


Ambivalent Effects of Positive Contact Between Women and Men on Collective Actions for Women's Rights

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Abstract

Positive intergroup contact, under some conditions, can undermine the interest of members of both socially disadvantaged and advantaged groups to act for equality. However, little is known about whether similar effects appear in a unique form of intergroup relations, gender relations. In two correlational studies and two experiments, we investigated the relationships among quality of contact, perceived discrimination, fusion with the feminist movement, and willingness to engage in collective action for women's rights. For women (Study 1a), positive contact with men was associated with less perceived discrimination, less fusion, and less collective action. For men (Study 1b), the relationships were in the opposite direction. Studies 2a and 2b revealed that recalling experiences of gender discrimination nullified the effects of contact for both women and men as compared to a control condition. Thus, when discrimination is not explicitly recognized, positive contact might have sedative effects on women, but mobilizing effects on men.

Keywords

collective action, discrimination, gender inequality, identity fusion, intergroup contact

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In an interview for a Spanish newspaper (Falcón, 1984), feminist writer Kate Millet observed,

Love has been the opium of women, as religion was that of the masses. While we loved, men ruled. Love itself may not be bad, but it is about the way it was used to coax women and make them dependent in every way.

This statement suggests that loving relationships between women and men can actually be an obstacle to the advancement of women in society. Similarly, Jackman (1994) explained how intimate, co-dependent relations between women and men elicit positive emotional responses that reinforce the relationship but also inhibit dissent. The present research, consisting of four studies, investigated the relationship of positive intergroup contact, a well-known strategy to improve intergroup attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011), experienced by women with men and by men with women on willingness to engage in collective action for women's rights. We further considered the potential roles of perceived discrimination and psychological connection to the feminist movement in this process.

Distinctiveness of Contact between Women and Men

A substantial empirical literature documents how having more frequent and, particularly, more positive intergroup contact with members of another group improves intergroup attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; cf. Paluck et al., 2018). However, intergroup contact may be both perceived (Binder et al., 2009) and responded to (Reimer et al., 2017) differently among members of socially disadvantaged and advantaged groups. In the present research, we examined these effects in the context of gender relationships—likely the most common and universal intergroup relationship—and considered the perspectives of both women and men.

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Studying gender is unusual in work of collective action yet essential for progress toward gender equality (Iyer & Ryan, 2009). Specifically, we investigated complex and potentially divergent relationships between the degree to which women (a socially disadvantaged group) and men (a socially advantaged group) view contact as positive and the consequences on subsequent perceptions and actions.

Although gender relations involve processes similar to other forms of intergroup relations, they are also highly distinctive (Radke et al., 2016). Most discriminated groups are numerical minorities, but women are as numerous as men. Also, unlike most other intergroup relations, contact between men and women is frequent, often unavoidable, and involves a desired, intimate form of friendship, romantic, or family relations. Radke et al (2016) further noted that romantic heterosexual relationships lead women to compete with other women for the favor of men, which gives rise to intrasexual competition rather than solidarity. Glick and Fiske (1996) additionally explained that men's dependency on women for sexual reproduction and child rearing tends to create paternalistic attitudes in which women are typecast in the roles of wives and mothers, and sexism is often expressed in paternalistic ways that reinforce gender inequality. According to Radke et al. (2016), these distinctive characteristics of gender relations may constitute barriers to equality that do not exist in other intergroup contexts.

Despite the distinctiveness of gender relations and persistent inequalities in multiple life domains worldwide, gender discrimination has received less attention than racial or ethnic discrimination in research on intergroup relations (Cislak et al., 2018) and, in particular, in research about the effects of intergroup contact and action for equality. Most of these studies of intergroup contact focus on the effects of cross-ethnic or cross-racial interactions and friendships on attitudes (cf. Becker et al., 2013; Reimer et al., 2017; Saguy et al., 2009). We are aware of only two studies on the potential effects of women's positive contact with men on collective action for gender equality. However, both studies, which are unpublished, explore the perspective of women exclusively and focus on contact with one specific man, with whom participants have a very close relationship. Sobol et al. (cited in Saguy et al., 2016) found a positive association between women's contact quality with their romantic partner and justification of gender power relations. Likewise, Droogendyk (2015) showed that women who thought of a male friend who was supportive of women's rights, compared to one who was not supportive, reported lower collective action intentions on behalf of women. While recognizing the importance and relevance of these findings, the current research considers from the perspective of contact theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011) how contact between women and men in general (not with a particular single individual) relates to collective action intentions of both women and men and examines the processes that may account for these effects.

Consequences of Intergroup Contact for Advantaged and Disadvantaged Groups

Previous research indicates that whereas positive intergroup contact may produce positive attitudes, such contact does not necessarily promote direct actions for social change toward equality and may, in fact, undermine such efforts (i.e., having a sedative effect). This process of undermining interest in engaging in collective action for social change may be attributable in large part to positive contact weakening perceptions of injustice, which is a well-established predictor of collective action (van Zomeren et al., 2008). Previous work reveals that more positive contact leads people to attend less to group-based disparities (Saguy et al., 2009), perceive less discrimination (Dixon et al., 2010; Tausch et al., 2015), and experience less anger about inequality (Hayward et al., 2017). With respect to women, seemingly positive relations with men framed in terms of benevolent sexism, in which women are viewed as "wonderful fragile creatures who ought to be protected and provided for by men" (Glick et al., 2004, p. 715), can similarly have a sedative effect on collective action toward equality by women (Becker & Wright, 2011).

Among members of socially advantaged groups, the effects of intergroup contact on collective action on behalf of a socially disadvantaged group are mixed. On one hand, favorable intergroup contact sometimes reduces action for social change toward equality because this contact suggests to them the acceptance of the status quo by members of the socially disadvantaged group (Dixon et al., 2012), which can reinforce intergroup inequality (Jost et al., 2017). On the other hand, under some conditions positive intergroup contact can facilitate action for social change among members of socially advantaged groups (Reimer et al., 2017), including in the form of engaging in ally activism (Louis et al., 2019). A key factor in this process may be the potential effect of positive intergroup contact on recognition of unjust discrimination, which is a powerful motivator of action toward equality (Droogendyk et al., 2016; Vezzali et al., 2017). Thus, when positive interactions occur in a way that also acknowledges injustice, members of socially advantaged groups are likely to become more motivated to take action toward equality (Vezzali et al., 2017). Such collective action by men can help establish a social climate that legitimizes the feminist movement and facilitates the recruitment of allies for the cause among other men (Selvanathan et al., 2020).

The current research contributes to the literature concerning how intergroup contact relates to collective action by examining, for the first time to our knowledge, the effects of positive contact between women and men on collective action for gender equality. In particular, we investigated whether women's more positive contact with men is associated with lower motivation to participate in collective action, whereas men's positive contact with women relates to more support for action for equality. We also tested whether perceived discrimination and identity fusion may account for these effects.

Potential Mediators of the Effect of Contact on Collective Action

Greater perceived discrimination is a primary motivator of engagement in collective action to advance the interests of one's group and achieve equality (Dixon et al., 2010; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Thus, we considered how positive intergroup contact predicts perceived discrimination against women and test a hypothesized indirect effect of contact between women and men with collective action in support of women through perceptions of discrimination.

Willingness to engage in collective action also depends upon how people relate to their groups (van Zomeren et al., 2008; Wright, 2010). Whereas previous research has often considered identification with a group, our focus is on identity fusion. Identity fusion involves a visceral feeling of oneness with an entity. Identity fusion was originally proposed to explain extreme sacrifices directed at promoting the welfare of one's group and its members (Swann et al., 2012), but it also reliably predicts less extreme outcomes, such as collective action intentions (Besta et al., 2018), donations, or emotional support (for a review, see Gómez et al., 2020). Identity fusion includes not only a relationship with an ingroup but also with a particular person (e.g., a leader, Kunst et al., 2019) or with a symbolic entity (e.g., a cause, Ashokkumar et al., 2020). This aspect of identity fusion is particularly relevant to the current research, because our interest was collective action for a particular cause, the feminist movement, which could apply to men as well as women, rather than fusion with women as a group. Identity fusion with the feminist movement also represents a type of politicized identity (Ashokkumar et al., 2020; Besta et al., 2018), and politicized identities are more predictive of collective action than are broader social identities (Simon & Klandermans, 2001).

Our interest in identity fusion in the current research was also based on previous work, both theoretical (Gómez et al., 2020; Swann et al., 2012) and empirical (Whitehouse et al., 2017), indicating that identity fusion varies as a function of relevant experiences. For example, Whitehouse et al. (2017) demonstrated that sharing negative experiences with others produces or increases identity fusion, and heightened identity fusion, in turn, elicits supportive actions. Based on these findings, we explored whether identity fusion with the feminist movement might connect perceptions of gender discrimination—a shared aversive experience—with collective action intentions for women's rights. Because collective politicized identities are born from awareness of power differences (Simon & Klandermans, 2001), we tested whether perceiving negative treatment toward women can predict men and women fusing with the feminist movement (Whitehouse et al., 2017).

Overview of the Present Research

All studies were conducted in Spain, where 43.2% of Spaniards call themselves feminists (40dB, 2019). In Studies

1a (with women) and 1b (with men), we examined, correlationally, the relationships between quantity and quality of contact between women and men and perceived discrimination against women, identity fusion with the feminist movement, and willingness to engage in collective action. Although greater quantity and quality both positively predict favorable intergroup attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), a number of studies have revealed that quality of contact has a stronger influence than the quantity (e.g., Binder et al., 2009; Dovidio et al., 2017). Based on these studies and particularly given the very frequent daily contact between men and women, we expected that the quality of contact may play a stronger role than quantity in shaping relations between them. In addition, we analyzed the effect of age, because younger Spaniards are more concerned about gender equality than older people (40dB, 2019).

We hypothesized that more positive intergroup contact (i.e., higher quality) would relate to more positive attitudes both of women toward men (Study 1a) and of men toward women (Study 1b), but that the effects of positive contact on collective action for women's rights by women and by men would diverge. Specifically, we predicted that women's more favorable contact with men would be associated with less willingness to engage in collective action for equality (Cakal et al., 2011). Regarding men, we anticipated that more positive contact with women would relate to greater willingness to engage in collective action (MacInnis & Hodson, 2019), perhaps due in part to the greater awareness of discrimination faced by women and the potentially consequent fusion with the feminist movement.

In Studies 2a (women) and 2b (men), we directly tested the hypothesized role that perceived discrimination plays in the effects of intergroup positive contact on willingness to engage in collective action for women's rights. We examined, experimentally, whether making discrimination salient would moderate the impact of positive contact on willingness to engage in collective action and the direct and indirect paths involved in these effects. In particular, we expected that the association between contact quality and collective action would be substantially weaker and potentially nonsignificant when discrimination is salient as compared to when it is not both for women and men.

We report all measures, manipulations, and exclusions in the "Method" section. All measures are described in the same order in which they were completed. Since Studies 1a and 1b as well as Studies 2a and 2b were conducted at different times and included different manipulations and/or measures, we present the results separately. However, combined analyses for Studies 1a and 1b and for Studies 2a and 2b can be found in Supplementary Materials (SM).

Study 1a

The goal of Study 1a was to obtain initial evidence of the relationship between women's contact with men and their

Table 1. Study 1a. Bivariate Correlations Among Measures of Contact of Women With Men, Discrimination, Fusion, Attitudes, and Willingness to Engage in Collective Action.

Variables	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Quantity	6.78	2.29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Quality	5.83	1.01	.23**	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Personal discrimination	3.72	1.76	.04	-.30**	—	—	—	—	—	—
4. Women discrimination	6.24	0.99	-.01	-.07	.49**	—	—	—	—	—
5. Men discrimination	2.52	1.35	.06	.06	.02	-.04	—	—	—	—
6. Fusion	3.57	1.59	.06	-.16**	.52**	.44**	.00	—	—	—
7. Collective action	5.42	1.46	.03	-.09*	.44**	.50**	.01	.70**	—	—
8. Attitudes of women	73.81	14.86	.12**	.09*	.02	.11**	-.05	.17**	.20**	—
9. Attitudes of men	67.10	16.06	.22**	.32**	-.20**	-.02	-.13**	-.01	.03	.56**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

willingness to participate in collective action for their rights. We assessed both amount (quantity) and favorability (quality) of contact. We additionally explored the relationships with other potentially related mechanisms such as attitudes, perceived discrimination, and identity fusion. Because women perceive discrimination against women generally and personal discrimination in different ways (Quinn et al., 1999), we assessed both forms of perceived discrimination.

Previous research demonstrates that perceived discrimination can be determined by the quality of intergroup relations and plays a critical role in collective action (Dixon et al., 2010; Tropp et al., 2012). Much of this work has primarily emphasized the role of perceptions of discrimination toward the group as a whole. However, perceived personal discrimination can also stimulate collective action because women do show systematic evidence of experiencing personal discrimination on implicit measures (Carney et al., 2010) and attribute this discrimination to their gender (Stroebe et al., 2011).

Method

Participants. Sample size was determined *a priori*. We anticipated a weak association ($r = 0.10$) between contact quality and willingness to engage in collective action for Studies 1a and 1b. To detect such an effect with 80% power and an alpha significance criterion of .05, we estimated that a sample of 614 participants would be necessary. Six hundred and thirty-five Spanish undergraduate women ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.61$, $SD = 10.41$) from a distance learning university participated for psychology course credits. The students of this university are distributed in urban and rural areas mainly throughout Spain but also in some European and North and South American countries, and they are more heterogeneous than usual undergraduate samples in terms of age, education, and location. Non-Spanish participants were diverted to different studies.

Procedure. Students were invited to participate in an online study about relationships between women and men. To measure *contact quantity*, participants were asked how much

contact they have with men in general from 0 (*nothing*) to 10 (*a lot*). Unless otherwise specified, the remaining variables ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Contact quality was evaluated by asking participants if the contact they had with men was *pleasant, egalitarian, cooperative, and voluntary* (based on Gómez et al., 2018), $\alpha = .86$.

Perceived personal discrimination was evaluated by a 5-item scale (e.g., “I have personally been a victim of gender discrimination”) adapted from Schmitt et al. (2002), $\alpha = .89$.

Perceived discrimination against women and against men were evaluated by two 4-item scales (e.g., “Women/Men as a group have been victimized by society”) adapted from Schmitt et al. (2002), α s = .89 and .82, respectively.

Fusion with the feminist movement was evaluated by Gómez et al.’s (2011) 7-item fusion scale (“The feminist movement is me”), $\alpha = .93$.

Adapted from Duncan (1999), *willingness to engage in collective action* was evaluated by asking participants to what extent they were willing to participate in seven actions in support of women’s rights (e.g., signing a petition, contributing money), $\alpha = .93$.

Participants indicated their *attitudes toward women and men* by means of four feeling thermometers (Haddock et al., 1993) ranging from 0 (*unfavorable/dislike/negative/cold*) to 100 (*favorable/like/positive/hot*), α s = .86 and .89 for women and men, respectively.

Finally, in this and all other studies, participants indicated their age and were debriefed and thanked.

Results

Quantity of contact only correlated positively with quality of contact and attitudes toward women and men (see Table 1). Quality of contact correlated most strongly with personal discrimination, personal discrimination correlated most strongly with identity fusion, and fusion correlated most strongly with collective action. The association between contact quality and perceived discrimination against women was not significant. This correlational pattern was consistent with

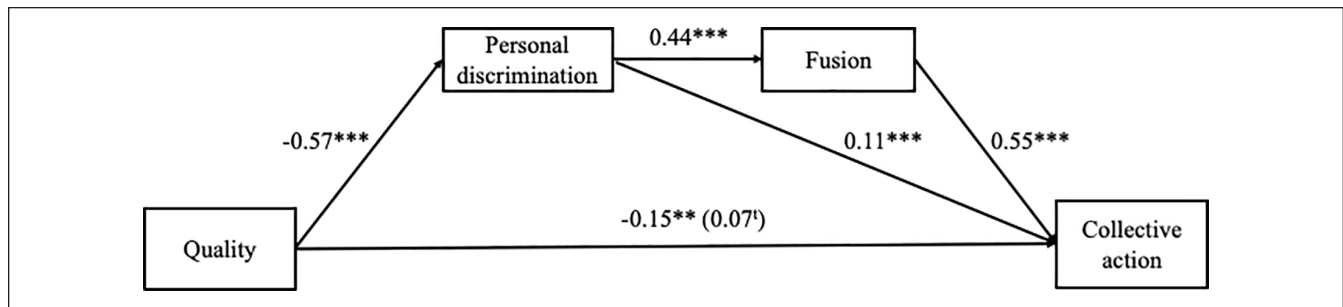


Figure 1. Study 1a (women's sample).

Note. Path analysis from contact quality to collective action via perceived personal discrimination and fusion with the feminist movement.

our hypothesis that quality of contact would predict perceived personal discrimination, which in turn would predict identity fusion and, in turn, collective action. To test this model, we conducted a path analysis using Lavaan in *R* (see Figure 1). Age and quantity of contact were included as covariates in all studies, and β is reported as a measure of effect size. (In this and in the subsequent studies we report, the patterns of results we report as significant hold when age is not included as a covariate.) Table 1 of SM presents the indirect effects for this and the other studies.

The indirect effects via personal discrimination and fusion serially, $\beta = -.10$, $b = -0.14$, 95% confidence interval (CI) = $[-0.18, -0.10]$, and via personal discrimination alone, $\beta = -.04$, $b = -0.06$, 95% CI = $[-0.09, -0.03]$, were significant. This model presented adequate fit indices (comparative fit index [CFI] = 1.00, Tucker–Lewis index [TLI] = 1.00, root-mean-square error of approximation [RMSEA] < .001, and standardized root-mean-square residual [SRMR] = .007). Alternative models altering the order of mediators were tested in all studies and yielded poorer fit indices (see SM).

When we included attitudes toward women and men and perceived discrimination toward women and men as mediators, only significant indirect effects via perceived personal discrimination and identity fusion emerged.

Discussion

Supportive of research on intergroup contact, women's more positive and more frequent contact with men were associated with more favorable attitudes toward men. Also, consistent with previous work (Becker et al., 2013), women who reported more positive contact with men also indicated less willingness to engage in collective action in favor of women's rights. In contrast, quantity of contact was unrelated to willingness to engage in collective action. Contact between women and men is extremely common in everyday experience, potentially limiting variability in this measure and/or making quality of contact a particularly salient dimension. However, for quantity of contact, we did not observe a ceiling effect in this study. As indicated in Table 1, the mean

quantity, assessed on a 0–10 scale, was 6.78 with a standard deviation of 2.29. (Similarly, as shown in Tables 2–4, we did not find ceiling effects in our subsequent studies.) These findings reveal that, consistent with previous research in other intergroup contexts (see Binder et al., 2009; Dovidio et al., 2017), the quality of contact may have a distinctive impact on relations between women and men, suggesting the value of considering the potentially separable roles of quality and quantity of contact in gender relations as well as in other forms of relations between groups.

As anticipated, women who had more favorable contact with men reported experiencing less personal discrimination, which then predicted less willingness to engage in collective action. Less personal discrimination also predicted less fusion with the feminist movement, which then also predicted less willingness to engage in collective action. Because the design of Study 1a was cross-sectional, our evidence of mediation should be considered correlational.

Unexpectedly, quality of contact was not associated with perceptions of discrimination against women as a group. Thus, the hypothesized effects of higher quality on collective action by women appear to be channeled more through individual-level than group-level perceptions. One possible explanation is that the personalizing impact of favorable contact (Miller, 2002) may occur particularly strongly in the context of gender relations, making women's personal identities more salient than social identities. In Study 1b, we explored these conceptual relationships among men.

Study 1b

Study 1b examined whether contact with women is associated with perceived discrimination, fusion with the feminist movement, and willingness to engage in collective action for women's rights among men. Positive contact in the form of intergroup friendships can enhance recognition of group bias, and condemnation of group inequality that can motivate collective action on the other group's behalf (MacInnis & Hodson, 2019). Thus, we investigated whether men's more positive contact with women would be associated with more positive attitudes toward women, as well as with stronger

perceptions of discrimination against women, greater fusion with the feminist movement, and greater willingness to engage in collective action for women's rights.

Method

Participants. As in Study 1a, we aimed for a sample size of 616. However, because of the small number of men enrolled in psychology classes, we were only able to obtain a sample size of 384 undergraduate Spanish men ($M_{\text{age}} = 33.51$, $SD = 11.80$), who participated for course credits. A sensitivity analysis revealed that such sample size could detect a minimum effect size of $\rho = .126$ with 80% power.

Procedure. We adapted the same questionnaire as in Study 1a to men. All variables demonstrated good reliability estimates: *contact quality*, $\alpha = .87$; *perceived personal discrimination*,

$\alpha = .85$; *perceived discrimination against women*, $\alpha = .87$; *perceived discrimination against men*, $\alpha = .80$; *fusion with the feminist movement*, $\alpha = .93$; *willingness to engage in collective action*, $\alpha = .93$; *attitudes toward women*, $\alpha = .91$; and *toward men*, $\alpha = .89$.

Results

Table 2 shows that quality and quantity of contact correlated positively with perceived discrimination against women, fusion with the feminist movement, collective action, and attitudes toward women and men, with effects stronger for quality. As expected, quality of contact correlated most strongly with perceived discrimination against women and collective action, discrimination against women correlated most strongly with identity fusion and collective action, and fusion correlated most strongly with collective action.

Table 2. Study 1b. Bivariate Correlations Among Measures of Contact of Men With Women, Discrimination, Fusion, Attitudes and Willingness to Engage in Collective Action.

Variables	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Quantity	6.93	2.25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Quality	6.08	0.97	.22**	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Personal discrimination	1.93	1.26	.00	-.07	—	—	—	—	—	—
4. Women discrimination	5.82	1.23	.11*	.22**	-.03	—	—	—	—	—
5. Men discrimination	2.71	1.37	-.02	-.09	.56**	-.01	—	—	—	—
6. Fusion	2.94	1.56	.12*	.17**	.05	.52**	-.01	—	—	—
7. Collective action	4.74	1.64	.20**	.23**	-.03	.59**	-.10*	.67**	—	—
8. Attitudes women	73.06	15.82	.14**	.31**	-.16**	.26**	.12*	.16**	.25**	—
9. Attitudes men	64.96	15.81	.13*	.21**	-.08	.10	-.07	.07	.11*	.67**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

To directly test the hypothesized model, we performed a path analysis using Lavaan in R (see Figure 2 and Table 1 in SM). This model parallels the one we tested for women with the exception that we substituted perceived discrimination against women for personal discrimination.

The indirect effects via discrimination against women and fusion serially, $\beta = .05$, $b = 0.09$, 95% CI = [0.04, 0.13], and via discrimination against women alone, $\beta = .07$, $b = 0.11$, 95% CI = [0.05, 0.17], were significant. This model presented adequate fit indices (CFI = .999, TLI = 0.989, RMSEA = .033, and SRMR = .012).

Additional analyses in which we also included attitudes toward women and men and perceived discrimination toward men only revealed significant indirect effects via perceived discrimination against women and identity fusion.

Discussion

Study 1b revealed that, among men, both the quality and quantity of contact with women correlated with more

favorable attitudes toward women and, importantly, with men's willingness to engage in collective action in favor of women's rights. The relationship between positive contact and collective action seems mediated (correlationally) by perceived discrimination against women and fusion with the feminist movement.

Studies 1a and 1b therefore showed that quality of contact is associated with willingness to engage in collective action for women's rights in opposite ways for women and men. Positive intergroup contact relates to less interest in collective action among women (a sedative effect) but to greater commitment to gender equality among men.

The methodology we used in Studies 1a and 1b was unable to directly establish causality. To address specifically the hypothesized causal role of perceived discrimination in the link between the quality of intergroup contact and engagement in collective action, in the next two studies (Study 2a with women and Study 2b with men) we experimentally manipulated the salience of perceived discrimination.

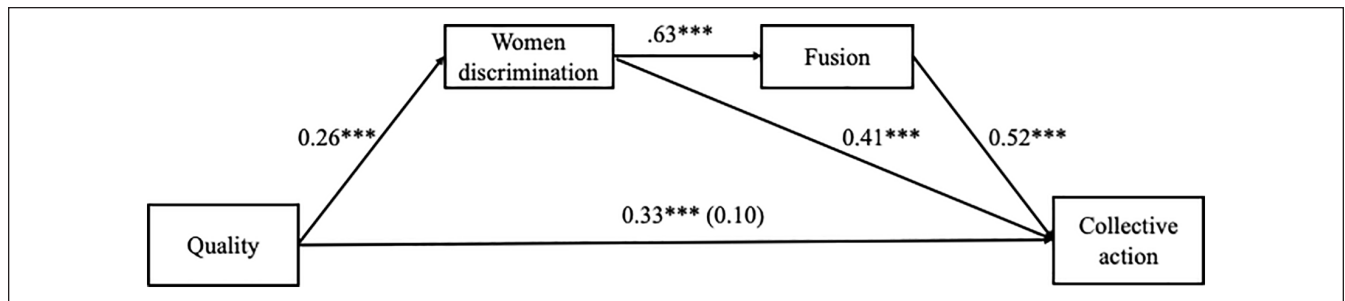


Figure 2. Study 1b (men's sample).

Note. Path analysis from contact quality to collective action via perceived discrimination against women and fusion with the feminist movement.

Study 2a

Study 2a builds directly on the findings of Study 1a, which indicate that women's more positive contact with men negatively relates to their willingness to engage in collective action in part because such contact reduces perceptions of personal discrimination. Specifically, in Study 2a, we complemented our findings of correlational mediation in Study 1a by, as recommended by Spencer et al. (2005), manipulating the proposed mediator experimentally by varying the salience of perceived personal discrimination. After assessing the quality and quantity of contact, participants recalled either past discrimination or an event unrelated to discrimination using a procedure modeled after Remedios et al. (2012).

To the extent that higher quality contact produces less willingness to engage in collective action for women's equality *because* it affects the way women think about personal discrimination, we hypothesized that making personal discrimination salient by asking women to recall a past incident of discrimination would lead to a relatively high level of willingness to engage in collective action regardless of the quality of women's prior contact with men. Thus, we predicted a Discrimination Salience \times Contact Quality interaction, with positive contact with men relating to less willingness to engage in collective action when personal discrimination is not made salient (replicating the relationship observed in Study 1a) and, because it establishes the hypothesized element (perceived discrimination), a nonsignificant, or at least substantially weaker, effect of positive contact when personal discrimination is made salient. As in Study 1a, we also predicted that this effect would be serially mediated by perceived personal discrimination and identity fusion with the feminist movement, although an effect for fusion would still represent, as in Study 1a, correlational mediation.

Method

Participants. Three hundred and five Spanish women ($M_{\text{age}} = 32.10$) were recruited using a snowball technique, such that

the undergraduates who participated in the previous studies asked their Spanish acquaintances to participate on voluntary basis. A sensitivity analysis revealed that such sample size could detect a minimum difference between slopes of .22 assuming an alpha criterion of .05 and 80% power.

Procedure. Participants first indicated the *quantity* and *quality* ($\alpha = .85$) of the contact they had with men as in previous studies. Next, participants were randomly assigned to the discrimination salience or no-salience condition. *Participants in the salience condition* read that people may be a victim of discrimination based on different reasons, even though some individuals deny being personally discriminated. Then, participants described a situation where they were personally discriminated for being a woman. All participants except one were able to describe one or several situations. The results do not change significantly if that participant is excluded from the analyses. *Participants in the no-salience condition* were asked to describe their last two trips to work or study center.

Then, participants responded to the measures used in Study 1a of *perceived personal discrimination*, $\alpha = .88$, *fusion with the feminist movement*, $\alpha = .91$, *willingness to engage in collective action*, $\alpha = .82$, and *attitudes toward women and toward men*, $\alpha = .89$.

Results

Correlations. Table 3 shows the bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics within the no-salience (Panel A) and salience (Panel B) conditions and across conditions (Panel C). Within the no-salience condition, contact quality correlated negatively with perceived personal discrimination, fusion, and collective action. However, those correlations were not significant in the salience condition. Contact quality correlated positively with attitudes toward men in both conditions. Contact quantity only correlated positively with quality and attitudes toward men regardless of condition.

Table 3. Study 2a. Bivariate Correlations Among Measures of Contact of Women With Men, Discrimination, Fusion, Attitudes and Willingness to Engage in Collective Action.

	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
A. No-salience condition								
1. Quantity	6.81	2.36	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Quality	5.63	1.02	.21**	—	—	—	—	—
3. Personal discrimination	3.74	1.76	.06	-.27**	—	—	—	—
4. Fusion	3.56	1.56	.07	-.20*	.60**	—	—	—
5. Collective action	5.14	1.49	.09	-.30**	.61**	.71**	—	—
6. Attitudes women	74.17	17.52	.06	.02	.22**	.22**	.29**	—
7. Attitudes men	61.65	16.85	.36**	.33**	-.28**	-.16 [†]	-.17*	.27**
B. Salience condition								
1. Quantity	6.62	2.36	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Quality	5.60	1.16	.30**	—	—	—	—	—
3. Personal discrimination	4.39	1.70	.03	-.05	—	—	—	—
4. Fusion	4.10	1.47	.08	-.10	.55**	—	—	—
5. Collective action	5.54	1.43	.14	.03	.48**	.58**	—	—
6. Attitudes women	76.21	14.73	.10	.11	.17*	.26**	.17*	—
7. Attitudes men	62.23	18.69	.21*	.41**	-.29**	-.23**	-.17*	.30**
C. Correlations across the two discrimination salience conditions								
1. Quantity	6.72	2.36	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Quality	5.62	1.09	.26**	—	—	—	—	—
3. Personal discrimination	4.05	1.76	.03	-.15**	—	—	—	—
4. Fusion	3.82	1.54	.07	-.15*	.59**	—	—	—
5. Collective action	5.34	1.47	.10	-.13*	.56**	.65**	—	—
6. Attitudes women	75.17	16.22	.07	.06	.21**	.24**	.24**	—
7. Attitudes men	61.93	17.74	.28**	.37**	-.27**	-.19**	-.16**	.28**

[†] $p = .051$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Regression analyses. We performed a regression analysis on each dependent variable considering quality (centered), condition (0 no-salience, 1 salience), and the two-way interaction as predictors, and contact quantity and age as covariates. For the sake of brevity, we only present the statistics of the most important results. The detailed results can be found in Table 2 of SM.

Personal discrimination. A significant interaction between quality and condition emerged, $\beta = .17$, $b = 0.36$, $p = .034$, 95% CI = [0.03, 0.70]. The negative effect of contact quality on perceived personal discrimination was significant in the no-salience condition, $\beta = -.31$, $b = -0.51$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [-0.76, -0.25], but not in the salience condition, $p = .220$, when women recalled having been victim of discrimination. There was, in addition, a significant effect for the salience condition, $\beta = .14$, $b = 0.49$, $p = .009$, 95% CI = [0.12, 0.85]. Participants in the salience condition perceived greater personal discrimination than did those in the no-salience condition (see Figure 3). Overall, women who reported more positive (quality) contact with men and women older in age reported less discrimination.

Fusion. This regression yielded a significant effect for the salience condition, $\beta = .13$, $b = 0.40$, $p = .015$, 95% CI = [0.08, 0.72]. Women who recalled an episode of discrimina-

tion were more fused than did those in the no-salience condition. Overall, women who reported more positive (quality) contact with men, $\beta = -.25$, $b = -0.35$, $p = .002$, 95% CI = [-0.58, -0.13], and women older in age reported less fusion.

Collective action. A significant effect of the interaction between quality and condition emerged, $\beta = .24$, $b = 0.44$, $p = .002$, 95% CI = [0.16, 0.72]. The negative effect of quality on collective action was significant in the no-salience condition, $\beta = -.36$, $b = -0.49$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [-0.70, -0.28], but not in the salience condition, $p = .614$. The simple effects of quality, and age, were also significant, whereas the effects of condition and quantity were marginal.

Attitudes toward women. We only found a significant effect of age, such that women older in age reported more negative attitudes toward women.

Attitudes toward men. This regression yielded significant effects of quality, $\beta = .29$, $b = 4.79$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [2.26, 7.32], and quantity, $\beta = .21$, $b = 1.60$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [0.79, 2.40]. Women who reported more positive (quality) or more frequent (quantity) contact with men expressed more positive attitudes toward them. The effect of age was also significant.

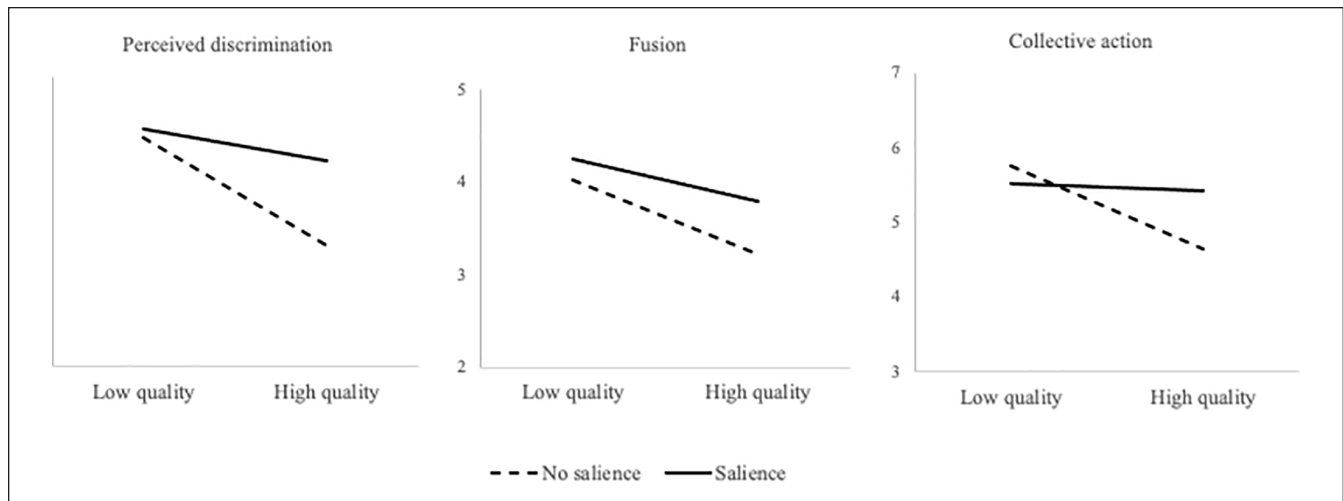


Figure 3. Study 2a (women's sample).

Note. Interaction of condition and quality on perceived personal discrimination, fusion with the feminist movement and collective action.

Mediational analysis. Lench et al. (2014) recommend using manipulation checks within mediation analyses to properly establish the causal role of the intended mental state in producing the outcome. Following their recommendation, we tested the model depicted in Figure 4 in which the interaction of quality and condition affected collective action via perceived personal discrimination and fusion with the feminist movement serially. Although the simple effects of quality and condition were included in the model as well as contact quantity and age as covariates, we did not represent all paths to simplify the figure. The serial indirect effect via personal discrimination and fusion was significant in the no-salience condition, $\beta = -.08$, $b = -.10$, 95% CI = $[-.16, -.04]$, but not in the salience condition (see Table 1 of SM). Besides, the indirect effect via discrimination alone was also significant in the no-salience condition, $\beta = -.07$, $b = -.10$, 95% CI = $[-.16, -.03]$, but not in the salience condition. This model presented adequate fit indices (CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.006, RMSEA < .001, and SRMR = .010).

Discussion

Study 2a demonstrated, as predicted, that the effect of quality of contact of women with men on willingness to engage in collective action in favor of women's rights is moderated by the activation of past episodes of personal gender discrimination, demonstrating the causal influence of the salience of personal discrimination. The results in the no-salience condition replicated the pattern of relationships we obtained in Study 1a in that women who reported more favorable contact with men were less willing to engage in collective action for women's rights. Also replicating previous findings, the relationship between quality and collective action appeared to be serially mediated by perceived personal discrimination and fusion in the no-salience condition. By contrast, when

women recalled an experience of personal discrimination, the association between positive contact and collective action was not significant. As expected, though, stronger perceptions of discrimination were associated with greater fusion, which was related to greater willingness to engage in collective action. The absence of mediation in this case occurred because when the proposed mediator (perceived discrimination) was made salient, quality of contact, as anticipated, did not predict collective action.

Study 2b

Study 2b builds on the findings of Study 1b, which suggested that men's more positive contact with women positively relates to their willingness to engage in collective action in part because such contact increases perceptions of discrimination against women. In Study 2b, we asked participants to recall either past discrimination against women or an event unrelated to discrimination. We expected a Discrimination Salience \times Contact Quality interaction, with positive contact with women relating to more willingness to engage in collective action when discrimination is not made salient (replicating Study 1b) and a nonsignificant, or at least substantially weaker, effect of positive contact when discrimination is salient. As in Study 1b, we also predicted that this effect would be serially mediated by perceived discrimination against women and fusion with the feminist movement.

Method

Participants. Two hundred and twenty-five Spanish men ($M_{\text{age}} = 41.81$) participated on voluntary basis. Sample size was not determined a priori. Anticipating a low response rate, we invited all male participants ($n = 986$) that had

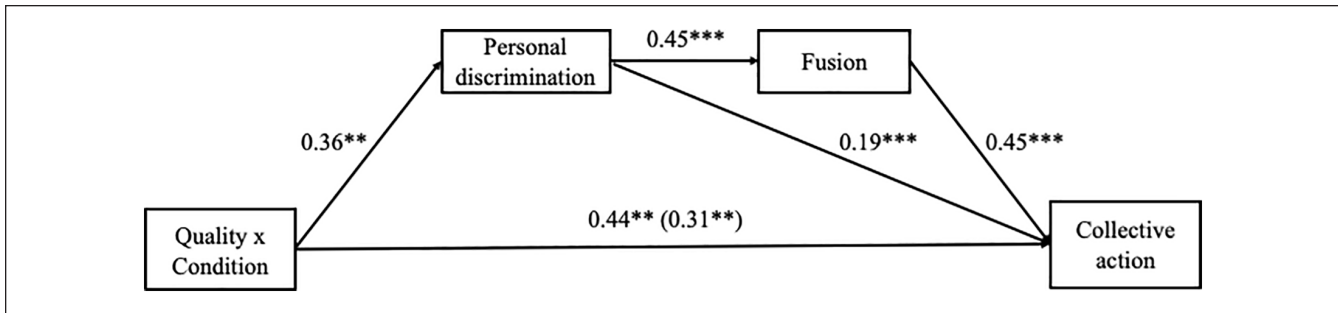


Figure 4. Study 2a (women’s sample).

Note. Path analysis from the interaction between contact quality and condition to collective action via perceived personal discrimination and fusion with the feminist movement. The no-salience condition was coded as 0 and the salience condition was coded as 1.

previously participated in studies about different topics during the previous year who indicated their willingness to volunteer for future research. A sensitivity analysis revealed that such sample size could detect a minimum difference between slopes of .19 assuming an alpha criterion of .05 and 80% power.

Procedure. Participants first indicated the *quantity* and *quality* ($\alpha = .85$) of the contact they had with women as in previous studies. Then, they were assigned to the no-salience or salience condition. *Participants in the salience condition* were asked to describe a situation where they personally witnessed a discriminatory treatment toward one or more women. Thirteen participants out of 109 were not able to describe such a situation. The results do not change significantly if these participants are excluded from the analyses. *Participants in the no-salience condition* were asked to describe their last two trips to work or study center.

Then, participants responded to the measures used in Study 1b of *perceived discrimination against women*, $\alpha = .89$, *fusion with the feminist movement*, $\alpha = .92$, *willingness to engage in collective action*, $\alpha = .90$, and *attitudes toward women*, $\alpha = .84$, and *toward men*, $\alpha = .85$.

Results

Correlations. In Table 4, we present the bivariate correlations within the no-salience (Panel A) and salience (Panel B) conditions and across conditions (Panel C). Within the no-salience condition, contact quality correlated positively with perceived discrimination against women, fusion, and collective action. However, those correlations were not significant in the salience condition. Contact quality correlated positively with attitudes toward men in both conditions. Contact quantity only correlated positively with quality in the no-salience condition and with fusion in the salience condition.

Table 4. Study 2b. Bivariate Correlations among Measures of Contact of Men with Women, Discrimination, Fusion, Attitudes and Willingness to Engage in Collective Action.

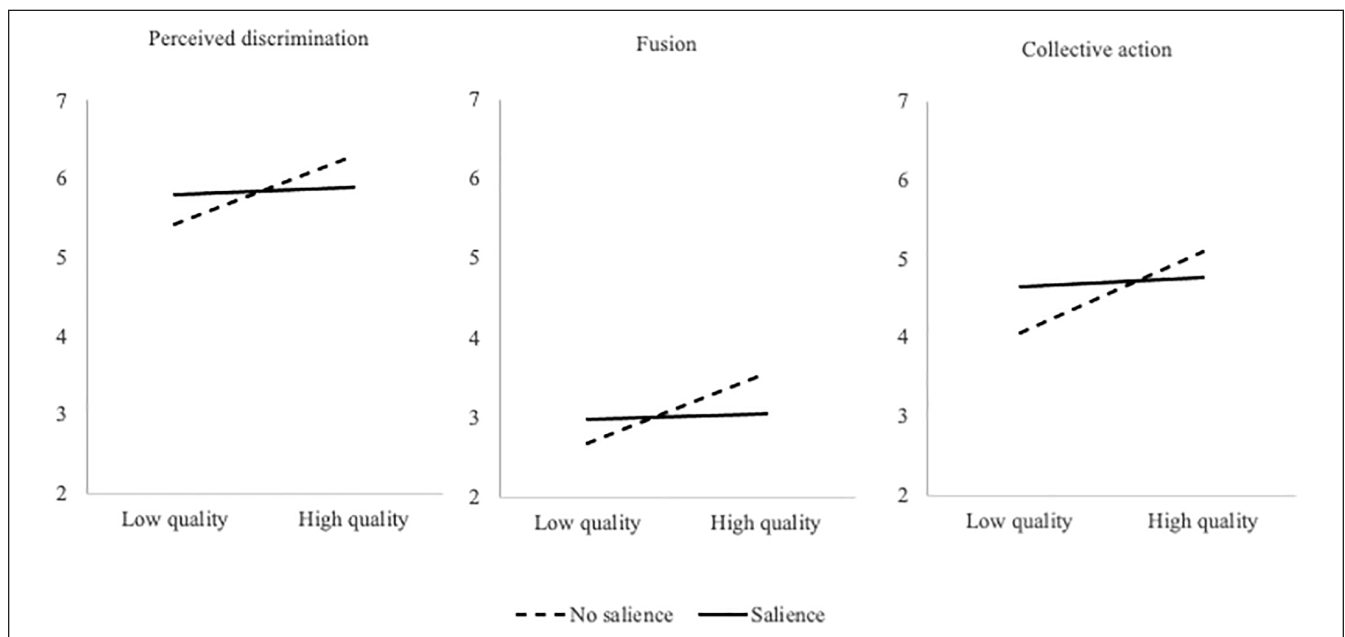
	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
A. No-salience condition								
1. Quantity	8.09	1.80	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Quality	6.20	0.77	.34**	—	—	—	—	—
3. Women discrimination	5.83	1.36	.12	.35**	—	—	—	—
4. Fusion	3.08	1.59	.10	.32**	.55**	—	—	—
5. Collective action	4.54	1.69	.16	.33**	.56**	.61**	—	—
6. Attitudes women	73.94	17.09	-.01	.27**	.21*	.12	.33**	—
7. Attitudes men	61.33	18.42	.02	.10	-.07	-.09	.14	.55**
B. Salience condition								
1. Quantity	8.23	1.96	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Quality	6.12	1.08	.10	—	—	—	—	—
3. Women discrimination	5.84	1.37	.13	.05	—	—	—	—
4. Fusion	3.01	1.49	.22*	.04	.43**	—	—	—
5. Collective action	4.69	1.44	.12	.08	.55**	.59**	—	—
6. Attitudes women	74.85	16.45	.07	.14	-.03	-.02	.20*	—
7. Attitudes men	62.60	16.35	.08	-.04	-.13	-.17†	-.07	.58**

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
C. Correlations across the two discrimination salience conditions								
1. Quantity	8.16	1.88	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Quality	6.16	0.93	.20**	—	—	—	—	—
3. Personal discrimination	5.83	1.36	.13	.18**	—	—	—	—
4. Fusion	3.05	1.54	.16*	.16*	.49**	—	—	—
5. Collective action	4.61	1.57	.14*	.19**	.55**	.60**	—	—
6. Attitudes women	74.38	16.75	.03	.19**	.10	.06	.27**	—
7. Attitudes men	61.95	17.42	.05	.02	-.10	-.13	.06	.56**

† $p = .076$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

**Figure 5.** Study 2b (men's sample).

Note. Interaction of condition and quality on perceived discrimination against women, fusion with the feminist movement and collective action.

Regression analyses. We performed a regression analysis on each dependent variable considering quality (centered), condition (0 no-salience, 1 salience), and the two-way interaction as predictors, and contact quantity and age as covariates. The detailed results can be found in Table 3 of SM.

Perceived discrimination against women. A significant effect of the interaction between quality and condition emerged, $\beta = -.29$, $b = -0.52$, $p = .010$, 95% CI = $[-0.92, -0.12]$. The positive effect of contact quality on perceived discrimination against women was significant in the no-salience condition, $\beta = .39$, $b = 0.58$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = $[0.25, 0.90]$, but not in the salience condition, $p = .647$, when men recalled experiences of discrimination against women. Overall, men who reported more positive (quality) contact with women perceived more discrimination against them. The

simple effects of quantity and condition were not significant in any regression (see Figure 5).

Fusion. The interaction between quality and condition had a significant effect, $\beta = -.26$, $b = -0.54$, $p = .018$, 95% CI = $[-0.99, -0.09]$. The positive effect of contact quality on fusion was significant in the no-salience condition, $\beta = .35$, $b = 0.58$, $p = .002$, 95% CI = $[0.21, 0.95]$, but not in the salience condition, $p = .770$. Overall, men who reported more positive (higher quality) contact with women and younger men reported greater fusion.

Collective action. A significant effect of the interaction between quality and condition emerged, $\beta = -.28$, $b = -0.59$, $p = .011$, 95% CI = $[-1.04, -0.14]$. The positive effect of contact quality on collective action was significant

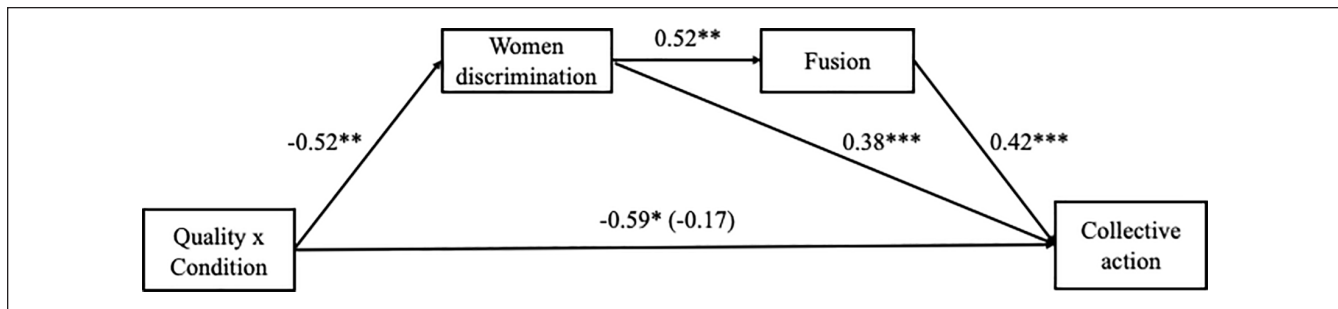


Figure 6. Study 2b (men's sample).

Note. Path analysis from the interaction between contact quality and condition to collective action via perceived discrimination against women and fusion with the feminist movement. The no-salience condition was coded as 0 and the salience condition was coded as 1.

in the no-salience condition, $\beta = .40$, $b = 0.68$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [0.31, 1.05], but not in the salience condition, $p = .516$. Overall, men who reported more positive (quality) contact with women were more willing to engage in collective action, whereas men older in age reported less willingness.

Attitudes toward women. Only a significant effect of quality emerged, $\beta = .34$, $b = 6.19$, $p = .003$, 95% CI = [2.12, 10.25], indicating that men who reported more positive (quality) contact with women expressed more positive attitudes toward them.

Attitudes toward men. No significant effects emerged.

Mediational analysis. Based on previous results, we tested the model depicted in Figure 6 in which the interaction of quality and condition affected collective action via perceived discrimination against women and fusion with the feminist movement serially. The serial indirect effect via perceived discrimination and fusion was significant in the no-salience condition, $\beta = .07$, $b = 0.12$, 95% CI = [0.04, 0.21], but not in the salience condition (see Table 1 of SM). Besides, the indirect effect via discrimination alone was also significant in the no-salience condition, $\beta = .13$, $b = 0.22$, 95% CI = [0.08, 0.36], but not in the salience condition. This model presented adequate fit indices (CFI = 1.00, TLI = 0.996, RMSEA = .014, and SRMR = .009).

Discussion

Study 2b demonstrated that while the manipulation of the salience of discrimination did not have an overall effect on perceived discrimination, fusion, or collective action, it did, as predicted, moderate the effect of quality of contact of men with women on willingness to engage in collective action in favor of women's rights. Making discrimination salient, compared to the no-salience condition, produced slightly stronger perceptions of discrimination, fusion, and willingness to engage in collective action for men whose quality of contact was relatively low but tended to reduce them for men

whose contact quality was high (see Table 4 of SM for details). Consistent with the findings of Study 1b, men who reported more favorable contact with women were more willing to engage in collective action for women's rights, and this effect appeared to be serially mediated by perceived discrimination against women and fusion only when discrimination was not salient. By contrast, when men were asked to recall an experience of discrimination against women the association between positive contact and collective action was not significant. In this condition, greater perceived discrimination related to greater fusion, and greater fusion was associated with more willingness to engage in collective action, but quality of contact no longer predicted collective action when discrimination was made salient. Attitudes toward both women and men were not affected by the discrimination salience manipulation.

General Discussion

A growing number of studies have considered the potentially complex influence of social contact between groups on intergroup relations. The present research extended previous work on this topic, which has focused largely on ethnic and race relations, to understand the distinct dynamics of relations between men and women, a distinctive form of intergroup relations of fundamental importance in social life. In addition, we considered the perspectives of both the socially disadvantaged group (women) and the advantaged group (men), which is particularly noteworthy because successful social change often requires the coordinated responses of both groups. Understanding factors that promote social change by members of advantaged groups on behalf of disadvantaged groups is also particularly valuable because they have greater resources, may be less likely to receive the backlash for their efforts, and can more readily mobilize other advantaged-group members as allies (Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Selvanathan et al., 2020).

Consistent with the substantial literature supporting contact theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011), positive contact by women with men was associated with more favorable

attitudes toward men (Studies 1a and 2a) and more positive contact by men with women was related to more favorable attitudes toward women (Studies 1b and 2b). However, higher quality contact relates to collective action in opposite ways for men and women. Specifically, supportive of the position that intergroup contact can undermine interest in collective action among members of disadvantaged groups (e.g., Saguy et al., 2009; Tausch et al., 2015), we found that women who reported higher quality contact with men were less willing to engage in collective action for women's rights (Studies 1a and 2a). By contrast, men who had more favorable contact with women expressed greater willingness to engage in collective action for women's rights (Studies 1b and 2b), which is in line with previous results (Reimer et al., 2017).

In addition to demonstrating these different effects of positive intergroup contact for women and men, the present research contributes theoretically to the study of intergroup relations by further illuminating the processes through which intergroup contact can influence engagement in collective action. In particular, our findings support the role of perceived discrimination in these dynamics. Perceived discrimination against women as a group was positively correlated, for both men and women, with willingness to engage in collective action for women's rights, consistent with previous work (van Zomeren et al., 2008). For men, perception of discrimination against women seemed to explain why more positive contact with women promotes intentions to participate in collective action for equality. Among women, however, our results indicated the particularly important role of perceived personal discrimination in the link between more positive contact with men and less willingness to engage in collective action for equality. Studies 2a and 2b, which manipulated the salience of gender discrimination, provided more direct experimental evidence of the causal role of this hypothesized mediator. Making discrimination salient nullified the effects of positive contact on willingness to engage in collective action for both women and men. When women became aware of past personal discrimination, the sedative effects of positive contact with men vanished and they increased their inclination to act for equality. In the case of men, however, the salience of discrimination did not increase willingness to engage in collective action, possibly due to the emergence of defensive reactions in those reporting higher quality. A tentative explanation would be that the salience of discrimination forced them to focus on their own privilege, which is uncomfortable. In fact, Droogendyk et al. (2016) point out that many advantaged-group allies tend to consider only the plight of the disadvantaged without recognizing the flipside, their own privilege, because doing so might question the legitimacy of their accomplishments and perhaps their integrity.

Three valuable directions for future research involve further examination of the influence of contact and fusion, as well as considering a more expansive view of differences in intergroup dynamics. In all four studies, reflecting our

interest in the cumulative effects of the quality and quantity of contact, we assessed, rather than manipulated, contact. Indeed, only 5% of studies of Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis involved experimental manipulations of contact. We acknowledge the value of further testing the effects of contact using other approaches, such as with longitudinal designs and experimental manipulations. Longitudinal designs, which can test the effects over time of contact experiences on collective action intentions and/or actual engagement in activities, can strengthen causal interpretations of the cumulative effects of contact between women and men (Hewstone et al., 2014). In addition, quality and quantity of contact have been manipulated experimentally in specific interpersonal exchanges, for example, by varying the functional nature of the relationship between members of different groups (e.g., Saguy et al., 2009). While the impact of such incremental experiences may be limited in the particular context of gender relations because of the vast reservoir of past experiences in interactions between women and men, manipulating the favorability of intergroup contact (e.g., by varying the way a confederate behaves) may still have some measurable effects, particularly when responses are assessed in the immediate context or if such interactions are arranged to occur repeatedly over time, particularly in naturalistic settings (see MacInnis & Page-Gould, 2015).

Our work also extends previous research on collective action by considering the role of identity fusion (see Gómez et al., 2020) in the relationship between contact and willingness to engage in collective action. Consistent with previous research showing that sharing painful experiences with others produces identity fusion (Whitehouse et al., 2017), we found that greater personal discrimination for women and perceived discrimination against women for men related to greater fusion with the feminist movement when discrimination was not salient. In Studies 1a and 1b and in the no-salience conditions of Studies 2a and 2b, we further found that fusion statistically mediated the effect of perceived discrimination on collective action. We caution, however, that we did not include additional studies that directly manipulated fusion, and thus, our evidence for serial mediation is correlational. Thus, future research might test the potential causal effect of identity fusion in the process more directly by manipulating it experimentally.

We also note that the effect of women's positive contact with men on collective action appeared to be mediated by personal discrimination and identity fusion, but not by group discrimination. The emphasis on the personal self and on the synergy between the personal and social identity that characterizes fusion theory (Gómez et al., 2011; Swann et al., 2012) could explain why personal discrimination—an individual factor—is more predictive of fusion with the feminist movement than discrimination against women—a group factor.

Beyond considering differences in social advantages, as a third direction for future work, research might also consider how other distinctive aspects of group experiences and

identities may affect the ways contact influences collective action intentions. For example, Techakesari et al. (2017) found that recalling a supportive interaction with a heterosexual friend increased collective action intentions among gay men but reduced them among lesbian women. Thus, expanding knowledge of the factors contributing to the differences, as well as the similarities, across intergroup contexts in what motivates people to engage in collective action can contribute substantially to a more comprehensive representation of intergroup dynamics.

We also acknowledge other limitations of the current research that might be addressed by additional work. We did not directly assess subsequent behavioral involvement but rather self-reported willingness to engage in collective action. However, the measure we used has direct precedent in the literature (Duncan, 1999) and is similar to a range of other commonly used measures in the study of collective action (e.g., Reimer et al., 2017). In addition, we recognize that effect sizes are modest, indicating that additional factors may be involved in how positive intergroup contact can relate to collective action. One likely candidate is the perceived legitimacy of disparities in resources between women and men (Iyer & Ryan, 2009). For example, men who perceive these disparities as relatively legitimate would likely display a weaker link with collective action because they see women's lower resources as more just and may see episodes of discrimination as isolated incidents rather than as evidence of systemic injustice.

In conclusion, the current research illustrates, while recognizing the distinctive facets of different types of relations, the value of theoretically integrating research on gender and on other forms of intergroup relations. Drawing on both literatures potentially informs researchers with different primary interests and perspectives of additional factors (e.g., fusion, quality and valence of intergroup contact generally, benevolent forms of bias) and guide interventions that capitalize on the different experiences, influences, and goals of the women and men and of members of socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups more generally, to mobilize them in a coordinated fashion to create more equal and just societies.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material is available online with this article.

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