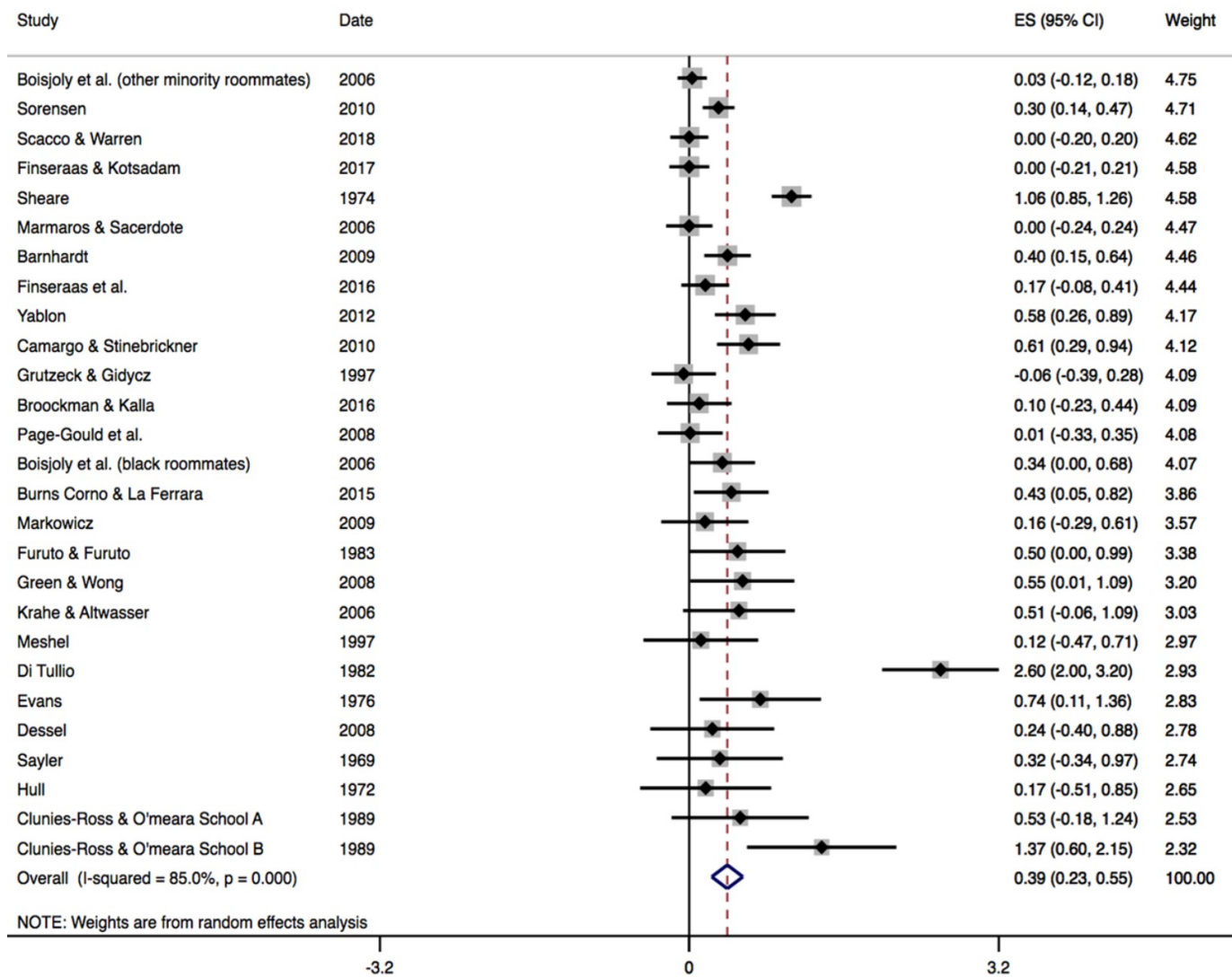


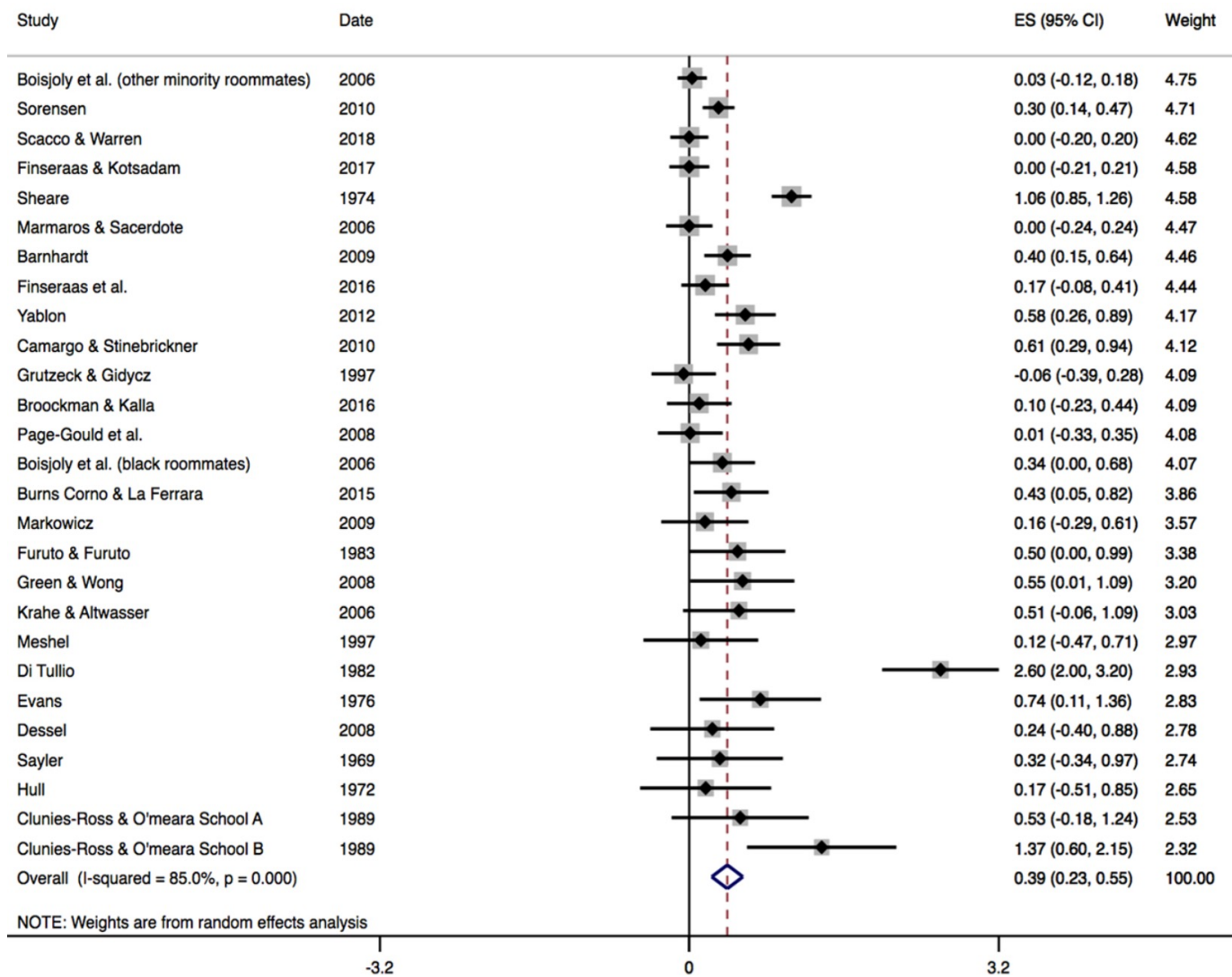
Figure 1

Scatter plot of mean contact-prejudice effect sizes (r) in relation to sample size.

Source: Pettigrew and Tropp 2006



Source: Paluck, Green, and Green 2019



- We cannot trust correlations!
- Selection bias is large!
- A mix of exposure bias and friending bias (Chetty et al, 2022)

Source: Paluck, Green, and Green 2019

Overcoming exposure bias...

- **We can design policies and institutions that encourage cross-group contact**
- **Schools (magnet; charter), busing, zoning, free access to public spaces (e.g. libraries), integrated sports leagues**
- **Optimize existing institutions (e.g. military, healthcare, education) for cooperative contact**
- **What are the causal effects of contact? Let's start with the 'hardest' cases first...**



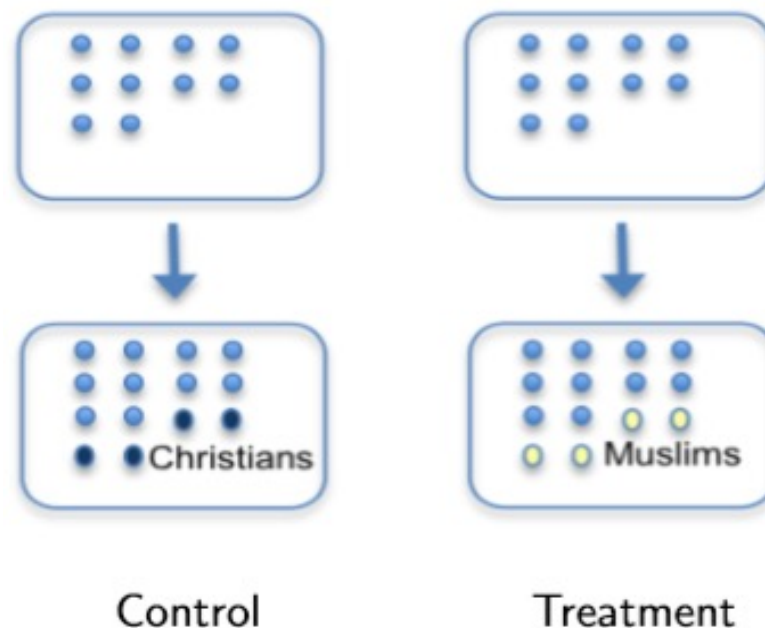
Contact after war

Research Question: Can contact build tolerant attitudes and behaviors after war?

Method: Hold constant “optimal” conditions of contact via soccer, and measure effects on real-world behaviors after war

Main result: Contact improved real-world everyday behaviors among peers – but did not build broader social cohesion

Granovetter 1983; Putnam et al. 1995



Outcomes

On-the-field behaviors:

- Sign up for mixed team next season
- Vote for Muslim to receive sportsmanship award
- Train with Muslims

Off-the-field behaviors:

- Attend mixed social event (*iftar*)
- Patronize business in Muslim city (Mosul)
- Donate to neutral NGO vs. Church



Results

On-the-field:

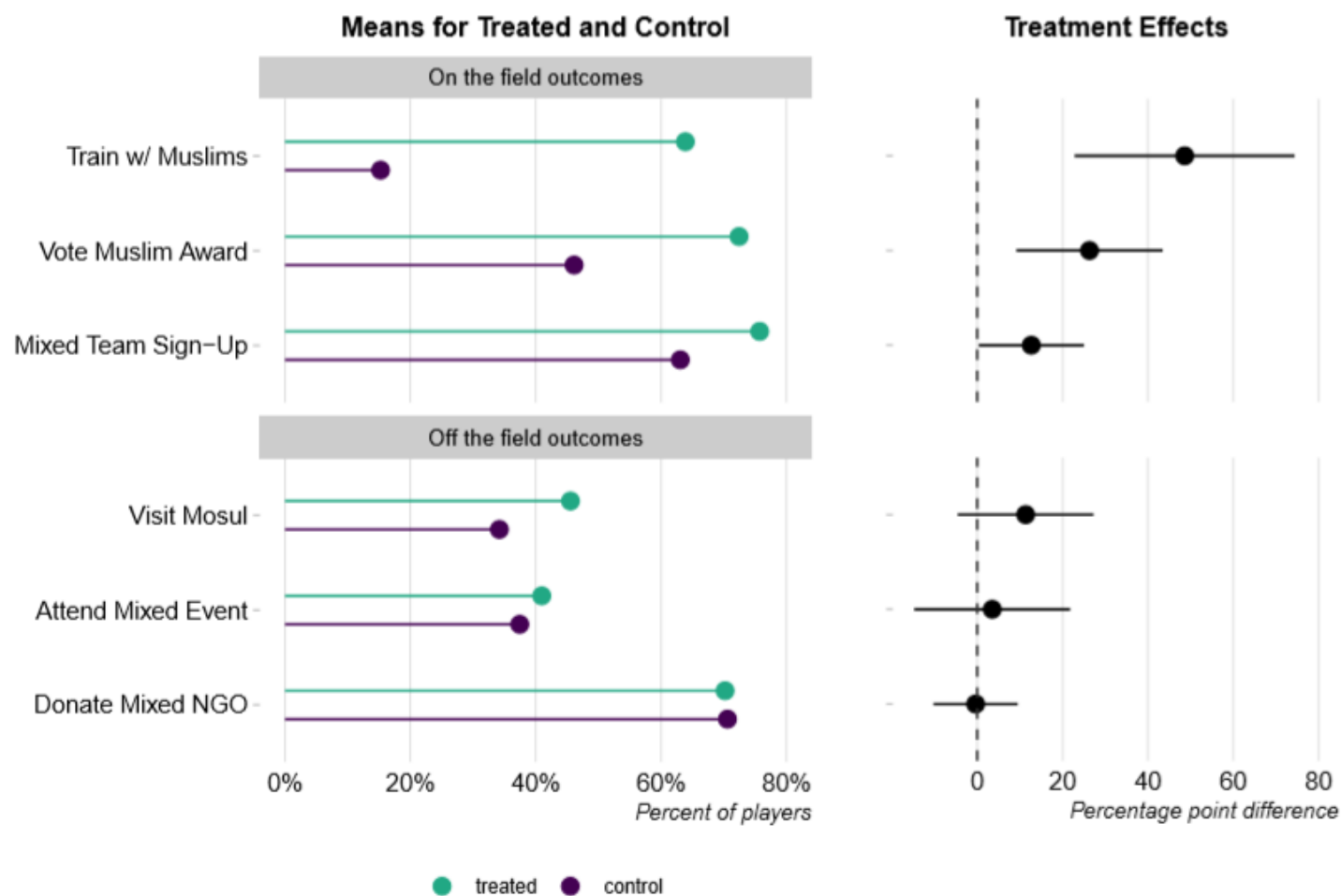
- More likely to train with Muslims, vote for a Muslim to win award

Off-the-field:

- No change to main outcomes

Indices:

- National unity index increased
- No change to views on Muslims



Cilliers, Dube, Siddiqi (2016)

- What happens when both sides explicitly discuss “what happened” during war?
- RCT evaluation of truth and reconciliation commissions in Sierra Leone
- Random assignment of some villages to discussions (clustered RCT)
- Survey outcomes: social capital (e.g. group membership), forgiveness of perpetrators, mental health
- Behavioral outcomes: public good lab game
- Measured 3 and 31 months after intervention

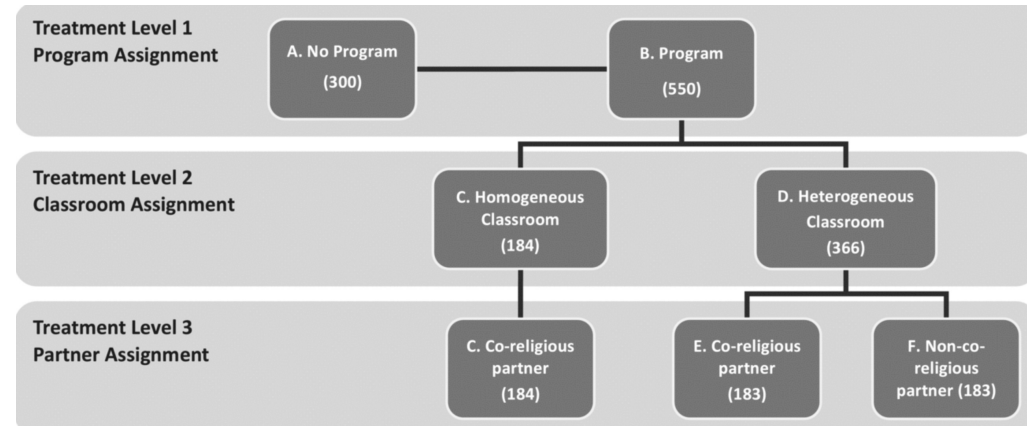
Cilliers, Dube, Siddiqi (2016)

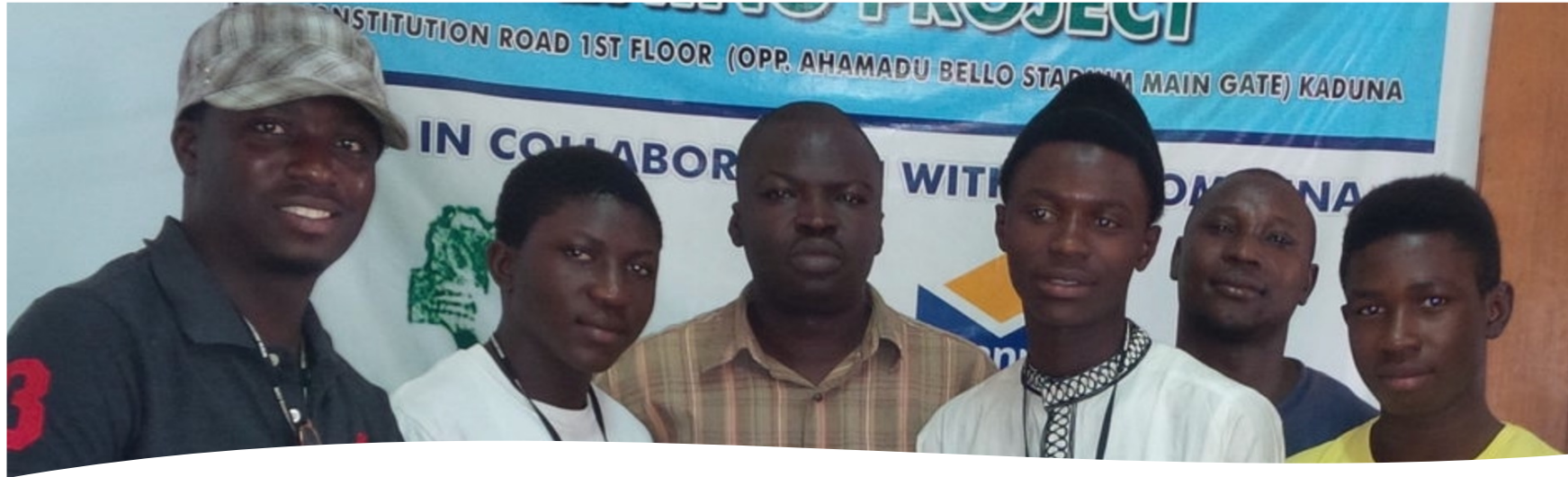
Variables	Round 1			Round 2			Baseline-dependent variable controls?
	Coefficient	SE	Observations	Coefficient	SE	Observations	
Forgive perpetrators	0.986***	(0.272)	550	1.231***	(0.361)	521	Y
Trust rebel excombatants	0.100	(0.073)	241	0.048	(0.198)	203	Y
Trust migrants	0.140**	(0.053)	653	0.119*	(0.069)	564	Y
Index of generalized trust in community	0.119**	(0.050)	878	-0.009	(0.038)	845	Y
Index of network strength	0.015	(0.027)	885	0.119	(0.085)	850	N
Index of community group participation	0.038*	(0.022)	884	0.084**	(0.040)	847	Y
Index of contributions to public goods	0.024	(0.033)	885	0.035	(0.046)	850	Y
Index of psychological well-being	-0.166***	(0.052)	873	-0.170***	(0.058)	837	Y

Increased social capital (network size, civic participation, social trust) and giving in public goods game...
But at a large psychological cost.

Warren and Scacco (2018)

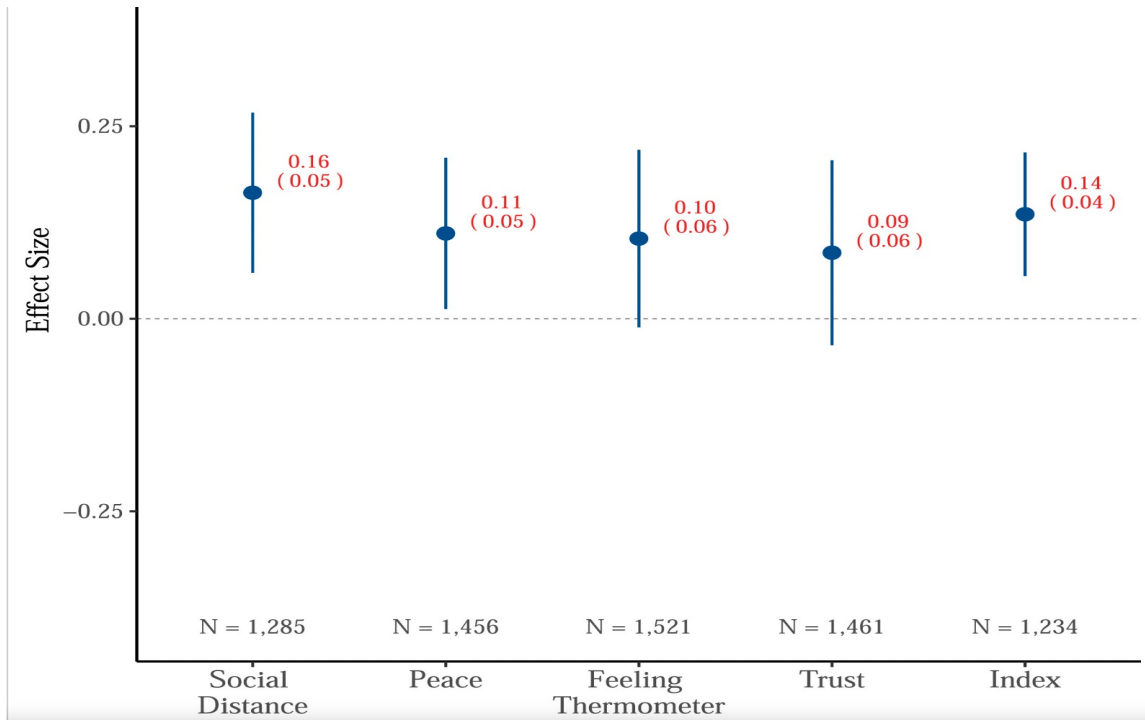
- Contact between Christians and Muslims for computer training (16 weeks)
 - Hypotheses: more contact = larger effects (*dosage*)
- Backdrop of violent riots in Kaduna; neither group socially dominant, few opportunities for contact





Warren and Scacco (2018)

- No changes in prejudice
- Mixed class subjects discriminate less against outgroup members
- Driven by an *increase* in discrimination among the homogenous class members
- Potentially negative consequences of *in-group* social contact

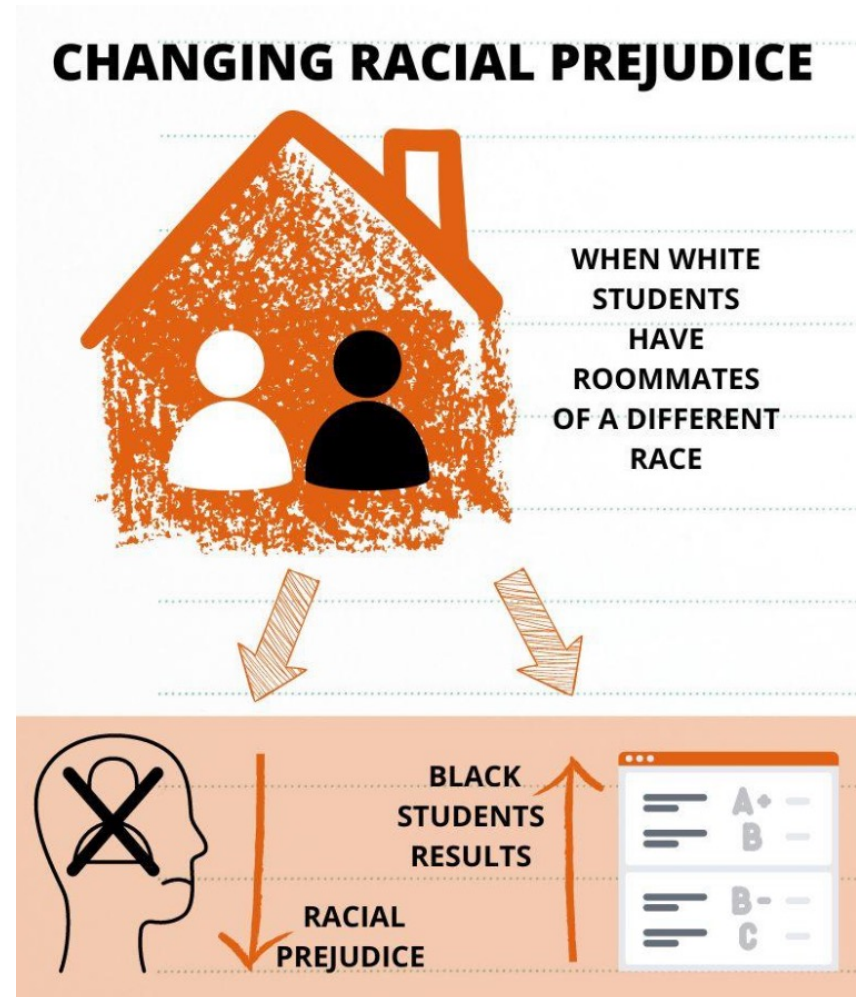


Weiss 2021

- Randomly assigned contact between Jewish-Israeli patients and Palestinian doctors reduced prejudice

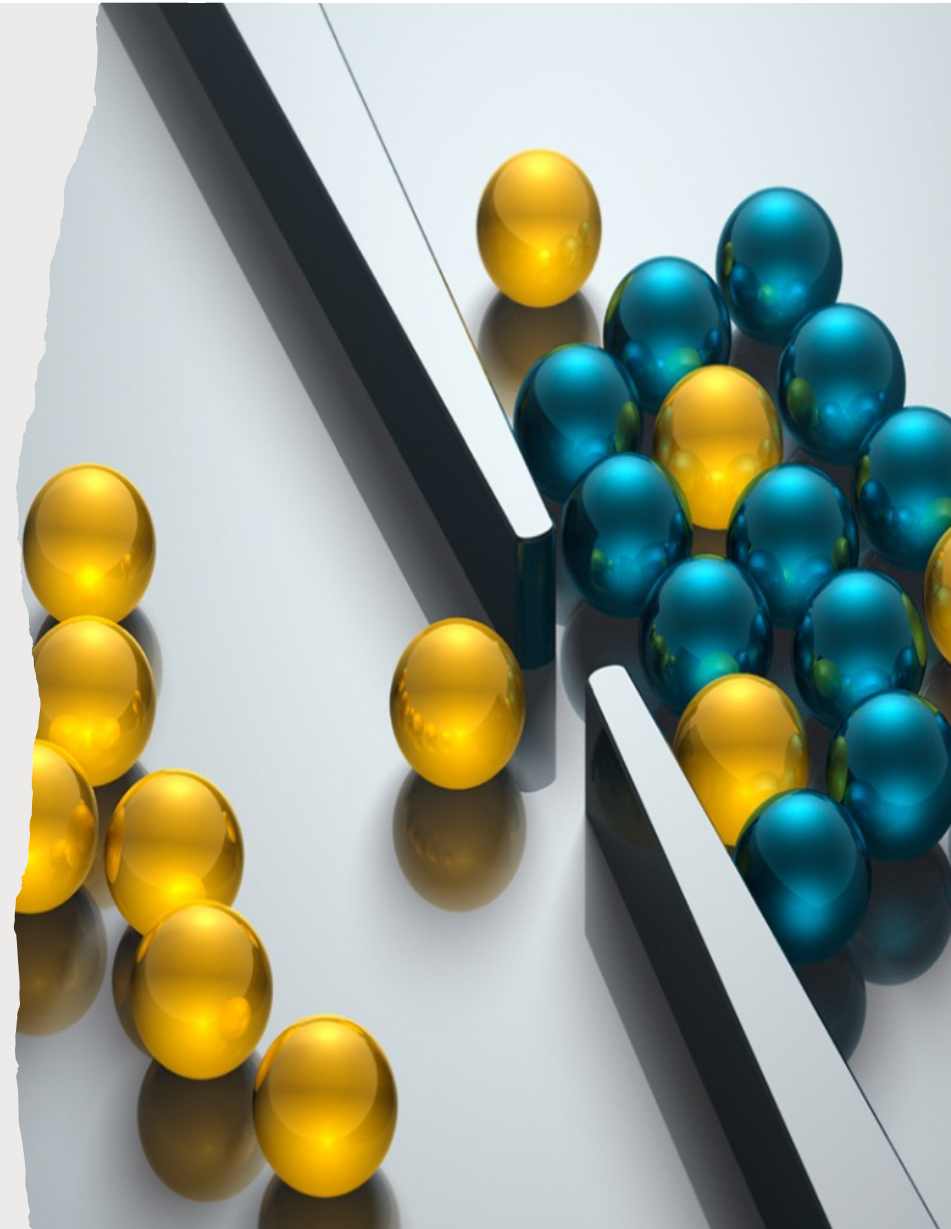
Corno, Burns, La Ferrara (2022)

- Random assignments of room mates in a South African university
- Cohabitation eliminated racial stereotypes (measured by IAT) and improved grades for Black students



Takeaways

- Institutional design choices can induce contact and overcome selection bias
- Contact generally reduces prejudice, but results are dampened in fragile settings that lack structural protections and stability --- precisely where they are most needed!
- What about the different *types* of contact?



Deliberative polling (Fishkin & Diamond 2020)

- Participants asked to put aside partisan labels and argue different sides of a policy issue
- Debate pressing issues of the 2020 election: immigration, health care, the economy, the environment and foreign policy
- Given balanced, background reading for and against 50 policy proposals
- At first, extreme partisan-based polarization between Ds and Rs on 26 of the proposals
- After a weekend of deliberation, the two parties moved closer on 22 out of the 26 proposals and in 19 of those, movement was large



Lowe (2022)



Field experiment using cricket leagues to integrate castes in India:

39% of upper castes practice “untouchability” in Uttar Pradesh



Randomized treatments (n = 1,261):

One-month cricket leagues vs. pure control (program evaluation)

Random assignment to teams (“collaborative contact”)

Random assignment to opponents (“adversarial contact”)

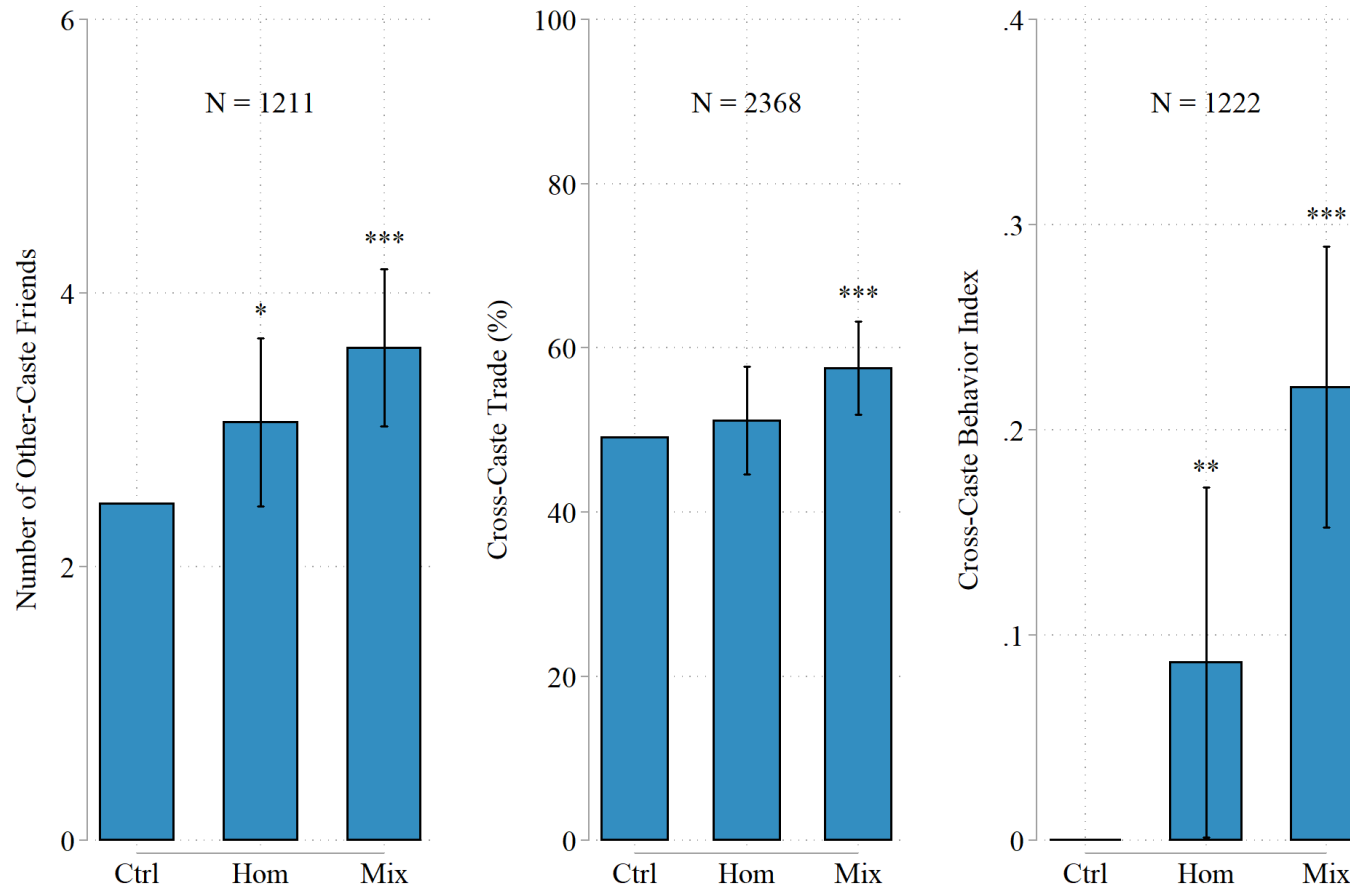


Outcomes:

Survey outcomes (self-reported friendships)

Behavioral outcomes (choice of teammates for future match trust game, trading game)

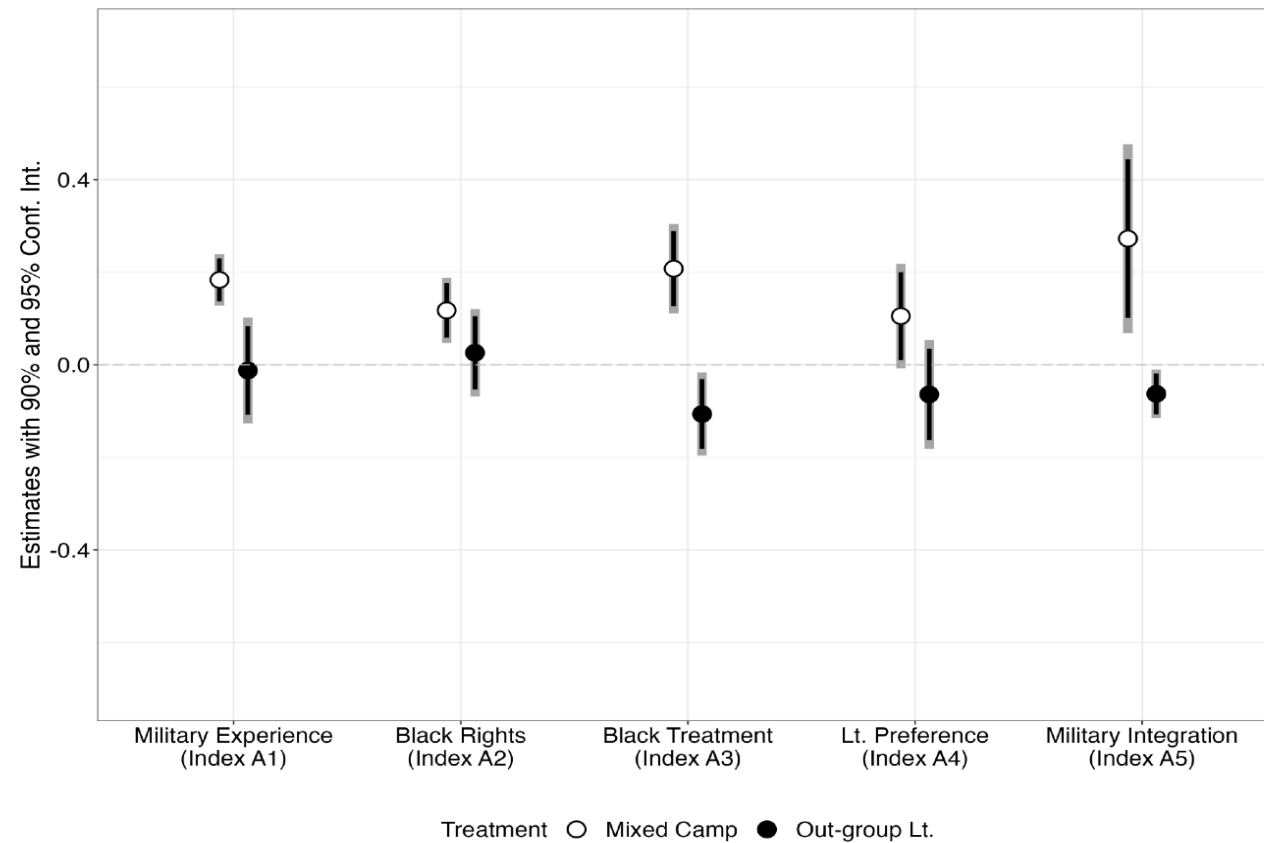
Positive effects of league participation



Mousa & Yang (2025)



FIGURE 1. ATTITUDES OF BLACK SOLDIERS



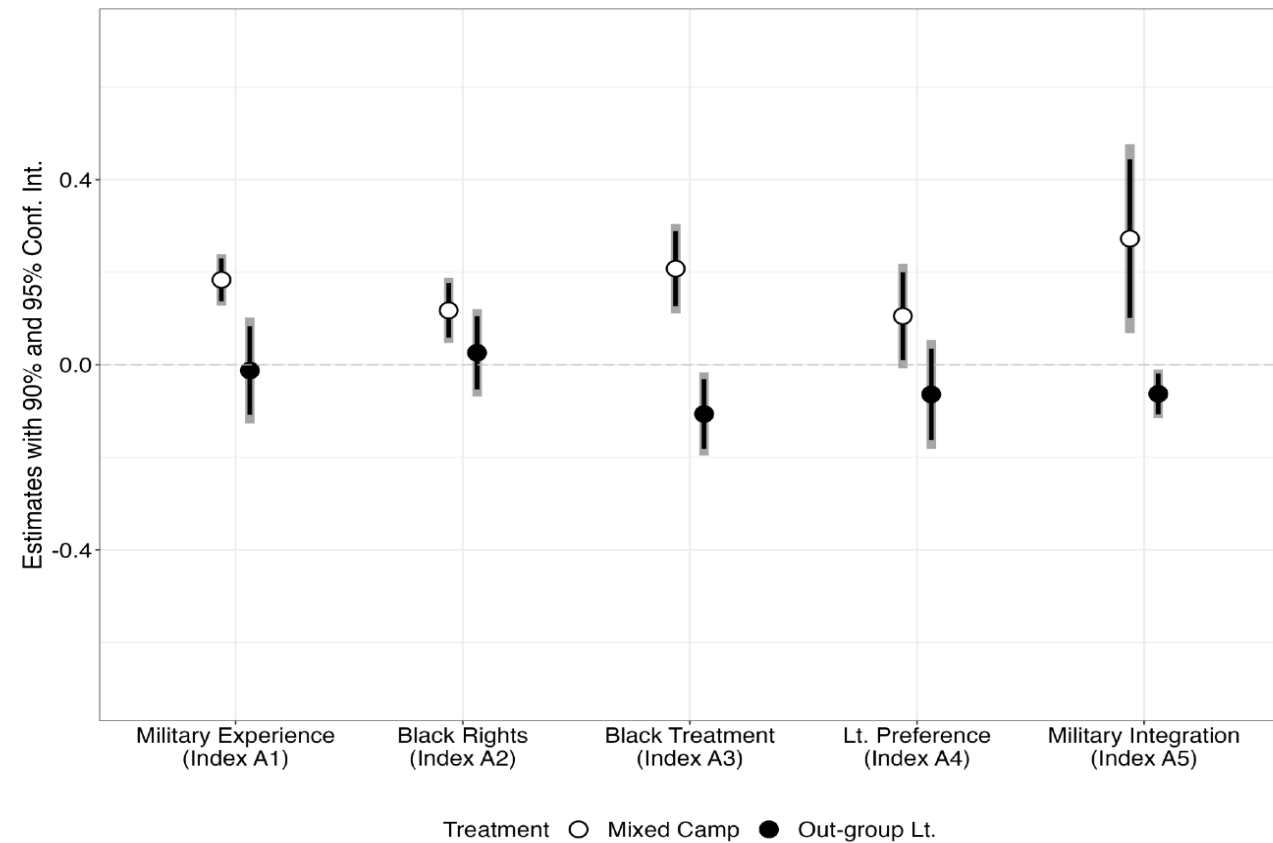
Equal contact improved intergroup attitudes among Black and White soldiers in WW2....

Mousa & Yang (2025)



FIGURE 1. ATTITUDES OF BLACK SOLDIERS

Equal contact improved intergroup attitudes among Black and White soldiers in WW2... But unequal contact triggered backlash

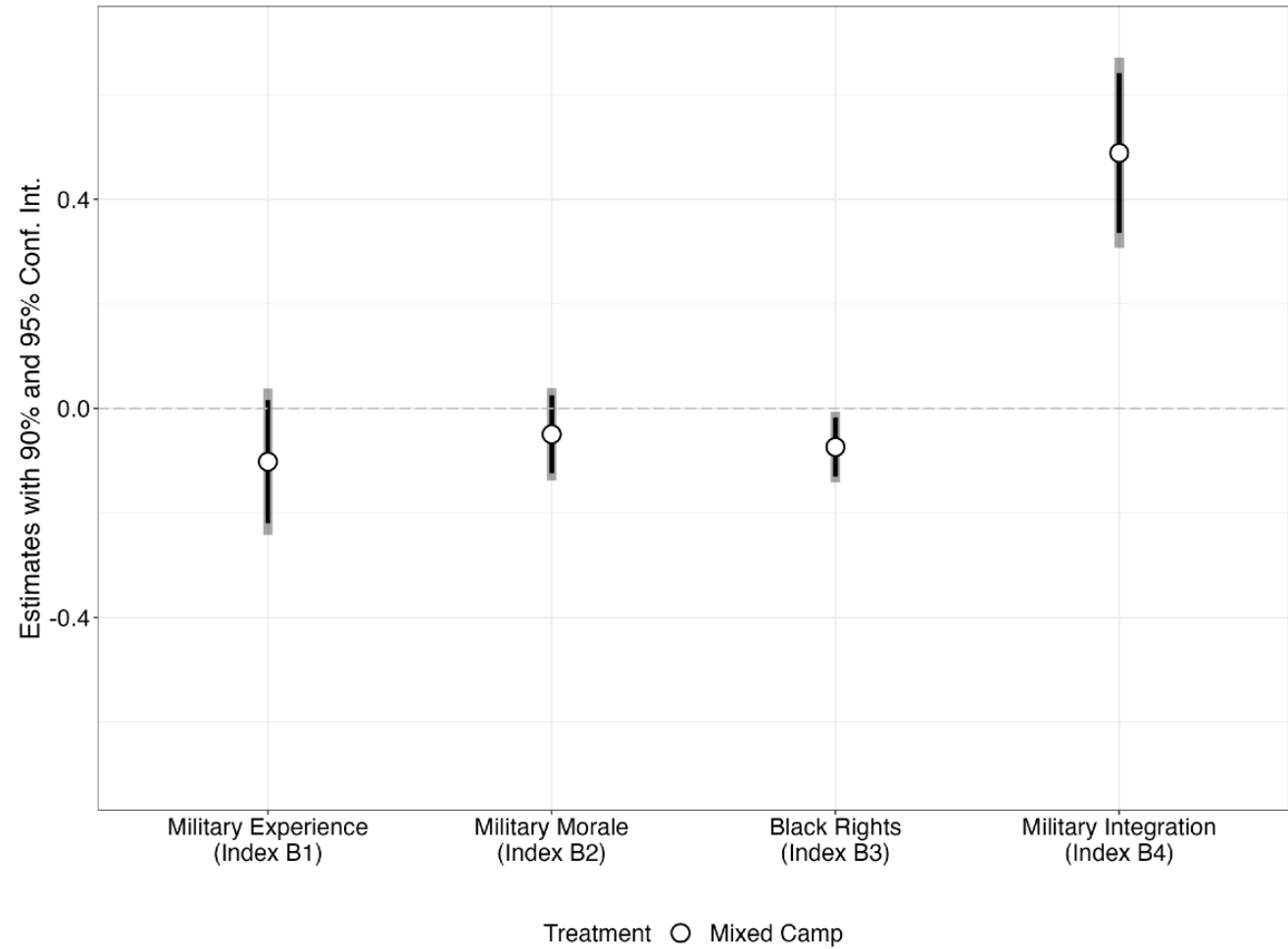


Mousa & Yang (2025)

White soldiers perceived equality as a threat



FIGURE 2. ATTITUDES OF WHITE SOLDIERS



Research questions

- Can empathy education increase the gains to contact?
- Are there spillover effects to make investments in contact worthwhile?

Lebanese president insists on return of Syrian refugees



Lebanese children look from the rooftop of their home at a Syrian camp in the eastern Lebanese border town of Aarsal. (AP/File)

Lebanese context



- Highest rate of refugees per capita in the world (25%), 1.5M
- No freedom of movement or employment for Syrians
- Longstanding prejudice; perception that Syrians get more aid
- Exacerbated in the wake of 2019 economic crisis
- Limited opportunities for meaningful contact – e.g., temporal school segregation

Experimental design

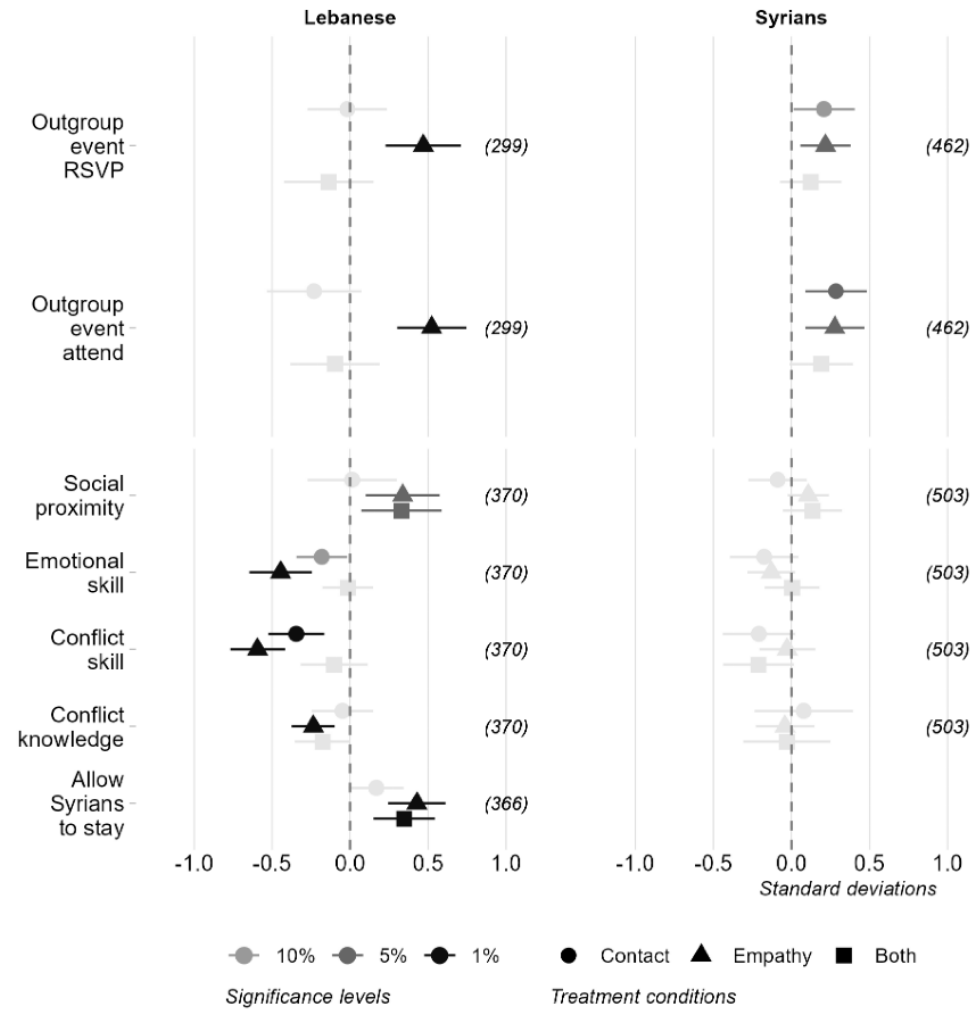
- **Partner:** Amel Association, secular non-profit
- **Intervention:** 12 week psychosocial support program
- **Participants:** 1,400 Lebanese and Syrian youth (11-15) and parents
- **Random assignment:** homogeneous vs. heterogeneous FPSS class; empathy vs. health curriculum
- **Outcomes:**
 - Prejudice, discrimination, social integration
 - Psychological integration (Syrians only)
 - Policy preferences (Lebanese only)
 - Participation in mixed social and cultural events



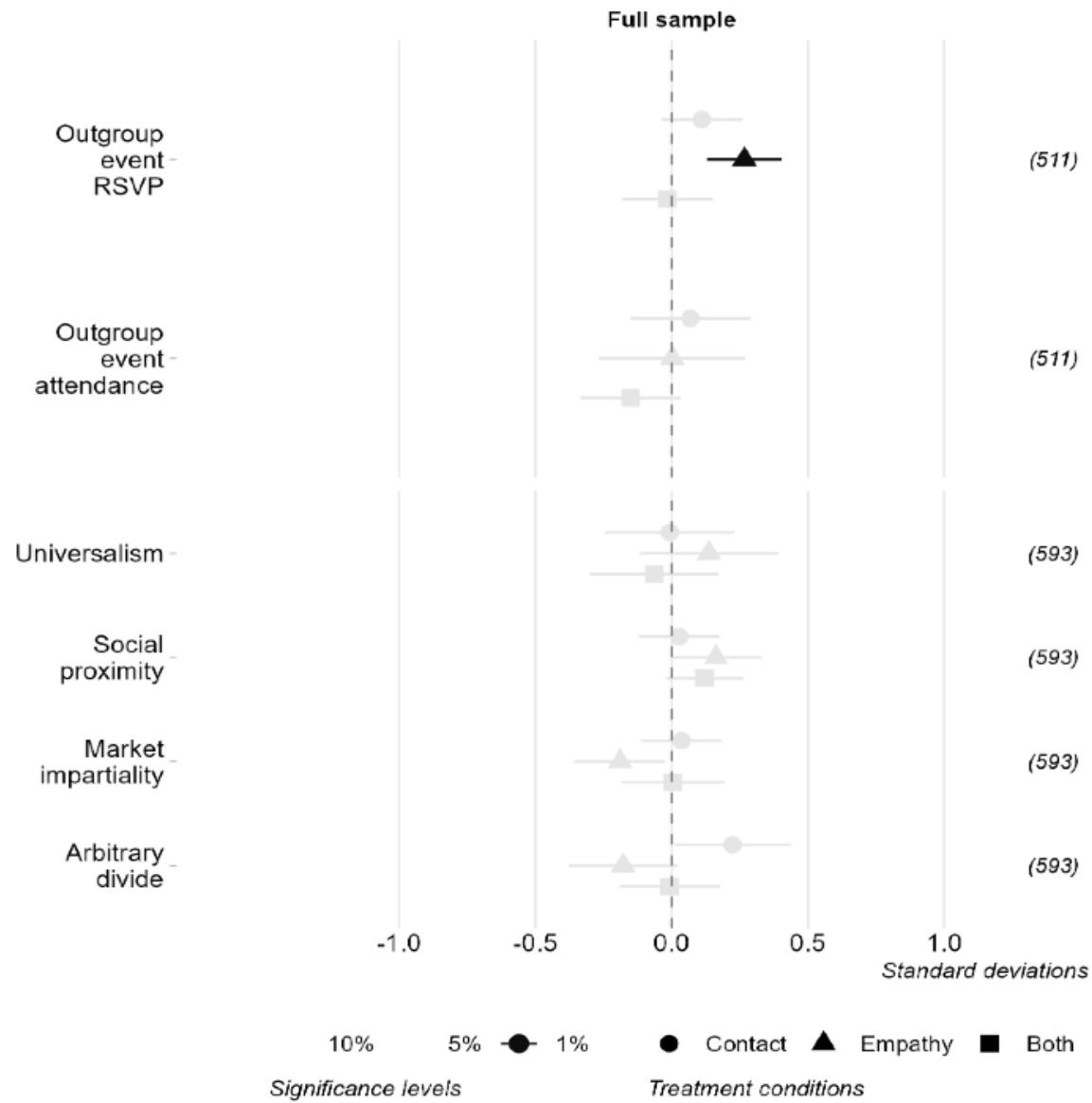
Lebanese children look from the rooftop of their home at a Syrian camp in the eastern Lebanese border town of Arsal. (AP/File)



Youth results



Parent results



Taking stock

- Contact typically reduces prejudice, especially when:
 - Cooperating for a shared goal
 - Under equal status
- But...
 - Mixed effects in fragile settings
 - Backlash risk among majority group
 - Psychosocial support needed
- What is the relationship between contact and violence?
- Are there meaningful spillover effects?
- Policy tools addressing structural roots of conflict needed in tandem with grassroots interventions targeting individual prejudice
 - Investment in the rare nodes in society where mixing is possible (e.g. classrooms)

