CURING PREJUDICE THROUGH REPRESENTATIVE BUREAUCRACIES
Evidence From A Natural Experiment in Israeli Medical Clinics

Chagai M. Weiss
Department of Political Science, University of Wisconsin – Madison

Contact Information:
🌐: www.chagaimweiss.com
✉: cmweiss3@wisc.edu
🐦: @chagai_weiss
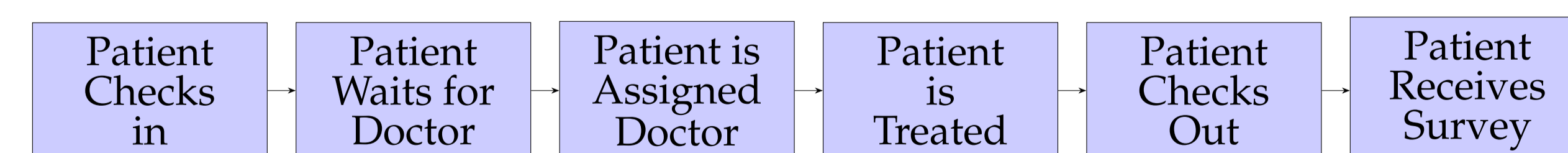📞: +1 (608) 345 8151

Introduction

- Representation is a core value of modern democracy [8].
- Acknowledging the discretion that non-elected bureaucrats enjoy in the process of policy implementation, scholars have suggested to extend the notion of representation beyond parliaments, and to promote representation within state bureaucracies [4].
- Indeed, bureaucracies comprised of workers that resemble the demographics they serve are associated with enhanced public goods provision [2, 6, 3, 9, 1].
- While there is evidence to suggest that diversity in the ranks of a bureaucracy may be beneficial for represented minorities, *the extent to which such representation shapes intergroup relations more broadly remains unclear.*

Theory

- I theorize about a particular mechanism through which representative bureaucracies can improve intergroup relations – *positive intergroup contact*.
- By enabling positive intergroup contact between minority bureaucrats and majority clients, representative bureaucracies can shape intergroup attitudes.
- The far-reaching arms of state bureaucracies, and the repeated interactions that citizens experience with street-level bureaucrats, can promote widespread and recurring contact leading to sustainable and scalable changes in intergroup relations.

Research Design

- I test my theory of representative bureaucracy and prejudice reduction with a natural experiment leveraging the random assignment of Jewish patients to Jewish/Arab doctors across 21 emergency medical clinics in Israel.
- I obtained doctor assignment data from clinic administrative records, and outcome measures by embedding several questions in the clinics ongoing evaluation surveys. Outcomes include measures of:
  1. Social Distance
  2. Attitudes Regarding the Feasibility of Peace
  3. Intergroup Feeling Thermometers
  4. Intergroup Trust
  5. An index which averages the z-scores of the above outcomes
- A general schema of my research design and data collection procedure is depicted in the chart below:

Patient Checks in	→	Patient Waits for Doctor	→	Patient is Assigned Doctor	→	Patient is Treated	→	Patient Checks Out	→	Patient Receives Survey

- I estimate OLS fixed effects models to account for clinic and date unobservables. Errors are clustered at the clinic level as portrayed in the the equation below:

$$Y_{icd} = \beta X_{treatment} + \eta_{clinic} + \Psi_{date} + \epsilon_{icd}$$

Main Results

- **Receiving treatment from an Arab doctor positively affects intergroup attitudes.**
  - Effects meet conventional levels of statistical significance for social distance, peace, and index measures, and approach significance for feeling thermometer measures.
- **Contact accounts for close to a fifth of a standard deviation shift in responses to a conventional seven item social distance scale.**
  - As the average Jewish respondent in my data is willing to accept an Arab as a co-worker, this effect moves respondents towards willing to accept Arabs as neighbors.
  - This effect is similar to a one unit shift on conventional religiosity scales, moving from ultra-orthodox to religious Jewish practices.
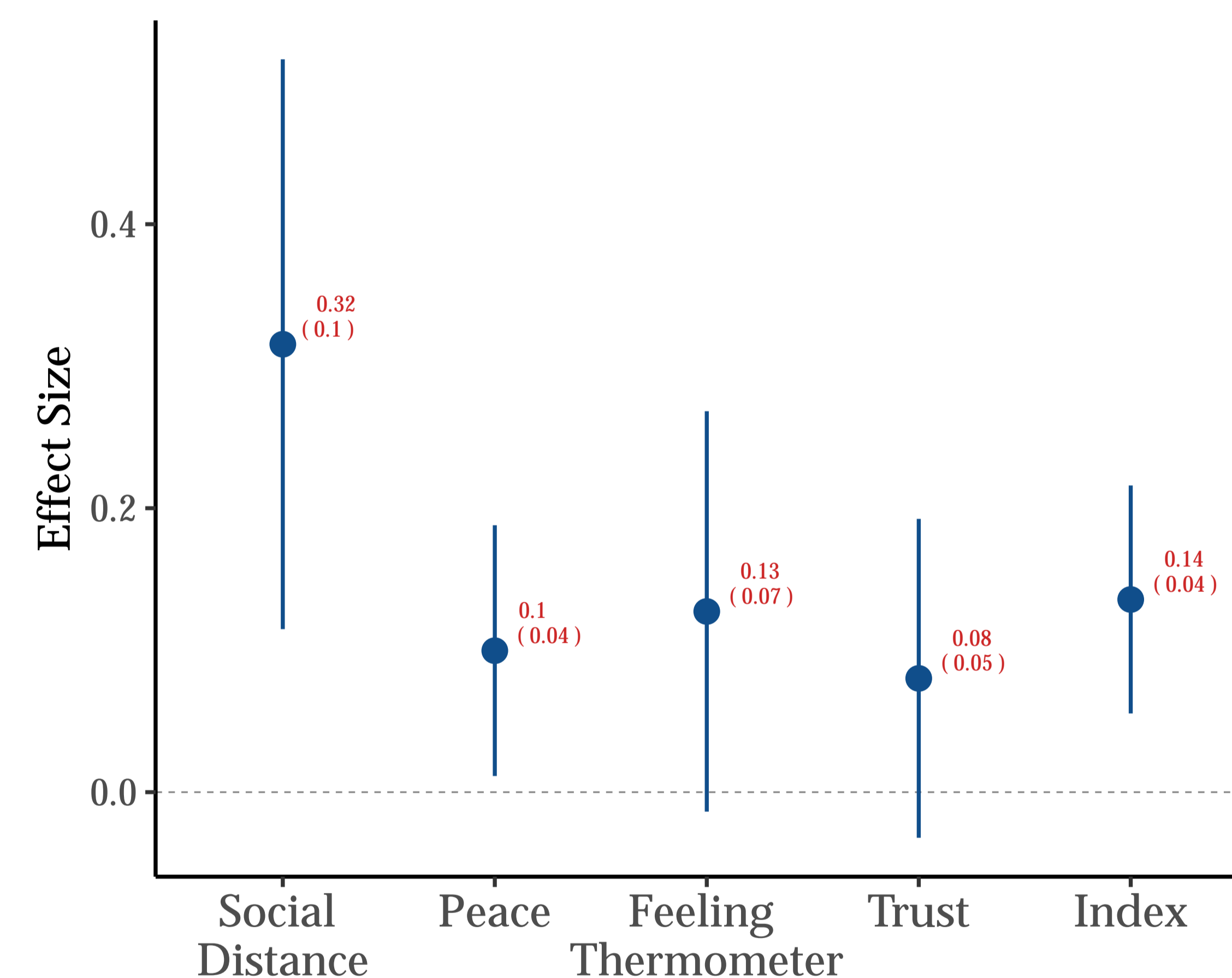

Figure 1: OLS coefficients representing the effects of contact with an Arab doctor on Jewish patients' attitudes. Standard errors in parentheses.

Robustness Checks

- I test whether patient covariates predict doctor assignment
- I account for doctor quality, as well as patient covariates
- I examine demographic correlates of selection into, and attrition from survey
- I examine effects of contact on Arab patients

Figure 2: A doctor's office, where patients receive treatment.

Future Extensions

- Follow up survey 6-8 months post-treatment (currently fielding)
- Behavioral measure – Petition signing (implemented via SMS)
- Qualitative interviews with doctors

Conclusion

- Building on the representative bureaucracy [5], and intergroup contact literatures [7], I develop a theory of prejudice reduction through bureaucratic representation.
- Leveraging the random assignment of patients to doctors across 21 Israeli medical clinics, I demonstrate that representative bureaucracies promoting positive intergroup contact, can reduce prejudice on a large scale.
- I contribute to:
  - The representative bureaucracy literature by demonstrating that representation can have positive externalities for intergroup relations.
  - The prejudice reduction literature by providing strong causal evidence for the positive effects of contact, amongst adults embedded in a deeply divided society, in a naturalistic setting which does not require obtrusive intervention.

Acknowledgements

References

[1] Marcella Alsan, Owen Garrick, and Grant C Graziani. Does diversity matter for health? experimental evidence from oakland. Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2018.

[2] Rikhil R Bhavnani and Alexander Lee. Local embeddedness and bureaucratic performance: evidence from india. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(1):71–87, 2018.

[3] Lael R Keiser, Vicky M Wilkins, Kenneth J Meier, and Catherine A Holland. Lipstick and logarithms: Gender, institutional context, and representative bureaucracy. *American political science review*, 96(3):553–564, 2002.

[4] Michael Lipsky. *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public service.* Russell Sage Foundation, 1980.

[5] Kenneth John Meier. Representative bureaucracy: An empirical analysis. *American political science review*, 69(2):526–542, 1975.

[6] Matthew J Nanes. Policing in divided societies: Officer inclusion, citizen cooperation, and crime prevention. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, page 0738894218802580, 2018.

[7] Elizabeth Levy Paluck, Seth Green, and Donald P Green. The contact hypothesis revisited. 2017.

[8] Hanna F Pitkin. *The concept of representation*, volume 75. Univ of California Press, 1967.

[9] Norma M Riccucci, Gregg G Van Ryzin, and Huafang Li. Representative bureaucracy and the willingness to coproduce: An experimental study. *Public Administration Review*, 76(1):121–130, 2016.

Scan for working paper