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OXFORD

Intergroup Contact as a Means of Reducing Religious Conflict: Evidence from Northern Ireland

Miles Hewstone

University of Oxford

Katharina Schmid

University of Oxford

Ananthi al Ramiah

Yale/National University of Singapore

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Outline



Social identity, segregation and contact in Northern Ireland

- ▣ Multiple identities
- ▣ Varying in strength

‘The Contact Hypothesis’

(Allport, 1954)

Positive contact with a member of another group (often a negatively stereotyped group) can improve negative attitudes:

- not only towards the **specific** member,
- but also **towards the group as a whole**

Types of contact

DIRECT CONTACT

- *Quantity of contact* – frequency of interaction with outgroup members, e.g., ‘How often do you meet/talk to/etc. outgroup members where you live/shop/socialize, etc?’
- *Quality of contact* – nature of the interaction with outgroup members, e.g., ‘How positive/negative; friendly/unfriendly, etc, is the contact?’
- *Cross-group friendship* – being friends with outgroup members, e.g., ‘How many close outgroup friends?’

EXTENDED CONTACT

- *Indirect/Vicarious contact*, via family or friends, e.g., ‘How many of your family members/friends have outgroup friends?’

Design of **Study 1**:

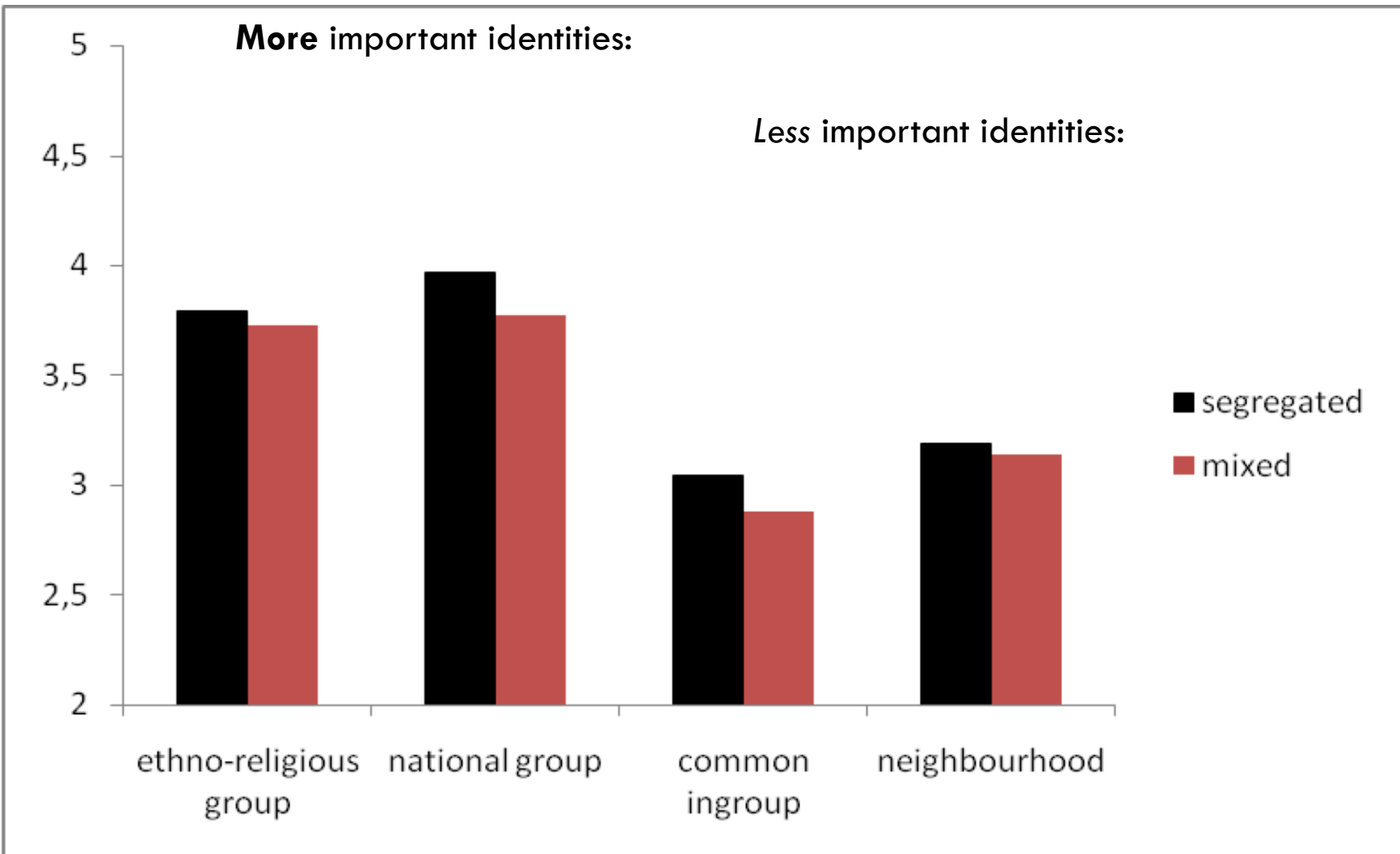
Neighbourhoods and Identity

- 6 Northern Irish towns (3 mixed, 3 segregated neighbourhoods)
- Today ca. 35-40% of N.I. population live in completely segregated neighbourhoods
- Random sample in each neighbourhood
- Neighbourhoods matched, as far as possible, on relevant criteria
- Final sample: $N = 1,948$ general population
 - ▣ 970 Catholic (353 males, 617 females)
 - ▣ 978 Protestant (391 males, 587 females)

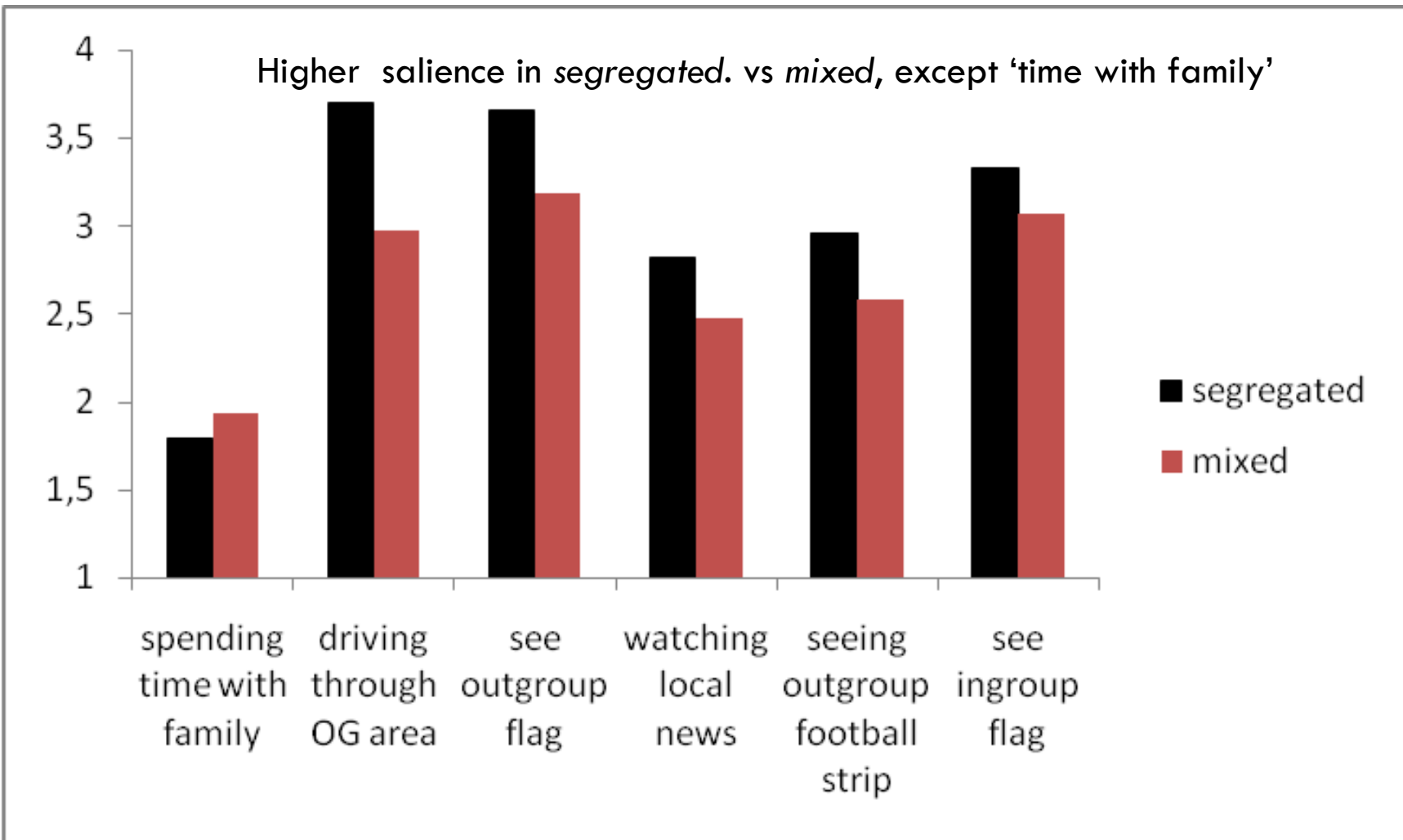
Multiple categorization in Northern Ireland

- Conflict **not** a simple religious one.
- Conflict between those who wish NI to remain part of UK (Protestants) and those who wish to see unification of NI with Republic of Ireland (Catholics)
- Not only ethno-religious, but multiple categories potentially important, e.g., national
- Ethno-religious vs national categorization: high, but not complete overlap between 'Catholic-Irish' or 'Protestant-British'

Identification with different categories for respondents living in segregated and mixed neighbourhoods



Self-reported salience of ethno-religious identity across hypothetical situations for respondents living in segregated and mixed neighbourhoods



Evidence Concerning Cross-group Contact in Our Mixed vs Segregated Neighbourhoods*

IN MIXED AREAS

- *More opportunities for and actual neighbourhood contact with outgroup members*
- *More outgroup friends*
- *More ingroup friends (and family members) who have outgroup friends (,indirect' / 'extended' contact)*
- *But ... more negative experiences with outgroup members*

*controlling for age, gender, education, income

Measures

(all 5-point Likert scales, except ingroup bias)

Independent Variables:

- Neighbourhood (segregated vs mixed)
- Direct Contact ($\alpha = .81$)
- Extended contact ($\alpha = .83$)

Mediators:

- Distinctiveness Threat ($\alpha = .70$)
- Group esteem threat ($\alpha = .70$)

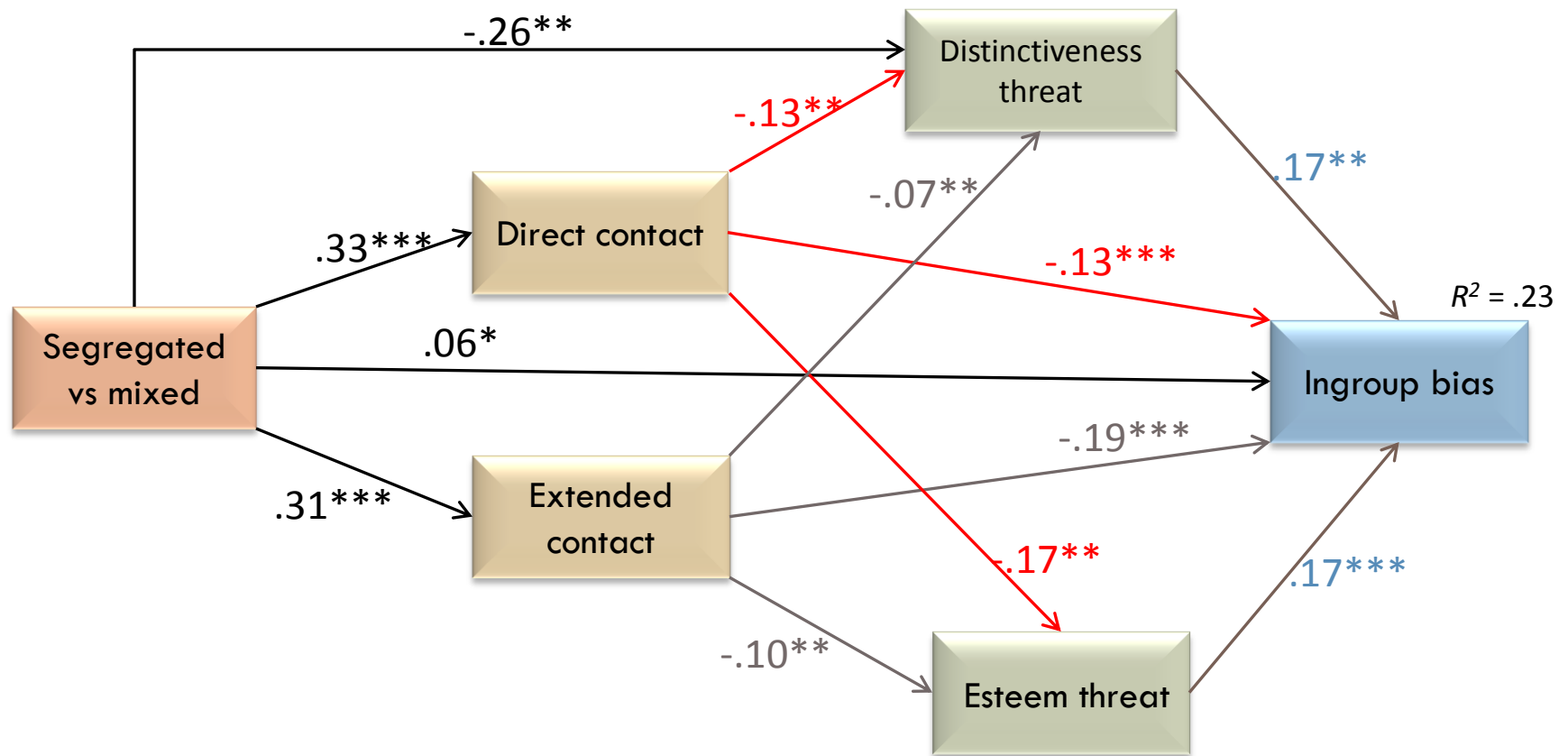
Moderators:

- Subgroup identification ($\alpha = .91$)

Dependent Variables:

- Ingroup bias

Neighbourhood Effects on Bias via Contact and Threats

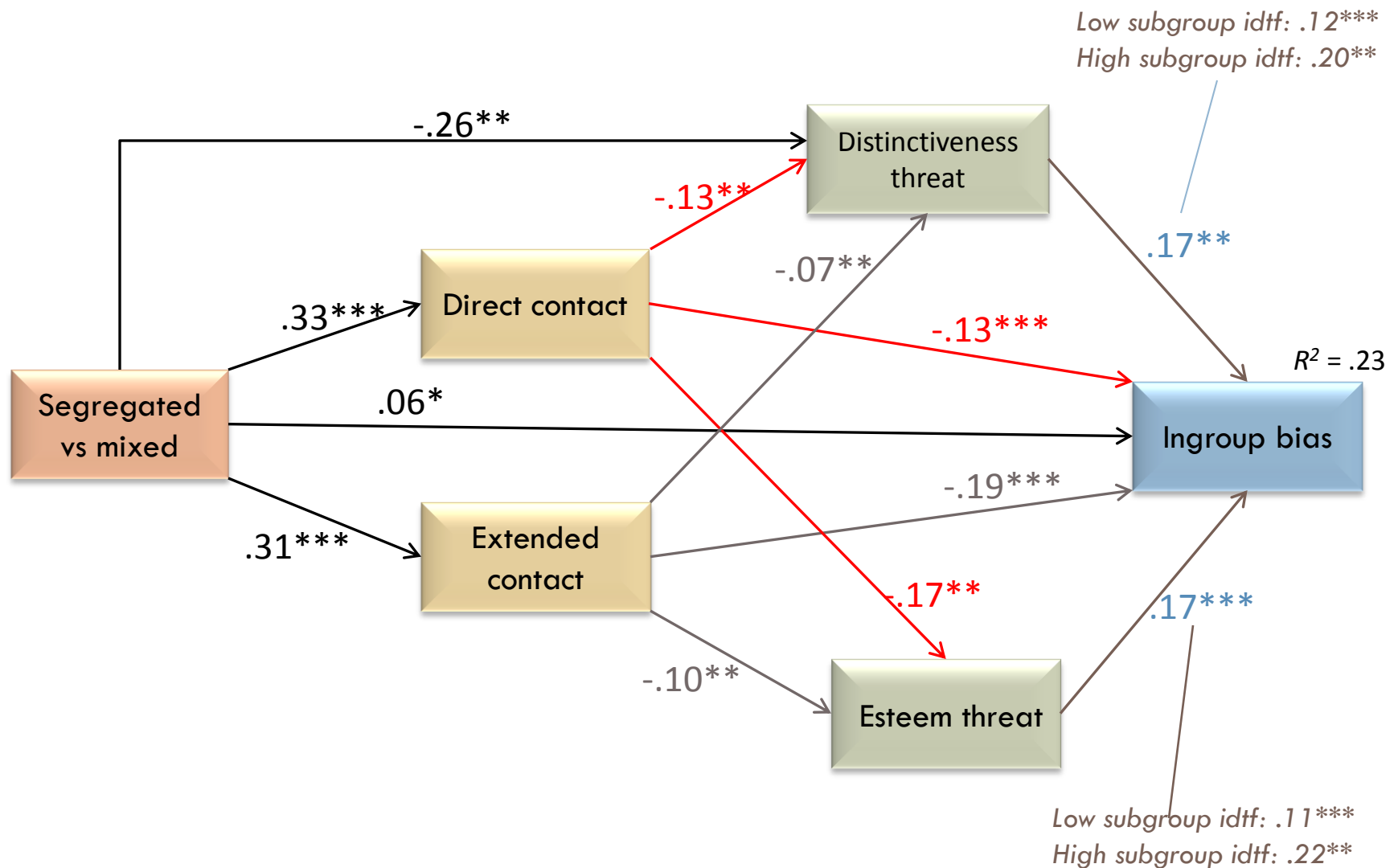


Model fit: $\chi^2(1) = .45$, $p = .50$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .000, SRMR = .002.

Additional correlations: direct contact – extended contact, $r = .48***$; Dist.threat – esteem threat, $r = .27***$.

Path coefficients are standardized beta weights. Age, gender, education and income controlled for.

Moderation of Threat Effects: By subgroup identification

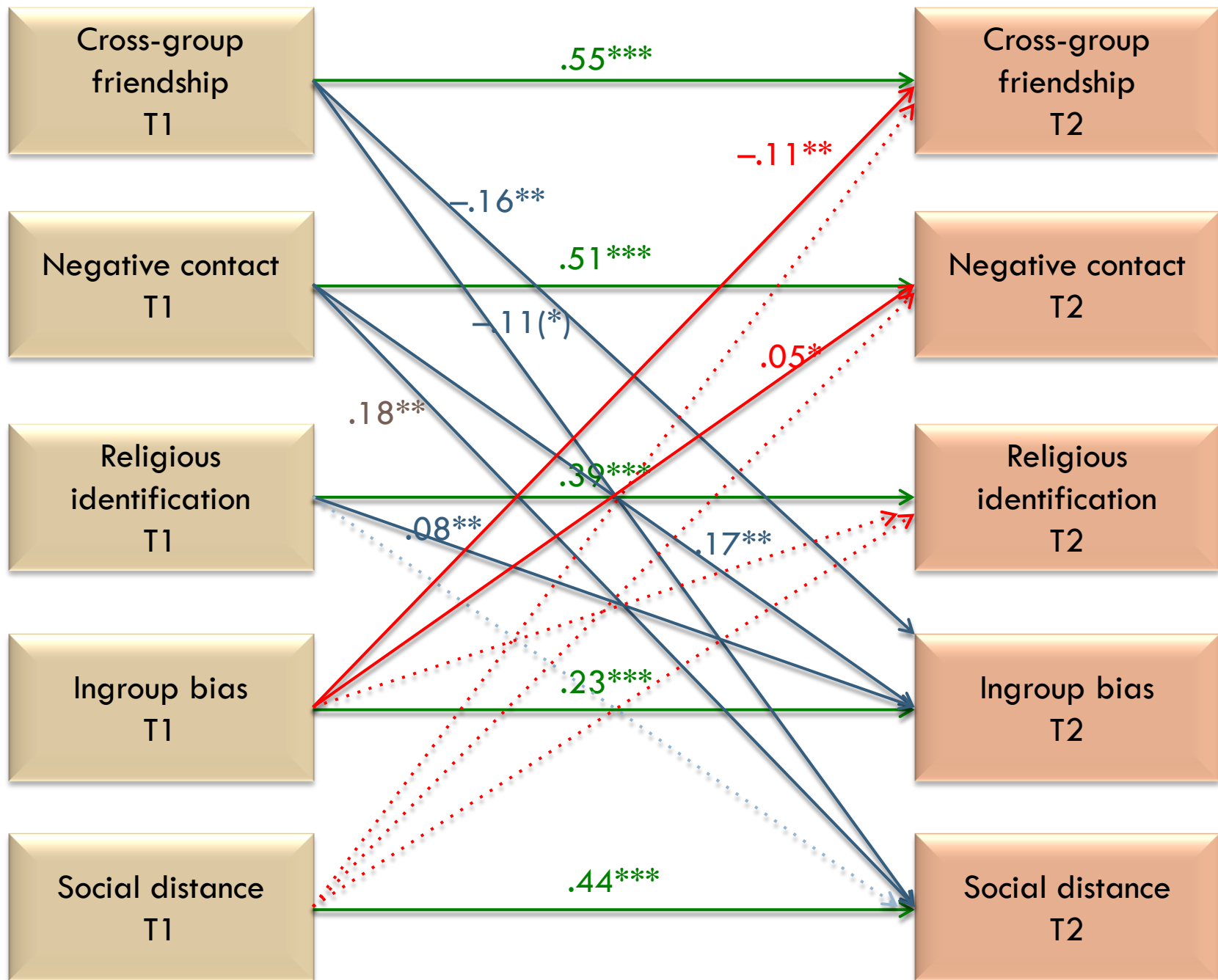


Study 2: Longitudinal Comparison of Mixed and Segregated Communities in Belfast, N. Ireland

- $N = 958$ adults (Catholics, Protestants)
- Recruited from four areas of Belfast:
 - ▣ Area 1 (predominantly Catholic; $N=170$)
 - ▣ Area 2 (predominantly Protestant; $N= 226$)
 - ▣ Area 3 (76% Protestants, 24% Catholics; $N=228$)
 - ▣ Area 4 (52% Protestants, 48% Catholics; $N=334$)
- Longitudinal sample: 404

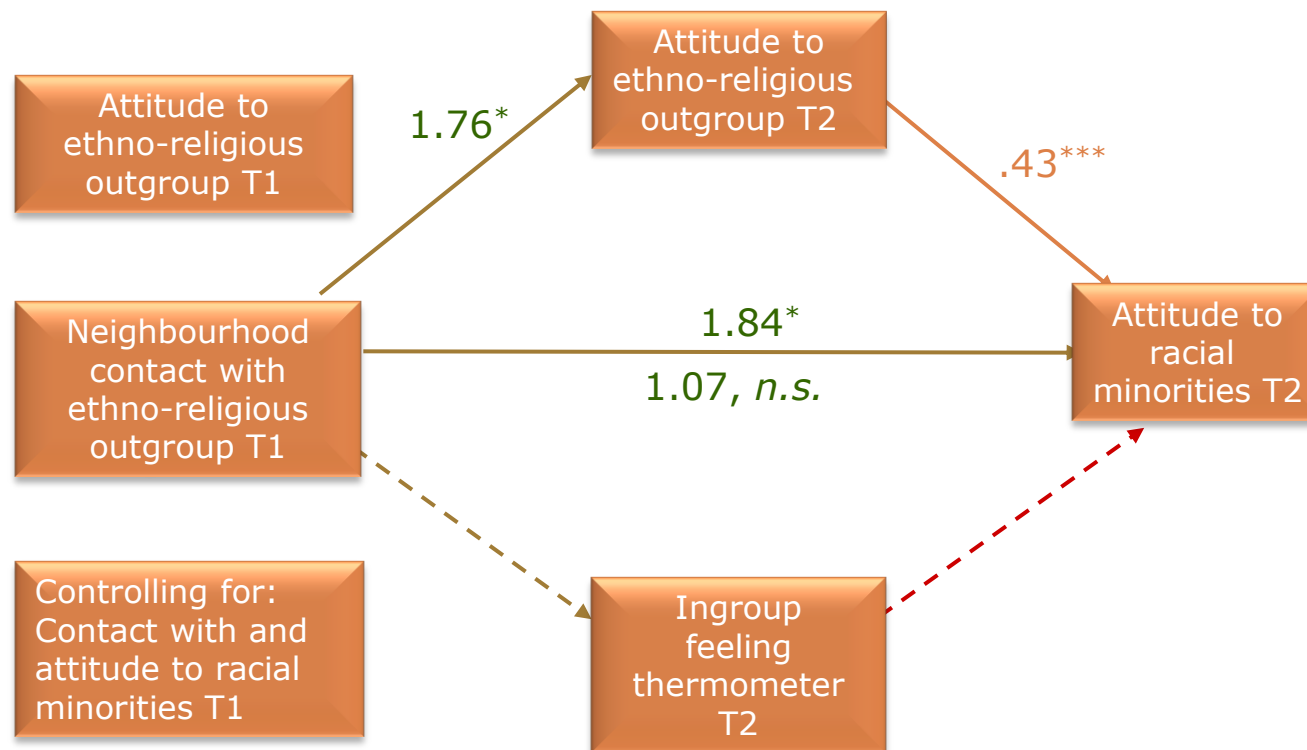
Sample and variables

- N=404 both time points completed
- Independent Variables:
 - ▣ cross-group friendship
 - ▣ negative contact
 - ▣ religious identification
- Dependent Variables:
 - ▣ ingroup bias
 - ▣ social distance
- Analyses done using type = complex command



Longitudinal Secondary Transfer Effect (STE) in Northern Ireland

($N = 181$ Catholics, 223 Protestants; matched at T1-T2, 1 year; Tausch et al., 2010)



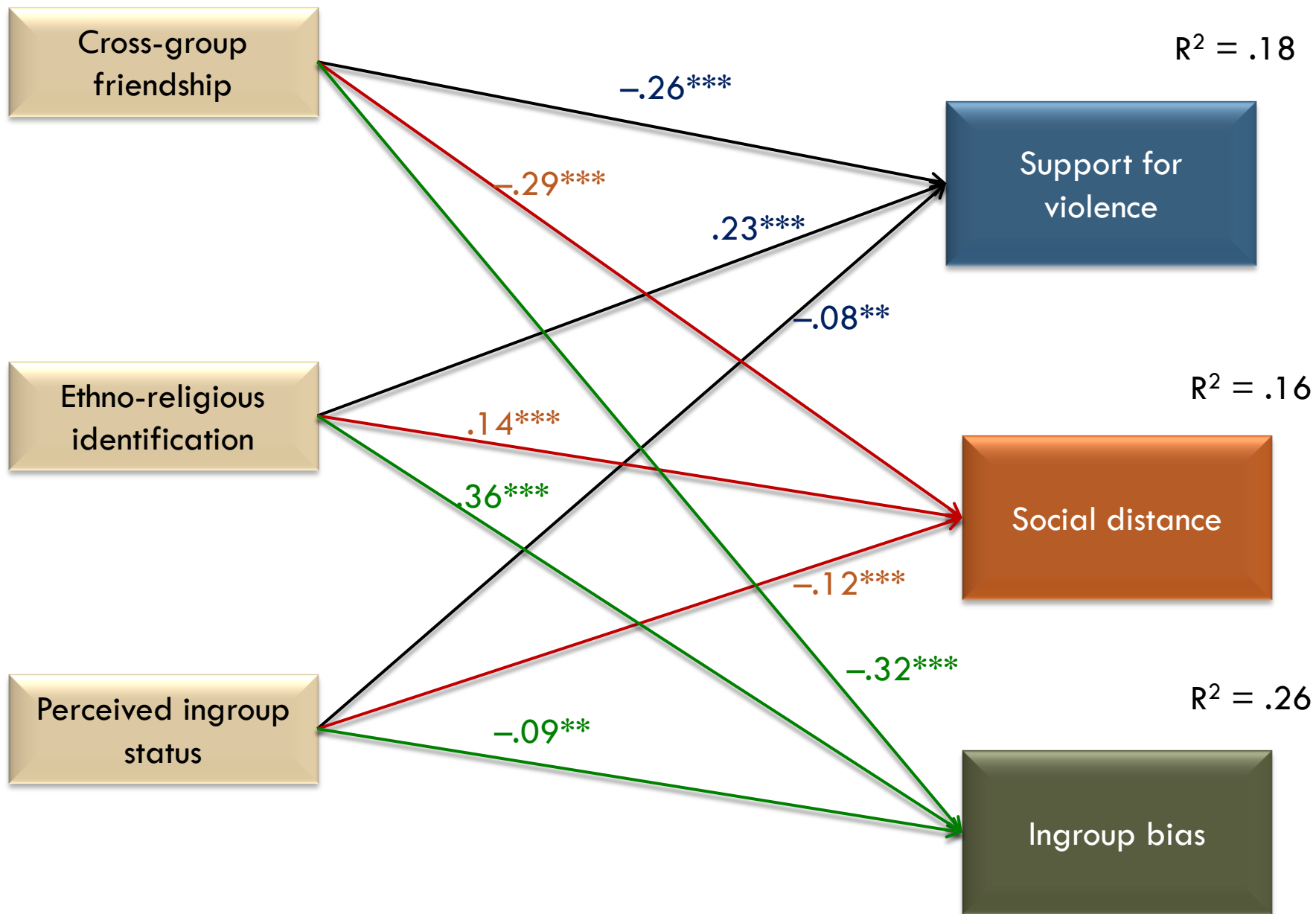
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Support for violence

- Contact effects on support for violence?

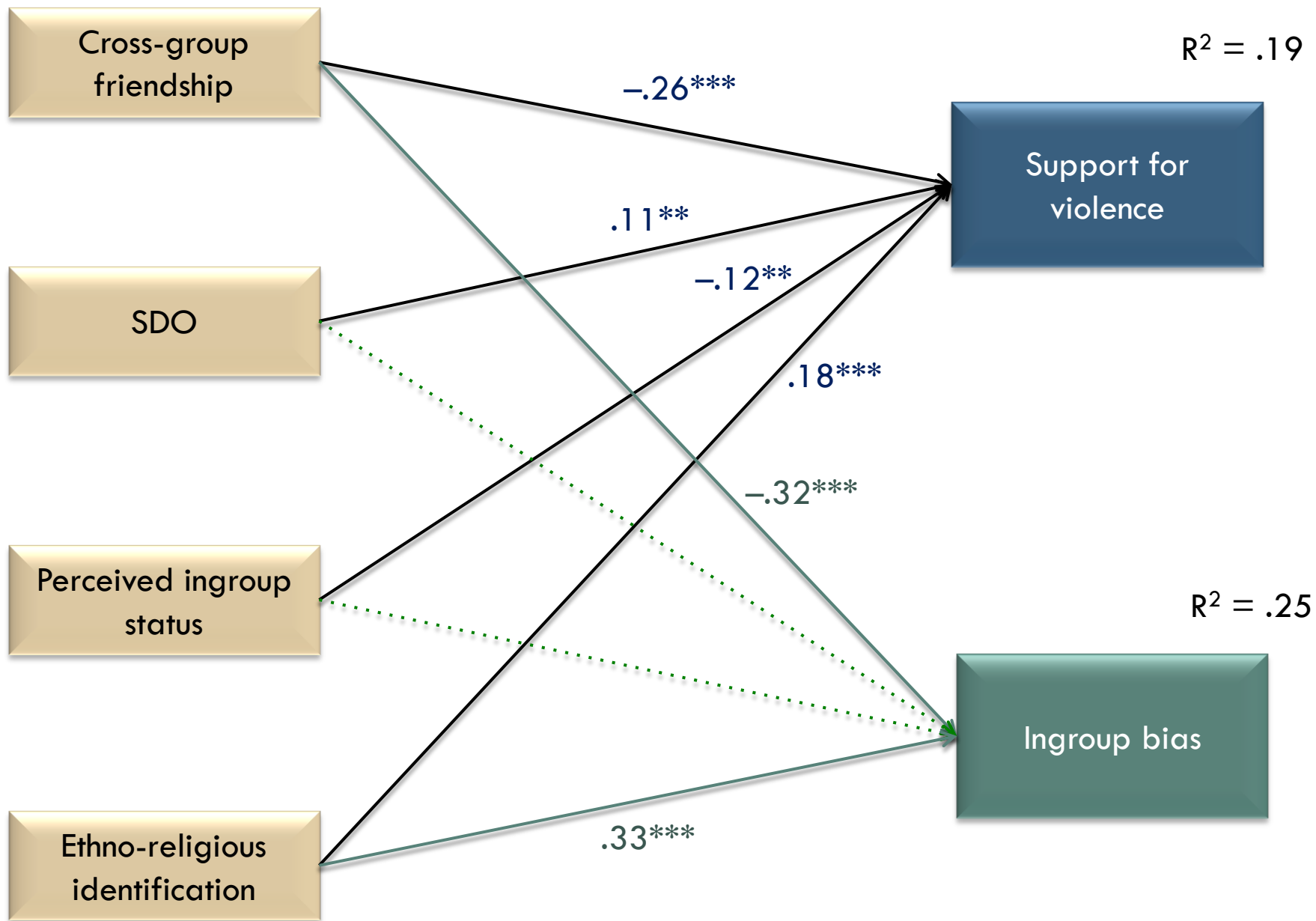
CRU Time 2 data only (N = 811):

- Independent Variables:
 - ▣ crossgroup friendship
 - ▣ religious identification
 - ▣ perceived ingroup status
 - ▣ religious group membership
- Dependent Variables:
 - ▣ support for violence
 - ▣ social distance
 - ▣ bias



ESRC data set: support for violence analyses

- Cross-sectional
- Dependent Variables:
 - ▣ support for violence
 - ▣ bias
- Independent Variables:
 - ▣ cross-group friendship
 - ▣ SDO (Social Dominance Orientation)
 - ▣ identification
 - ▣ perceived ingroup status
 - ▣ religious group (C vs P)



Extended Contact:

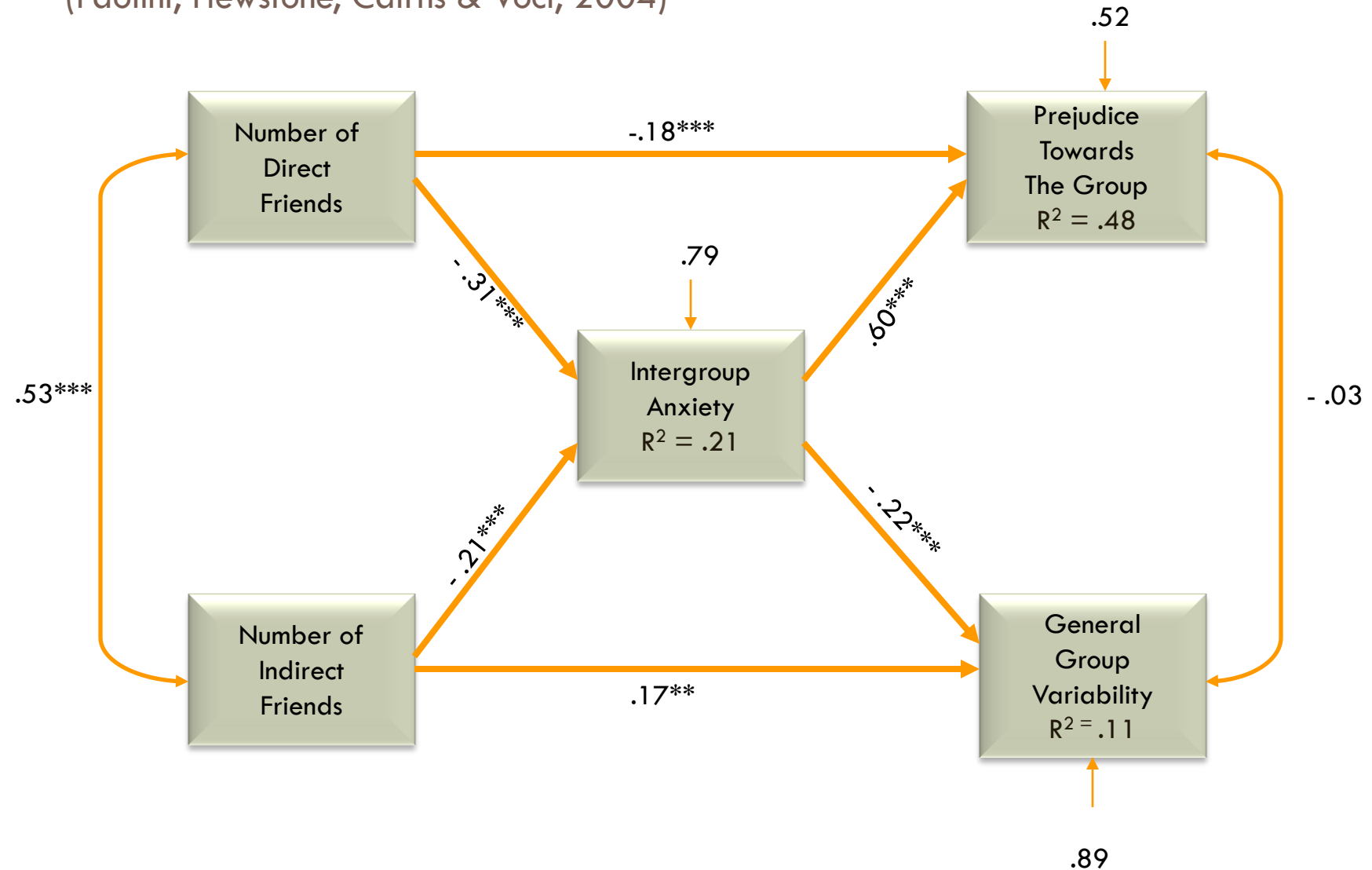
Some of my best friends have friends who are . . .

- 'Extended contact' is second-hand, rather than involving the participants in direct intergroup contact themselves
- Just *knowing* other people in your group who have out-group friends might improve attitudes to the out-group (Wright et al., 1997)
- Advantages:
 - ▣ *inter alia*
 - ▣ Does not rely on direct contact, so can work in segregated settings

Extended Contact in Northern Ireland

(Results for Catholics and Protestants; N = 316)

(Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns & Voci, 2004)



Key facts about extended contact

- It works!
- It works by changing group norms
- It is especially effective for those who have no direct contact
- **Review:** Turner, R. N., Hewstone, M., Voci, A., Paolini, S., and Christ, O. (2007). Reducing prejudice via direct and extended cross-group friendship. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 18, 212-255.

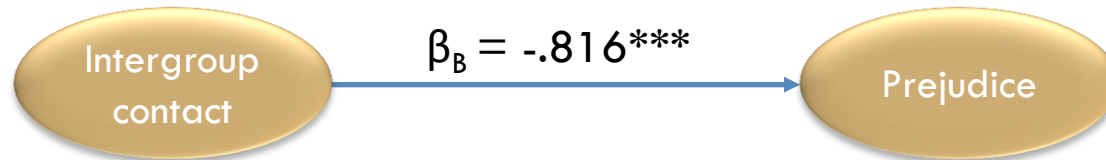
Contextual effect of intergroup contact

Do individuals who have the same amount of *individual* contact, but who live in different **contexts**, which have different mean neighbourhood levels of contact, *differ* in their prejudice?

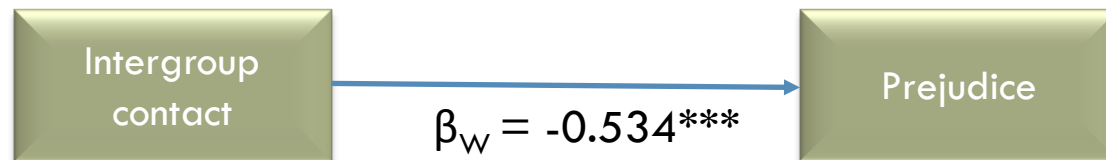
Does the context influence intergroup attitudes over and above individual level variables?

If so, then **context** drives this difference (*contextual effect*) – it **can't be explained with individual level variables**.

Results: NI schools data (N = 3923 Year 8 students (Level 1) from 51 secondary schools (Level 2))



Context level

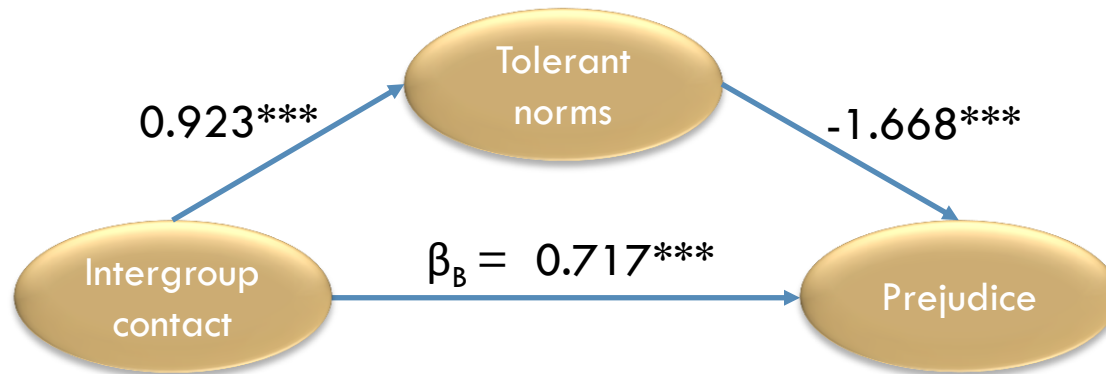


Individual level

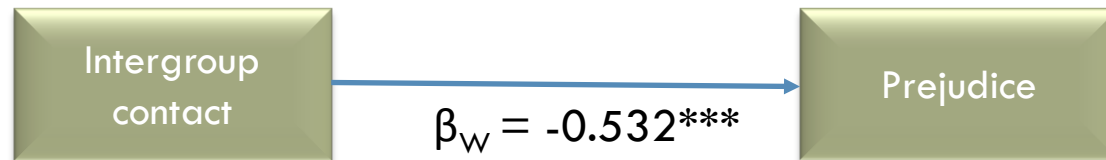
Contextual Effect: $\beta_C = \beta_B - \beta_W = -0.281^{**}$

*controlled for sex and religiosity

Results: NI school data (Study 1f)



Context level




Individual level

Contextual Effect: $\beta_C = \beta_B - \beta_W = 1.249$

Indirect effect on context level: -1.540^{**}

*controlled for sex and religiosity

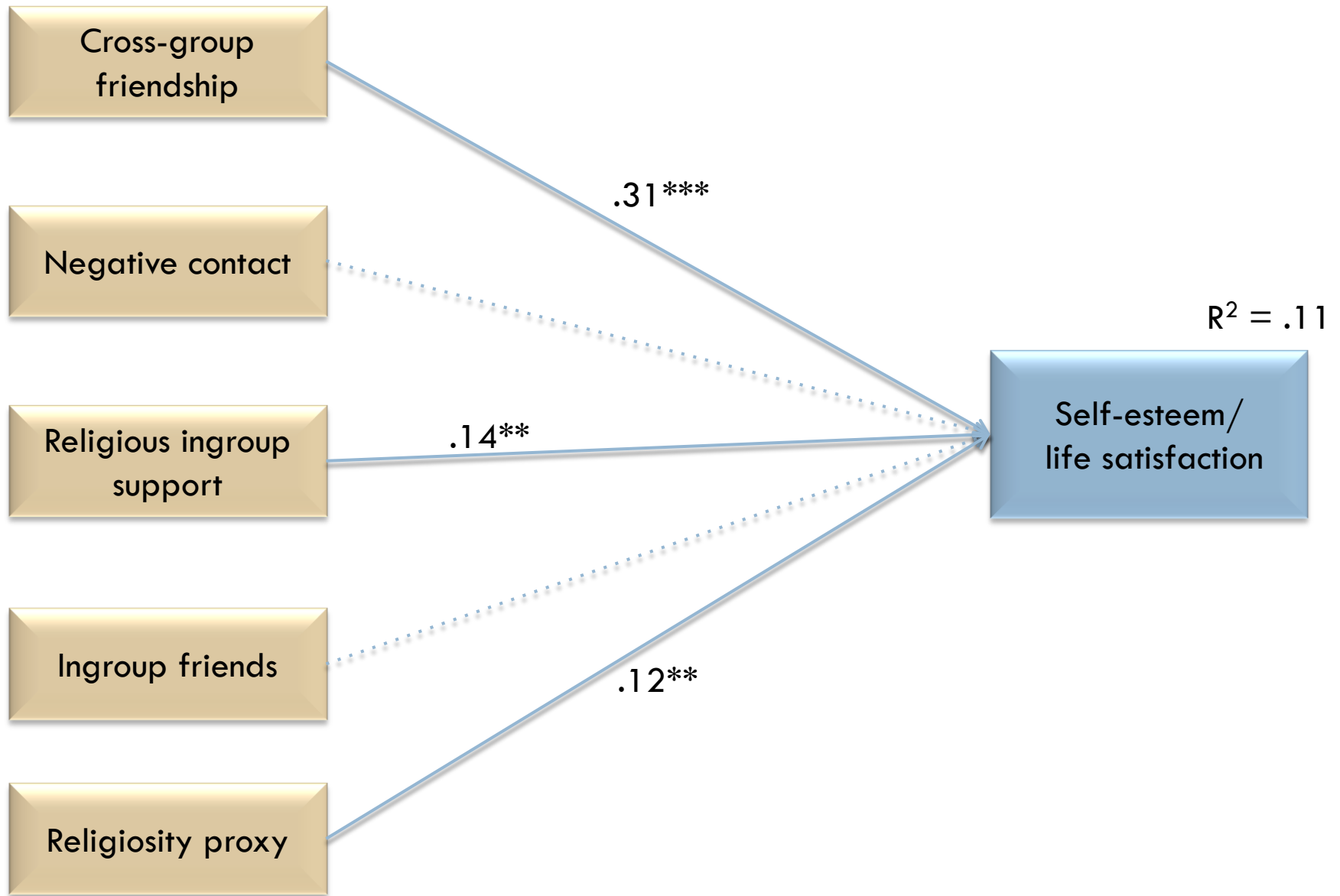


Is group membership/social identification 'bad'?

Additional outcomes: self-esteem/life satisfaction and wellbeing

CRU (time 1 only; N = 986)

- IVs:
 - Cross-group friendships
 - negative contact
 - group support (from religious ingroup)
- DVs:
 - self-esteem
 - life satisfaction
- Controlling for:
 - religious group (C vs P)
 - religious ingroup friendships
 - religiosity (as measured by proxy: attendance of religious services/activities)
 - age
 - gender



Summary

- Ethno-religious identity still important in contemporary N.I.
- Contact reduces outgroup bias, and support for political violence
- Cross-sectional and longitudinal effects
- Effects for both direct and extended contact
- *Strength of identification* moderates effects
- Contact with ethno-religious outgroup has secondary-transfer effects
- Identification also has *positive* effects