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**Improving Intergroup Relations
through Actual and Imagined Contact:
A Field Experiment with Malawian
Shopkeepers and Chinese Migrants**

NO. 105

WORKING PAPERS

**WORKING PAPERS
ON EAST ASIAN STUDIES**

MARCH 2016

UNIVERSITÄT
DUISBURG
ESSEN

Offen im Denken

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ISSN: 1865-8571 (Printed version) / 1865-858X (Internet version)

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JUN GU / ANNIKA MUELLER / INGRID NIELSEN / JASON SHACHAT / RUSSELL SMYTH:

Improving Intergroup Relations through Actual and Imagined Contact: A Field Experiment with Malawian Shopkeepers and Chinese Migrants

WORKING PAPERS ON EAST ASIAN STUDIES, NO. 105, DUISBURG 2016

Abstract

We examine the ability of intergroup contact to ameliorate the effect of in-group bias on economic outcomes. Specifically, we employ randomized experiments to test whether actual and imagined contact is effective in reducing prejudice between indigenous Malawian shopkeepers (in-group), and their Chinese migrant counterparts (out-group), and test the stability of these changes over time. We find differing results with actual contact. Local Malawians' attitude towards Chinese migrants did not improve, but their willingness to spend time with them did. In contrast, actual contact led to improvement in the Chinese migrants' attitude toward local Malawians, but did not increase their willingness to spend time with them. These effects persisted over a time period of at least ten days. Imagined contact had no impact on Malawians' attitude towards or willingness to spend time with Chinese migrants.

Keywords

Chinese migrants in Africa, actual contact, imagined contact, prejudice, field experiment

JEL Codes

C93, J15, O19

1 INTRODUCTION

The last decade has seen a massive influx of Chinese migrants, among them many traders and shopkeepers, into sub-Saharan Africa. Chinese migrant shopkeepers and their local counterparts are shaped by fundamentally different cultures whose norms and strategies translate into diverse sets of business practices. Potential frictions stemming from these differences, and the consequent loss in economic efficiency, make the study of social identity especially critical in this context.

Social identity is a person's sense of self, derived from group membership, where the group can be defined in various ways (e.g. ethnicity, gender, occupation or religious affiliation) (Chen & Li 2009). Social identity has been shown to generate many positive economic outcomes within groups. Common group identity has been shown to increase cooperation (Eckel & Grossman 2005; Goette, Huffman & Meier 2006), and improve coordination (Charness, Rigotti & Rustichini 2007; Chen & Chen 2011) among group members. Building a strong group identity can be used to solve or mitigate hold-up problems (Morita & Servatka 2013). Group identity also increases the degree of altruism (Chen & Li 2009) and charitable giving (Eckel & Grossman 2005) toward in-group members.

At the same time, social identity can also lead to negative economic outcomes. Where there is an in-group and an out-group, low levels of trust often exist between the groups and the out-group has been shown to have low levels of morale (Tsutsui & Zizzo 2014). When groups are formed, the concepts of "them" and "us" trigger emotional responses, which can lead to discrimination against members of the other group (Ahmed 2007). In particular, there is much evidence from experimental economics showing that participants exhibit in-group bias, meaning that they favor those from their own social group over those from another social group (see e.g. Chen & Li 2009; Goette et al. 2006).

Identity-based favoritism results in discrimination against, and stereotyping of, members of the other group on the basis of their social identity. This produces myriad problems that impede economic progress. For members of an out-group, it can hinder their prospects of finding employment (Booth, Leigh & Varganova 2012) as well as career advancement within an organization (Pittinsky, Shih & Trahan 2005). In addition, the progression of children from an out-group at school can be adversely affected if teachers form expectations of their academic abilities based on stereotypes (Lakhani, Sacks & Heltberg 2014).

In addition, identity-based favoritism can result in economic problems that impede economic development. It impedes, for example, attempts to assist with social integration of migrant communities from ethnic out-groups (Casey & Dustmann 2010). Identity-based favoritism is also the basis of much ethnic-religious intolerance and conflict (Alesina, Baqir & Easterly 1999). In-group bias, coupled with a strong sense of social identity, also underpins elements of ideological/religious extremism, which has been shown to contribute to social violence in many parts of the world (Chen 2010).

Economists have recognized that it is important to implement strategies to address prejudices grounded in social identity (Ben-Ner, McCall, Stephane & Wang 2009; Fryer & Loury 2013). In this paper, we report the results of a framed field experiment that tests one such strategy; namely, promoting contact between an in-group and an out-group. The contact hypothesis, first formulated by the psychologist Gordon Allport (1954), states that intergroup contact can reduce prejudice towards the other group. The contact hypothesis has far reaching implications because it suggests that positive intergroup contact between individual group members can generalize to affect positive attitude change about, and behavioural change toward, the whole other group.

Carrell, Hoekstra and West (2015) recently introduced the contact hypothesis into the economics literature. Based on an experiment with random room assignment at the U.S. Air Force Academy, and consistent with the contact hypothesis, they find the attitudes and behaviours of white males towards African Americans are positively influenced by the number and aptitude of black peers with whom they have had contact.

Our study has several features that extend the existing literature. One such feature is that we examine both the effects of actual¹ and imagined contact on overcoming in-group bias. Hewstone & Brown (1986) refined Allport's (1954) original hypothesis to require actual contact that is pleasant in nature and involving an element of cooperation towards a common shared goal.² Existing research demonstrates that such contact acts to reduce prejudice via a range of emotion-based mediating processes, including reduced intergroup anxiety and increased self-disclosure and trust (Crisp & Turner 2012; Pettigrew 1998). Imagined contact is a more recent variation of Allport's (1954) original contact hypothesis, proposed by Crisp and Turner (2009). The imagined contact hypothesis states contact in the form of an imagined interaction with an out-group can produce more positive perceptions of that group. The logic is that when individuals imagine pleasant intergroup contact, they engage in conscious processes that parallel those involved in actual contact, generating positive evaluations of the out-group, similar to the effects of actual intergroup contact (Crisp & Turner 2012; 2013). The efficacy of imagined contact would make it a powerful tool for economic and social change. An obvious usage would be low cost, highly scalable interventions through channels such as public service announcements.

1 What we call actual contact is commonly called direct contact in the social psychology literature. We use 'actual' because of its natural juxtaposition to 'imagined.'

2 Mere incidental contact, such as passing in the street, is not regarded as being sufficient to reduce prejudice (Hewstone & Browne 1986).

A second feature of our study is that we test the effect of actual contact from the perspective of both the in-group and out-group. Most studies assume that in-group prejudice toward an out-group will be reciprocated (Chen & Li 2009). Yet few studies, even in social psychology, test the contact hypothesis from the perspective of reducing out-group prejudice toward the in-group. The reason may be that in terms of promoting social inclusion, the onus generally is on the in-group to change its behaviour and attitude toward the out-group. However, it is not difficult to think of instances in which breaking down strongly-held stereotypes about members of an in-group among members of an out-group may be important in reducing negative economic outcomes. One such example would be reducing the potential for religious or ideological extremism (Chen 2010).

A third feature of our study is that we use outcome measures that tap both cognitive and behavioural responses to contact. The cognitive measure asks participants about their general attitude toward members of the other group. The measure of behavioural intent asks participants about their willingness to spend time with members of the other group. By including these two measures, we are able to differentiate whether contact produces differences in the way that the groups think about, and plan to act toward, the other group. This distinction is important if behavioural intentions are mechanisms through which cognition spills into actual behaviour. Then understanding how contact influences intentions is an important step forward in understanding the broader dynamics and implications of Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis.

A fourth feature of our study is that we examine if any observed change in attitude or intended behaviour in response to actual or imagined contact persists over time. If actual or imagined contact is to have a lasting effect on reducing prejudice, it is important that changes in attitude and behavioural intentions persist. This issue has been rarely addressed in the contact hypoth-

esis literature. One exception is Enos (2014), who performed a randomized controlled experiment in which Spanish-speaking confederates were randomly assigned to be inserted, for a period of days, into the daily lives of Anglo-whites living in homogenous communities in the United States, thus simulating demographic change. The result was a significant increase in exclusionary attitudes among treated subjects.³ Enos (2014) randomly surveyed community members at T + 3 days and then again at T + 10 days following the introduction of confederates. He found that shifts towards exclusionary attitudes were stronger for those surveyed three days after the treatment than those surveyed ten days afterwards. We differ from Enos (2014) in seeking to establish if inclusionary, as opposed to exclusionary, attitudinal and behavioural change persists over time.

We test whether actual and imagined contact reduces prejudice in the context of Chinese business migrants in the African nation of Malawi. Chinese outward migration and proliferation of small-scale Chinese enterprises has been increasing since the introduction of more liberalized emigration policies in China in the 1980s. In sub-Saharan Africa, there Chinese migrants have often met resistance from the local competition, resulting in a sharp social divide. Chinese presence in Malawi is similar to that in several other host countries in generating social frictions with the indigenous populations. This includes other African nations, such as South Africa (Harrison, Moyo & Yang 2012) as well as other host nations in other parts of the world. Historically, there have been periods of racial tension between Chinese business migrants and members of the host communities in Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia

(Gabriel 2014), Singapore (Yeoh & Lin 2013) and Thailand (Chantavanich 1997). Chinese migration to Europe has been a more recent phenomenon, but similar tensions have emerged there as well, such as in the Italian city of Prato (Dei Ottati 2014). Chinese migrants in many African, Asian and European countries are interesting out-groups to consider because while they remain social outsiders, they are often economically successful. And, in many cases, it is their economic success that has fueled tensions. Conflicts have arisen between other economically successful ethnic-migrant groups, aside from the Chinese, and the host communities in various countries, for example Korean migrants in the United States (Johnson, Farrell & Guinn 1997). In this sense, our paper also contributes to a larger literature on out-group relationships of minority groups of relatively higher economic position.

Thus far, academic research into the dynamics of frictions between Chinese migrants and members of the host community remains scant. The same is true for frictions between members of the host community and economically successful out-groups. The current research fills this gap by employing three randomized experimental studies to test the effect of actual intergroup contact and imagined intergroup contact between Chinese migrant and Malawian shopkeepers. In the first and second studies, we test the effect of actual contact on the attitude of Malawians towards the Chinese, and the willingness of Malawians to spend time with the Chinese and vice-versa. In the third experiment, we employ the notion of imagined contact to test whether Malawian shopkeepers, who imagined contact with their Chinese counterparts, would report a more positive attitude toward, and be more willing to spend time with them.⁴ To test

3 This study is an example of why the contact hypothesis was amended to specify contact must be cooperative and pleasant, which in this instance it was not. Pairs of Spanish speaking confederates joined a daily train commute from predominantly Anglo-Saxon American suburbs, and consistently conversed between themselves in Spanish.

4 We did not include Chinese migrants in the imagined contact study because of the particularly small pool of potential subjects and the greater *ex ante* emphasis on the ability of intergroup contact to influence the in-group rather than the out-group (Tropp & Pettigrew 2005).

the persistence of the experimental effects over time, for all three experiments we conducted telephone follow-ups with participants exactly ten days after the experiment, and resurveyed them regarding their attitude and willingness to spend time with the other group.

We find that actual contact facilitates a behavioural response in Malawian shopkeepers toward their Chinese counterparts, but no attitudinal change. At the same time, we find that actual contact facilitates an attitudinal change in Chinese shopkeepers toward their Malawian counterparts, but no behavioural response. We find that the positive effects due to the actual contact interventions are persistent for at least 10 days. We find that imagined contact has no effect on either cognitive or behavioural re-

sponses among Malawian participants towards the Chinese out-group.

That we find asymmetric effects is, in our view, a strength of the study. It is believed that intergroup contact influences in- and out-groups through the same process. Thus, we assume symmetry when stating our hypotheses below. However, it is also clear that there are inherent strong cultural and socio-economic asymmetries between the two groups in this study. Our results shed new light on the differential impact of actual contact, at least when there are substantive differences between groups. We feel that such evidence, when coming from a properly designed experiment, is as important as if the evidence had uniformly rejected or confirmed the hypotheses.

2 CHINESE MIGRATION TO AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCIAL INTERESTS IN AFRICA

A large inflow of Chinese migrants has reshaped the economic landscape of sub-Saharan Africa. Though reliable figures are hard to come by, Sautman (2006) estimates that the number of Chinese migrants in South Africa alone grew from about 30,000 in 2001 to between 100,000 and 300,000 in 2006. This scale of foreign migration of a group with no traditional or colonial ties to Africa is unique. Apart from its scale, the Chinese diaspora in Africa is also qualitatively unique in that the Chinese, unlike other migrant populations with commercial interests, lack cultural or linguistic ties to Africa (for example, Indian migrants in former British colonies in Africa share a common language and certain institutions with the local populace). The influx of Chinese products and the proliferation of small Chinese enterprises have led to lower prices for a range of products and increased competition for local businesses. Further, the presence of Chinese traders has also greatly expanded the choice set of African consumers (McNamee, Mills, Manoeli, Mulaudzi, Doran & Chen 2012).

Political reactions to the Chinese presence have been mixed. While Malawian leaders such as the late president Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika and the former president Joyce Banda have largely welcomed Chinese investment, there have also been recent laws condemned by civil rights groups as xenophobic. As an example, the Investment and Export Promotion Bill, which was enforced starting July 31, 2012, was aimed mainly at Chinese private traders and barred foreigners from carrying out trade in Malawi's rural areas (Ngozo 2012).

For the man in the street, the social frictions associated with Chinese migration manifests in different ways. Local Malawians perceive Chinese firms as bad employers who have little regard for labor laws and workers' rights (Chinguwo 2008). In some countries, ill will is growing amongst African customers over the perceived poor quality of some Chinese goods (McNamee et al. 2012). For their part, Chinese traders feel misunderstood. In a survey-based

study of Chinese private traders in South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia and Angola, McNamee et al. (2012) found that Chinese traders pride themselves on their work ethics, and believe that their mind-set is neither comprehended nor shared by their African customers or employees.

A backdrop to Chinese migration to Africa is China's own political ambition on that continent. China has poured large amounts of foreign aid into Africa, which is tied to expanding its strategic interests there. In 2013 China's foreign aid budget was US\$ 6.4 billion, equivalent to 0.07 percent of the country's GDP (Brant 2014). Between 2010 and 2012, China provided US\$ 14.4 billion of aid to 121 countries; of which 51 were in Africa (Brant 2014). China wants to work with African nations to promote the notion of a Chinese development model in Africa, as an alternative to the Washington Consensus United States-inspired pro-market approach to development in Africa (Davies 2008; Friedman 2009). One has to wonder how much these Chinese development efforts are at risk because of the accompanying social frictions? Further, can the utilization of positive and cooperative social contact provide a grass-roots driven dissipation of the frictions?

We conduct our studies in Lilongwe, which is the capital of Malawi. Malawi is a small landlocked country in South East Africa with an approximate population of 16.36 million people. The Malawian economy is largely agrarian and under-diversified; tobacco accounts for the majority of its export earnings (World Trade Organization 2002). Thus foreign investment and access to the Chi-

nese export market have been welcome. Formal diplomatic relationships were established between China and Malawi in 2008 after Malawi severed its 41-year old ties with Taiwan. This led to a surge in migration from China in the form of construction workers and private traders. The current size of the Chinese business community in Lilongwe, not including construction workers, is approximately 2000.

Few studies have examined the contact hypothesis considering Chinese migrant groups. There are studies that have found that intergroup contact between adult rural-urban migrants and those with an urban *hukou* (household registration) in China, is correlated with more positive attitudes towards the other group (Nielsen, Nyland, Smyth, Zhang & Zhu 2006; Nielsen & Smyth 2011). Similarly, research suggests that intergroup contact between Chinese migrants in the Italian town of Prato is positively correlated with more favorable attitudes among the Chinese migrants towards local Italian residents (Nielsen, Paritski & Smyth 2012). A limitation of each of these studies is that because they use cross-sectional self-reported data, they are only able to establish correlation, and not causation, between contact and attitude change. Gu et al. (2014) used an experimental design with random treatment assignment to test the effect of intergroup contact on attitudes between a group of urban adolescents and a group of rural-urban migrant adolescents in China. Their results showed that intergroup contact in the form of completing a pleasant and cooperative task (jointly completing a fun puzzle) was effective in reducing negative attitudes towards the other group.

3 HYPOTHESES AND EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS

In two different experiments, we examine whether actual and imagined contact changes local Malawian shopkeepers' attitudes and behavioural intentions toward Chinese migrants (a

significant majority of whom are also shopkeepers) and vice versa. Specifically, we test the following hypotheses regarding the impact of contact on in-group and out-group attitude:

(H1) Malawians' attitude towards out-group under actual contact: Actual contact of a pleasant and cooperative nature between Malawian shopkeepers and their Chinese counterparts will improve local Malawian shopkeepers' attitude towards Chinese migrants;

(H2) Malawians' attitude towards out-group under imagined contact: Imagined contact of a pleasant and cooperative nature between Malawian shopkeepers and their Chinese counterparts will improve local Malawian shopkeepers' attitude towards Chinese migrants; and,

(H3) Chinese migrants' attitude towards out-group under actual contact: Actual contact of a pleasant and cooperative nature between Malawian shopkeepers and their Chinese counterparts will improve Chinese migrants' attitude towards local Malawians.

We further test the following hypotheses about the impact of willingness to spend time with members of the other group:

(H4) Malawians' willingness to spend time with out-group members under actual contact: Actual contact of a pleasant and cooperative nature between Malawian shopkeepers and their Chinese counterparts will increase local Malawian shopkeepers' willingness to spend time with Chinese migrants;

(H5) Malawians' willingness to spend time with out-group members under imagined contact: Imagined contact of a pleasant and cooperative nature between Malawian shopkeepers and their Chinese counterparts will increase local Malawian

shopkeepers' willingness to spend time with Chinese migrants; and,

(H6) Chinese migrants' willingness to spend time with out-group members under actual contact: Actual contact of a pleasant and cooperative nature between Malawian shopkeepers and their Chinese counterparts will increase Chinese migrants' shopkeepers' willingness to spend time with local Malawians.

We test the following hypothesis on persistence for each treatment:

(H7) Persistence of contact effects: Any improvement in attitude or increase in willingness to spend time resulting from actual or imagined contact will be stable over time.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS

Experiment 1: Actual Contact

A total of sixty indigenous (local) Malawian shopkeepers, and sixty Chinese migrants (most of whom are also shopkeepers), participated in the experiments for monetary compensation. Table 1 provides summary statistics for all participants. To recruit the Malawian subjects, recruiters identified markets and other areas with a large number of shops. Within each such area, the recruiters selected shops based on location with the goal of recruiting Malawian participants from shops as distant as possible from each other. To gain access to the Chinese migrant population, we worked closely with the Community of Chinese Businessmen, Malawi. We identified six community leaders to assist our recruiting

Table 1: Summary Statistics for Study Participants

Group	Experiment	Treatment or Control	Subjects	Females	Secondary School Graduates	Average Age
Malawian	Actual	Treatment	30	19	27	30.6
		Control	30	15	22	29.8
	Imagined	Treatment	30	7	20	35.9
		Control	30	17	24	28.4
Chinese	Actual	Treatment	30	9	24	34.6
		Control	30	8	27	36.7

efforts. All participants were told that the experiment would last for up to one and a half hours, comprising a survey and a simple, pleasant task.

We employed a randomized experimental design with a treatment to induce actual pleasant and cooperative contact. Participants received 5000 Malawian Kwacha (MWK) as a show-up fee and another 2000 MWK as a transportation fee at the end of their session (US\$ 1 \approx 390 MWK at the time of the study).

The joint experiment consisted of six sessions, two per day, conducted over the 5th, 6th, and 7th of July, 2014. The first three sessions constituted the control group, the latter three the treatment group. In each session the Malawian and Chinese participants were randomly paired to form dyads. Half of the dyads were randomly selected into a treatment group where they engaged in an actual contact event with their dyad partner, while half were randomly selected into a control group where they did not engage in actual contact with their dyad partner.

A session proceeded as follows: each dyad was seated side by side at a desk. Each participant was given a name card with his or her last name (e.g., “Banda” and “Ming”, respectively). Once seated, participants in each dyad were instructed to exchange name cards and pronounce their own last name clearly so that each participant could learn the name of their counterpart.

Each dyad was then asked to complete two jigsaw puzzles, a task that the participants perceived as enjoyable yet requiring cooperation on their part to achieve the common goal. The Chinese and the Malawian subjects were both unfamiliar with jigsaw puzzles. We believe that this created a level playing field between in-group and out-group members. The experimental set-up further fostered cooperation as the puzzles were large enough that handing and asking each other for puzzle pieces and pointing out where pieces might fit into parts the other person had completed was the most efficient way to tackle the task.

We used the following procedure to manipulate the amount of contact between the treatment and control groups. We gave two comparable jigsaw puzzles per dyad. In the treatment group, each dyad was asked to jointly solve the puzzles one after the other, with the order randomly assigned. In the control group, each dyad was asked to solve both puzzles as well; however, in this case each of the members were randomly assigned one of the puzzles to solve individually. All the participants were given a maximum of one hour to complete the jigsaw puzzle task.

While subjects were allowed to quietly communicate with their dyad partners in the treatment groups, almost all of the information communicated between them was non-verbal based on personal observations of the experimenter leading the sessions. This was reinforced by the language barriers between in-group and out-group members of our study. The few exceptions in terms of verbal communication were members asking for puzzle pieces or enquiring whether the dyad member had seen a piece with a specific colour and/or pattern.

After the jigsaw puzzle task, the participants completed a short survey that included demographic and socio-economic questions and our key question to assess a participant’s attitude and willingness to spend time with the members of the other group. We provide the complete questionnaire in the appendix. But here we provide excerpts of our two key questions for the local Malawians.

Circle the word that best sums up your thoughts about Chinese migrants in Malawi:

1. My general attitude toward Chinese migrants in Malawi is ...

very positive positive neutral negative very negative

2. If I could, I would enjoy spending my spare time with Chinese migrants.

very true true neutral untrue very untrue

We coded responses using a five-point Likert scale (1 = very positive/true, 3 = neutral, 5 = very negative/untrue).⁵ All Malawian subjects provide answers to both key questions. Two Chinese subjects from the control group did not provide answers to the first question. A different Chinese subject did not provide a response to the second question.

Experiment 2: Imagined Contact

A total of sixty Malawian shopkeepers participated in the experiment for cash compensation. While these participants were different individuals from those who participated in Experiment 1, they were recruited using the same strategy.

The experiment employed a randomized design with a treatment to simulate imagined pleasant and cooperative contact. Participants received 5000 MWK as a show-up fee and another 2000 MWK as a transportation fee at the end of their session (US\$ 1 ≈ 460 MWK at the time of the study). The experiment consisted of six sessions, two per day, conducted over the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of November, 2014. Again, the first three sessions were used to create a control group and the latter three to create a treatment group (thirty participants per group).

5 These questions were not incentivized as we feel no incentivized task would simultaneously give all participants a strong incentive to tell the truth, while not impacting their measures of attitude and behavioural intent. It has been shown (Gneezy & Rustichini 2000) that intrinsic motivation can be more effective than an under-scaled monetary incentive scheme in experiments. Incentivizing is a problem in our setting due to the vast discrepancy between the Malawian and Chinese participants' incomes. An effective incentive scheme requires a choice between either a largely more favourable absolute payment scale to the Chinese or a largely more favourable payment proportional to income levels to the Malawians. We feared that adopting such inequitable incentives would generate strong asymmetric influences on collected measures and behaviour.

A session proceeded as follows. Participants were read a story about climbing Mount Mulanje (one of the two most famous natural sights in Malawi and a popular destination for hiking/climbing among Malawians and Chinese alike), with a shopkeeper they met for the first time at the foot of the mountain. Our script described the interaction with the shopkeeper as enjoyable and emphasized the cooperative nature of the interaction required to reach the common goal. We used the following procedure to manipulate imagined contact: the participants were asked to either envision a Malawian (control group) or Chinese (treatment group) shopkeeper as their travel companion. During the reading of the script several breaks were provided for visualization. The appendix contains the full instructions used to manipulate imagined contact. Afterwards, a survey asked participants details about the script that was read out to them, as well as about what they had visualized. Subsequently, the same survey tool as for the actual contact experiment was administered. All subjects in this experiment answered both key questions.

Follow-up Surveys

We conducted follow-up surveys for both experiments via phone. In all cases, the project associates called participants exactly ten days after the date of their initial participation. The follow-ups comprised a survey in which a subset of the questions from the initial participation were asked again, including our key questions of interest regarding attitude toward the other group and willingness to spend time with a member of the other group. We obtained follow-up responses for all one hundred and twenty Malawian participants and fifty-seven out of the sixty Chinese participants. The three Chinese participants we were unable to follow-up with had answered both key questions in the initial study.

4 RESULTS

Actual contact has different effects for the in-group (local Malawians) and the out-group (Chinese migrants). Actual contact provides a significant increase in Malawians' willingness to spend time with a Chinese migrant, but does not improve their attitude towards Chinese migrants. These results are inverted for the out-group. Actual contact does not increase Chinese migrants' willingness to spend time with local Malawians. However, their attitude towards local Malawians does improve. Both observed initial impacts, local Malawians' increased willingness to spend time with Chinese migrants and Chinese migrants' more positive attitude toward local Malawians, persisted for at least ten days. Imagined contact was not successful. There was no difference between control and treatment responses by local Malawians to either the attitude or willingness-to-spend-time question.

We start by presenting histograms for the responses to the attitude and behaviour measures. Figure 1 is a 2×4 array of histograms of the local Malawian responses to our attitude and willingness-to-spend-time questions. The rows of the array correspond to the two experiments: the top row for the actual contact experiment and the bottom row for the imagined contact experiment. The left two columns correspond to the attitude question and the right two columns to the willingness-to-spend-time question. The odd-numbered columns correspond to the treatment groups and the even-numbered columns to the control groups. Each histogram reports the response counts for the initial responses (dark grey bars) and the follow-up responses (light grey bars), collected ten days later.

Malawians in the actual contact experiment tend to provide low responses, indicating a positive attitude, but there is no apparent difference between the distributions of those in the treatment group and those in the control group. The distribution of the follow-up responses is identical

to the initial responses, but this is a mere coincidence as there are subjects who change their response. In the imagined contact experiment, the distribution of the responses of those in the treatment group appears to be more concentrated on lower responses than in the control group. Shortly we will see this treatment effect is only marginally significant. The distribution of follow-up responses is very similar.

With respect to the willingness-to-spend-time question, in the actual contact experiment the distribution of the initial treatment groups' responses is more concentrated on the lower responses. On the other hand, there is no apparent difference between the initial responses of the treatment and control groups in the imagined contact experiment. Further, in all four cases, the distribution of follow-up responses closely matches that of the corresponding initial responses. Thus, in the case of the actual contact, this is evidence that the contact effect sustains for at least ten days.

Figure 2 presents the 1×4 array of histograms for the Chinese migrants' responses to both questions in the actual contact experiment. For the attitude question the responses in the treatment are concentrated on lower, more positive levels. This more positive attitude appears to mute in the follow-up. For the willingness-to-spend-time question, the treatment and control distributions are quite similar.

Next, we formally test our hypotheses. We first examine treatment effects in the initial experiments. In Table 2 we compare the treatment and control responses within each experiment and group by comparing their means with a one-sided *t*-test for which the alternative hypothesis is the mean treatment response is lower than the mean control response. A rejection is consistent with a positive effect of contact. We also conduct a one-sided Wilcoxon rank-sum test

Figure 1: (Malawians) Histograms of the Initial and Follow-up Responses to “My general attitude toward Chinese migrants in

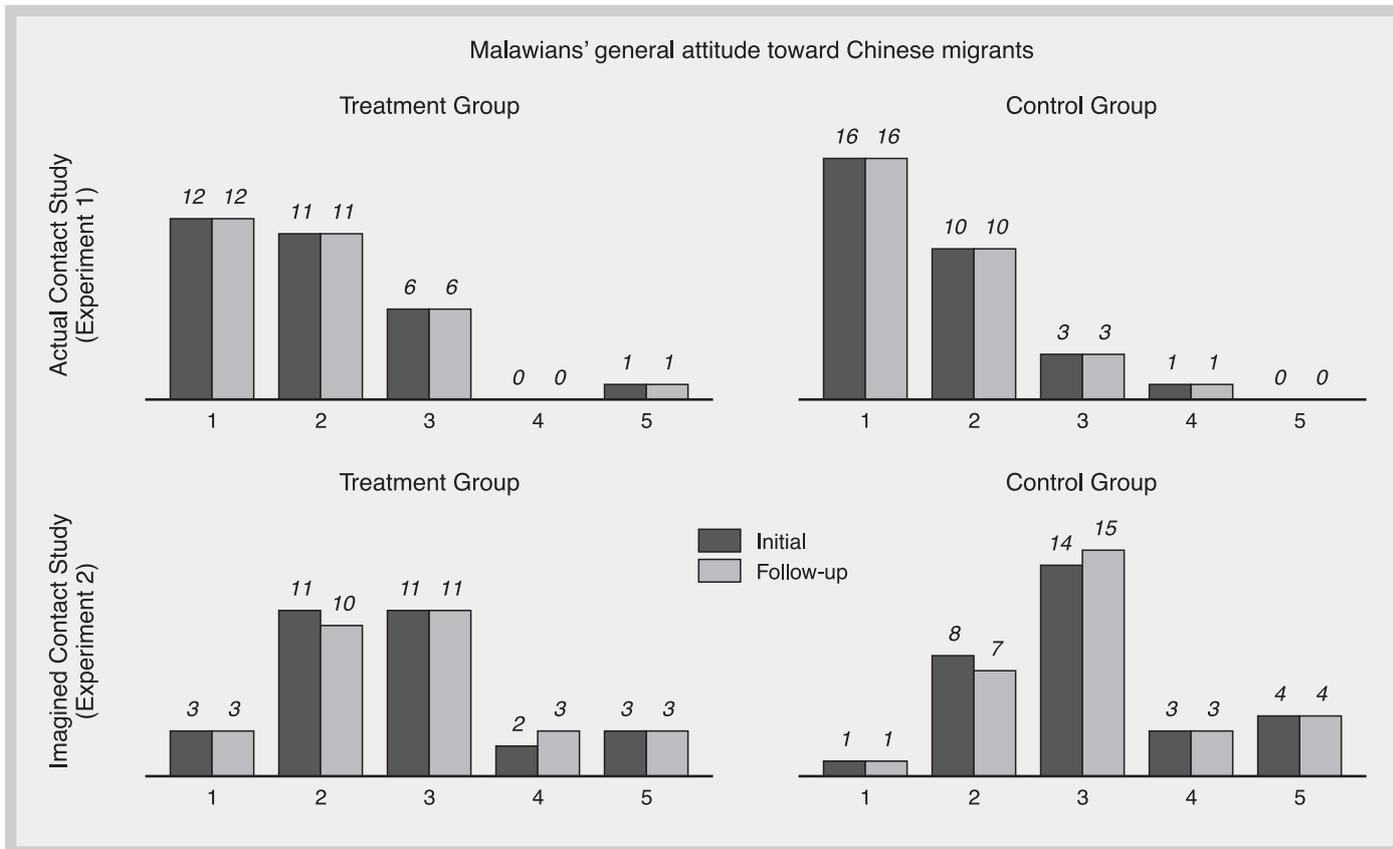
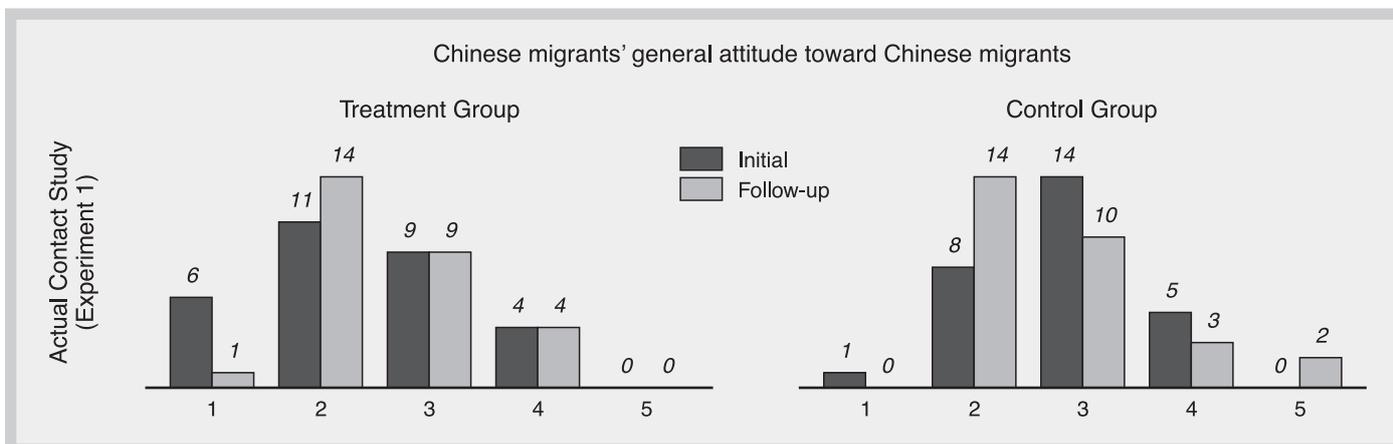
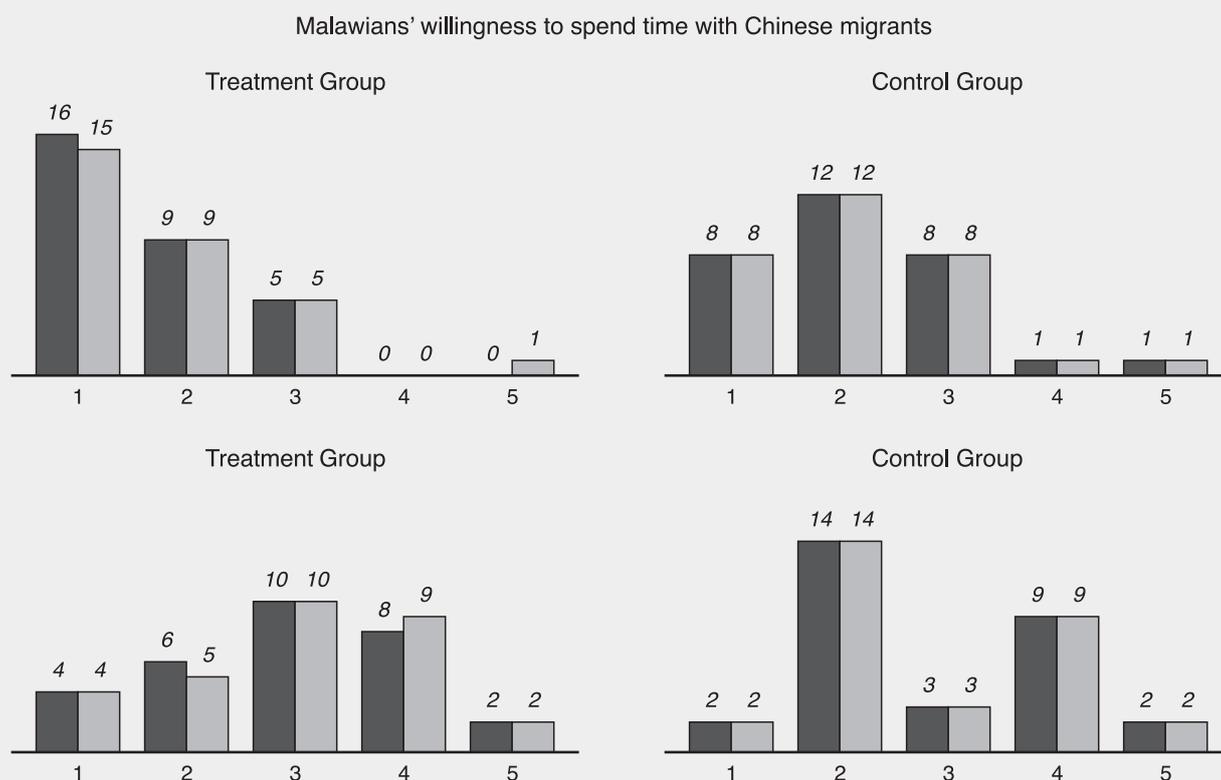
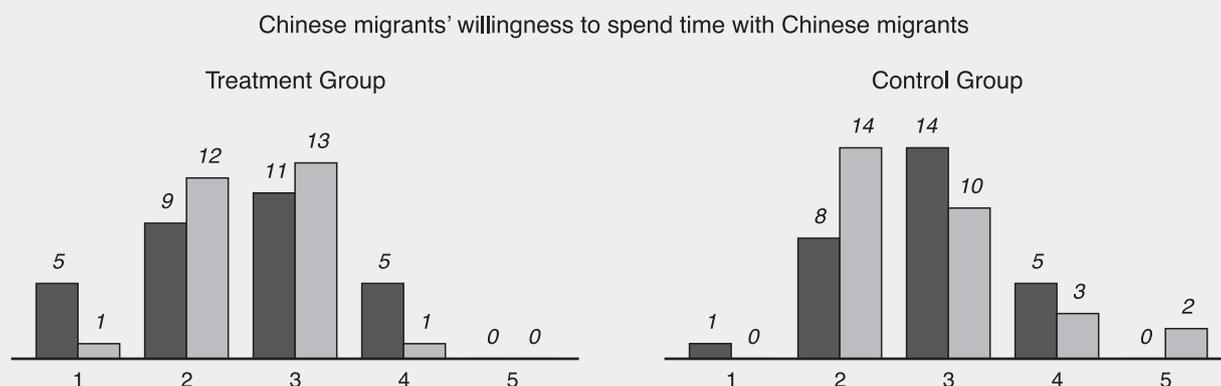


Figure 2: (Chinese) Histograms of the Initial and Follow-up Responses to “My general attitude toward Chinese migrants in



that the distribution of responses is the same for the treatment and control groups versus the alternative that the response distribution for the control group weakly first order stochastically dominates that of the treatment group. We use this test because the number of observations for each group is no more than thirty and the histograms do not suggest a normal distribution for responses.

We first consider whether contact positively affects attitude in the top part of the table. For local Malawians, we find no effect on attitude from actual contact. In fact, the treatment mean is slightly larger. We do find marginal support for improved attitude when there is exposure to imagined contact, the treatment mean response is 0.33 lower in this case. This difference is marginally significant, the p -value

Malawi” and “If I could, I would enjoy spending my spare time with Chinese migrants”**Malawi” and “If I could, I would enjoy spending my spare time with Chinese migrants”**

is approximately 10% for both tests. We find the strongest evidence of positive attitude change for Chinese migrants exposed to actual contact. The mean treatment response is 0.77 lower than the mean control response. In this case we reject both equal means of response and equal distribution of responses at the 1% level of significance. We summarize our first two results.

Result I: Local Malawians' attitude towards Chinese migrants is not impacted by actual or imagined contact. We reject hypotheses *H1* and *H2*.

Result II: Chinese migrants' attitude towards local Malawians is positively affected by actual contact. We confirm hypothesis *H3*.

Now we turn our attention to test the treatment effects of actual and imagined contact on the

Table 2: Hypothesis Tests for Treatment Effects

Survey Question			Malawian Actual	Malawian Imagined	Chinese Actual	
General attitude	Control	Responses	30	30	30	
		Mean	1.63	3.03	3.10	
		Standard deviation	(0.81)	(1.03)	(1.30)	
	Treatment	Responses	30	30	28	
		Mean	1.90	2.70	2.37	
		Standard deviation	(0.96)	(1.09)	(0.96)	
			<i>t</i> -statistic	-1.16	1.22	2.49***
			<i>p</i> -value	0.89	0.11	0.01
			Wilcoxon rank-sum statistic	-1.15	1.32*	2.27***
		<i>p</i> -value	0.88	0.09	0.01	
Willingness to spend time with other group	Control	Responses	30	30	30	
		Mean	2.17	2.83	2.93	
		Standard deviation	(0.99)	(1.15)	(1.31)	
	Treatment	Responses	30	30	29	
		Mean	1.63	2.93	2.53	
		Standard deviation	(0.76)	(1.14)	(0.97)	
			<i>t</i> -statistic	2.34***	-0.34	1.34*
			<i>p</i> -value	0.01	0.63	0.09
			Wilcoxon rank-sum statistic	2.20**	-0.45	1.01
		<i>p</i> -value	0.01	0.67	0.16	

*, **, *** indicate rejection of the null hypothesis at the 10 %, 5 %, and 1 % level respectively

willingness to spend time with members of the other group. We report the relevant means and hypothesis tests in the lower half of Table 2. First consider the effects for local Malawians. In the actual contact experiment, the mean response is 1.63 for the treatment group, and 2.17 for the control group. We reject the null in favor of the alternative with a *p*-value slightly larger than 1 %. We reach a similar conclusion with the Wilcoxon rank-sum test. In the imagined contact experiment there is little difference in mean response levels of the control and treatment group. The treatment group mean is 2.93, and the control group mean is 2.83. Correspondingly, we fail to reject the null for either the *t*-test or Wilcoxon rank-sum test. The mean of the Chinese migrant treatment group response is about 0.40 lower than that of the control group, this is only marginally significant in the one-sided *t*-test (*p*-value of 0.09) and insignificant with the Wilcoxon rank-sum test (*p*-value of 0.16). We summarize our next two results.

Result III: Local Malawians' willingness to spend time with Chinese migrants is positively impacted by actual contact but not impacted by imagined contact. We confirm hypothesis *H4* but reject hypothesis *H5*.

Result IV: Chinese migrants' willingness to spend time with local Malawians is not affected by actual contact. We reject hypothesis *H6*.

Lastly, we address the hypothesis that positive changes in attitude and behavioural intentions resulting from contact are sustainable for the ten days between contact and our follow-up. In Table 3, we report the mean and standard deviations of responses from our initial experiments and their follow-ups. We also report the counts of individual responses that increased, remained the same, and decreased from the initial to the follow-up study. We provide two tests for response stability. First, we report a one-sided paired *t*-test for which the null is the initial and

Table 3: Time Effects Statistics and Hypothesis Tests

			Malawian				Chinese	
			Actual		Imagined		Actual	
			Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
Panel A: General attitude toward other group	Initial	Responses	30	30	30	30	30	28
		Mean	1.90	1.63	2.70	3.03	2.37	3.10
		Std. Dev.	(0.96)	(0.81)	(1.09)	(1.03)	(0.96)	(1.30)
	Follow-up	Responses	30	30	30	30	28	29
		Mean	1.90	1.63	2.76	3.07	2.76	2.57
		Std. Dev.	(0.96)	(0.81)	(0.20)	(0.92)	(0.91)	(0.79)
	Count	Follow-up > Initial	11	7	1	1	8	2
		Follow-up = Initial	9	17	29	29	16	19
		Follow-up < Initial	10	6	0	0	4	6
	Paired <i>t</i> -test	<i>t</i> -statistic	0.00	0.00	-1.00	-1.00	1.32	-1.19
		<i>p</i> -value	0.50	0.50	0.84	0.84	0.20	0.88
	Matched pairs signed rank test	<i>z</i> -statistic	0.16	0.25	-1.00	-1.00	1.21	-1.78
<i>p</i> -value		0.44	0.40	0.84	0.84	0.23	0.96	
Panel B: Willingness to spend time with other group	Initial	Responses	30	30	30	30	30	29
		Mean	1.63	2.17	2.93	3.10	2.53	2.93
		Std. Dev.	(0.76)	(0.99)	(0.98)	(0.92)	(0.64)	(0.90)
	Follow-up	Responses	30	30	30	30	27	29
		Mean	1.77	2.17	3.00	3.10	2.52	2.79
		Std. Dev.	(0.97)	(0.99)	(0.98)	(0.92)	(0.64)	(0.90)
	Count	Follow-up > Initial	7	0	1	1	6	6
		Follow-up = Initial	20	30	29	28	16	12
		Follow-up < Initial	3	0	0	1	5	9
	Paired <i>t</i> -test	<i>t</i> -statistic	0.81	.	-1.00	0.00	0.00	-0.76
		<i>p</i> -value	0.21	.	0.84	0.50	0.50	0.88
	Matched pairs signed rank test	<i>z</i> -statistic	1.15	.	-1.00	0.00	0.20	-0.94
<i>p</i> -value		0.13	.	0.84	0.50	0.42	0.83	

response means are the same versus the alternative that the initial response is lower, i.e. average responses in the follow-up are less positive. Second, we report the similar non-parametric Wilcoxon matched pair signed test.

The statistics and hypotheses tests reflect strong stability in responses across experiments, treatments, and groups. One of our main research questions is how persistent are successful contact interventions? Accordingly, we focus on the two positive treatment effects. With exogenous exposure to actual contact, the local Malawians' willingness to spend time with migrant Chinese mean response was initially 1.63, and then increased slightly to 1.77. Twenty of the respondents did not change their response,

seven increased their response, and three even reduced their response. With this stability it is not surprising that we fail to reject the null hypotheses of both tests. With exogenous exposure to actual contact, Chinese migrants' mean response to the attitude question was 2.37, and the follow-up was 2.76. This nominal degradation in attitude is not significant according to our hypothesis test, but is still concerning none the less. Cautiously we can offer our final result.

Result V: The positive impact resulting from actual contact on local Malawians' willingness to spend time with Chinese migrants, and Chinese migrants' attitude towards local Malawians persists for at least 10 days. Thus we conditionally confirm *H7*.

5 DISCUSSION

We conclude with discussions of possible sources of the differing impact of positive actual contact upon the Malawian and Chinese participants' attitudes and behavioural intentions; possible sources of and remedies to our recorded failure of imagined contact to influence our Malawian subjects; and implications of our results for the Chinese migrant phenomenon in Africa.

Why does actual contact improve attitudes of the Chinese and not the Malawians? Differences in the effect of actual contact on attitudes between the groups might reflect the different social status of the two groups. Social identity theory stresses the need for an individual to have a positive social identity and that individuals will strive to maintain this state. Minority-status groups, such as the Chinese migrants in our study, have been shown to hold a stronger sense of social identity (Goette et al. 2006). This could be a consequence of social identity threat, the phenomenon by which minority groups perceive their status as a group threatened and work to overcome this threat. This suggests, in turn, that the minority-status group will be more accommodating of the majority-status group in order to ensure a positive social identity. Consistent with this theory, evidence from cross-sectional contact studies in the psychology literature (see e.g. Dixon et al. 2010 and Nielsen & Smyth 2011) suggests actual contact changes the attitudes of minority-status groups more readily than majority-status groups.

Why does actual contact increase the Malawians' willingness to spend time with Chinese migrants, but not vice versa? A possible explanation for the difference in behavioural responses lies in the differences between the two groups in terms of their economic power. While the Chinese are the minority-status group, they are more economically successful than the Malawians. Behavioural responses will depend upon

the net returns of interaction to each group, irrespective of their respective attitudes.

Malawians are likely to perceive value from spending time with the Chinese, because to do so increases the possibility to imitate strategies of those more economically successful. Access to their social networks can provide more business opportunities, and the ability to receive technology transfers. Actual contact could increase the perceived value of these channels, and none of these rely upon an improved assessment of status, or decreased social distance, which likely improve attitude.

On the other hand, we conjecture that the more prosperous economic position held by the Chinese shopkeepers could lead them to not perceive similar economic benefits from spending time with their Malawian counterparts. Thus, while actual contact gives them a more positive impression of Malawians in general, the increase in intrinsic value of their company and lack of perceived economic benefits of interaction do not add up to a change in intended behaviour.

Why has imagined contact had no effect on attitude or behavioural intentions in the context of the current study? In General, one would expect actual contact to have a stronger effect on attitudes and behavioural intentions than imagined contact. Turner & Crisp (2010) acknowledged that imagined contact might not be as powerful or as long lasting as face-to-face contact, based on the notion that actual experiences produce stronger attitudes than indirect experiences (Stangor, Sullivan & Ford 1991). More specifically, following a review of the imagined contact literature in psychology, Crisp & Turner (2012) concluded that imagined contact will be less effective when in-group identification is high and prior contact is low. In such circumstances, imagined contact may not be sufficient to overcome intergroup anxiety. Conversely, Birtel

and Crisp (2012) found that higher pre-contact intergroup anxiety made imagining positive out-group interaction more difficult.

Lack of contact and high levels of prejudice between Malawian shopkeepers and Chinese migrants likely had heightened intergroup anxiety. Hence, the social divide between Malawian locals and Chinese migrants in Malawi is perhaps so wide, that a single imagined contact event does not have sufficient power to affect changes in either attitude or behavioural intention.

Given the failure of the imagined contact treatment in the current study to have an effect, we make some suggestions for improvements of the imagined contact treatment that could plausibly get it to work better in the future. First, when the social divide is particularly high, more involved or sustained tasks may be needed following the imagined contact. In an imagined contact study with Italian fifth graders, Vezzali et al. (2012) followed the intervention session by first asking the children to spend 15 minutes writing down a detailed description of the interaction and then a further 10 minutes discussing what they had imagined with a research assistant. This had a positive effect on changing attitudes towards migrant children.

Second, there is evidence in other contexts that television shows can lead to positive economic outcomes. For example, La Ferrara, Chong & Duryea (2012) found that soap operas that portrayed small families had a positive effect on lowering fertility rates in Brazil. Jensen & Oster (2009) found that exposure to cable television increased female socioeconomic status and the educational outcomes of their children in rural India. Kearney & Levine (2014) found that a series of reality television shows in the United States focused on teenage pregnancies increased awareness of contraception use amongst teenagers and led to a reduction in teen births. La Ferrara et al. (2012: 29) note that, "programs targeted to the culture of the local population have the potential of reaching

an overwhelming amount of people at very low costs and could thus be used by policy makers to convey important social and economic messages [including] the rights of minorities." Along the same lines, Paluck (2009) found some evidence that radio soap operas have the potential to act as a vehicle for conflict prevention in Rwanda. One possible policy intervention, building on the notion of imagined contact, may be introducing personable or cooperative characters of different ethnic groups into popular television shows. Such an approach would help to reduce intergroup anxiety that is a major cognitive impediment to imagined contact.

Third, that our results suggest that imagined contact alone might not be enough to have a positive effect suggests that a continuum of contact strategies may be needed (Crisp & Turner 2012). As part of such an approach, imagined contact might be applied in the first stage and actual contact in the second stage. This approach sees imagined contact as part of a larger solution that comprises multiple interventions. In this respect, as Crisp & Turner (2012: 170) put it: "A comprehensive solution to the problem of prejudice will involve multifocused interventions that tackle the complex and multilayered motivational, ideological, economic and social contributors to this most pervasive social problem. But just as a purely cognitive focus is not enough, nor should we ignore the power and potential of social cognitive approaches in helping us tackle these problems."

How do our results speak to the Chinese migrant phenomenon in Africa? For most field experiments there should be a natural skepticism that internal validity does not reflect external validity. However, in this case the internal validity is informative of an important practical economic phenomenon and provides positive policy direction. As part of China's rise as an economic superpower, China's engagement with Africa is emerging as an important economic and political phenomenon. China's entry into Africa is part of a long-term strategy. However, there is mistrust

in some African nations about the true intent of the Chinese (Davies 2008), and such mistrust has the capacity to act as a barrier to broader acceptance of the Chinese model of development. This mistrust has been a source of African political forces pushing back against China's strategy. For example, in 2011, Michael Sata, the leader of the largest opposition party, Patriotic Front, made resistance against Chinese 'exploitation' of Zambia's natural resources and workforce a key campaign platform (Palitza 2011).

Chinese shopkeepers, such as those recruited for the current study, are a significant component of the interface between the Chinese development model and everyday Malawians. If Malawian shopkeepers have more positive behavioural intentions toward their Chinese counterparts, they may be more likely to support the broader, higher-level development actions of the Chinese government. That actual contact facilitates change in the behavioural intentions of these Malawians toward the Chinese shop-

keepers, and that the change is stable, thus has important practical implications. Where mistrust and anxiety about the perceived true objectives of the Chinese exists, our results suggest there is a foundation for addressing it.

Acknowledgements

We thank two anonymous referees and seminar audience members at the University of Duisburg-Essen for constructive comments. We are grateful for the generous support our study received from the Office of the District Commissioner of Lilongwe. We thank the leaders of the Community of Chinese Businessmen, Malawi, for granting access to their community, and for fruitful collaboration. We thank our project associates Lonnie Mwamlima and Tiantian Lin for their assistance in fieldwork and data collection. We also thank Marumbo Munyenembe for key contributions to the fieldwork, not least in the form of logistical support. Annika Mueller acknowledges funding from WISE, Xiamen University.

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APPENDIX: EXPERIMENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES AND SCRIPTS

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS OF MALAWIAN ORIGIN

1. Demographic Information

Which year were you born in? _____

Your gender: Male Female

Your marital status: Single (never married)
Married
Divorced or separated
Widowed

What level of education have you completed? No formal education
Primary school
Secondary school
Vocational training
Bachelor degree
Post-graduate degree

What is your occupation? _____

What is your average monthly income? _____

On average, how many hours per day do you work? _____

On average, how many days per week do you work? _____

How many dependent children do you have? _____

If you have dependent children, how many currently live with you? _____

2. Your Dyad Partner

His/her last name: _____

3. Circle the Word that Best Sums up Your Thoughts about Chinese Migrants in Malawi

My general attitude toward Chinese migrants in Malawi is ...
very positive positive neutral negative very negative

If I could, I would enjoy spending my spare time with Chinese migrants
very true true neutral untrue very untrue

IMAGINED CONTACT SCRIPTS AND COMPLIANCE QUESTIONS

Imagined Contact Condition

We are interested in people's ability to imagine and visualize events. We would like you to spend the next 10 minutes imagining yourself meeting a Chinese shopkeeper for the first time. Together you will climb to the top of Mount Mulanje. You meet the shopkeeper and a guide in the market. You shake the shopkeeper's hand and you exchange names. Imagine the Chinese shopkeeper's appearance. In the

market you buy provisions to take on your trip together. After passing the first meadow, you enter the woods and must cross a stream. You help each other to balance and walk across large rocks to do this. Then you cross tea plantations as the slope gets steeper. You help take photos of each other and share water and snacks. After the tea plantations, the slope grows steeper. You and the Chinese shopkeeper help each other over large rocks and up steep paths. After three hours you reach the summit. To celebrate your achievement, one of you cooks a lunch you enjoy together, and the other cleans the pots and dishes. Finally you take photos of each other and the guide takes photos of you together with the Chinese shopkeeper.

After ten minutes ask the following questions

- 1 Have you climbed Mount Mulanje before?
- 2 Was the shopkeeper male or female?
- 3 How old was the shopkeeper?
- 4 What country was the shopkeeper from?
- 5 Name something specific you bought in the market place?
- 6 Was the weather sunny, cloudy, or rainy?
- 7 Did you take a photo together in the tea plantation?
- 8 Which of you cooked the lunch?
- 9 What did you have for lunch?
- 10 How long did it take for you two to climb the mountain?

Control Condition

We are interested in people's ability to imagine and visualize events. We would like you to spend the next 10 minutes imagining yourself meeting a Malawian shopkeeper for the first time. Together you will climb to the top of Mount Mulanje. You meet the shopkeeper and a guide in the market. You shake the shopkeeper's hand and you exchange names. Imagine the Malawian shopkeeper's appearance. In the market you buy provisions to take on your trip together. After passing the first meadow, you enter the woods and must cross a stream. You help each other to balance and walk across large rocks to do this. Then you cross tea plantations as the slope gets steeper. You help take photos of each other and share water and snacks. After the tea plantations, the slope grows steeper. You and the Malawian shopkeeper help each other over large rocks and up steep paths. After three hours you reach the summit. To celebrate your achievement, one of you cooks a lunch you enjoy together, and the other cleans the pots and dishes. Finally you take photos of each other and the guide takes photos of you together with the Malawian shopkeeper.

After ten minutes ask the following questions

- 1 Have you climbed Mount Mulanje before?
- 2 Was the shopkeeper male or female?
- 3 How old was the shopkeeper?
- 4 What country was the shopkeeper from?
- 5 Name something specific you bought in the market place?
- 6 Was the weather sunny, cloudy, or rainy?
- 7 Did you take a photo together in the tea plantation?
- 8 Which of you cooked the lunch?
- 9 What did you have for lunch?
- 10 How long did it take for you two to climb the mountain?

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