

## **TIME SPAN AS A FACTOR IN CONTACT INTERVENTION: IMPLICATION FOR PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

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### **Abstract**

Recent studies suggest that affective intervention programs are better suited and more effective than cognitive ones in yielding positive relationships between conflict groups. They also suggest that meaningful interventions require long-term investment. Based on empirical evaluation of the attitudes of Israeli students towards contact with both Arab and Jewish Israeli religious or secular counterparts over time, it is suggested that the possibility of affective based interventions for both cases is doubtful. Findings revealed that while willingness to meet with religious or secular counterparts was stable over time, radical changes were presented in regard to meetings with Arab counterparts, and provided only a small time opportunity to both initiate and carry out any possible change. Implications for peace education are discussed.

There is ample research evidence that contact intervention programs are of the most popular and successful methods for enhance positive intergroup relations between conflict groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Most effort is now invested in studying how contact works rather than if it is working (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003), and affective long term interventions are now considered as most suitable for bringing about a meaningful change (Dovidio et al., 2003; Kenworthy, Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2005; Pettigrew, 1997,1998; Yablon, 2006). Nevertheless although almost not receiving any research attention it is evident that in regions of intractable conflicts initiating contact between conflict groups, for itself, is an elusive goal. Even when contact is eventually initiated it is many times that the hectic reality and ongoing social and political developments negatively affect the intergroup relations and such programs come to an immature end. The main aim of the present study was to study the fluctuations in the willingness to participate in ingroup and intergroup contact and to discuss the possible implications it may have on the methods (affective versus cognitive) and expected outcomes of contact intervention programs. This was done in relate to two different conflicts in Israel: National and cultural.

### **Contact Intervention Programs**

Contact between members of conflict groups became one of the most popular ways to enhance positive relationships between groups in conflict. Allport's Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954) and Sherif's famous Robbers' Cave study (Sherif, 1966; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961) both serve as a reference point for the study of intergroup relationships. Following these, many studies were designed to reveal both theoretical and practical implications of contact as a means for peace intervention.

Following the research based evidence that contact between groups is effective in various settings and enhances positive intergroup relations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), attention has shifted to examining *why* contact is useful rather than *what* conditions enhance useful contact between conflict groups (Dovidio et al., 2003). Pettigrew (1998) even pointed to some of the limitations in the study of contact hypothesis which can be used to explain the growing number of studies dealing with the underlying process of contact interventions. For example, he argued that the study of conditions, as opposed to processes, yields a growing, possibly infinite, list of conditions that do not distinguish between conditions which facilitate positive contact and those which are essential for positive change. According to Pettigrew, many of these conditions are limited ones that exclude most intergroup encounters and therefore also remove the interest from this perspective of investigation. Other limitations refer to the generalization of the effect and the need to study how and when positive outcomes generalize towards other individuals, groups, or situations. Another issue is the vacuum left by the early studies based on the original Contact Hypothesis that has nothing to say about the underlying process of either successful or unsuccessful contact.

### **Affective and Extensive Intervention Programs**

The emphasis on processes rather than conditions has yielded growing evidence regarding the role of affective elements in successful contact intervention programs (Yablon, 2006).

Traditionally, cognitive rather than emotional processes were seen as the base for successful intergroup contact (Paolini, Hewstone, Voci, Harwood, & Cairns, 2006). The basic assumption was that providing information and knowledge regarding the counterparts enhances positive relationships as it reduces ignorance and provides meaningful information about each of the conflict groups to the other (Mackie & Smith, 1998; Miller, Kenworthy, Stenstrom, & Canales, in press). Recent studies, however, reveal that while cognitive processes have a positive contribution, it is the affective domains that are important and lead to meaningful change (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; 2006). Islam and Jahjah (2001), for example, found that emotions are crucial components of racial attitudes and that affective measures are better than cognitive measures as

predictors of attitudes towards minority groups. Using an experimental research design, Edwards and von Hippel (1995) found that affect-based attitudes tend to be expressed with greater confidence than cognition-based attitudes, while Tropp and Pettigrew (2005) found that affective aspects have a special role in defining contact-prejudice relationships and that they are critical for understanding the effect of contact on prejudice. Esses and Dovidio (2002) also used an experimental research design and found that participants who were focused on their emotions rather than on cognition showed greater willingness to meet with members of their conflict group. They suggested that regardless of the effect of emotions on intergroup relations via intergroup contact, the emotional aspect is important in order to promote intergroup contact in the first place. Thus, the role of emotions is now seen as important to intergroup contact, as well as for initiating contact between the conflict groups.

Another line of studies on emotions as a means of intergroup contact are those exploring the relationship between specific emotions and positive contact intervention outcomes. In their meta-analysis, Pettigrew and Tropp (2000) concluded that reducing anxiety is more important for reduction of prejudice via contact than is increased knowledge of the outgroup. They estimated that 20-25% of the effect of contact in reducing prejudice is explained by a reduction in intergroup anxiety. Stephan and Stephan (2000) even suggested that such anxiety is a result of either symbolic or realistic intergroup threat. They suggested an *Integrated Threat Model* to include such relationships and proposed that a realistic threat is a threat to the political and economical power, or physical well being, while a symbolic threat is a threat to the value system, belief system, or worldview of the ingroup.

Empathy was also found to be a meaningful mediator for enhancing positive intergroup relationships via intergroup contact (Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). It is suggested that taking the perspective of members of the conflict group, focusing on their feelings or imagining how one would feel in their situation, reduces intergroup prejudice and fosters positive contact. Dovidio et al. (2004) pointed to five different mechanisms explaining how such "perspective taking" can enhance positive relationships with another group. These mechanisms include the generalization of positive feelings towards larger groups, enhancing interest in the welfare of others, arousing feelings and perceptions of injustice, altering cognitive representations of target group members, and inhibiting stereotyping by taking the perspective of a member another group.

In sum, during recent years, emphasis on the study of the underlying process of the contact hypothesis yielded a growing number of models describing the process of intergroup contact and the essential role of affective aspects (see Dovidio et al., 2003; Kenworthy et al., 2005; Pettigrew, 1998). Affective components of intergroup contact were found to make a crucial contribution to the enhancement of positive relationships between conflict groups. Such components pointed to the important role of emotions in initiating contact, mediating positive outcomes, and enhancing the generalization of

positive outcomes of face-to-face interactions between individuals towards the entire group.

As a result of the growing evidence of the main role of the affective domains in contact intervention programs, contact interventions are now expected to be based on affective elements, and be scheduled and planned in a way that will allow such affect-based interventions. Pettigrew (1998), who directly addressed the issue of *time* in contact interventions, highlighted the importance of long-term encounters that enable the construction of positive intergroup relations, and referred to the time issue as "a dramatic shift for the intergroup contact research literature" (p. 76). Thus, in order to allow meaningful and affect-based interaction between members of two conflict groups, such as would result in positive relationships which would also be generalized to include the entire group, contact should be relatively long.

However, as long-term relationships may eventually lead to a positive, permanent and consistent change, it is critical to understand that in regions of persistent conflict, such as Israel, this may be an unrealistic goal. Long-term interventions, which do not consider the immediate social needs and circumstances which do not usually allow for such a long-term intervention period, cannot be seen as an appropriate approach to mitigating intergroup conflicts. In that case, more modest modification, which is not affect-based, may make a positive contribution to the immediate future, making this a more appropriate approach. Consequently, rather than suggesting that affect-based long-term intervention programs are the most useful way to enhance positive relationships, it is argued that such interventions would be suitable for benign environments (or ingroup conflicts) but not to tackle persistent intergroup conflicts in intractable regions.

### **One Country – Two Conflicts**

Following the idea that different conflicts may need to be addressed by different types of contact intervention programs, Israel can serve as an example for an environment where ingroup conflicts and intergroup conflicts must be addressed in different ways. Five major schisms split the population of the State of Israel: political, status, ethnic, religious, and national (Smootha, 1993). The first four conflicts are ingroup conflicts, whereas the national schism is an intergroup conflict as it involves people of two different national identities.

In order to point to the importance of differentiation between various types of conflict groups and its relevance to the strategy used in contact interventions, this study focuses on the religious and national conflicts in Israel.

The conflict between religious and secular Jews in Israel is mainly based on the tension between the democratic political culture of the State and the hierarchical Jewish traditional culture that is one of the foundations of the State (Don-Yehiya & Liebman, 1984). While the basis for the establishment of the State of Israel is the Zionist

movement, one of many such nineteenth- and twentieth-century national movements, the Jewish identity of Israeli society and Israeli culture is based on symbols and views taken from traditional Jewish culture. In addition, while Israel is a modern, democratic, and mostly secular state there is no constitutional separation between state and religion and everyday life in Israel is anchored in religious law. Thus, on the one hand, the State compels all its citizens to accept upon themselves, to some extent, a way of life that is founded on a religious worldview and to identify with religious symbols even if they contradict their secular worldview and way of life. On the other hand, religious sects find the State far more secular than religious.

From a sociological point of view the social schism between the religious and the secular exists not only on an ideological and conceptual level but in almost every sphere of daily life. There are separate school systems for religious and secular students, and neighborhoods with either a religious or secular majority. There are public struggles about maintaining the religious or secular characteristics of neighborhoods, and there are voices calling for public transportation on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. Etzioni-Halevy (2000) describes the relationships between religious and secular groups in Israel as a "social disaster" in which the two groups are in a process of social separation from each other.

While the conflict between religious and secular Jews in Israel is cultural by nature, the conflict between Israeli Jews and Arabs is national. This conflict is characterized by the collision of a multiplicity of religious, cultural, and national identities (Lewis, 1998), and is rooted in the establishment of Israel in 1948. It is a result of long and violent conflicts based on the national aspirations of both the Zionist and Palestinian movements.

On 29 November, 1947, the United Nations passed a resolution which called for the establishment of two states (one Jewish and one Arab) in the Land of Israel. Several months later, in May 1948, the State of Israel was established in a territory which had been under British mandate since the end of World War I. The 150,000 Arabs who remained in the new state comprised, at that time, around 10% of all Palestinian national populations and around 15% of the Israeli population. This made them the largest minority group within Israeli society (Peleg, 2004). Since then, the social relationships between the Arab primary minority and Jewish majority groups are characterized by tension, suspicion, and inequality (Abu-Saad, Yonah, & Kaplan, 2000; Moore & Aweiss, 2003).

Relationships between the Arabs and Jews in Israel were never stable. They change with social and political developments and in recent years witnessed a serious deterioration. Political events such as the 1993 agreement between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and the Palestinian armed uprising (*Intifadah*) which has been ongoing since 2000, have intensified the dual Israeli-Palestinian national identity of the Israeli Arabs and deepened the Jewish-Arab rift. On the one hand, Israeli Arabs have increased their support for the Palestinian struggle

against Israel and their identification with it, while on the other hand, they also increased their social demands for equal status as Israeli citizens (Bishara, 1999; Ghanem, 2002; Rekhess, 1998; Smooha, 1998; Zidani, 1998). Given current tensions, the Israeli Jewish population is suspicious of the Israeli Arab demand for social integration, and doubts their loyalty to Israeli identity (Seginer, 2001; Smooha, 1988).

### **The Present Study**

The main focus of the present study was the possibility to initiate and implement a long-term affective-based contact intervention program in regions of intractable conflict. Bearing in mind that such contact could probably benefit any intergroup contact, the questions asked here are whether such contact could be initiated, and, once initiated, could it be maintained as long as it is necessary to fulfill its goals.

Three primary research hypotheses were addressed in the current study. The first was that more students would present positive attitudes towards participating in ingroup (secular-religious) encounters than in intergroup (Jewish-Arab) encounters. Taking time into consideration the second hypothesis suggested that measuring ingroup and intergroup attitudes over time would reveal stronger fluctuations in the attitudes towards intergroup (Jewish-Arab) encounters than toward ingroup (secular-religious) encounters. Finally, the third hypothesis was that the "window of opportunity" for initiating and maintaining contact between groups would be relatively shorter in regard to the intergroup contact (Jewish-Arab) and even shorter in comparison to the ingroup (secular-religious) encounters.

### **Method**

#### *Sample*

A national representative sample of 500 Jewish first-year students in Israel participated in the study. This number represents participant who responded after an attrition rate of about 12% during the 16 months of the study, and a response rate of about 83%. Students were sampled from the five major universities in Israel located in the north, center, and south of the state. The sample population was 51% female, 49% male, and 16% of participants were married. Participants' age range was 21-30 years ( $M = 24.14$ ;  $SD = 1.81$ ). About 13% of the participants defined themselves as religious, 38% as traditional, and 42% as secular (7% did not respond to this question).

### *Measures*

At each time point of the study participants were asked to answer two identical questions: 1. Would you agree to participate in a face-to-face peace intervention program with *Israeli Arabs* in order to enhance tolerance and understanding between Israeli Arabs and Jews? 2. Would you agree to participate in a face-to-face peace intervention program with *Israeli secular/religious Jews* in order to enhance tolerance and understanding between secular and religious Jews (secular students received a version asking about religious counterparts and religious students on secular)? Participants were asked to respond by either answering "yes" or "no" and to avoid abstaining.

### *Procedure*

The study took place over a 16-month period from January 2005 to April 2006. Interviews were conducted by telephone, and all calls were made in the first week of each month. The first telephone interview was devoted to introducing participants to the aims, method, and expected duration of the study. They were also provided with necessary information in order to report on any change in their telephone number or availability, and informed that their anonymity would be preserved throughout the interviews and after. Anonymity was maintained by assigning participants a numerical code for their responses in the data set, and keeping their personal details (such as name and telephone number) separately. Participants were interviewed by research assistants who were proficient in the social sciences, who worked in a university research center, and were trained to conduct such telephone surveys.

## **Results**

The aim of the present study was to track the attitudes of a national sample of Israeli Jewish students towards participation in contact activities with both Israeli Arabs and Israeli religious or secular counterparts over time. This was done to compare the two types of conflicts and to study the possible limitations of long-term contact intervention programs.

The first study hypothesis was that more students would present positive attitudes towards participating in ingroup (secular-religious) encounters would do so for than intergroup (Jewish-Arab) encounters. Students' negative attitudes (saying "no") towards participation in both ingroup and intergroup encounters are presented in Figure 1. It appeared that at any point of time during the 16 months of the study a majority of minimum 54% and maximum 68% (Mean = 59.90; *SD* = 3.92) of the sample would not agree to participate in a contact intervention program with Arab counterparts. At the same

time, most of the students who would not agree to interact with either religious or secular Jewish counterparts did not exceed 34% (Mean = 30.25;  $SD = 3.10$ ).

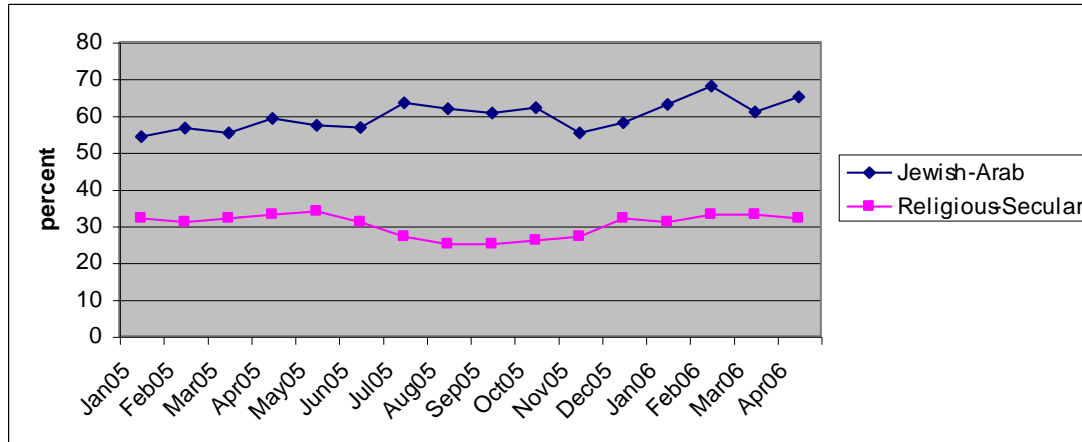


Figure 1. Students' negative responses towards participating in either ingroup (secular-religious) or intergroup (Jewish-Arab) face-to-face encounters from January 2005 to April 2006.

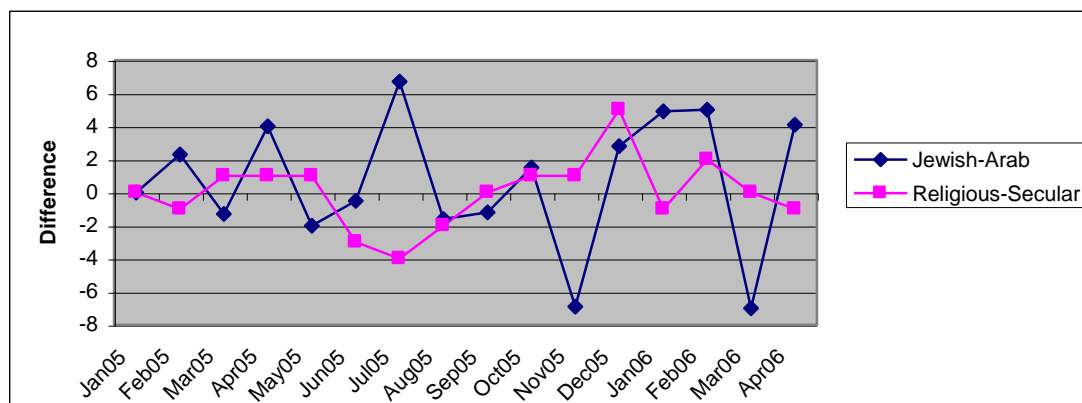


Figure 2. Changes in participants' negative attitudes toward participating in either ingroup (secular-religious) or intergroup (Jewish-Arab) face-to-face encounters from one month to another starting from January 2005 to April 2006.

The second research hypothesis was that over time, stronger fluctuations would be evidenced in the attitudes toward intergroup (Jewish-Arab) encounters than would be the case for ingroup (secular-religious) encounters. Figure 2 presents the changes in participants' negative attitudes from month to month. As can be seen, the changes in attitudes towards intergroup (Jewish-Arab) contact are much stronger and fluctuate more radically over time than attitudes towards ingroup (secular-religious) contact. The average month-to-month difference with regard to intergroup contact is 3.23% ( $SD =$



2.25), with the modest change being 1.2% and the highest 7% (Median = 2.55). Regarding ingroup encounters the average month-to-month difference is only 1.5% (SD = 1.36), with months where there is no change in attitudes at all. The high changes over time were 3%, 4% and 5% each appeared only once (Median = 1).

Figure 2 presents the change in attitudes of all participants. It was assumed that some participants probably did not change their attitudes either for or against participation in encounters throughout the study period. A survival analysis indicated that around 45% of participants (45% regarding Jewish-Arab encounters and 45.8% regarding religious-secular encounters) did not change their opinion throughout all the research period (see Figure 3). It appeared that the number of participants who consistently refused to participate in intergroup (Jewish-Arab) encounters (25%) was higher than those who consistently refused to participate in ingroup (religious-secular) encounters (11%) [ $\chi^2 (df = 12) = 44.57, p < .001$ ]. Regarding positive attitudes towards encounters, 20% of the sample consistently agreed to participate in intergroup contact (Jewish-Arab) and 34.8% in ingroup (religious-secular) encounters. Although these findings may enrich a discussion on the social and political atmosphere within Israeli society, they mainly point to the notion that when this group of "persistent" participants is removed, there are only around 55% of participants who can either be convinced to participate or negatively influenced to refuse to participate in ingroup or intergroup encounters.

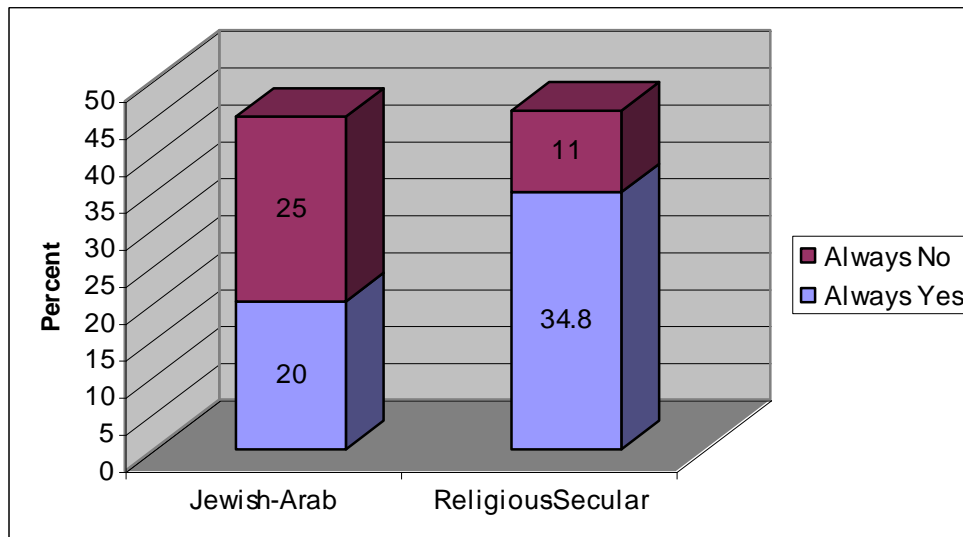


Figure 3. Amount of participants who consistently agree or refuse to participate in either ingroup (secular-religious) or intergroup (Jewish-Arab) face-to-face encounters.

Based on the previous analysis, the "window of opportunity" for enhancing encounters between the conflict groups, studied in the present study, is presented in Figure 4. Deducting the number of people who have a consistent opinion regarding participation in either ingroup or intergroup encounters (see Figure 3) from the total

number of participants, revealed the clearest picture of the fluctuations in the positive attitudes toward participation in encounters. Figure 4 therefore presents a curve of positive attitudes of people who are influenced by various factors and change their opinion from time to time with regard to participation in contact intervention programs with either ingroup or intergroup members. It appears that regarding encounters with religious or secular counterparts, the baseline of the "window of opportunity" involving participants in encounters is relatively stable with one stage of growth starting in July 2005, peaking in September and October and declining in November. Regarding encounters with Arabs, there is a decline in the willingness to interact from July to August 2005, then a step-by-step growth until November and then a relapse. Adding a regression line to the curve (see Figure 4) points to the general decline in the willingness to interact with Arab counterparts over time while stable in attitudes regarding religious or secular counterparts.

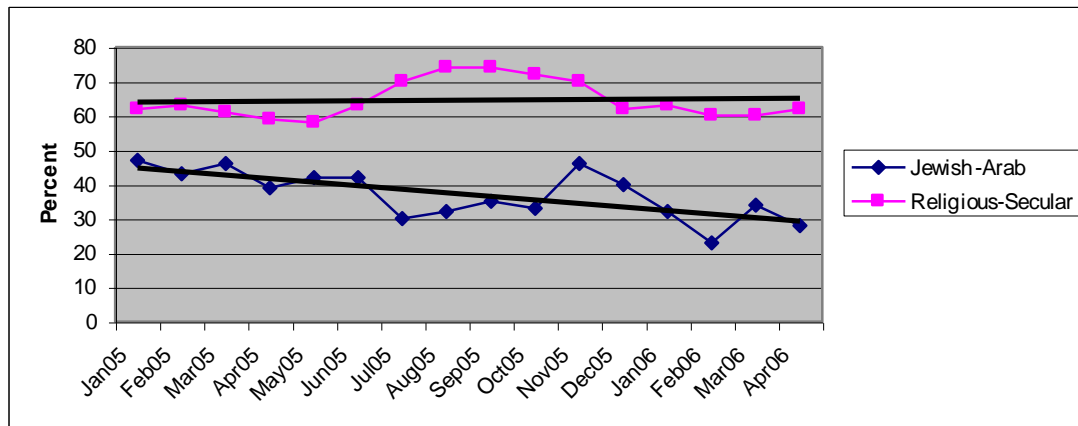


Figure 4. The willingness to participate in either ingroup (secular-religious) or intergroup (Jewish-Arab) face-to-face encounters of students whose attitudes are flexible (sometimes agree and sometimes not) from January 2005 to April 2006.

Other findings revealed by the curve analysis described in Figure 4 are that by comparing only those participants who change their attitudes from time to time, the number of participants who agree to meet with ingroup (religious-secular) counterparts is higher at each time point (Mean = 64.56;  $SD = 5.46$ ) compared to those willing to interact with intergroup (Jewish-Arab) counterparts (Mean = 37.00;  $SD = 7.14$ ). In addition, fluctuations in attitudes towards intergroup (Jewish-Arab) contacts are much stronger and vary more radically over time compared to attitudes towards ingroup (secular-religious) contact. The average difference from one month to another in regard to intergroup contact is 5.56% ( $SD = 4.13$ ) while in ingroup encounters it is only 2.5% ( $SD = 2.39$ ). These findings support the third research hypothesis regarding higher fluctuations in attitudes

towards contact with Arab participants compared to contact with religious or secular Jews.

### Discussion

The findings of the present study point to the imbedded differences between different types of ingroup and intergroup conflicts and suggest that *time considerations* should be part of determining the type of contact intervention. One of the main findings of the present study was that while most of the participants agreed to interact with members of a conflict group based on their religious identity, they did not agree to do so when it came to their national identity. At the same time, while willingness to meet with ingroup (religious or secular) counterparts was stable over time, radical changes were presented in regard to meetings with intergroup (Arab) counterparts and provided only a small time opportunity to both initiate and carry out any possible change.

The reason that more students were willing to meet with religious counterparts rather than Arab counterparts can relate to the intensive negative relationship between Israelis and Palestinians in recent years (Moore & Aweiss, 2003; Seginer, 2001) which also projects onto the relationship between Israeli Jews and Arabs who, for the most part, identify themselves as Palestinians (Ghanem, 2002; Kaplan, Abu-Saad, & Yonah, 2001). In addition, Smooha (2002) describes Israel as an *Ethnic Democracy* in which the ethnic nation and not the citizenry form the State for the benefit of the majority. This ideology distinguishes between members and nonmembers of the ethnic nation, and sees the latter as a threat to the survival of the ethnic nation. In those circumstances, the minority itself cannot fully identify and confer full legitimacy on the State. Therefore, although the political system is democratic and the minority groups fully participate in the governing of the state, and while they are all assumed to receive equal individual and social rights, they are still seen as a threat to the state and they themselves do not fully integrate. Such political, cultural and social relationships can be used to explain why the majority of the Jewish students refused to participate in encounters with the Arab minority while showing high willingness to interact with secular or religious members of the Jewish majority group. In a recent national study only 14% of Israeli Jewish citizens stated that they believe that the relationships between Jews and Arabs in Israel are good, and 62% of the population even supported the idea that in certain circumstances the government may consider to enhance Arab emigration outside the state (Arian, Atmor, & Hadar, 2006:39).

The above findings show a preference for ingroup contact over intergroup contact based on cognitive aspects. However, in explaining this preference, emotional aspects should also be considered as an important factor.

The above findings show a preference for ingroup contact over intergroup contact based on cognitive aspects. However, in explaining this preference, the importance of emotional aspects should also be considered. The current study did not address the emotional basis, however, it is possible that reluctance or willingness to meet with one's

conflict group is based on such emotional aspects, rather than – or in addition to – cognitive ones. Indeed, various studies point to the negative emotional base of the conflict between different groups, including the one between Israeli Jews and Arabs (Yablon, 2006), and the role of the emotional aspects in understanding intergroup attitudes has been demonstrated (e.g., Edwards & von Hippel, 1995; Esses & Dovidio, 2002; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Using such perspective can also explain some of the findings related to the fluctuations in attitudes, which will be discussed below.

Thus, other findings of the present study were that around 45% of the population hold consistent attitudes towards their conflict groups and do not change either their willingness or reluctance to meet with their counterparts. While more students hold consistent positive attitudes towards ingroup encounters (religious-secular), when it comes to intergroup relationships (Jewish-Arab) most of them present consistently negative attitudes. As modification of attitudes usually drive out the need for adjusting to new or changing circumstances based on either experiencing new situations or by changing ideals or needs (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), the social and political atmosphere in Israel all but precludes such opportunities. Thus, almost all of the political and social experiences of either Israeli Jews or Arabs are mostly negative and decline over time (Bar-Tal & Labin, 2001) and so do not request any modification in their attitudes.

In addition, even if there are occasional meetings between individuals of the two groups, different conditions that are found to increase positive relationships between members of conflict groups may be missing and such interaction can make relationships even worse. Thus, such contact between Arab and Jewish individuals mostly involves people of unequal status where their contact is usually impersonal, competitive by nature and often opposed by authorities. Conditions which are not only inappropriate to foster positive change in attitudes (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1976; Pettigrew, 1971, 1998; Stephan, 1987; Stephan & Stephan, 1996), but also intensified ingroup bias (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Eshel, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), promote negative stereotyping (Rothbart & John, 1985), low empathy and higher levels of anxiety (Stephan & Finlay, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Such interactions do not exist between religious and secular Jews (Smootha, 2002) who also share much in common (Levy, Levinsohn & Katz, 2002).

Finally, around 20% of Israeli students are consistently positive towards meeting Arab counterparts, which reflects the idea that there is a stable basis for peace intervention programs, and that such encounters would not go unanswered. In many ways this finding is supported by the notion that even during the highest tension between Israelis and Palestinians during the second Palestinian *Intifada*, over 150,000 people in Israel were engaged in coexistence activities (Abraham Fund Initiatives, 2002). In light of the findings in this study, affect-based intervention programs may be the most suitable and fruitful strategies for planning contact intervention for those students.

In sum, the findings of the present study raise the question of *the feasibility* of affective based contact intervention programs in different situations. It is suggested that different approaches should be considered for contact intervention programs between

conflict groups in regions of protracted conflict and for those designed to tackle ingroup conflict characterizing benign environments. It may be suggested that when members of two conflict groups share the same public arena and live under one social, political and cultural environment, long-term meaningful contact is possible and is to be encouraged. However, such contact between two groups who live under a different social, political, cultural, and even financial atmosphere is doubtful. In that case, even the lowest common denominator of shared spoken language, understanding of cultural norms, familiarity with governmental entities and political structure usually do not exist and require attention. When two conflict groups are almost totally strange to each other, when even their lifestyles differ, when hate, suspicion and anxiety characterize their relationships, the basis for meaningful and affective contact does not exist. As found in the present study, in regions of intractable conflict such as Israel, the time necessary to build such relationships does not exist and the intervention therefore has to focus on other, more manageable components.

From a practical point of view, researchers should make an effort to identify the conditions that can mitigate intractable conflicts, and find the possibilities for relatively short but still successful contact. It is also important to identify the conditions in which members of one conflict group change their mind and agree to participate in contact intervention programs when they had previously refused to do so. In regions of protracted conflicts, it is important to understand not only how to enhance positive relationships via contact, but also how to stimulate people to change their attitudes towards their willingness to even to participate in contact intervention. Understanding what makes people's attitudes towards members of their conflict group resistant to change (either positive or negative) over time is also a key factor in finding possible ways to bring about a positive change in regions of intractable conflicts. This may also refer to other cognitive structures such as beliefs, norms, and values that may enhance different attitudinal modification in different societies and should therefore further studied.

Finally, in addition to studying the underlying processes of intergroup contact, it remains important to study and reveal the ways and conditions in which two polarized conflict groups can meet for relatively short periods and still have meaningful and successful contact, resulting in a positive change.

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