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Postcolonial Migration and Relational Inequality: The Complexities of Positive Contact as a Relational Equality Promoting Tool

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Abstract: Recently, some political philosophers have started to argue that the history and continuation of colonial injustices means that former colonising states have no right to exclude members of former colonies or colonially inflected societies. However, less attention has been paid to the issue of how postcolonial migrants ought to be treated once admitted into former metropoles. In this paper I assess whether postcolonial migrants ought to be required to *socially integrate* once admitted. On the one hand, there seems to be a compelling argument in favour of this requirement, because of the *relational equality* promoting benefits of social integration. I show how postcolonial migrants are subject to relational inequality within former metropoles and draw attention to compelling empirical evidence that shows that facilitating close and frequent interactions between members of 'outgroups' and 'ingroups' is an effective means of promoting relational equality. However, I then argue that postcolonial migrants ought not to be required to socially integrate for two reasons. Firstly, such policies in fact risk reinforcing relational inequality, and secondly, they risk subjecting postcolonial migrants to unreasonable burdens. This does not mean that former colonising states ought to dispense with social integration policies altogether, but they ought to be more attuned to the preferences of postcolonial migrants. In contexts in which they oppose social integration policies, a more appropriately relational egalitarian act would be for former colonising states to keep open the possibility of future social integration, rather than to impose it.

Keywords: colonialism; relational inequality; postcolonial migrants; positive contact; social integration

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1 Introduction

Recently, some political philosophers have begun to argue that even if states have a general right to exclude voluntary migrants from entering into and settling in their territory, the ongoing history of colonial injustices means that former European colonising states[1] have no or only diminished rights to exclude voluntary migrants from certain states. Some argue that these states have no right to exclude voluntary migrants from their own former colonies, with such claims often made in reparative terms. Here the idea is that former colonising states owe members of their former colonies the right to migrate as reparation for colonial injustices (e.g. Goldstone 2024; Lim 2023; Schwabe and Urselmann 2020).[2] Others defend a broader account of postcolonial migration rights in that they argue that former colonising states have a duty to open their borders to members of all former colonies regardless of whether or not they specifically colonised such people. For example, E. Tendayi Achiume argues that colonies and colonisers collectively formed the same unequal political and economic association that persists today as neocolonial empire. Consequently, members of former colonies are entitled to migrate to former colonising states to exercise their right to self-determination within this neocolonial empire.[3] Others defend an even broader view, according to which previous direct colonial relationships are neither necessary nor sufficient to ground a postcolonial right to migrate. Rather, states have no or only diminished rights to exclude all those who are subject to unjust (neo)colonial norms of treatment and exclusion, who may or may not hail from a former colony (see Schmid 2023).

Despite such differences, all these accounts reveal that former colonising states' right to exclude is in some way undermined with regards to members of former colonies or colonially inflected societies more broadly. I focus in this paper on a related but different issue that has received far less attention – how postcolonial migrants ought to be treated once admitted into former colonising states. There is little reason to think that those that would take up a postcolonial right to migrate would be treated as equal once admitted without significant interventions taking place. After all, many former metropoles already have relatively large populations

1 By former colonising states I mean European states which ruled over parts of Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean for the purposes of economic exploitation from the late fifteenth-century until the mid-twentieth century when formal decolonisation commenced.

2 For an account that does not rely on the idea of reparations, see Amighetti and Nuti (2016). Amighetti and Nuti argue that on a liberal nationalist defence of the right to exclude, former colonising states have no right to exclude members of their own former colonies because the two are part of the same national cultural association.

3 To be clear, Achiume does not argue that *all* members of former colonies have rights to migrate to former colonising states, seemingly excluding postcolonial elites (2019, 1559).

who originate from former colonies[4] and such people are currently treated in unequal ways by their states and co-members. Section 2 demonstrates one core injustice that postcolonial migrants are often subjected to within former metropoles: *relational inequality*. Relational inequality refers to pernicious social hierarchies in which some agents are considered inferior and others superior. This section shows how postcolonial migrants are often subjected to racial and cultural hierarchies traceable to past colonialism that portray them as inferior compared to privileged populations: that is, those who are racialised as 'white' and considered 'native' to their state. In response to postcolonial relational inequality within former metropoles, the remainder of the paper assesses the moral justifiability of one potential relational equality promoting measure: efforts to socially integrate postcolonial migrants (that is, efforts to bring them into closer contact with those individuals privileged within postcolonial social hierarchies). Section 3 presents the argument in favour of socially integrating postcolonial migrants. There is extensive empirical evidence showing that frequent and close interactions between members of 'ingroups' and 'outgroups' is a particularly effective means of promoting relational equality (e.g. Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Perhaps, then, former colonising states ought to facilitate interactions between postcolonial migrants and their privileged citizens, and individuals, including postcolonial migrants, ought to take up such opportunities for interaction. Section 4 however puts forward two arguments to show that postcolonial migrants should not be required to interact with privileged populations. Firstly, I briefly show how this could reinforce colonially derived social hierarchies that pit 'good' migrants who socially integrate against 'bad' migrants who do not. Secondly, I discuss in more detail how the imposition of social integration policies could expose postcolonial migrants to unreasonable costs. I argue instead that former colonising states ought to be guided by the preferences of postcolonial migrants, meaning that in some contexts they ought to implement such policies, whereas in others they ought not to. Section 5 shows how even in contexts in which postcolonial migrants rejected social integration policies, such that social integration played no instrumental role in promoting relational equality, former colonising states and their privileged citizens offering postcolonial migrants the opportunity for

4 Former metropoles tend to have fairly large populations who hail from their own former colonies in particular (as opposed to some other former colony or colonially-inflicted society more broadly). This is because many adopted relatively open borders for their own colonies in the mid-twentieth century. For example, Britain's 1948 Nationality Act conferred the status of citizen to Britain's commonwealth and colonial subjects. However, the act should not be seen as an attempt to welcome the migration of people from Britain's colonies. Rather, it was an attempt to encourage settler colonies such as Australia and Canada to see themselves as part of the wider empire, rather than to seek independence (e.g. El-Enany 2020, 94). The migration of nonwhite people was a 'shock' (Patel 2021, 6) and subsequent acts were put in place to restrict racialised migration to Britain.

future positive contact would still represent an important move towards postcolonial relational equality. Section 6 concludes.

Before I proceed, I should clarify my focus in several ways. Firstly, I examine the moral justifiability of socially integrating postcolonial *migrants* to try to promote relations of equality. By 'migrants' I mean individuals born in one country who then move to and settle in a foreign one. The paper only briefly addresses the related but distinct question as to whether former colonising states ought to pursue the social integration of the descendants of postcolonial migrants. There is already engagement with the question as to whether it is permissible to use social integration policies to promote equal relations with oppressed nonmigrant populations,[5] with many political philosophers arguing that such populations cannot be expected to bear high costs of integration (e.g. Shelby 2016).[6] Conversely, it is often accepted that states can expect migrants to incur more costs of social integration compared to subjugated nonmigrant populations, at least when those migrants chose to move to the state that they live in (e.g. Kymlicka 1995). One core aim of the paper is to challenge this claim, at least with regards to postcolonial migrants.

Secondly, I deal with the question of whether former colonising states ought to require *voluntary* postcolonial migrants to socially integrate. Not all migrants choose to move to the state that they live in, with there being a distinction between 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' migrants. I say more on the distinction in Section 4.2, but essentially voluntary migrants are those who move to a foreign state by choice, typically to improve their economic lot, with involuntary migrants those who are compelled to move. It is often accepted that involuntary migrants can be expected to do less with regards to social integration compared to voluntary migrants, because they did not choose to migrate (e.g. Kymlicka 1995). Again, my aim is to show that this is not true of voluntary postcolonial migrants.

Thirdly, I focus on whether social integration policies ought to be pursued in order to promote equal relations with *postcolonial* migrants. I use this term broadly, to cover those migrating both from former colonies and those migrating from

5 In contrast, political philosophers have only briefly considered the potential of positive contact to promote relational equality between 'host' and migrant populations (see e.g. Draper 2025; Mason 2012). When discussing whether migrants ought to be socially integrated, political philosophers tend to focus on other valuable ends that this could promote. For example, David Miller (2016) argues that states ought to promote the social integration of migrants because this promotes a shared national culture. Or Andrew Mason (2012) argues that states ought to promote the social integration of migrants because this promotes social cohesion and just institutions.

6 Not all political philosophers argue that nonmigrant subjugated populations cannot be expected to bear high costs of social integration. As I show in this paper, Elizabeth Anderson (2010) is notable in arguing in the context of racial inequality in the United States that both black and white Americans have duties to bear the costs of integration.

colonially-inflected societies.[7] However, arguably there are many kinds of migrant groups who face relational inequality, not just postcolonial migrants.[8] A question then arises as to whether I should focus on the category of postcolonial migrants as one among many suitable case studies for the exploration of a more general phenomenon, or whether I should suggest that there is something normatively unique about this case, such that my conclusions about the permissibility of social integration policies in this context may not apply elsewhere. On the one hand, one might argue that whilst there is something descriptively or contextually unique about postcolonial migrants (namely, that their unequal social position today is traceable to the unjust past of formal colonialism), there is nothing normatively distinct about the injustices that they face. On the other hand, one might argue that there are in fact some normatively distinct features regarding the situation faced by postcolonial migrants. For example, in Section 4.2, I show how the drivers of postcolonial migration are often tied to colonial histories, and I suggest that states can perhaps expect less, including in terms of social integration, from those whose migration they are responsible for. If this is true, then it may be that what I argue would perhaps not apply to those migrant populations whose choices to migrate were not shaped by their host state. Nonetheless, I remain open to the possibility that there is nothing normatively unique about the situation faced by postcolonial migrants and I shall remain agnostic as between these two positions.

Fourthly, whilst I limit my focus to the relational inequalities that postcolonial migrants face, this is not to deny that they also often face distributive inequalities. Rather, I assume that remedying the distributive and relational inequalities faced by postcolonial migrants will often require different solutions.[9]

Finally, I examine a particular kind of relational inequality faced by postcolonial migrants: recognition/status hierarchies (see e.g. Anderson 2012, 44; Fourie 2014, 91). I define relational inequality in Section 2.1, but essentially, relational egalitarians object to three kinds of social hierarchies: hierarchies of status, in which those who possess certain attributes (racial minorities, women, the working class and so on) are degraded by the dominant norms and stereotypes of that social context; hierarchies

7 That is, those from states that are not former colonies but are nonetheless still subject to morally objectionable (neo)colonial norms.

8 See for example Alina Rzepnikowska (2018) on the prejudice experienced by Polish migrants residing in Britain.

9 That being said, whilst some distinct measures may be needed to address such distributive inequalities, relational injustices are often deeply intertwined with distributive inequalities (see Fraser and Honneth 2003), and so measures such as social integration aimed to dismantle relational inequality may have some, albeit indirect, effect upon distributive inequalities. Further, social integration policies may also have independent effects upon distributive inequality, by granting groups occupying inferior social positions access to human and social capital (e.g. Anderson 2010).

of power, in which some agents are subjected to the unaccountable arbitrary power of others; and hierarchies of standing, in which some agents are denied the space to make claims on others (e.g. Anderson 2012). Whilst the three hierarchies often occur alongside one another, they are analytically distinct, and overcoming each will often require distinct solutions. By focussing on how colonial hierarchies of status structure relations within former metropoles, I do not intend to argue that colonialism is only defined by this particular kind of relational inequality and that postcolonial migrants are not also subject to hierarchies of power and standing. Indeed, there is a compelling case to make that all three kinds of hierarchies were integral to colonial projects and continue to structure contemporary relations (see Chan 2025). Rather, I simply limit my focus to a measure aimed primarily at promoting equality of status.

2 Relational Inequality, Colonialism and Postcolonial Migrants

2.1 Definition of Relational Inequality

According to relational egalitarians, equality is primarily about the quality of social relations that people have, not about achieving certain distributions (e.g. Tomlin 2014, 7). Relational egalitarians tend to make two types of claims: a negative one, that relations of inequality are morally objectionable and ought to be avoided, and a positive one, that relations of equality are valuable and ought to be established. In terms of the negative claim, relational egalitarians object to unequal social relations. These are durable and pervasive social hierarchies that assume that some agents within a particular social context are inferior and others superior (e.g. Anderson 2012). Such rankings are durable in that they are upheld by prevailing institutions, structures and norms, and persist over time (e.g. Anderson 2012). And they are pervasive in that they typically affect how agents occupying inferior and superior social positions are related to in multiple domains of interaction: the workplace, educational institutions, legal systems and so forth. Further, they are rankings that make assumptions of inferiority and superiority in that they deny the fact of moral equality. That is, they deny the fact that all agents possess some relevant capacity that makes them moral equals (typically taken to be a capacity for rational and/or moral agency).

When there are hierarchies of status, the dominant norms within a particular social context degrade those with certain attributes (such as women or those belonging to racial minority groups): that is, they assert that they are moral inferiors. Further, such norms call for unequal regard and treatment towards those with

devalued traits (e.g. Akhtar 2024; Anderson 2012; van Wietmarschen 2024). Regard concerns interpersonal relations and the attitudes that individuals adopt towards one another. When there are hierarchies of status, individuals take their cue from degrading norms and adopt unequal attitudes towards agents with devalued attributes. Unequal regard can be explicit, with some agents consciously adopting attitudes such as disgust or derision. Alternatively, it can be a result of implicit biases which are 'widely shared automatic patterns of cognition or affect that can operate without the agent's awareness, and that are difficult to bring under the agent's control' (Beeghly and Holroyd 2020, 2). An example of implicit unequal regard would be if one consciously believes that men are not inherently more assertive than women, but in a psychological test pairs female faces with the word 'insecure' (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018, 86).

Treatment concerns how individuals behave towards one another in their interpersonal interactions, as well as how they are treated by the institutions that structure societies (e.g. Schemmel 2021). When there are hierarchies of status, those with degraded attributes face treatment at the hands of institutions or other individuals that expresses the message that they are moral inferiors, with such unequal treatment then reinforcing the existing inegalitarian norms (e.g. Anderson 1999; Schemmel 2021). For an example of institutional level unequal treatment, those belonging to a particular minority cultural group might find that the state seeks to destroy their culture and make them assimilate to the dominant one. Such treatment expresses the demeaning message that they possess an inferior culture. Or those belonging to a particular racial group may be subject to segregationist policies and practices, with such treatment expressing the message that the racial minority are inferior and as such unworthy of interaction with (e.g. Anderson 2010). In terms of unequal treatment on an individual level, sometimes those occupying superior social positions will deliberately engage in forms of speech or action that are intended to degrade those occupying inferior social positions. For example, they might intentionally adopt a sexist slur. In other instances, those occupying superior social positions, without conscious intent, will subject those occupying inferior social positions to degrading treatment due to implicit biases. For example, a postcolonial migrant living in Britain might find that they face microaggressions such as 'You speak English so well!' Such a comment may be intended as a compliment, but arguably expresses a degrading message by echoing the colonial past where English was imposed as a 'superior' language.[10]

Implicit in the analysis so far is the idea that there is something morally objectionable about relational inequality. Typically, relational egalitarians argue that relational inequality is morally objectionable for two reasons: because it is

10 See Emily McTernan (2018) on microaggressions as constituting social hierarchy.

wrong, as it denies the fact of moral equality (e.g. Anderson 2012; Schemmel 2021) and because it is often harmful to the agents related to as inferior. For example, those subject to hierarchies of status often face self-respect harms. Degrading norms, accompanied by unequal treatment, may result in the targeted agents 'internalising a sense of their own inferiority' (Mason 2015, 138).

Not only do relational egalitarians make a negative claim, many also make a positive claim: that relations of equality ought to be pursued (e.g. Anderson 1999). When there is equality of status, the dominant norms of that particular social context assert the moral equality of all (e.g. Anderson 1999, 2012). In line with such norms, individuals regard and treat other individuals as equal. That is, they recognise others' equal moral worth and express this fact of moral equality through their actions (e.g. Anderson 2008, 263). And institutions, including the state, express equal respect for individuals through their law and policies (e.g. Anderson and Pildes 2000). As Christian Schemmel (2021, 40) puts it, egalitarian social movements 'are after … the confirmation that the people they represent are not, by virtue of belonging to a group such as women, or gays, of inferior moral worth, and accordingly, they demand state action that makes this clear'.

2.2 Colonialism and Relational Inequality

That a central wrong of European colonialism was *relational inequality*, including *hierarchies of status*, is often overlooked in the political philosophy literature, but long recognised by anticolonial thinkers. As Aimé Césaire ([1950] 2000, 41) argues, colonialism is 'based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt'. Recent work though, particularly that of Shuk Ying Chan (e.g. Chan 2025; Chan and Patten 2023) explicitly argues that colonialism involved relational wrongs, including hierarchies of status (see also e.g. Lu 2011, 2017; Mills 1997; Wong 2019). As Chan (2025, 83) argues, it was 'hierarchies … organized along the lines of race and culture' that were the 'central features of colonial governance'. Colonisers asserted that they were the racial and cultural superiors of their colonies, with 'scientific' theories of race used to 'prove' the biological and cultural superiority of white colonisers over the nonwhite colonised (e.g. Andrews 2021). Indeed, the dominant norms globally and within metropoles were by the nineteenth century an 'entitlement to conquer and subjugate other peoples based on a notion of racial or civilizational superiority' (Lu 2011, 267). Amongst other harms, colonial hierarchies of status had clear implications for the self-respect of the colonised. As Césaire ([1950] 2000, 43) claims, there were 'millions of men … who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair'.

Racialised hierarchies of status did not end with formal decolonisation from the mid-twentieth century onwards (see e.g. Lu 2011, 2017; Mills 2019). As Chan argues:

> Empire gave rise to a global hierarchy of esteem in which some racialized groups are seen and represented as inferior and others as superior. As an ideology to justify slavery and colonialism at the time, this hierarchy of status did not disappear with formal decolonization and the decline of scientific racism. Instead, implicit representations of nonwhite peoples as objects of fear, contempt, and tutelage have persisted in international politics, the media, and academic scholarship. (forthcoming 2025, 118)

As critical race scholars show, racial hierarchies are constituted not just by supposed biological differences, but also on the basis of 'ethnicity, language, culture and/or religion' (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015, 637). Colonial norms persist today, but with the decline of scientific racism, nonwhite people are now usually degraded not upon the basis of their supposedly inferior biology, but instead upon the basis of their supposedly inferior culture (e.g. Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015; Lentin 2008) – what is often referred to as 'cultural racism'. Cultural racism is not new, with members of colonies during formal colonialism devalued both upon the basis of their supposedly inferior biology and supposedly inferior culture. So 'the decline of biological racism … simply shifted racist and racial discourses onto the arena of an already quite well-developed terrain' (Alcoff 2023, 257).

Chan shows how continuing colonial hierarchies of status pervade global relations between members of former colonies and members of former colonising states. I shall highlight here how colonial norms of cultural racism also persist within former metropoles. Sociologists Ramón Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou (2015, 645–646) capture the persistence of colonial norms not just globally but also within former metropoles when they argue:

> If colonial/racial subjects … experience higher unemployment rates, higher poverty rates, higher dropout rates, lower quality of education in public schools, lower salaries for the same jobs as White workers or are placed in the 'dirty' jobs of the labour market, it is because they are 'lazy', 'unassimilated', 'uneducated', have 'bad habits', 'bad attitudes' or an 'unadapted/inadequate culture'. By internalising the 'causes' inside the discriminated communities and explaining their social situation in terms of their own cultural features, cultural racist discourses conceal the reproduction of racism and the old colonial/racial hierarchies inside the metropoles.

As Grosfoguel et al. make clear, there are numerous forms of unequal treatment that postcolonial migrants (and their descendants) face in accordance with continuing colonial norms of cultural racism. Another is the *de facto* segregation that occurs in many former colonising states (e.g. Messing 2014; Semyonov and Glikman 2009). *De jure* segregation occurs when the state formally enforces the residential

concentration of members of different social groups in specific localities, whereas *de facto* segregation occurs when multiple factors converge such that members of a particular social group in effect have few options but to live in certain areas. As sociologist Deborah Phillips (2007, 1149) suggests in the British context, 'socially constructed ideas about 'race' and 'difference' have produced and sustained segregationist practices in the housing market and other spheres', with postcolonial migrants often compelled to live in particular localities due to factors such as racist landlords (e.g. Musterd and Van Kempen 2009). Further, ethnic majority members often prefer to live in neighbourhoods characterised by a low number of ethnic minority members, even when living there would not be more expensive, involve worse quality housing, or involve worse quality schools compared to an area primarily composed of the ethnic majority (Schlüter et al. 2018). Failing to interact with certain agents does not necessarily constitute an act of unequal treatment. After all, individuals have limited social batteries and availabilities, and there may often be innocuous and more or less stochastic reasons why some individual has failed to interact with other individuals. However, when the dominant norms within a social context assert that some agents are inferior and others superior, as is the case in former metropoles, a failure on the part of individuals occupying superior social positions to interact with those occupying inferior positions arguably does express a denigrating message – the message that the group occupying inferior social positions possesses some trait that makes them unworthy of being interacted with.

Moreover, when there are interactions between postcolonial migrants and privileged individuals, postcolonial migrants are often treated in unequal ways. For example, they often face overt harassment on the basis of their religious identities, accents and/or cultural dress (e.g. Fernández-Reino and Cuibus 2020). They also often face unintentional forms of unequal treatment, such as microaggressions (e.g. Nicolson 2023). And that at least some members of former colonising states also regard postcolonial migrants in unequal ways is evident through survey data. In Britain for example, 44 % of people believe that some ethnic groups are innately harder working than others (Kelley, Khan, and Sharrock 2017).

So postcolonial migrants are subject to wrongful and harmful hierarchies of status within former colonising states (see e.g. Verkuyten and Masson 1995). Therefore, a fully fledged defence of a postcolonial right to migrate arguably ought not only show that members of former colonies/colonially-inflected societies have a right to be admitted into former metropoles, but also show what actions ought to be taken to overcome the unequal conditions that those taking up such a right would face *once admitted*. The rest of the paper considers the moral justifiability of one specific status equality promoting measure: the facilitation of 'positive' interactions between postcolonial migrants and privileged individuals.

3 Positive Contact and the Promotion of Postcolonial Relational Equality

3.1 Contact Theory

When considering how status hierarchies can be effectively overcome, social scientists often turn to contact theory, described as 'one of psychology's most effective strategies for improving intergroup relations' (Dovidio, Gaertner, and Kawakami 2003, 5). Contact theory proposes that facilitating interactions between members of outgroups and ingroups is a particularly effective means of reducing prejudice,[11] with members of the ingroup countering negative stereotypes of the outgroup through first-hand experience (e.g. Allport 1954). However, most contact theorists do not argue that contact *simpliciter* will promote equal relations. Rather, contact must occur under certain preconditions. The most famous version of contact theory proposed by psychologist Gordon Allport (1954) stressed the following preconditions. Firstly, contact should take place between people of a similar background. For example, suppose that the aim is to improve race relations. An optimal contact situation in the workplace would involve contact between two workers of different racial groups, with the individuals sharing their status as employees in common. A less optimal contact situation would involve contact between a worker and boss of the two different racial groups. Secondly, contact should be cooperative, involving a setting such as students working together on a school project. Thirdly, contact should be in pursuit of shared goals, such as individuals playing together on a sports team. Fourthly, contact should be supported by institutional structures such as local and national authorities. Institutional structures can act as 'norm entrepreneurs' (Anderson 2010, 124) by spreading the message that interaction between people from different social groups is a positive phenomenon. They also can undertake 'numerous structural interventions' such as facilitating interactions in neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools, juries and recreational activities 'to make positive intergroup contact possible' in the first place (Madva 2016, 708–709). Other contact theorists have added additional preconditions, including the requirement for contact to be frequent (e.g. Bollen 2022).

Essentially, contact theorists call for *social integration.* Unlike assimilation, social integration does not require members of the outgroup to conform to the values and culture of the ingroup. Rather, it requires that both groups adjust some of their existing patterns of behaviour to come into more contact with one another. Further, social integration goes beyond spatial integration. Spatial integration occurs when

11 That is, unequal treatment and regard.

groups share social spaces and institutions (for example, neighbourhoods, schools or workplaces) but do not interact in more informal ways. For example, 'a school may be spatially but not socially integrated if students of different races attend different tracked classes, participate in different school clubs, rarely befriend one another and inhabit different halls or dormitories' (Anderson 2010, 112). Rather, social integration occurs when those of different social groups engage in informal interactions: they form friendships, date, chat at work, engage in small talk as neighbours, join amateur sports teams with one another and so forth (e.g. Anderson 2010, 116).

According to contact theory, positive contact helps to overcome inegalitarian attitudes, treatment and norms. With regards to inegalitarian attitudes, contact theorists suggest that contact helps to reduce both explicit (i.e. conscious) forms of unequal regard and implicit forms of unequal regard (i.e. unconscious and unchosen unequal attitudes) (e.g. Dasgupta 2013; Dasgupta and Asgari 2004; Turner and Crisp 2010). And those who occupy superior social positions start to have a positive perception of not only those individuals who they directly interact with, but also members of outgroups not involved in the contact situation, generalising specific interactions with individuals to the entire group to whom those people belong. As Pettigrew and Tropp (2006, 766) report, this generalising effect of contact 'enhances the potential of intergroup contact to be a practical, applied means of improving intergroup relations'. Further, positive contact is reported to help reform individual behaviours in addition to attitudes. Those that engage in positive contact are more likely, for example, to make friends from diverse social groups (e.g. Emerson, Kimbro, and Yancey 2002). And some studies suggest that positive contact does not just help to reform individual attitudes and behaviours, but also makes individuals more likely to take steps to dismantle structural inequalities (e.g. Di Bernardo et al. 2021). Finally, positive contact may also help to promote egalitarian norms (e.g. De Tezanos-Pinto, Bratt, and Brown 2010; Paluck 2009; Visintin et al. 2019

The empirical evidence supporting the theoretical claims of contact theory is 'vast' (Hjerm and Nagayoshi 2011, 821). For example, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006, 751) examined 515 studies that involved positive contact, finding that 'intergroup contact typically reduces intergroup prejudice' (see also e.g. Hewstone and Swart 2011; Lemmer and Wagner 2015). The next subsection presents the argument that opportunities for positive contact ought to be facilitated between postcolonial migrants and socially privileged individuals to promote postcolonial relational equality within former metropoles. In making this claim, I rely on studies that show that the facilitation of frequent and direct contact between migrant populations and 'host' populations is an effective way of reducing relational inequality (e.g. Andersson and Dehdari 2021; Jolly and DiGiusto 2014; McLaren 2003; Simonovits, Kézdi, and Kardos 2018). That being said, contact theory is not without its critics. As Alex Madva (2017, 153) puts it, 'attempts to change attitudes through social interaction … have a long history, and

evidence for their success is substantial but complicated'. Some studies do not find that positive contact significantly improves intergroup relations, including between host populations and migrants (Homola and Tavits 2017). And others dispute the theoretical claims of contact, suggesting instead that increased contact leads to animosity as members of diverse groups feel threatened by one another (e.g. Stephan and Stephan 1985). Therefore, given the literature that is critical of contact theory, the argument that I present below is a conditional one: only if it is indeed the case that positive contact between postcolonial migrants and socially privileged citizens would promote egalitarian relations is there a case to make that former colonising states ought to facilitate the preconditions for positive contact.

3.2 Former Colonising States' Duty to Facilitate Positive Contact to Promote Postcolonial Relational Equality

Assuming the theoretical and empirical soundness of contact theory, it might seem that former colonising states ought to facilitate opportunities for positive interactions between their citizens who occupy superior social positions and postcolonial migrants. Often there are minimal interactions between these two groups, with postcolonial migrants subject to *de facto* segregation. And when there are interactions, these are often marked by deeply inegalitarian forms of treatment on the part of privileged individuals. The duty to facilitate positive interactions would stem from former colonising states' broader duties to promote relational equality. In addition to their direct relational egalitarian duties to adopt laws and policies that express the equal moral worth of individuals that they interact with, states also have indirect relational egalitarian duties: to promote egalitarian norms, structures and interpersonal relations (e.g. Chan and Patten 2023; Schemmel 2021, 54; Voigt 2020). Accordingly, one way for these states to discharge their duties to promote relational equality would be by facilitating the preconditions for positive contact between their socially privileged citizens and postcolonial migrants. There are several ways in which positive contact should help to promote postcolonial status equality. Firstly, positive contact should help to promote egalitarian attitudes and behaviours on the part of individuals occupying superior social positions. Secondly, it should make privileged individuals more likely to engage in broader structural changes to promote postcolonial relational equality: for example, by supporting remedies to redress structural inequalities in housing, policing and so on. Thirdly, it should help to dismantle degrading postcolonial norms. Fourthly, not only should the facilitation of positive contact help to challenge postcolonial status hierarchies themselves, but it should also help to remedy the harmful effects of such hierarchies, such as self-respect harms.

There are myriad policies that former colonising states could adopt to facilitate positive contact. For example, to encourage integration within neighbourhoods, they could give housing subsidies to postcolonial migrants and socially privileged individuals to encourage residential mixing (e.g. Laurentsyeva and Venturini 2017). In education they could structure catchment areas to promote the mixing of children from diverse backgrounds. Further, they could ensure that military forces and juries are racially mixed. And to encourage more informal forms of contact they could, for example, fund local sports teams or voluntary organisations with diverse membership (e.g. Lessard-Phillips, Fajth, and Fernández-Reino 2020; Orton 2012).

However, there is only so much that political institutions can do to promote relational equality via positive contact. Political institutions can facilitate the preconditions for positive contact, but individuals have to actually take up such opportunities for interaction to actually promote relational equality. That is, they have to actually move to diverse neighbourhoods, form friendships at work, send their children to mixed schools, make small talk as neighbours, partake in recreational activities with one another and so on. In the context of racial integration in America, Anderson (2010, 189) worries that without action on the part of individuals, racial integration could be 'just a pipe dream', suggesting that 'the project of integration cannot be left to state initiative alone'. For her (2010, 148–149) this means that there is a duty on the part of both black and white individuals to socially integrate. The next subsection presents the argument that, in the postcolonial context, socially privileged individuals and postcolonial migrants have a duty to interact with one another to promote relational equality.

3.3 A Duty for Individuals to Interact to Promote Postcolonial Relational Equality

Like institutions, individuals occupying superior social positions not only have duties to ultimately regard and treat those currently ranked lower as their equals, but they also have duties to *promote* relational equality (see e.g. Chan and Patten 2023, 5). That is, they have duties to promote egalitarian norms, structures, institutions and interpersonal relations. Such duties stem from individuals' broader duties to act in ways that remedy injustice (e.g. Anderson 2010; Young 2011). If positive contact is conducive to promoting postcolonial status equality, it seems to follow then that those occupying superior social positions ought to be required to take advantage of opportunities for positive contact. By 'required' I do not mean that in most cases those who failed to act on their duties ought to face legal sanctions. Rather, I mean that the duty to interact should be understood as an expectation, 'a norm enforced through informal social sanctions rather than legal mechanisms' (Carens 2005, 30).

One option could be, for example, a norm that labelled those who engaged in positive contact as 'good' citizens and those who do not to as 'bad' citizens, failing to do their bit to eradicate injustice.[12] Acting on this duty would rule out the permissibility of self-segregation for individuals occupying superior social positions. Instead, it would require them to, for example, move to mixed neighbourhoods, send their children to mixed schools, and join mixed recreational clubs. But acting on the duty would require privileged individuals to do more than just take advantage of interactions. It would require them doing this in a way that immediately ruled out the permissibility of certain types of behaviour. Those occupying superior social positions could not claim that they were discharging their duties to remedy colonial era status hierarchies if they intentionally and consciously subjected postcolonial migrants to prejudice in their interactions. They could then be justifiably made the subject of social sanctions (or even legal sanctions depending on the type of unequal treatment).[13] However, in the transition from relational inequality to relational equality, it would perhaps be too optimistic to expect individuals occupying superior social positions to immediately refrain from often unintentional forms of prejudice such as microaggressions that are the result of implicit biases, that is, operating without the agent's awareness and so difficult to bring under their control. It is precisely through engaging with measures such as positive contact that privileged individuals should start to overcome such more implicit forms of unequal regard and treatment.

At this point, one might contend that even if promoting positive contact would help redress relational inequality, privileged individuals (and their states) do not have a duty to specifically engage with this particular measure, given that relational equality might be promoted in other ways. For example, former colonising states could promote relational equality by implementing antiracist education in schools, and privileged individuals could do so by, for instance, donating money to antiracism charities, educating themselves on the wrongs of colonialism and so on. On this view, then, states can choose to facilitate contact situations and privileged individuals can choose to engage with such situations if they wish, but they do not have a duty to specifically do so, so long as they act on their duties of justice in other ways. However,

12 Which exact sanctions ought to be used is a complex question, but one relevant consideration is arguably the potential for backlash. It might be that in some contexts using stronger sanctions (e.g. labelling those who do not interact in the right way 'bad' citizens) could be inconducive to justice in the long term by creating backlash and resentment amongst advantaged groups and so making them less likely to interact. Another relevant consideration is the type of behaviour in question. For example, advantaged groups adopting conscious and intentional forms of prejudice in their interactions with postcolonial migrants should arguably be subject to stronger social sanctions than those who fail to interact at all.

13 For example, in the United Kingdom, racial and religious hate speech is a crime (e.g. The Guardian 2009).

it is questionable whether states and their privileged populations should in fact be afforded such discretion regarding which justice promoting activities they engage with. Rather, all things being equal, they ought to engage specifically in those measures that would be the most effective at promoting justice.[14] Given then that there is much empirical evidence that shows that contact is one of the most effective ways of promoting relational equality, it seems then that privileged individuals and states have a duty to engage with this particular measure.

So far, I have suggested that there is a strong case to make that former colonising states ought to facilitate the preconditions for positive contact between privileged individuals and postcolonial migrants, and privileged individuals ought to take up opportunities for interaction. It also seems to follow that postcolonial migrants ought to be required to engage in positive contact. This is because the duty to remedy injustice also applies to those who occupy inferior social positions. As Tommie Shelby puts it (2016, 222):

> We all, whether we belong to dominant or subjugated groups, have a duty to help establish just social arrangements … Given that the injustices at issue are features of a system of social cooperation that we all, winners and losers, participate in, we should view the project to correct these injustices as a joint one.

Indeed, failing to hold victims accountable for how they respond to conditions of injustice is to fail to treat them as 'full moral persons and as political agents in their own right' (Shelby 2016, 222). In the context of racial injustice in America, Anderson (2010, 148–149) argues for a duty to racially integrate for both white and black Americans because 'since all citizens have a duty to promote the justice of social arrangements, and integration is instrumental to justice, it is just to expect all citizens to bear their fair share of the costs of integration'. Along similar lines, postcolonial migrants plausibly have duties to help promote postcolonial relational equality within former metropoles, duties that ought to be met by them interacting with socially privileged citizens. If postcolonial migrants are expected to bear their fair share of the costs of integration, this would rule out the permissibility of self-segregation, and those who failed to interact would be rightfully subject to social sanctions. One obvious social sanction would be a norm according to which those who socially integrate are 'good' migrants and those who fail to are 'bad' migrants.

14 I say 'all things being equal' because sometimes there will be countervailing moral considerations which mean that the most effective measure ought not to be adopted. For example, if engaging in the most effective measure would impose extreme costs on privileged individuals, perhaps another less effective measure ought to be chosen. Similarly, costs on disadvantaged individuals ought to also be considered. Section 4 of the paper will show how despite being one of the most effective ways of promoting relational equality, sometimes social integration ought not to be pursued, because of the costs on postcolonial migrants.

The next section, however, argues that postcolonial migrants ought not to be required to interact with socially privileged individuals.

4 Why Postcolonial Migrants Should Not be Required to Interact

In this section I offer two arguments to support the conclusion that postcolonial migrants ought not to be required to interact with socially privileged individuals. The first suggests that requiring postcolonial migrants to interact could reinforce postcolonial relational inequality. The second suggests that it is unreasonably demanding to require them to bear the costs of interaction. I explore each concern in turn, focussing largely on the second.

4.1 A Duty to Interact as Reinforcing Postcolonial Relational Inequality

If postcolonial migrants were required to socially integrate, those that failed to do so would be liable to face social sanctions, that is, to be condemned as 'bad' migrants. But subjecting postcolonial migrants to such social sanctions would reinforce a colonially derived status hierarchy that already persists in many European states: the hierarchy of 'good' versus 'bad' migrants. 'Good' migrants are those who are perceived to contribute in some significant way to the state that they migrate to, including by socially integrating, with 'bad' migrants those who are perceived as failing to contribute, including by failing to socially integrate. Such hierarchies are, at least when applied to postcolonial migrants, a legacy of colonialism, 'invoking a dichotomy between good and bad colonized subjects, such as that of "good nobles" and "bad savages" (Hackl 2022, 8). Therefore, to require postcolonial migrants to socially integrate and to designate those who do not as 'bad' migrants is not to move towards status equality, but rather is to reinforce existing colonially derived hierarchies within former metropoles.

4.2 The Unreasonable Burdens of Social Integration

In response, one might argue that the above concern can be imposing a different kind of social sanction, one that would not reinforce colonial hierarchies on those who failed to interact. For example, those who failed to interact could be subjected to a

norm according to which they are obliged to do their fair share in promoting relational equality by showing solidarity towards their fellow oppressed people. But even then, I shall now suggest that, due to the unreasonable burdens of interaction, it would still be morally objectionable to require postcolonial migrants to interact. A common objection to the claim that victims have a duty to remedy their own injustice is that requiring them to do so will often be overly burdensome, exposing them to myriad harms, including psychological harms (e.g. Vasanthakumar 2020, 5). Clearly it would be unreasonably burdensome to require postcolonial migrants to interact if privileged individuals fail to comply with their duties of social integration: that is, if they fail to immediately cease from engaging in conscious and intentional forms of prejudice. That oppressed groups should not be required to interact when in doing so they would be subject to overt and intentional forms of hostility is argued by Shelby (2016) in the context of racial injustice in America. Unlike Anderson, Shelby compellingly argues that black Americans have a right to self-segregate if in interacting they would be exposed to intentional and conscious forms of racial prejudice. Jamie Draper (2025) makes a similar argument in the case of unequal migrant and host people relations, suggesting that when migrants would be subjected to hostility in their interactions, they have a right to self-segregate, with self-segregation helping to protect their self-respect in the face of degrading norms and treatment.

Whether it would be unreasonably demanding to require postcolonial migrants to engage in positive contact if those occupying superior social positions properly discharged their duties is a more difficult question. As I suggested in Section 3.3, postcolonial migrants could initially be exposed to subtle and unintentional forms of prejudice in their interactions with socially privileged individuals, forms of unequal treatment that positive contact over time is meant to help eradicate. On the one hand, one might take the view that all groups, including those occupying inferior social positions, can be expected to incur some costs in efforts to promote justice. If contact is a highly promising way to improve relational equality and therefore progress towards justice, and all social members have duties to support this progress, the potential harms of interactions, at least when they are not a result of overt and conscious prejudices, should be outweighed by the benefits gained from interaction. In fact, this view would seem to imply that it is not just postcolonial migrants who have a duty to interact when socially privileged individuals act on their duties, but also the descendants of postcolonial migrants. After all, it is not just postcolonial migrants who face status inequality within former metropoles, but their descendants too. And, assuming that their descendants also have duties of justice to help promote relational equality, on this view they would also have duties to interact.

However, the harms of unintentional and unconscious prejudice that postcolonial migrants and their descendants could initially be exposed to should not be

overlooked. Take for example microaggressions. They might be usually unintentional and subtle. But they still 'constitute … a putdown or degradation … a tiny reminder of one's lesser status owing to one's group' (McTernan 2018, 7, 19). And a core feature of microaggressions is that they are not an occasional occurrence, but rather are patterned, durable and an everyday reality for marginalised groups (e.g. Sue et al. 2007). Indeed, there is ample psychological literature detailing the significant harms of microaggressions (e.g. Kanter et al. 2017; Torres, Driscoll, and Burrow 2010; Williams 2020). I suggest then that it is too demanding to require postcolonial migrants and their descendants to engage in contact situations even when the unequal treatment that they would be subjected to is subtle and unintentional rather than conscious and intentional because of the still significant harms of such treatment.

The burdens of social integration do not mean that postcolonial migrants and their descendants are absolved of their duties to promote relational equality within former metropoles. Proponents of the claim that the oppressed have a duty to resist their injustice often deal with the fact that discharging this duty will often be extremely demanding by arguing that this duty is an imperfect one, thereby giving the oppressed significant discretion as to how they discharge it (e.g. Hay 2011). So postcolonial migrants and their descendants can choose to engage in contact situations if they wish but should not be required to. Instead, they can choose to self-segregate and discharge their duties to promote justice in other ways (by, for example, publicly speaking out against the degrading treatment that they face) even if such ways may be less effective overall at promoting justice than contact. In fact, self-segregating in itself can be seen as a way of resisting injustice. As Shelby (2016, 61) contends, self-segregation can be a means of oppressed groups discharging their duties of justice, by, for example, providing them with an opportunity to find 'a high concentration of politically like-minded individuals … which could enable them to influence local policies and to elect officials who will listen to their concerns and so is, in principle, an important source of political empowerment'.

However, one might respond with the claim that there is an important difference between postcolonial migrants and their descendants, such that it would be unreasonably burdensome to require the latter to discharge their duties to promote relational equality specifically through engaging in contact situations, but not unreasonable to require the former to do so. The difference is that postcolonial migrants, at least the voluntary migrants I am focussing on, chose to move to former metropoles. As I mentioned earlier, migrants are often divided into two categories, voluntary and involuntary migrants. How exactly to define an involuntary migrant is subject to debate but a popular definition posed by Valeria Ottonelli and Tiziana Torresi (e.g. 2013) suggests four relevant considerations. The first is noncoercion. Those who are coerced to leave their home state (those who are kidnapped, trafficked

and so on) are not voluntary migrants. The second is sufficiency. Those who migrate because their basic needs are not met at home are involuntary migrants. The third is exit options. If those who migrate cannot return home, they are involuntary migrants. The fourth is access to information. Those who migrate according to false information and with the correct information would have decided to stay cannot be considered voluntary migrants. It is often accepted that because voluntary migrants make a conscious choice to move to a new state, this choice implies a willingness to accept certain burdens and responsibilities in the host state (e.g. Mason 2012, 170). On this view, voluntary migrants explicitly or implicitly enter into a social contract with the state that they move to whereby they sign up to certain terms to govern their behaviour (e.g. Draper 2025). The position of voluntary migrants can be contrasted to nonmigrant subjugated populations or involuntary migrants who did not choose to live in their state and thus cannot be held to the same standards as voluntary migrants (e.g. Kymlicka 1995, 96).

Accordingly, one core term of the postcolonial 'migration contract' could be a duty on the part of postcolonial migrants to engage in social integration to help promote relational equality within former metropoles, rather than having discretion as to how they discharge their duties of justice. Of course, there are still limits to what voluntary migrants can be expected to do in the host state. As Draper (2025, 305) puts it, any migration contract 'that requires immigrants to accept their own social exclusion as a condition of entry' is unfair. Postcolonial migrants could not be expected to interact if former colonising states and their privileged citizens failed to act on their duties to promote relational equality. But so long as they complied with their duties, the postcolonial migration contract would not require postcolonial migrants to accept their own social exclusion as a condition of entry. Rather, it would require them to accept some costs in order to help promote relational equality within former metropoles. Conversely, the descendants of postcolonial migrants (and involuntary migrants from former colonies/colonially inflected societies) did not choose to live in former metropoles and so have not signed up to accept the terms of such a contract. Therefore, given the high burdens of positive contact, it should be at their discretion as to how they discharge their duties to promote relational equality.

However, even if, in general, voluntary migrants can be expected to accept certain burdens that involuntary migrants and nonmigrant subjugated populations cannot be expected to, this does not apply in the postcolonial context. For one thing, it is actually far from clear that those who are considered 'voluntary' postcolonial migrants are in fact voluntary migrants. Claiming that all those who do not fulfil Ottonelli and Torresi's conditions are voluntary migrants arguably overlooks a fifth relevant condition in determining whether one's migration is voluntary or not: whether one's decision to migrate has been made in the context of injustice. In the case of colonialism, colonial wrongs have created the push factors which compel

members of former colonies and colonially inflected societies to migrate in the first place (see Jaggar 2020), a fact reflected by intellectual A. Sivanandan's (e.g. 2008) well-known aphorism about postcolonial migration to Britain: 'We are here because you were there.' Take, for example, the wrong of colonial exploitation. It is well accepted that past colonial exploitation has had an adverse effect today upon the economies of Global South states, with colonially extracted wealth embedded in former metropoles. In the absence of *in situ* material reparations, the ongoing legacy of colonial exploitation makes migrating to former metropoles often the best option that such people have to access certain opportunities and resources. It is no surprise that 16 % of adults worldwide – almost 900 million people – would like to migrate permanently, largely people from parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia. And it is no surprise that amongst the top desired destinations are Britain, France, Spain and Germany (Pugliese and Ray 2023). Further, colonial wrongs not only push, in general, members of Global South states to migrate to former colonising states, but they often also push members of former colonies to migrate to their own former colonising states because of the wrong of colonial cultural imposition. There is empirical evidence to suggest that members of former colonies often want to migrate to their own former colonising state in particular, as opposed to some similarly well-off state, because of shared language and cultural links (e.g. Hooghe et al. 2008). Such linkages are the result of colonisers imposing their languages and cultures on their colonies in ways that endure today.

Suggesting then that members of former colonies/colonially inflected societies who want to migrate to former colonising states are doing so voluntarily therefore overlooks the fact that colonialism has fundamentally conditioned the choices of postcolonial migrants, both the choice to migrate to a former colonising state and also often the choice of which former colonising state to migrate to. Since the movement of postcolonial migrants is shaped by the lingering effects of colonial injustices, this historical context raises important questions about what kinds of duties postcolonial migrants can be expected to have in former metropoles, including whether they can be expected to discharge their duty to remedy injustice specifically by engaging in costly forms of social integration. Perhaps all postcolonial migrants, including those who do not fit Ottonelli and Torresi's conditions, are involuntary migrants and as such cannot be required to socially integrate when there are high costs.

At this point though one might resist the claim to categorise 'voluntary' postcolonial migrants as in fact involuntary migrants. Indeed, Ottonelli and Torresi (2023) claim that one should distinguish between *injustice* and *forcedness* regarding decisions to migrate. For them, not all the choices that one makes in circumstances of injustice should be considered forced. To be sure, injustice may influence people's choices, but this does not make their actions involuntary – 'the mere fact of being

influenced and constrained by social structures does not make actions nonvoluntary because all people's actions are' (Ottonelli and Torresi 2023, 410). According to this line of argument, then, members of former colonies/colonially inflicted societies may make the choice to migrate to former metropoles because of colonial injustices but this does not mean that such choices are involuntary.

Perhaps Ottonelli and Torresi are correct that it would expand the definition of 'involuntary' too far to consider those who make the choice, against a background of injustice, to migrate as 'involuntary' migrants. I am open to this view. Nonetheless, even so, the fact that 'voluntary' postcolonial migrants make the decision to migrate in conditions of injustice does, I think, still have important implications for what they can be expected to do in former metropoles. Indeed, as Ottonelli and Torresi (2023, 410) recognise:

> When people make choices in circumstances of injustice, they may gain a right to a more favorable treatment than those who act in just conditions, especially by those who are responsible for those unjust circumstances. Thus, those affluent societies whose relation to source countries is tainted by a colonial past, or by economic and political injustice, may owe immigrants favorable treatment in recognition of the fact that immigrants make their choices against the background of unfair circumstances.

Building on this argument, given that postcolonial migrants have made the choice to migrate against a backdrop of colonial injustices, a postcolonial 'migration contract' should not require postcolonial migrants to incur high costs to help promote relational equality within former metropoles. Rather, the postcolonial migrant contract should involve a commitment on the part of former colonising states and their privileged citizens that they will incur most of the costs of alleviating colonial injustices, including the costs of achieving postcolonial relational equality. In other words, the costs should not be shared, but should disproportionately fall upon those who are responsible for or benefit from the very injustices that have compelled postcolonial migrants to move to former metropoles.

Therefore, (voluntary) postcolonial migrants should not be required to engage in social interactions to promote relational equality due to the potentially significant harms of exposure even to subtle and often unintentional prejudices such as microaggressions. The fact that such migrants are 'voluntary' migrants does not make it any more reasonable for them to incur such burdens, either because they are not in fact voluntary migrants, or they are but their situation as victims of injustice makes it unreasonable to require them to incur significant burdens in the move to establish justice. Rather, it ought to be at their discretion whether or not they discharge their duties to promote relational equality specifically through engaging in contact situations. So rather than unilaterally facilitating conditions for social integration, the public officials of former colonising states ought to instead adopt a

contextualized approach, consulting with postcolonial migrants (and their descendants) in specific localities to assess whether or not they are in favour of social integration policies. In localities in which a sufficient mass of postcolonial migrants shows a preference to discharging their duties to promote relational equality specifically via positive contact, former colonising states ought to facilitate its preconditions, and socially privileged individuals ought to take up opportunities for interaction. But in contexts in which they choose to self-segregate, it would be morally inappropriate for former colonising states to facilitate preconditions for positive contact, even if they did not require postcolonial migrants to interact. Doing so would risk exposing them to harms of unwanted interactions that they have a right to choose not to be exposed to. For example, suppose that former colonising states did not require postcolonial migrants to interact, but continued to facilitate opportunities for interaction by, for instance, offering financial incentives to individuals to residentially integrate. Even if postcolonial migrants faced no requirement to move, if socially privileged individuals moved into areas predominantly populated by postcolonial migrants, this could still expose them to the kinds of harms that I have highlighted throughout this paper.

However, if the duty to interact was an imperfect one, this would limit the potential for positive contact as an instrumental means of promoting postcolonial relational equality. In contexts in which postcolonial migrants rejected the facilitation of social integration policies, other relational equality promoting measures would have to be relied upon. If it is the case that positive contact is 'one of the most important psychological interventions to promote social change' (McKeown and Dixon 2017, 1–2), a failure to adopt it in a more widespread manner would seem to be regrettable. Indeed, Draper (2025) describes as a cause for pessimism the fact that positive contact is an effective means of promoting relational equality alongside the fact that requiring a duty of integration is often too burdensome for migrants. However, the next section argues that even in contexts in which postcolonial migrants chose not to engage in contact situations, such that contact failed to play an instrumental role in promoting postcolonial relational equality, there is still an important role for the offer of future positive contact to play in helping to establish postcolonial relational equality.

5 The Expressive Role of Positive Contact

So far, I have defended the duty to interact on the part of privileged individuals as a means of them fulfilling their duties of promotion: that is, a means by which they can help to transform unequal interpersonal relations, norms and structures so that eventually status equality is achieved. But now I shall show how the value of social

integration policies goes beyond their instrumental role in promoting relational equality and how privileged individuals acting on their duties of interaction can also be a means by which they act on their *direct* duties of relational equality (i.e. their duties to regard postcolonial migrants as equals and treat them in ways that express their equal moral worth). And crucially, I show how even when postcolonial migrants choose self-segregation, individuals in superior social positions can still directly express egalitarian attitudes in their actions by making it known that they are open to future positive interactions.

I argued in Section 2.2 that one specific way in which privileged individuals in the postcolonial context often fail to act on their direct duties of relational equality is by self-segregating, in the process expressing the message that postcolonial migrants possess some trait that makes them inferior and unworthy of being interacted with. And I showed how those who interact in more substantial ways with postcolonial migrants often treat them unequally. By taking up opportunities for interaction and by doing so in a morally appropriate way (i.e. by immediately ceasing intentional forms of prejudice), I think that privileged individuals could go some way towards acting on their direct duties of relational equality. By interacting in positive ways, those who previously failed to interact, or interacted but in profoundly unequal ways, would express, *contra* existing hierarchies of cultural racism, the message that postcolonial migrants are not inferior but are of equal moral worth, such that they are worthy of frequent and substantial interactions. Of course, this is not to say that all it takes to relate as equal to individuals currently occupying inferior social positions is to interact with them. Individuals occupying superior social positions would not fully fulfil their direct relational egalitarian duties until they regarded postcolonial migrants in equal ways and ceased subjecting them to unintentional unequal treatment such as microaggressions. Nonetheless, by engaging in interactions, privileged individuals would at least go some way towards expressing equal attitudes.

In contexts in which postcolonial migrants chose self-segregation, privileged citizens could still directly express their recognition of postcolonial migrants' equal moral worth by making it clear (through social media, community meetings, local publications and so forth) that they would welcome future positive interactions if and when postcolonial migrants seek it. And they could show that they are genuinely committed to future interactions by engaging in actions to reduce the burdens of social integration. For example, they could engage in measures that can help to remedy implicit biases such as exposure to counter-stereotypes (e.g. FitzGerald et al. 2019). By engaging in such actions, privileged individuals would show that they are committed to minimising the burdens of future interaction, thereby making postcolonial migrants more likely to want to interact in the future. So, by showing a willingness to engage in future interactions and by doing the work to ensure that any

future interactions are less burdensome than current interactions, privileged individuals could express the equal status of postcolonial migrants, even in the absence of current positive contact.

6 Conclusion

In this paper I have built on the burgeoning literature that defends a postcolonial right to migrate by asking how postcolonial migrants ought to be treated once admitted into former colonising states. In particular, I have assessed whether postcolonial migrants ought to be socially integrated to help overcome the relational inequalities that they often face in former metropoles. Several conclusions of the paper merit particular attention. Firstly, the paper has important implications for the duties of postcolonial migrants with regards to social integration. Often it is assumed that voluntary migrants can be required to socially integrate to help promote valuable ends. But I suggested that requiring postcolonial migrants to interact could in fact undermine the pursuit of justice by reinforcing colonial era status hierarchies. And I argued that even if such a requirement did not reinforce postcolonial relational inequality, social integration could expose postcolonial migrants to unreasonable costs. I argued instead that it ought to be at the discretion of postcolonial migrants whether they interact to help promote postcolonial relational equality or discharge their duties of justice in other ways.

Secondly, the paper has important implications for the duties of former colonising states and the duties of dominant groups within such states. The paper suggests that the public officials of former colonising states ought to do more to consult with postcolonial migrants in particular localities and hear their views on contact. When the majority favour positive contact within a particular area, I argued that former colonising states have a duty to facilitate its preconditions, rather than maintaining what is often the status quo of *de facto* segregation. And I claimed that privileged individuals ought to take advantage of such interactions. But when postcolonial migrants in a particular context are opposed to social integration, I suggested that it would be impermissible to impose contact situations. Whilst prioritising the preferences of postcolonial migrants may appear to undermine the strength of positive contact as a relational equality promoting tool, I resisted this conclusion. Rather, I argued that in contexts in which postcolonial migrants found positive contact overtly demanding and chose to self-segregate, the opportunity for future positive contact ought to be kept open, with this offer expressing an important egalitarian message.

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