

# Conflict resolution and asymmetric conflict: The contradictions of planned contact interventions in Israel and Palestine

Thiessen, C & Darweish, M

Author post-print (accepted) deposited by Coventry University's Repository

## Original citation & hyperlink:

Thiessen, C & Darweish, M 2018, 'Conflict resolution and asymmetric conflict: The contradictions of planned contact interventions in Israel and Palestine' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, vol 66, pp. 73-84.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.06.006>

DOI [10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.06.006](https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.06.006)

ISSN 0147-1767

Publisher: Elsevier

**NOTICE: this is the author's version of a work that was accepted for publication in *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. Changes resulting from the publishing process, such as peer review, editing, corrections, structural formatting, and other quality control mechanisms may not be reflected in this document. Changes may have been made to this work since it was submitted for publication. A definitive version was subsequently published in *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 66, (2018) DOI: [10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.06.006](https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.06.006)**

© 2018, Elsevier. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Copyright © and Moral Rights are retained by the author(s) and/ or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This item cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

This document is the author's post-print version, incorporating any revisions agreed during the peer-review process. Some differences between the published version and this version may remain and you are advised to consult the published version if you wish to cite from it.

# **Conflict resolution and asymmetric conflict: The contradictions of planned contact interventions in Israel and Palestine**

**Chuck Thiessen<sup>a</sup>**

Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University

**Marwan Darweish<sup>b</sup>**

Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University

<sup>a</sup> Corresponding author at: Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, United Kingdom, CV1 5FB; Email: chuck.thiessen@gmail.com.

<sup>b</sup> Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, United Kingdom, CV1 5FB; Email: aa1223@coventry.ac.uk.

## **Abstract**

This paper critically analyses a contradictory phenomenon experienced by local-level conflict resolution initiatives in Israel and Palestine. Despite their widespread utilization in other contexts of inter-communal conflict, facilitated contact interventions, including citizen dialogue and arranged encounters between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, are being rejected and publicly denounced by many within the Palestinian and Israeli conflict resolution community in this case. This paper contributes to an understanding of this rejection by investigating arguments in favour of and against planned contact intervention initiatives through an analysis of interview narratives from 40 respondents working for peace and conflict resolution organisations in Israel and the West Bank as well as secondary research reports. Our analysis reveals deeply conflicting viewpoints. Arguments in favour of contact-based strategies suggest that they have the potential to disrupt an entrenched status quo of asymmetry-inspired social segregation. Conversely, arguments against suggest that these conflict resolution initiatives are struggling to level power asymmetry and bypass the structural and historical drivers of violence. In response, this paper introduces a grounded proposal for conflict resolution inside asymmetric conflict that emerges from the interview narratives of practitioners, themselves, regarding effective strategies, the nature of agency, and the scope of influence of local-level contact-based conflict resolution initiatives inside asymmetric conflict.

## **Keywords**

Conflict resolution; contact; dialogue; Israel; Palestine; power asymmetry

## **Introduction**

Planned intergroup contact interventions in Israel and Palestine have been broadly promoted as fundamental components to bottom-up conflict resolution initiatives because of their perceived capabilities to counteract the failure of official peace negotiations and agreements, reconstruct individual and group identities, reduce prejudice and hostility, and increase the odds of sustainable peaceful coexistence in the future (Abu-Nimer, 2004, 2012; Maoz, 2002, 2003; Pundak, Ben-Nun, & Finkel, 2012; Ron, Maoz, & Bekerman, 2010; Steinberg & Bar-On, 2002). However, facilitated contact-based conflict resolution initiatives are being widely rejected in Israel and Palestine. For example, in 2014 Palestinian anti-normalization activists publicly disrupted, stalled and dispersed participants at two peace conferences involving Jewish Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank city of Ramallah and in East Jerusalem. Principled objections to joint meetings have ground many local-level conflict resolution projects to a halt, and dialogue initiatives between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians have become quite rare at the current juncture. While objections to contact have emerged from within both Palestinian and Jewish Israeli societies, the scope and intensity of the objection to contact interventions varies. Objections are widespread, public and forceful within Palestinian society, and are correlated to growing contention with the aftereffects of the 1993 Oslo Accords. Objections within Jewish Israeli society are mostly limited to a small subset of younger more ‘radical’ activist organizations, including both left-leaning human rights organizations and right-wing nationalist organizations. This public resistance and castigation points to a growing debate within the Israeli and Palestinian conflict resolution community over the contradictions of contact-based conflict resolution practices (Barakat & Goldenblatt, 2012, p. 25).

Existing research literature only superficially recognizes the contradictions of planned contact interventions in Israel and Palestine - conflict resolution research has only partially

connected contact and dialogue to the overarching asymmetrical political conflict (Abu-Nimer, 2012; Francis, 2010; Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004; Maoz, 2011; Selby, 2003), while social psychological research has only just begun to explore these interventions in relation to other avenues of social and political change such as collective action (Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012; Saguy, 2017; Wright & Baray, 2012). In neither body of research has the reasoning behind this rejection of contact been explicitly theorized. In response, the present research contributes to an understanding of this contradictory phenomenon and investigates how those closest to the action, conflict resolution practitioners who are either active participants in, or resisters against, contact-based conflict resolution practices, theorize the contradictions of contact interventions in Israel and Palestine.

This article proceeds by first surveying the theoretical background that situates the practice of planned contact interventions in the ongoing debates within the social psychological and conflict resolution literature over the validity of the contact hypothesis and the contradictions of conflict resolution action inside asymmetric conflict. Against this backdrop, our research methods are outlined, followed by a presentation of findings that begins with the viewpoint that planned contact interventions are constructive at the current juncture. Critical responses to contact-based strategies are presented next, with special reference to their apparent inability to either level power asymmetry or attend to the roots of ongoing violence and injustice. The final discussion and conclusions sections construct and examine a grounded proposal for conflict resolution inside asymmetric conflict that emerges from the interview narratives.

## **Theoretical background: Planned contact interventions inside asymmetric conflict**

### *Planned contact interventions*

Planned contact interventions such as citizen dialogue, reconciliation and healing sessions, micro-negotiations, joint schooling and training, social, sports and cultural events, and economic and development cooperation are widely used by conflict resolution organizations as strategic initiatives in response to protracted social conflict and intergroup violence in Palestine (Abu-Nimer, 2004, 2012; Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Maoz, 2000a, 2002, 2003; Ramsbotham, 2010; Ron, et al., 2010; Steinberg & Bar-On, 2002). Widely utilized in other contexts of intercommunal violence including between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland and between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, planned contact interventions (often labelled ‘people-to-people’ activities) in Israel and Palestine were first initiated in the 1970s and 1980s, often as high-risk ventures for facilitators and participants, which evolved into a flood of internationally-funded contact-based conflict resolution activity after the Palestine Liberation Organization adopted a two-state platform in 1988 and the promotion of cross-communal contact after the 1993 Oslo Accords (Herzog & Hai, 2005).

A growing body of research and evaluation literature has shown that planned contact interventions in Israel and Palestine are modifying individual perceptions of the ‘other’ (Abu-Nimer, 2012; Maoz, 2000a; Steinberg & Bar-On, 2002), encouraging multiple perspectives and deepening understandings of conflict (Khuri, 2004), reconstructing individual identities (Maoz, Steinberg, Bar-On, & Fakhereldeen, 2002) and motivating sustained participation in further conflict resolution ventures (Lazarus, 2011). More broadly, research has evidenced that intergroup contact facilitates the re-imagination of in-groups boundaries and category memberships (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005; Wright & Lubensky, 2009), allow individuals to learn about outgroups, modify social behaviours, generates positive emotions,

trust and empathy (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), and shape in-group norms and customs in relation to outgroups (Pettigrew, 1998, p. 71). Transformational influence is directional – flowing from micro-individual to macro-institutional-political levels – which requires a consistent focus on historically advantaged groups as the primary agents of change in creating a more peaceful society (Dixon, et al., 2012, p. 418; Wright & Baray, 2012). These outcomes were predicted by Allport’s ‘contact hypothesis’, which proposed that competing ethnic or national groups would be able to reduce hostility and develop positive perceptions of their adversaries through structured encounters (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969).

However, these positive findings are ostensibly dissonant with the principled rejection of such activities in Israel and Palestine. There currently exists scant empirical research that considers the principled rejection of planned contact interventions - conflict resolution literature on planned contact interventions has, for the most part, limited itself to the internal dynamics of group dialogue sessions, and social psychological research on contact and prejudice reduction has only begun to move out of idealized contexts (e.g. between equal status groups) and consider the manner in which intergroup encounters can undermine other avenues of social and political change (Dixon, et al., 2012; Saguy, 2017; Saguy & Dovidio, 2013; Wright & Lubensky, 2009). The present study expands these debates by shifting the focus of analysis out of group contact sessions and into ‘non-ideal’ contexts by considering how conflict resolution practitioners theorize this rejection of planned contact interventions in relation to the protracted asymmetrical conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinians.

#### *Asymmetric conflict, power and oppression*

Conflict resolution literature reveals a hesitancy to consider the stature and efficacy of various conflict resolution prescriptions in relation to asymmetric social and political conflict and has evidenced a predilection to detach micro-level conflict resolution interventions from

the overarching socio-political reality in contexts of asymmetric conflict (Francis, 2010; Hansen, 2008; Mitchell, 1991; Ramsbotham, 2017; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011). While taking into account some notable exceptions (See for e.g. Abu-Nimer, 2012; Azar & Farah, 1981; Maoz, 2000c; Rouhana & Korper, 1997), this predilection is important to note since the dynamics of entrenched power and structural asymmetry unmistakably endorse and define violent conflict as experienced by Jewish Israelis and Palestinians (Arreguin-Toft, 2001). The consequences of decision-making undertaken within this sort of conflict resolution paradigm are significant since power and structural asymmetry tend to direct conflict into ‘malign spiral[s] of interaction’ between competing parties (Mitchell, 1991, p. 28). Engaging with these asymmetry-inspired spiralling interactions requires conflict resolution practitioners to reconsider any expectations that competitors will abide by the predictable patterns of (re)action typical in contexts of symmetric power (Pruitt, 1998; Ramsbotham, 2017).

A conceptualization of ‘power asymmetry’ benefits from Boulding’s (1990) description of threat power, or the coercive authority to enforce sanctions with violence; and economic power, which is embodied by resource advantages garnered from exchange and trade processes (Atack, 2012). Threat and economic power exertion are fundamentally drawn to domination and subordination inside hierarchy and, in the case of Israel and Palestine, depend upon legal and structural dimensions to asymmetric ethno-nationalist conflict. Legal asymmetry ensures the dominant party’s advantage by allowing it to define the situation, dictate the status and legitimacy of its competitors, and select the tools to prosecute the conflict (Mitchell, 1991). Structural asymmetry, meanwhile, allows a dominant party to define which issues are consequential in a conflict and to force their concerns onto political agendas for action. Structural asymmetry is also defined by differential abilities to ‘survive’ the conflict and mobilize intra-communal cohesion (Mitchell, 1991). Legal and structural asymmetry in conflict zones often take the form of systemic domination and oppression (Galtung, 1990; Gil,

2013; Hansen, 2008), and are widely identified as central to the Palestinian social and political experience.

*The de-politicization of conflict resolution and the interpersonal turn*

In their encounter with asymmetry-inspired oppression and occupation, contact-based conflict resolution practice has, arguably, found it beneficial to de-politicize its activities and re-direct its focus onto addressing interpersonal issues. At least two strands of reasoning for this shift are specified in the conflict resolution and social psychology literature. First, conflict resolution practitioners continue to test the utility of contact activities engendered by Allport's contact hypothesis. Of particular concern is Maoz's (2000b) critique that the predictions of the contact hypothesis have not been fully confirmed in cases of actual asymmetrical ethno-political conflict. Maoz and others question the applicability of the hypothesis to planned contact interventions in contexts like Israel and Palestine, and argue that the structural dynamics of the external conflict do penetrate planned contact activities and significantly compromise interactions therein (Abu-Nimer, 2012; Maoz, 2000c; Pettigrew, 1998; Rouhana & Korper, 1997). Of particular concern is that this seepage of external asymmetrical socio-structural dynamics (Rouhana & Fiske, 1995) into contact activities contravenes Allport's essential condition that attitudinal and behavioural changes rely upon perceptions of equal status within the contact interaction (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998).

Facilitators of planned contact interventions that have recognized this phenomenon are faced with difficult decisions, and have sometimes chosen to divert interactions away from expressions of dissent by weaker groups (Maoz, 2000c), avoid 'political' discussions (Abu-Nimer, 2012; Eide, 1972; Maoz, 2000b; Phipps, 2014; Rouhana & Korper, 1997), and channel interactions towards commonalities and/or cooperative ventures as opposed to the overarching socio-political conflict in order to avoid discussions that allowed Palestinian counterparts a



dominant role, or any threat to the privileged position of Jewish Israeli participants (Saguy & Dovidio, 2013). Bypassing the ‘political’ has, in part, motivated a growing critique of conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives in Israel and Palestine as pre-occupied with achieving ‘normalization’, a process that aims to project occupation-inspired oppression as ‘normal’ and a reality that must be consented to and tolerated by local populations (Barakat & Goldenblatt, 2012; Mi’Ari, 1999; Salem, 2005).

Second, some scholars argue that conflict resolution research and practice tend to identify with and serve the interests of groups conceived to be powerful (Carroll, 1972; Eide, 1972; Hansen, 2008). For example, Schmid (1968) details conflict resolution’s tendency to support ‘power’ in maintaining the oppressive status quo in political conflicts. This critique builds on an ongoing debate within conflict resolution scholarship as to its relationship with ‘the establishment’ and particularly with national governments (Rapoport, 1970; Stohl & Chamberlain, 1972). Stohl & Chamberlain (1972) believe that this critique centres on competing conceptions of peace because ‘it is necessary to decide whether by peace you mean social justice or social stability (p. 527).’ Are, then, conflict resolution activities suppressing conflict to serve the interests of oppressive but stabilizing power structures?

Jabri (1995, p. 53) argues that conflict resolution practice has, in fact, often served ‘the establishment’, which has necessitated the de-politicization of conflict resolution action and ‘the extraction of the conflict resolution setting from its social and political context’ (Jabri, 2006, p. 5). This de-politicization of conflict resolution theory and practice has important implications for planned contact interventions inside contexts of asymmetric conflict because it has led to the prioritization of interpersonal peace formation over more encompassing forms of justice. A fixation on addressing conflict at the interpersonal level constitutes an ‘interpersonal turn’ and reifies behavioural analyses of conflict as it evades of the messy task of addressing entrenched drivers of violence and eliminating structural violence (Abu-Nimer,

2012; Eide, 1972; Galtung, 1996, p. 280; Phipps, 2014; Rouhana & Korper, 1997). A notable consequence of prioritizing interpersonal peace over systemic justice is a tendency to conceptualize and operationalize conflict resolution as a process of de-escalation inside asymmetric conflict (Lederach, 1995a). Numerous scholars equate externally sponsored de-escalation as ‘riot control’, which serves to pacify insubordinate populations and reinforce the oppressive status quo and ensure hegemonic stability (Duffield, 2001; Francis, 2010; Stohl & Chamberlain, 1972; Turner, 2015).

### *Reconsidering conflict resolution in contexts of asymmetric conflict*

The de-politicization of conflict resolution theory and practice and its penchant for de-escalating surface expressions of conflict have, in part, inspired a revisionist movement and conceptual paradigm shift, broadly labelled as ‘conflict transformation’, that features efforts to leverage forms of conflict intensification inside contexts of asymmetric conflict (Galtung, 1996; Lederach, 1995b; Thiessen, 2017). A key theoretical justification for this paradigm shift lies in a reconsideration of Adam Curle’s (1971) model for the progression of conflict in unbalanced relationships, which proposed that conflict resolution must first equalize unbalanced power dynamics inside conflicting relationships through confrontation before conciliatory settlements can be achieved.

A revised conflict resolution enterprise based on Curle’s ideas affirms the constructive potential of conflict as a natural social process that serves distinct political functions (Kriesberg, 2015; Lederach, 1995b). Similar affirmations have begun to surface within social psychological research – researchers are contradicting common conceptualizations of intergroup conflict as a social problem or an ‘absolute bad’ (Dixon, et al., 2012, p. 423). To clarify, social psychological and conflict resolution research has tended to neglect the instrumental and constructive nature of conflict and violence (Vayrynen, 1991). Thus, conflict

resolution practice can exhibit biases towards problem-solving approaches that shy away from altering the basic nature of conflicting relationships and suppress political violence in a manner that ultimately maintains the advantaged position of powerful parties (Richmond, 2004; Vayrynen, 1991), confer or secure international legitimacy for power advantage and, in many cases, does this by ‘dressing up domination as “cooperation”’ (Selby, 2003, p. 121).

In contrast, Curle proposes that conflict resolution practice inside systems of power asymmetry should not be distracted with how conflict is presented, but endeavour towards the structural modification of power relationships. Conflict resolution, operationalized as a process of structural change and power re-distribution, channels manifestations of conflict into peace processes that feature the pursuit of justice by digging beneath surface manifestations of conflict and revealing its structural roots. This process aligns with realizations within social psychological research that advantaged groups within conflict rarely give away their power and privileges but, rather, equality and justice is achieved through struggle by subordinate groups (Wright & Lubensky, 2009).

Adjusting power inside imbalanced relationships will require mobilized struggle and collective action by disempowered groups to destabilize the status quo (Schmid, 1968). Equality and justice are won as opposed to being gifted by advantaged groups as the result of improved intergroup attitudes from contact interventions (Dixon, et al., 2012, p. 419). As a result, Dudouet (2006) proposes that conflict resolution needs to embrace confrontation and the intensification of conflict. Understanding and utilizing civil conflict intensification requires the integration of social movement/resistance theory with conflict resolution theory, a move that works to ‘turn [conflict resolution] away from its problem-solving, status quo, pacification/system maintenance orientation’ (Jackson, 2015, p. 21). For example, there is growing evidence that unarmed collective action against a violent adversary inside an asymmetric relationship carries some potential to assist oppressed populations in transcending

subordination towards elevated self-confidence, unity and social capital leading to group formation and mobilization (Darweish & Rigby, 2015; Dudouet, 2008; Nanetti, 2017), trigger power shifts to coerce or convince an opponent to accommodate demands (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Dudouet, 2008; Schock, 2013), and leverage influential external parties to amplify key demands (Darweish & Rigby, 2015; Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The effectiveness of unarmed collective action has been linked to Boulding's (1990, p. 25) third type of power – 'integrative power', or the power of consent, which recognizes that a power-holder's ability to maintain legitimacy is conditional on the loyalty of subordinates (Atack, 2012, p. 103).

Our theoretical background has featured two lines of social psychological and conflict resolution practice and research – the theoretical individualism of planned contact interventions and the structural focus of collective action and resistance. These two lines of inquiry appear to be inherently contradictory (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2007; Saguy, 2017; Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009). For example, Wright and Lubensky (2009, p. 298) conclude that 'contact appears to create a direct impediment to the development and maintenance of critical conditions necessary for collective action'. They reason that blurred intergroup boundaries, positive feelings towards outgroups and diminished perceptions of inequality due to contact interventions contravened the necessity of clear intergroup boundaries and strong negative beliefs regarding intergroup injustice for collective action to occur (Wright & Lubensky, 2009). But, more fundamentally, both conflict resolution and emerging social psychological research recognize that contact interventions promote intergroup harmony, in part, by viewing conflict as a negative social force that should be prevented and 'resolved', whereas resistant collective action requires intensified conflict through which social and political change for equality and justice is realized (Dudouet, 2008; Schock, 2013; Wright & Lubensky, 2009, p. 302).

Planned contact interventions and resistant collective action have been awkward cohabitants in Israel and Palestine, and have been justified as complementary paths toward sustainable peace and intergroup harmony. The provocative analysis surveyed above casts this viewpoint into doubt and proposes that contact interventions may, in fact, be undermining other avenues of social and political change. The present study contributes to the investigation of this theoretical provocation and brings the collective voice of conflict resolution practitioners, themselves, to bear on the rigorous analysis of contact-based initiatives. How do conflict resolution practitioners theorize their experiences of planned contact interventions?

## **Method**

### *Research design*

This research is a grounded theory investigation, and was conceived of and developed in collaboration with leaders from nine Israeli and Palestinian civil society organizations in 2013, who identified the controversy over planned contact interventions and helped shape the contours of the research theme and final research design. We settled on an interview guide that inquired about experiences of contact-based interventions, including partners, target groups, achievements, struggles, transformational potential, and external supports and threats including issues of power, the overarching political conflict and the official peace process.

### *Research population and data gathering*

This research relies upon data gathered through a series of 40 face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted with leaders from 17 Israeli, 16 Palestinian (from the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel) and seven international organizations. Sampling was purposive - aimed at capturing a cross section of perspectives on contact interventions defined by key inclusion criteria: the location of organization headquarters, respondents' ethnicities and experience of contact-based conflict resolution. Sampling was also theoretical; some

respondents were selected while we analysed our data to elaborate on gaps in the proposal we construct and present later in this paper. Nineteen men and 14 women were interviewed (three interviews had two respondents), of a variety of ages (18+ years). Organizations included 20 local NGOs (headquarters in Israel or Palestine), five international NGOs, five educational institutions, four other civil society groups, four research/consulting organizations and two international donors. All respondents had significant experience working with contact interventions (e.g. as a donor or facilitator) or had significant experience as a critical observer of contact-based initiatives while active in conflict resolution or resistant collective action.

Interview data was gathered during 2014 and 2015 on four trips to Israel and the West Bank by the authors and an Israeli research assistant. Our tri-ethnic research team allowed most participants to use their mother tongue (Arabic, English or Hebrew), and helped to reduce cultural barriers for respondents when engaging with controversial themes. Most interviews were audio recorded, with the remainder documented through detailed notes. Interviewing was terminated when significant repetition emerged across the various interview narratives. We have tried to ensure the anonymity of all respondents.

Interview data were complemented by a variety of secondary documentary sources which were selected according to their direct relevance to the research themes. Sources included ten research reports, three published interview transcripts, five project evaluations and nine evidence-based commentaries on planned contact interventions. All secondary data was produced after the 1993 Oslo Accords.

### *Data analysis*

Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and submitted along with the detailed interview notes and secondary sources to data analysis using NVivo. Data analysis procedures were guided by constructivist approaches to grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) and required

the identification of core explanatory categories to explain beliefs and behaviours regarding contact-based strategies through open coding, followed by selective coding to populate core categories. When identifying these codes, we did not sort respondents into ‘advocates’ or ‘critics’, but recognized complex viewpoints where respondents both advocate for and criticize contact interventions. Thus, when we refer to a ‘critic’ or ‘advocate’ in the discussion below, we are referencing specific statements made by a respondent, and not applying an all-encompassing label to the respondent. Further, although we have not quantified exactly our reporting of categories and codes, we have indicated in a couple places the number of coded references for overarching categories regarding the type of organization the respondent worked for (international, Israeli or Palestinian) to illustrate broad trends in viewpoints inside a context defined by asymmetric competition. We have also conscientiously featured categories containing the highest numbers of coded references while allowing those with fewer references to nuance major categories, where appropriate.

Our grounded theory strategy also shaped how we report our research. As examples, continual memo-writing facilitated a process of theory development (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) as presented later in this paper, and we constructed the majority of our theoretical background after data was analysed in order to better accentuate the viewpoints of our respondents. In 2017 we validated our interpretation of these viewpoints by presenting our research findings and theoretical propositions at four events in Israel and the West Bank where peace and conflict resolution practitioners and donors provided feedback.

## **Findings**

### *Arguments in favour of planned contact interventions*

A subset of the interview narratives and research literature we reviewed advocate for contact-based conflict resolution strategies inside the asymmetric conflict between the State of

Israel and the Palestinians. Approximately two-thirds of the coded references from our interview data in this section are from respondents working for organizations based in Israel, while international and Palestinian organizations evidenced more limited reflection on these themes. Responses are described below in terms of change inside three concentric social realms – individual, group and elite-political.

*Individual awakening.* Research respondents believed that contact-based initiatives were effective conflict resolution tools that can motivate personal-psychological adaptation. A range of personal-level activity was justified by participants, ranging from superficial information-sharing to the deeper psychological process of humanization. Several interviewees expanded on the way planned contact interventions can dislodge the asymmetric status quo. For example, numerous participants working for Israeli organizations suggested that information exchange during dialogue sessions created awareness and respect for opposing narratives, revealed misinformation and bias, bolstered truthful and critical conversations and enabled deeper experiential understandings of an exceedingly complex context.

Research respondents also described how dialogue sessions and personal encounters generate deep emotional experiences for individual participants; ones that motivate a variety of personal changes including relationship-building, increased cooperation, and commitments to advocacy. One Israeli participant shared a memory of sitting with grieving members of the opposing group to discuss the common experience of losing a family member to the conflict. Several respondents insisted that these sorts of emotionally moving experiences resulted in a reduction of fear in many individuals. They pointed out that fear can motivate suspicion, segregation and support for self-protecting violence.

Conversely, a reduction of fear and ignorance allows planned contact participants to humanize ‘the other’. For example, several West Bank respondents attested that their perceptions of Jewish Israelis had been constrained by their almost exclusive exposure to



soldiers and settlers due to stringent controls on movement. A West Bank Palestinian respondent working for an international organization noted her own response to those limits and the stereotypes they engender:

‘I see the Israeli as a person with a gun at a checkpoint, and the Israeli sees the Palestinian as cheap labour. They don’t see the human side... [it becomes] easier to kill the other.’

In her view, contact allows competitors to see the human side of the ‘other’ and revise conceptions of their ‘enemy’.

*Group change.* Research respondents described how planned contact interventions contribute to broader communal explorations of how competing populations can live side-by-side in peace. Contact-based conflict resolution strategies have the potential to disrupt an entrenched status quo of asymmetry-inspired social segregation whereby interactions between competing populations are restrained by fear and restricted to functional encounters such as business transactions or conversations at checkpoints.

Several Jewish Israeli respondents justified the value of engineering insulated ‘bubble’ environments, where small competing groups can model trust and the possibility of constructive interaction. Our respondents believed that inside many planned encounters a microcosm of equality is realized and that this is subversive inside asymmetric conflict since these encounters encapsulate, however fleetingly, the characteristics of ‘hoped-for’ peaceful coexistence. One leader in a cross-communal school in Israel stated that:

‘Basically, our purpose in building the school is to have an island here in this region of conflict, where students can come to a safe place and interact with each other, form bridges between people and cultures.’

Other research participants believed that the safe space within dialogue encounter groups allowed participants to explore and debate contentious issues and ask tough questions. Again,

these activities can be subversive of asymmetry as opinions expressed in safety are detached from the constraints of external power structures and shielded from the social pressures of everyday life. This detachment allows participants to experience, understand and validate the reality of competing social narratives as they develop novel solutions and allow previously suppressed viewpoints to gain traction.

*Elite-political transformation.* Some participants viewed the personal and communal transformations described above as constituent of a broader transformative political project – a local turn in the peace process aimed at wider inclusion of citizen political action. The interview narratives reveal that official peace process negotiations, including the Oslo Accords, are popularly viewed as having been conducted in bad faith and unable to activate meaningful change on the ground. Some respondents believed that planned contact interventions return agency to the local level by bypassing self-interested political elites and their interest in maintaining the asymmetric status quo. Several described how political elites have become disconnected from struggles at the local level, actively suppress local initiatives, and then find themselves unable to kindle a critical mass of citizen discussion on key issues. In this context, a Palestinian NGO leader cited the popular slogan which suggests that ‘Peace is too dear to be left to politicians only’. Several respondents argued that dialogue-based strategies can engage a comprehensive range of stakeholders and reduce local-level hopelessness by channelling adversaries into constructive conflict resolution processes.

However, our research participants did not propose abandoning political peace processes and argued that widespread sustainable change is dependent upon the constructive involvement of elite actors. For example, two Israeli civil society respondents proposed that the achievements of planned encounters could be ‘scaled up’ to ensure impact on future peace processes by shaping future political and social leaders who may be amenable to peaceful

solutions. An Israeli school leader argued that, ‘if you educate “influencers”, then eventually there will be change.’

#### *Arguments against planned contact interventions*

The viewpoints summarized in the preceding section were fundamentally critiqued by other respondents who cautioned against the use of contact-based strategies at the current juncture and justified the growing objection to planned contact interventions in Israel and Palestine. Approximately 40% of the coded references from the interview data in this section are from respondents working for Palestinian organizations, with the remaining references divided almost equally between international and Israeli organizations.

*Bypassing the needs of oppressed local populations.* Many of our respondents believed that planned contact interventions, as currently envisioned and funded by international donors, are not addressing the needs of local conflict-affected populations but, rather, the self-interests of other actors. As an example, respondents argued that funding decisions made by international governmental donors are based upon the self-interests of their respective commissioning governments (and their constituencies) including their economic and political relations with the State of Israel and its citizens. Thus, the interview narratives reveal perceptions that the injection of international donor money for contact-based strategies has diminished the feasibility of locally owned and prioritized practices. Lines of accountability have become inverted as donor-driven agendas reflect external agendas in relation to the State of Israel as opposed to the needs of local Israeli and Palestinian populations. As an example, the director of an international peace organization described how the EU’s *Partnership for Peace (P4P)* program has dictated project design by, for instance, insisting upon joint Israeli-Palestinian initiatives rather than supporting collective action.

Second, the resource injections provided by international donors have served to create a distinct ‘dialogue industry’ in Israel and Palestine (Compare with Richmond (2004)).<sup>1</sup> An international peace worker described this as comprising a cohort of dialogue facilitators who have collectively initiated and implemented large numbers of dialogue projects in the post-Oslo Accord period. Further, some respondents believed that there is an accompanying cohort of dialogue participants who are often simply rotating between various initiatives, and this limits the reach of the dialogue industry. The emergence of a bounded set of dialogue-based conflict resolution methods, which have become the norm within the ‘industry’, may additionally be preventing the use of other forms of conflict resolution including popular collective action. According to a few respondents, this inherent friction with popular collective action ultimately serves to maintain the status quo of asymmetric conflict.

Third, other participants believed that planned contact interventions have been co-opted and manipulated by the State of Israel to ensure the maintenance of its power advantage. They suggested that planned contact interventions can be illusory and misleading and that these activities permit occupation structures to project the false impression that advances towards peace are being made even while they are working to intensify oppression. Several respondents alleged that, while dialogue initiatives are probably being carried out with sincerity at the local level, they inadvertently enable the State of Israel to divert attention away from continuing rights violations: they allow it to make apparently reasonable claims that it is genuinely committed to resolving the ongoing conflict.

*Impotency in levelling power-asymmetry.* Several respondents argued that efforts to

---

<sup>1</sup> During our analysis, we recognized that every ‘industry’ develops a preferred language utilized by insiders. This required us to search surrounding text for viewpoints that dig beneath the industry-accepted responses.

balance power inside planned contact interventions were mostly symbolic, distinctly inadequate and, most likely, unable to effect change outside of controlled group settings. These respondents explained this impotency as being rooted in the deeply self-sustaining nature of power asymmetry because pronounced economic, social, and political benefits for ‘the powerful’ inside asymmetrical relationships fossilize the status quo. They pointed out that power relationships between partner organizations and between project participants therefore often replicated the status quo of occupation-inspired power asymmetry and did not model equalized relations. A respondent on a programme evaluation that we reviewed stated: “It doesn’t matter how hard you try [to create equality]; the external reality is much stronger (Kahanoff, Salem, Nasrallah, & Neumann, 2007)”.

At the heart of the respondents’ critique is the common practice of conducting dialogue processes as if detached from the contentious political beliefs that participants carry with them into sessions. A typical outgrowth of this practice is the equation of Jewish Israeli participants and their circumstances with Palestinian participants. Some respondents who worked for Palestinian organizations argued that contact strategies based on a sense of equality and shared individual sufferings are blind to the distinct differences between the life experiences of the ‘occupier’ and ‘occupied’. For example, Palestinians arrive at joint meetings inside East Jerusalem or Israel distressed by travel permit processes and invasive security procedures at checkpoints.

Several respondents insisted that the power imbalance between Israeli and Palestinian partner organizations and staff was reinforced by Israeli partner organizations’ preferential access to international donor resources. A Palestinian administrator for a European donor noted that Israeli organizations were ‘affiliated with the West, so they are more accessible’ and ‘internationals will listen more to the Israelis’. As a result, international funders often insist that Israeli partners retain control over project finances and activities. Israeli partner control

also extends to project design since Israeli partners typically lead bid-writing processes, which results in reduced Palestinian ownership of project implementation. A Palestinian community organization leader, experienced in joint project work, reflected that:

‘Palestinian staff were simply doing what the Israeli leaders asked them to do, there was not a feeling of equality, there was little or no transparency with the Palestinian staff in regard to finances, and unequal budgets on different sides of the line.’

*Neglecting the drivers of violence.* The interview narratives revealed a broad perception that planned contact interventions are not capable of neutralizing power asymmetry due to their inability to rectify, and their evasion of the structural and historical drivers of violence. As predicted earlier (See: Abu-Nimer, 2012; Eide, 1972; Maoz, 2000b, 2000c; Phipps, 2014; Rouhana & Korper, 1997; Saguy & Dovidio, 2013), some respondents described how select planned contact interventions were avoiding ‘the hard issues’ by focusing on individual psychological change, discussing cultural differences between groups and providing entertainment programs. Furthermore, they cautioned that these sorts of initiatives were making local-level conflict resolution appear disingenuous. An Israeli NGO leader suggested that:

‘If an organization does not support right of return [for refugees], it is hypocritical [...] because they do coexistence dialogue activities, but are ignoring the fundamental rights abuses.’

Another explanation for the struggle of planned contact initiatives to address the drivers of violence involves their inherent inability to evidence transformation beyond the personal-psychological level. This is a formidable critique since it disputes a fundamental claim made by advocates of dialogue-based methodologies – that de-politicized interactions between competitors will induce personal transformations which will trickle outwards and affect the broader socio-political conflict. This critique brings into focus disagreement over the perceived ‘reach’ of contact-based strategies. According to a representative of an international

governmental donor, this critique is based on awareness that many ‘co-existence’ activities avoid difficult discussion of resolutions for root causes and find it favourable to steer dialogues towards issues at the personal level. A Palestinian civil society leader protested that ‘Our conflict is not psychology; our problem is political!’ In related fashion, an international NGO leader reacted against the notion that building friendships and relationships between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians was pre-requisite for solutions to root causes:

‘This conflict is not about two peoples relating to each other, it is a problem of how one relates to the occupier.’

*Normalizing the occupation.* Taken together, the three previous critiques of planned contact interventions point to a final overarching problem acknowledged by a strong majority of our interview respondents and by several secondary data sources. The issue is that planned contact interventions may be associated with the normalization of the occupation. As such, contact-based initiatives are viewed as part of a broader strategy which ensures that oppressed populations accept and terminate resistance to occupation structures and processes. This view directly implicates planned contact interventions in maintaining the status quo of Israeli dominance and constraining the Palestinian self-determination movement.

One respondents argued that the promotion of congenial relations between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis inside the tightening grip of occupation succeeds only in:

‘break[ing] the mind down to accept the possibility of occupied relationships [...] psychologically accepting the occupier’ (Palestinian activist).

Two other participants went as far as to argue that the underlying goal of many joint Palestinian-Israeli activities was to assist oppressed populations in accepting the distorted logic of oppression. As a facet of normalization, joint interactions either aim to portray a sense of ‘equal’ struggle or, worse, tilt discussions towards exploring the potential legitimacy of the

oppressors' repressive actions. Several respondents said that these suspicions had provoked escalating resistance to these 'normalization events' and protests at dialogue initiatives.

## **Discussion**

Our data analysis has revealed deep divisions between the arguments in favour of and against planned contact interventions – represented by the viewpoints of critics and advocates. However, we emphasize again that we did not essentialize respondents as either critics or advocates, but recognized that some argued for and against planned contact interventions in the same interview. Our respondents' contradictory viewpoints resonate with the theoretical background presented earlier, that concluded with the suggestion that conflict-reducing approaches such as planned contact interventions may be undermining other avenues of social and political change that intensify conflict. In this section, our goal is to make sense of this theoretical and practical disagreement and outline three contentious themes that emerge from our research to form a grounded proposal for effective conflict resolution inside the asymmetric conflict.

### *Scope of influence of conflict resolution*

The first component to our grounded proposal contends that, while important, individual identity revision is distinctly inadequate as a mode of change inside asymmetric conflict. Instead, strategic conflict resolution decision-making should prioritize methods that evidence a direct effect on both oppressive asymmetric power structures and elite-level peace processes (Compare with Abu-Nimer, 2012; Maoz, 2000c; Rouhana & Korper, 1997). This proposition is legitimated by a broad agreement in our findings that local-level transformation in the personal and group realms should be designed to impact the elite-political realm, including oppressive state structures and concomitant official peace process initiatives.



However, respondents disagreed regarding the potential that identity changes at the personal and group level have to disrupt power asymmetry in this elite-political realm. Advocates of contact and dialogue argued that identity revisions from subversive interactions inside socially engineered settings can be ‘scaled up’ to shape future leaders and ‘influencers’ in elite-level peace processes. Critics noted that any revisions to individual identities inside dialogue groups are mostly overwhelmed by competing socio-political forces when they move beyond these insulated environments. Further, critics insisted that contact-based strategies are, in fact, ‘normalizing’ the status quo of state oppression. These critics favoured strategies of resistant collective action that intensified conflict (but not violence) and harnessed the legitimacy provided by global civil society and justice structures (Compare with Francis, 2010; Jackson, 2015).

This component to our grounded proposal captures the essence of Curle’s (1971) model for harnessing conflict inside unbalanced power relationships by making planned contact interventions conditional on the reformation of ‘occupied’ relationships through (re)politicized conflict resolution initiatives to subvert status quo power relationships (See also Azar & Farah, 1981; Jabri, 1995; Rouhana & Korper, 1997). This conditional logic reflects the inclination of several respondents towards local-level Palestinian-led ‘resistant’ approaches, which aligns with Wright and Lubensky’s (2009) observation that collective action shifts the analytical gaze towards subordinate groups inside conflict resolution processes.

However, this proposal runs up against the hard reality that internationally funded conflict resolution practice is deeply committed to cross-communal cooperation and contact, based on an individualist strategy of trying to get dominant group members to like subordinate group members, and vice versa (Dixon, et al., 2012, p. 421). International commitments to contact interventions are not surprising since contact interventions often do achieve improved attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2008). However, Dixon, et al. (2012) and Saguy, et al.

(2009) have highlighted important contradictions within this international stance and argue that by reducing perceptions of discrimination contact interventions suppress motivations to challenge structural injustice through resistant collective action. This contradiction has been predicted by Jackman (1994, p. 2), who warned that dominant groups rely on subtle and insidious pressures, including befriending and emotionally disarming subordinates, to sustain the status quo of power asymmetry and advantage.

### *Conflict resolution strategy*

Our second proposal suggests that transformative conflict resolution strategies should prioritize the levelling of power asymmetry and structural injustice by attending to the historical and structural drivers of asymmetric conflict (Compare with Azar & Farah, 1981; Francis, 2010). This proposition is supported by broad agreement amongst our respondents that the status quo between the State of Israel and the Palestinians is injuriously asymmetrical in nature, and is defined by neglected drivers of violence and insecurity on both sides. Further, the interview narratives revealed a broad desire to rectify these drivers, and that rectification is dependent on how these drivers are conceptualized. For example, ongoing violence is conceptualized by some as rooted in a conventional two-way conflict that suffers from religious and/or cultural discord, while some of our critics insisted that drivers of violence are, rather, rooted in an ongoing settler colonial project by the State of Israel.

Further, our data analysis has evidenced competing ideas about the ability of contact-based strategies to attend to these drivers of violence. Advocates of contact-based strategies propose an indirect course of action – utilizing information sharing and trust-building in safe environments to revise the identities of individuals who will then move outwards to effect change within their respective communities. In contrast, critics of planned contact interventions doubted that transformed individuals could transcend the political and social interests invested

in the benefits of asymmetric conflict. These critics propose conflict resolution strategies that directly engage with occupying structures that are perpetuating difficult drivers of violence.

The weight of academic research has traditionally supported the use of contact-based strategies to attend to drivers of violence (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2008). However, we introduced in our theoretical background strands of research within the fields of conflict resolution and social psychology that are propping up the viewpoints of our critics and suggest that contact interventions may struggle to level power asymmetry and structural injustice given the manner in which positive cross-communal interactions can, ironically, serve as an obstacle for the mobilization of subordinate groups against injustice since they weaken ingroup identifications (Saguy, 2017), dampen the recognition of injustice (Francis, 2010; Wright & Lubensky, 2009), and build trust in members of oppressive groups (Saguy, et al., 2009).

#### *Agency and conflict resolution*

Our third proposition is also rooted in broad congruity in our findings and suggests that conflict resolution action should be designed and controlled at local levels and maintain clear independence from the self-interests of upper-level actors in order to dislodge the status quo of entrenched power asymmetry (Compare with Jabri, 1995; Schmid, 1968). Respondents generally agreed that a ‘local turn’ is required to yield control over conflict resolution (broadly speaking) to local populations and their civil societies. Conversely, if agency at the local level can be stifled, the status quo of asymmetric violence is likely to survive and deepen.

However, the interview narratives noticeably diverge regarding the ability of contact-based strategies to amass agency at the local level. One side argued that planned contact interventions are inherently suited to bypassing elite actors and their self-interested propensity to act without local consultation, while the other proposed that planned contact initiatives tend

to position the interests of prejudiced international donors, a stifling ‘dialogue industry’ and the self-interested State of Israel before their overt local-level concerns. These critics contended that conflict resolution should, instead, resist the distractions of external influence and resourcing and adopt a framework of resistant collective action that intensifies nonviolent conflict.

Our contradictory findings mirror the contradictions within our theoretical background. Advocates agreed that contact-based strategies carry directional influence as they modify behaviour and shape in-group norms at the local level with a view to institutional-political change (Compare with Lazarus, 2011; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), while critics argue that local-level agency is largely co-opted by advantaged groups who are interested in extending the benefits of the status quo by ignoring the preferred strategies of subordinate groups (Compare with Bastian, Lusher, & Ata, 2012). Because power advantage shapes both the type of conflict resolution strategies chosen and research conducted on resulting practices, our respondents argued for a shift in focus and vantage point (Compare with Wright & Lubensky, 2009), whereby the preferred conflict resolution strategies of the subordinate party are prioritized (e.g. within international funding guidelines) and control over conflict resolution is wrested from the distracting and distorting self-interested hands of elite-political actors in both Israeli and Palestinian societies. Research strategies should follow suit and promote the voices of subordinate populations through analysis and interpretation that fairly bypasses the biases of power.

## **Conclusions**

A synthesis of our contradictory findings has generated a grounded proposal for conflict resolution inside asymmetric conflict. This proposal accentuates our critical respondents while also reflecting Wright & Lubensky’s (2009, p. 307) prescient admonition – ‘it is likely that in

the end prejudice reduction and collective action are both necessary for the building of a more just and egalitarian society'. While our proposal has featured substantial agreement between advocates and critics, it is also ambiguous – including contradictory justifications for both the reduction and intensification of conflict. These contradictions inevitably require practitioners to make difficult judgements and exclusions at the expense of other strategies for resolving conflict and ensuring social and political change. Our proposal certainly does not reject planned contact interventions outright but, rather, justifies engagement between competing viewpoints that may reveal solutions (Saguy, 2017; Wright & Lubensky, 2009).

However, our proposal does highlight the viewpoint of conflict resolution practitioners that collective resistance is essential to unify the Palestinian population and trigger power-levelling processes inside asymmetric conflict (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Darweish & Rigby, 2015; Dudouet, 2008; Schock, 2013). This viewpoint reflects suggestions in our theoretical background to move conflict resolution decision-making onto the laps of subordinate populations to better utilize strategies they believe are necessary to rectify inequity of power and advantage.

The discussion in this article has pushed further than some related research (See for example Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004; Maoz, 2011; Saguy, 2017) that remain faithful to contact interventions in the current climate of conflict, albeit with suggested revisions such as addressing power asymmetry within the contact experiences themselves. In contrast, several of our respondents propose the termination of contact events for a period during which intensified conflict ensures that status differences are equalized. This is certainly an unsettling viewpoint with significant consequences. As Dixon, et al. (2012, p. 425) point out, 'the "tranquillity" of inequitable relations between groups is notoriously difficult to disturb' (see also Wright, 2008). Thus, the stakes are high - the improbable prospect of equality emerging from the asymmetrical status quo motivates a careful consideration of the way contact interventions may be

suppressing the insubordinate state of mind necessary for power-levelling collective action. The bottom line of our research is, then, that while peace and conflict resolution practitioners do recognize the benefits of contact interventions, they also are willing to admit that these interventions may sustain and not disturb the status quo of power asymmetry in Israel and Palestine. Thus, a re-evaluation of the preeminent status given to planned contact interventions and the theories of social and political change that justify their use inside asymmetrical relationships is certainly justified. For example, Ben David, et al. (2017) propose *intragroup* dialogue as an effective alternative. Central to this re-evaluation will be a robust examination of the relationship between contact-based strategies and conflict-intensifying resistant collective action, and a willingness to confront the contradictions that emerge when both strategies are practiced side-by-side inside asymmetric conflict.

### **Funding**

This research was supported by a European Union FP7 Marie Curie Actions project, *Perspectives of conflict transformation from the Middle East and Europe* [PIRSES-GA-2011-295036].

### **Acknowledgements**

This paper benefited from critical feedback provided by Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Oliver Ramsbotham, Patricia Sellick, Mira Sucharov, and four anonymous reviewers for the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. The authors also recognize the input of their research assistant Anat Reisman-Levy and the generous contributions of respondents.

### **References**

- Abu-Nimer, M. (2004). Education for coexistence and Arab-Jewish encounters in Israel: Potential and challenges. *Journal of Social Issues, 60*, 405-422.
- Abu-Nimer, M. (2012). *Dialogue, conflict resolution, and change: Arab-Jewish encounters in Israel*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Amir, Y. (1969). Contact hypothesis in ethnic relations. *Psychological bulletin, 71*, 319-342.
- Arreguin-Toft, I. (2001). How the weak win wars: A theory of asymmetric conflict. *International Security, 26*, 93-128.
- Atack, I. (2012). *Nonviolence in political theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Azar, E. E., & Farah, N. (1981). The structure of inequalities and protracted social conflict: A theoretical framework. *International Interactions, 7*, 317-335.
- Barakat, R., & Goldenblatt, D. (2012). Coping with Anti-Normalization. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture, 18*, 86-95.
- Bastian, B., Lusher, D., & Ata, A. (2012). Contact, evaluation and social distance: Differentiating majority and minority effects. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 36*, 100-107.
- Ben David, Y., Hameiri, B., Benheim, S., Leshem, B., Sarid, A., Sternberg, M., Nadler, A., & Sagy, S. (2017). Exploring ourselves within intergroup conflict: The role of intragroup dialogue in promoting acceptance of collective narratives and willingness toward reconciliation. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 23*, 269-277.
- Boulding, K. E. (1990). *Three faces of power*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Carroll, B. A. (1972). Peace research: The cult of power. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 16*, 585-616.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. London: SAGE Publications.

- Chenoweth, E., & Stephan, M. (2011). *Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Curle, A. (1971). *Making peace*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Darweish, M., & Rigby, A. (2015). *Popular protest in Palestine: The history and uncertain future of unarmed resistance*. London: Pluto Press.
- Dessel, A., & Rogge, M. E. (2008). Evaluation of intergroup dialogue: A review of the empirical literature. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 26, 199-238.
- Dixon, J., Durrheim, K., & Tredoux, C. (2005). Beyond the optimal contact strategy: a reality check for the contact hypothesis. *American Psychologist*, 60, 697-711.
- Dixon, J., Durrheim, K., & Tredoux, C. (2007). Intergroup contact and attitudes toward the principle and practice of racial equality. *Psychol Sci*, 18, 867-872.
- Dixon, J., Levine, M., Reicher, S., & Durrheim, K. (2012). Beyond prejudice: relational inequality, collective action, and social change revisited. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 35, 451-466.
- Dudouet, V. (2006). Transitions from violence to peace: Revisiting analysis and intervention in conflict transformation. In *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation*. Berlin: Berghof Foundation.
- Dudouet, V. (2008). Nonviolent resistance in power asymmetries. In: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.
- Duffield, M. (2001). *Global governance and the new wars: The merging of development and security*. London: Zed Books.
- Eide, A. (1972). Dialogue and confrontation in Europe. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 16, 511-522.
- Francis, D. (2010). *From pacification to peacebuilding: A call to global transformation*. London: Pluto Press.



- Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 27, 291-305.
- Galtung, J. (1996). *Peace by peaceful means: Peace and conflict, development and civilization*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gil, D. G. (2013). *Confronting injustice and oppression: Concepts and strategies for Social Workers*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Halabi, R., & Sonnenschein, N. (2004). The Jewish-Palestinian encounter in a time of crisis. *Journal of Social Issues*, 60, 373-387.
- Hansen, T. (2008). Critical conflict resolution theory and practice. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 25, 403-427.
- Herzog, S., & Hai, A. (2005). What do people mean when they say ‘people-to-people’? Origins, definitions, goals and methods. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture*, 12, 12-13.
- Jabri, V. (1995). Agency, structure, and the question of power in conflict resolution. *Paradigms*, 9, 53-70.
- Jabri, V. (2006). Revisiting change and conflict: On underlying assumptions and the de-politicisation of conflict resolution. In *Berghof Handbook*. Berlin: Berghof Foundation.
- Jackman, M. R. (1994). *The velvet glove: Paternalism and conflict in gender, class, and race relations*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Jackson, R. (2015). How resistance can save Peace Studies. *Journal of Resistance Studies*, 1, 18-49.
- Kahanoff, M., Salem, W., Nasrallah, R., & Neumann, Y. (2007). *The evaluation of cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli NGOs: An assessment*. Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies/UNESCO.
- Keck, M., & Sikkink, K. (1998). *Activists beyond borders: Advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

- Khuri, M. L. (2004). Facilitating Arab-Jewish intergroup dialogue in the college setting. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 7, 229-250.
- Kriesberg, L. (2015). *Realizing peace: A constructive conflict approach*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lazarus, N. (2011). *Evaluating peace education in the Oslo-Intifada generation: A long-term impact study of Seeds of Peace 1993-2010*. American University, Washington, DC.
- Lederach, J. P. (1995a). *Conflict transformation in protracted internal conflicts: The case for a comprehensive framework*. London: St. Martin's Press.
- Lederach, J. P. (1995b). *Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Maoz, I. (2000a). An experiment in peace: Reconciliation-aimed workshops of Jewish Israeli and Palestinian youth. *Journal of Peace Research*, 37, 731.
- Maoz, I. (2000b). Multiple conflicts and competing agendas: A framework for conceptualizing structured encounters between groups in conflict - The case of a coexistence project of Jews and Palestinians in Israel. *Peace & Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 6, 135-156.
- Maoz, I. (2000c). Power relations in intergroup encounters: A case study of Jewish-Arab encounters in Israel. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24, 259-277.
- Maoz, I. (2002). Is there contact at all? Intergroup interaction in planned contact interventions between Jews and Arabs in Israel. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26, 185-197.
- Maoz, I. (2003). Peace-building with the hawks: Attitude change of Jewish-Israeli hawks and doves following dialogue encounters with Palestinians. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, 701-714.

- Maoz, I. (2011). Does contact work in protracted asymmetrical conflict? Appraising 20 years of reconciliation-aimed encounters between Israeli Jews and Palestinians. *Journal of Peace Research*, 48, 115-125.
- Maoz, I., Steinberg, S., Bar-On, D., & Fakhereldeen, M. (2002). The dialogue between the 'Self' and the 'Other': A process analysis of Palestinian-Jewish encounters in Israel. *Human Relations*, 55, 931-962.
- Mi'Ari, M. (1999). Attitudes of Palestinians toward normalization with Israel. *Journal of Peace Research*, 36, 339-348.
- Mitchell, C. (1991). Classifying conflicts: Asymmetry and resolution. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 518, 23-38.
- Nanetti, R. (2017). A means to conflict transformation: Social capital as a force for Palestinian communities. In A. Ozerdem, C. Thiessen & M. Qassoum (Eds.), *Conflict transformation and the Palestinians: The dynamics of peace and justice under occupation* (pp. 130-146). London: Routledge.
- Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49, 65-85.
- Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 90, 751-783.
- Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2008). How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic tests of three mediators. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38, 922-934.
- Phipps, A. (2014). 'They are bombing now': 'Intercultural dialogue' in times of conflict. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14, 108-124.
- Pruitt, D. G. (1998). Social conflict. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (4th ed., pp. 470-503). New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Pundak, R., Ben-Nun, A., & Finkel, L. (2012). More relevant than ever: People-to-People peacebuilding efforts in Israel and Palestine. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture, 18*, 46-53.
- Ramsbotham, O. (2010). *Transforming violent conflict: Radical disagreement, dialogue and survival*. London: Routledge.
- Ramsbotham, O. (2017). *When conflict resolution fails: An alternative to negotiation and dialogue: Engaging radical disagreement in intractable conflicts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., & Miall, H. (2011). *Contemporary conflict resolution: The prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts* (3rd ed.). Malden, MA: Polity.
- Rapoport, A. (1970). Can peace research be applied? *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 14*, 277-286.
- Richmond, O. (2004). The dilemmas of conflict resolution: A comparison of Sri Lanka and Cyprus. *Nationalism and Ethnic politics, 10*, 185-219.
- Ron, Y., Maoz, I., & Bekerman, Z. (2010). Dialogue and ideology: The effect of continuous involvement in Jewish-Arab dialogue encounters on the ideological perspectives of Israeli-Jews. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 34*, 571-579.
- Rouhana, N., & Fiske, S. T. (1995). Perception of power, threat, and conflict intensity in asymmetric intergroup conflict between Arab and Jewish Citizens of Israel. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 39*, 49-81.
- Rouhana, N., & Korper, S. H. (1997). Power asymmetry and goals of unofficial third party intervention in protracted intergroup conflict. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 3*, 1-17.

- Saguy, T. (2017). Downside of intergroup harmony? When reconciliation might backfire and what to do. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.
- Saguy, T., & Dovidio, J. F. (2013). Insecure status relations shape preferences for the content of intergroup contact. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 39*, 1030-1042.
- Saguy, T., Tausch, N., Dovidio, J. F., & Pratto, F. (2009). The irony of harmony: Intergroup contact can produce false expectations for equality. *Psychological Science, 20*, 114-121.
- Salem, W. (2005). The Anti-Normalization discourse in the context of Israeli-Palestinian peace-building. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture, 12*, 100-109.
- Schmid, H. (1968). Peace research and politics. *Journal of Peace Research, 5*, 217-232.
- Schock, K. (2013). The practice and study of civil resistance. *Journal of Peace Research, 50*, 277-290.
- Selby, J. (2003). Dressing up domination as 'cooperation': The case of Israeli-Palestinian water relations. *Review of International Studies, 29*, 121-138.
- Steinberg, S., & Bar-On, D. (2002). An analysis of the group process in encounters between Jews and Palestinians using a typology for discourse classification. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 26*, 199-214.
- Stohl, M., & Chamberlain, M. (1972). Alternative futures for peace research. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 16*, 523-530.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing Grounded Theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Thiessen, C. (2017). The evolution of conflict transformation theory and practice in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In A. Özerdem, C. Thiessen & M. Qassoum (Eds.),

- Conflict transformation and the Palestinians: The dynamics of peace and justice under occupation* (pp. 3-19). London: Routledge.
- Turner, M. (2015). Peacebuilding as counterinsurgency in the occupied Palestinian territory. *Review of International Studies*, 41, 73-98.
- Vayrynen, R. (1991). To settle or to transform? Perspectives on the resolution of national and international conflict. In R. Vayrynen (Ed.), *New directions in conflict theory: Conflict resolution and conflict transformation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Wright, S. (2008). Strategic collective action: Social psychology and social change. In R. Brown & S. L. Gaertner (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of Social Psychology: Intergroup processes* (pp. 409-430). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Wright, S., & Baray, G. (2012). Models of social change in social psychology: Collective action or prejudice reduction? Conflict or harmony. In J. Dixon & M. Levine (Eds.), *Beyond prejudice: Extending the social psychology of conflict, inequality and social change* (pp. 225-247). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, S., & Lubensky, M. (2009). The struggle for social equality: Collective action versus prejudice reduction. In S. Demoulin, J.-P. Leyens & J. Dovidio (Eds.), *Intergroup misunderstandings: Impact of divergent social realities* (pp. 291-310). New York, NY: Psychology Press.