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### Authors

Hagai, Ella Ben  
Zurbriggen, Eileen L  
Hammack, Phillip L  
et al.

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## **Beliefs Predicting Peace, Beliefs Predicting War: Jewish Americans and the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict**

**Ella Ben Hagai,\* Eileen L. Zurbriggen, Phillip L. Hammack,  
and Megan Ziman**

*University of California, Santa Cruz*

*Jewish Americans' opinions on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict influence both the Israeli and the U.S. governments. Consequently, the Jewish American diaspora can act to promote or inhibit the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians. Several different sociopsychological beliefs have been postulated to lead individuals to support the perpetuation of conflict. Among these beliefs are a sense of collective victimhood, dehumanization and delegitimization of the other side, a zero-sum view on the conflict, and a monolithic narrative about the conflict. In this exploratory study we examined the role of these beliefs in predicting Jewish Americans' rejection or support of compromise solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. A survey study of 176 Jewish Americans shows that a monolithic view on the conflict, dehumanizing and delegitimizing of the other side, and a zero-sum view on the conflict played an important role in predicting opposition to compromise solutions for the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. Beliefs about collective victimhood did not predict support for compromise solutions. Findings are discussed in terms of the centrality of narrative misrecognition in preventing agreement to concessions toward the other side.*

In a rapidly globalizing world, the resolution of conflicts does not depend only on the opinions of the local population, but also on the opinions of members of diaspora communities (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006; Shain, 2002; Shain & Barth, 2003). Recognizing the importance of these diaspora communities, in this article we examine Jewish Americans' opinions on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In

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\*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ella Ben Hagai, Department of Psychology, University of California, 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95064 [e-mail: ebenhaga@ucsc.edu].

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particular we are interested in identifying the beliefs that best predict Jewish Americans' support for or rejection of concessions to Palestinians.

Jewish Americans are an interesting as well as a politically important diaspora group because their attachment to Israel is central to their group identity (Hartman & Hartman, 2000). According to Cohen (2002), after the 1967 Six Day War, "Israel moved to the fore as the most compelling cause in American Jewish life and became the centerpiece of fund-raising and of political activism" (p. 133). Jewish Americans' views of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict influence both the U.S. government's policies toward the conflict and the actions of the Israeli government (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006; Shain & Barth, 2003). Consequently, the public opinion of the Jewish American community can serve either to inhibit or to push forward the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians (Benhorin, 2011; Chomsky, 1999; Cohen, 2002).

Several different beliefs may play a major role in explaining individuals' lack of support for peaceful solutions to conflict. Among the beliefs proposed are a sense of collective victimhood (Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori, & Gunder, 2009; Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Saguy, 2004; Vollhardt, 2009), dehumanization and delegitimization of the outgroup (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Hammack, Pilecki, Caspi, & Strauss, 2011; Kelman, 2001; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998), a zero-sum perspective on the conflict (Kelman, 1997), and a monolithic narrative about the conflict (Bar-On, 2002; Bar-On & Canin, 2008; Bar-On & Kassem, 2004; Hammack, 2008; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). It has been suggested that when individuals endorse some or all of these beliefs, they will reject solutions to conflict that represent a compromise between the two opposing positions. In this study we aim to empirically examine which of the beliefs proposed by different theorists predict diaspora individuals' rejection of peaceful solutions to a conflict important to their identity.

### **Jewish Americans and the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict**

Understanding Jewish American beliefs associated with support for compromise solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (i.e., solutions in which each side makes some concessions) is important for several different reasons. The first is the Jewish American community's influence on the Israeli and the American governments' approaches to the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In fact, the Jewish diaspora's (as well as the Palestinian diaspora's) strong attachment to Israel/Palestine has led some political scientists to argue that the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is not a two-level game in which negotiators must bridge the demands of the enemy side and the public opinion of their own constituents (Shamir & Shikaki, 2010); rather, it is a three-level game in which the Palestinian and Jewish diaspora opinions on concessions must be accounted for in the negotiations (Shain, 2007; Zogby, 2010). The Jewish diaspora has a direct

influence on the Israeli government, especially in regard to concessions over Jewish holy sites (particularly those in Jerusalem). In addition, because of the Jewish American community's relatively high involvement in the American political process (e.g., substantial influence on the Democratic party's selection of presidential nominees and high voting rates in key swing states like Ohio and Florida), Jewish opinion on the conflict shapes the American government's policies in the Middle East. Leaders of the Jewish community can persuade the American government to propose a peace plan (e.g., Clinton's Peace Plan, Bush's Road Map), as well as reward the Israeli or Palestinian state for making concessions to the other side (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). On the other hand, vocal members of the Jewish American community can help sway the American government to allow the continuation of the status quo, in which there are repeated expansions of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and episodic violent clashes between Hamas and the Israeli army.

Second, while it is clear that the Jewish American community plays an important role in influencing the U.S. government's approach to the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the opinions of the Jewish American community concerning how to resolve the conflict can hardly be thought of as monolithic. In the last few years there has been a growing schism in the Jewish American community in terms of the right approach toward Israel and the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Landy, 2011). This schism is represented by the growth in membership and power of groups such as J Street, Jewish Voice for Peace and Rabbis Against the Occupation, who broke from the Jewish mainstream organizations represented by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Organizations such as J Street and Jewish Voice for Peace frame themselves as pro-peace, oppose some of the actions of the Israeli government and call on the American government to act as a fair broker between Israel and the Palestinians (Beinart, 2012).

Third, from a political psychological perspective, the Jewish American community serves as an interesting case study as it is influenced by two different ethes. On the one hand the Jewish community has long been associated with support for a liberal ethos championing social justice and human rights; on the other hand Jewish Americans' attachment to Israel exposes them to an ethos that includes a sense of victimhood and dehumanization of the outgroup, common to societies living in an intractable conflict such as Israel (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Oren, 2010; Lerner, 2011). Although there is a great deal of diversity in Jewish Americans' level of engagement with the Jewish community, individuals who engage with mainstream Jewish institutions tend to be exposed to the Israeli hegemonic interpretation of the conflict throughout their life course; such institutions include attending Hebrew schools, participating in Jewish student organizations in college (e.g., Hillel), traveling on free Israeli government–sponsored trips to Israel (i.e., Taglit-Birthright),

and participating in Friday services where events in Israel are often discussed (Habib, 2004). Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin (2005) frames Jewish Americans' attachment to Israel as part of a general trend in the growth of a Jewish American civil religion: "This religious expression has little to do with theology. Instead, it is based on the trauma of the Holocaust; financial, political and emotional support of Israel; philanthropy and political action; and concern with Jewish survival as a nebulously defined goal which is distinct from other Jewish religious values and beliefs" (p. 12). In sum, although Jewish Americans, as a diaspora group, do not experience the ethnic segregation and threat that is typical of settings of conflict and tend to hold liberal views, they are also exposed (to some extent) to beliefs common in societies living in intractable conflict. How such beliefs shape their opinions about the conflict and their willingness to compromise with the outgroup is the question this study aims to address.

Understanding which beliefs best predict individual rejection or support for compromise solutions among a sample of Jewish Americans will contribute to a better understanding of why individuals who live in the diaspora, and who do not experience conflict directly, come to reject concessions to the other side. Moreover, in a time of growing polarization over Israel among members of the Jewish American community, it is important to identify the beliefs that serve as the source of divergent views on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Understanding the beliefs that are associated with divergent views on the resolution of conflict will help make dialogue between members of the Jewish community more constructive and may potentially help promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

### **Demographic Variables and Beliefs Associated with the Perpetuation of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict**

Before turning to the beliefs that have been theorized to play a central role in the perpetuation of conflict, it is important to note the role of demographic variables in explaining divergent views on conflict resolution. Studies indicate that identifying as politically conservative, being female, being younger, and being more educated have been associated with support for peaceful (i.e., compromise) solution to conflict (Hammack et al., 2011; Maoz & Eidelson, 2007; Shamir & Shikaki, 2002; Yuchtman-Yaar & Hermann, 1997), although there are some exceptions (e.g., Maoz & McCauley, 2005; Maoz, Shamir, Wolfsfeld, & Dvir, 2009).

In addition to demographic variables, the extent to which individuals identify with their ingroup is also related to how they see the outgroup (Brown, 2000). For example, individuals who strongly identify with their ingroups tend to be worse at recalling incidents of violence and hatred propagated by the ingroup (Sahdara & Ross, 2007). Members of the Turkish diaspora who had strong ingroup

identification were more likely to attribute responsibility for the Armenian genocide to Armenians compared to individuals who had weaker ingroup identification (Bilali, Tropp, & Dasgupta, 2012).

### **Collective Victimhood**

Above and beyond demographic variables and the levels of identification with the ingroup, a belief in collective victimhood has been hypothesized to play a central role in the perpetuation of intractable conflict in general and in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in particular (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Saguy, 2004; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998; Vollhardt, 2009). According to Bar-Tal et al. (2009), a sense of collective victimhood is defined as “harm that is viewed as undeserved, unjust and immoral, and one that the group was not able to prevent . . . [This harm] can be real or partly imagined, but usually is based on experienced events” (p. 238). Individuals’ sense of collective victimhood does not necessarily depend on their own personal experiences with the conflict, but rather on shared collective discourses that construe the collective as helpless against unjust harm (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Nadler, 2002).

A collective sense of victimhood has been theorized to play an important role in the perpetuation of conflict in several different ways. First, when members of the collective feel that unjust and undeserved harm has been done to them, they tend to support acts of revenge that lead to the perpetuation of the conflict (Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Saguy, 2004). Second, the belief that the collective has been unjustly treated may lead to a sense of self-righteousness, through which it is believed that the victim can do no wrong (Bar-Tal, 2000). Finally, when the two sides share a sense of victimhood, competitive victimhood may arise (Noor, Brown, & Prentice, 2008). Nevertheless, in certain instances collective victimhood can lead to an increase in empathy toward the outgroup, especially in cases in which the outgroup is perceived as being similar to the ingroup in their experience (Vollhardt, 2009).

Evidence indicates that victimhood and related constructs are associated with lack of support for conflict resolution and reconciliation (Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011). For example, an experimental study conducted in Canada suggests that Jewish Canadians who were reminded of the Holocaust felt less collective guilt for harmful actions toward the Palestinians than Jewish Canadians who were not reminded of the Holocaust (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). Among a sample of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, individuals who scored high on a competitive victimhood measure were less likely to forgive members of the outgroup for past violence (Noor et al., 2008). Siege mentality, a construct related to collective victimhood and defined as the “belief that the rest of the world has highly negative behavioral intentions toward [the in-group]” (Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1992, p. 634), has been shown to correlate with a hawkish political orientation

(Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1992). In terms of the features of collective victimhood, Eidelson (2009) found that Americans' endorsement of a collective sense of helplessness and injustice after the 9/11 attacks predicted individuals' support for the "war on terror." By contrast, in Israel, a sense of vulnerability, injustice, and distrust—but not helplessness—predicted individuals' support for violent solution to conflict (Maoz & Eidelson, 2007).

Although collective victimhood is often postulated to play an important role in the perpetuation of conflict, the essential definitional components of a sense of collective victimhood have not been studied together. Because in this study our main aim is to test different theories that lead to the rejection of compromises, we decided to examine a sense of collective victimhood as it is derived from Bar-Tal et al.'s (2009) definition of victimhood. This definition includes three necessary features: a belief that harm is/was inflicted on the collective, a belief that this harm is/was unjust, and a belief that the collective is/was helpless in protecting itself against this harm.

### **A Zero-Sum View of Conflict**

Another common explanation for the perpetuation of intergroup conflict is grounded in realistic group conflict theory (Sherif, 1966). According to this theory, when groups compete over scarce resources such as land or water, intergroup antagonism will emerge. The incompatibility of group goals leads to a zero-sum approach in which every concession on the part of one side is understood as a win for the other side (Kelman, 2007).

Some historians have argued that since the arrival of the Jewish settlers in Israel (then Palestine), both sides have framed the conflict as a competition over land (Doron & Kook, 2001). Because each side understands the land as its own, any gain of land by one side is perceived as a loss by the other. Because no peaceful solution is possible from a zero-sum viewpoint, any sort of "breakthrough" can only be accomplished through a change in the existing balance of power. A zero-sum view of conflict leads individuals to refuse concessions to the other side and to support the investment of societal resources in the strengthening of militaristic institutions (Doron & Kook, 2001).

The growing consensus among Jewish Israelis and Jewish Americans who endorse a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict calls into question the prevalence of a zero-sum view on the conflict, in which any concession to the other side is a loss to one's own (Bar-Tal et al., 2010; Bienstock, 2010; Caspit, 2011). Nevertheless, because Maoz and McCauley's (2005) survey study of a national sample of Jewish Israelis shows that zero-sum beliefs about the conflict predict opposition to concessions, it is possible that zero-sum beliefs are important components of the worldviews of individuals who oppose compromise solutions.

## Delegitimizing and Dehumanizing of the Other Side

According to social identity theory, in order to satisfy individuals' need for positive self-esteem, when individuals are categorized into a group they will come to see their group as superior to an outgroup (Tajfel, 1982). To support individuals' sense of ingroup superiority, stereotypes and prejudices toward the outgroup emerge (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The higher the tension between the ingroup and the outgroup, the more likely the prejudice and stereotypes will be used to dehumanize and delegitimize the outgroup (Bar-Tal, 2000, Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005).

Within the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the delegitimization and dehumanization of members of the other side have been postulated to be one of the central causes for the perpetuation of the conflict. According to Bar-Tal and Teichman (2005), both Palestinians and Israelis tend to see one another as having inhuman traits, uncivilized morality, or as holding values that are intolerable. For example, each side tends to see the other as primitive or as very aggressive and essentially violent. In addition, immorality and disloyalty are attributed to members of both sides (Oren & Bar-Tal, 2006). Empirical studies conducted in Israel show that although beliefs that dehumanize the Palestinians are *not* held by a majority of Jewish Israeli respondents, there is a clear correlation between the delegitimization and dehumanization of the Palestinians and support for noncompromise solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011; Halperin, Bar-Tal, Nets-Zehngut, & Drori, 2008; Hammack et al., 2011; Maoz & McCauley, 2008).

## A Monolithic View of the Conflict

A narrative psychological approach to conflict sees conflict not only in terms of competition over scarce resources such as land or water, but also as a struggle of recognition and misrecognition of identities (Bruner, 1990; Geertz, 1973; Salomon, 2004). The contents of collective identities become delineated through collective narratives. At the base of the different stories that make up the collective narrative repertoire are root narratives that include the most basic components of a narrative: an actor, a setting, an action, and a problem (Bruner, 1990; Lakoff, 2008). The root narrative (like ideology) frames the (human) nature of the collective actor as well as the setting in which she or he lives (Althusser, 1971). Such framing of who the collective actor is (i.e., her or his intentions) and the setting in which she or he must act serve as the base of stories about both the present and the past. In a time of conflict each side's narrative misrecognizes the narrative of the other (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Moreover, because narratives are constructed based on structural realities as well as social discourses, when a prolonged intractable conflict is at play, the root narratives serve to justify the reality of the conflict,



making peaceful compromises nonsensical (e.g., “Why should we give them land when they stole the land from us?”).

The understanding of identity and national conflict in terms of competing narratives has been explored in several qualitative studies (Ayalon & Sagy, 2011; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011; (Ben Hagai, Hammack, Pilecki, & Aresta, in press); Hammack, 2006, 2008, 2011). For example, a discourse analysis of conversations among Israeli and Palestinian adolescents suggests that Jewish Israeli adolescents tend to base their understandings of the conflict on a narrative schema in which Jews have good intentions to live in peace but because of Arab attacks they must continually defend themselves. Palestinian adolescents, on the other hand, tend to base their utterances on a narrative schema in which they belong to and own the land but due to Jewish occupation they are humiliated and made to suffer (Ben Hagai et al., in press).

Only recently, a growing number of quantitative studies has attempted to operationalize historical and collective narratives and examine their influence on individual psychology and political dispositions (Smeeks, Verkuyten, & Poppe, 2011; Vertkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). For example, in Israel, individuals who reported that memories of collective trauma were central to their thinking were more likely to exhibit both collective fear (i.e., fear for the state of Israel) and personal fear of Arab attacks (Halperin et al., 2008). According to a narrative psychological approach to conflict, when individuals see conflict in terms of their own narrative and misrecognize the narrative of the outgroup, they will refuse concessions to the outgroup since giving up land or resources seems nonsensical when the out-group is seen as threatening.

## **The Present Study**

In this study we take an exploratory approach to determine which of the beliefs suggested by different theorists predict individual Jewish Americans’ support or rejection of compromise solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. We examine the effect of beliefs in collective victimhood, a zero-sum view on the conflict, dehumanization and delegitimizing, and a monolithic narrative after controlling for the effect of demographic variables and attachment to the Jewish homeland.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited through several Jewish American listservs primarily based in California and through announcements on social networking sites. In the announcement, Jewish respondents were invited to participate in a survey exploring Jewish Americans’ framing of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. To

participate in the study respondents followed a link to the Survey Monkey website, where they completed the survey online.

The data analysis presented here includes only completed surveys. One hundred seventy-six participants completed all parts of the survey, which represented approximately 60% of all the surveys started online. Participants included 70 men and 106 women. The majority of our sample (76%) was between the ages of 18 and 29; 15% were between the ages of 30 and 39; and 9% were age 39 or over. Three percent of our sample attended only high school or lower, 76% had a college degree or were currently attending college, and 21% were in graduate school or had a graduate degree. Of the participants in this sample, 6% identified as Republicans, 64% identified as Democrats, 19% identified as independent, and 11% did not know or did not answer. Overall, the sample overrepresented women, was on average younger than the general Jewish population in the United States, and represented slightly more Democrats compared to a national sample of Jewish Americans (Annual Survey of Jewish Opinions, 2007), in which 58% of respondents identified as Democrats.

To assess participants' attachment to Israel compared to a national sample of Jewish Americans, we included a question from the Jewish American National Survey that asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: "Caring about Israel is a very important part of my Jewish identity." Seventy-nine percent of respondents agreed with the statement, 17% disagreed, and 4% neither agreed nor disagreed. A comparison between our sample and a national sample of Jewish Americans (Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, 2007), of which 69% agreed with the statement, 28% disagreed, and 3% did not know, suggests that our sample is fairly similar to a national sample of Jewish Americans in terms of attachment to Israel, although perhaps slightly more attached.

## Measures

### Criterion Variable

*Attitudes toward Israeli–Palestinian conflict resolution.* Endorsement of different solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict was assessed by presenting the four solutions depicted in Table 1. Solutions 1 and 2 are based on formulas that have been accepted by the Palestinian leadership (Benvenisti, 2003; Kelman, 2011). Because these solutions have been accepted by the Palestinian leadership, they are likely to lead to a peace agreement with the Palestinians and to a (possible) end to the conflict. Below, we refer to these as "compromise solutions." Solutions 3 and 4 have been rejected by the Palestinian leadership (Kelman, 2011; Maoz & Eidelson, 2007, Maoz & McCauley, 2005), and thus support for these

**Table 1.** Solutions to Conflict Revealing Attitudes toward Compromise

Solution	Description
1.	A one-state solution in which Jews and Palestinians hold equal rights as part of a bi-national state
2.	A two-state solution in which Israel withdraws to the 1967 armistice lines and a Palestinian state is established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital
3.	A two-state solution in which Israel keeps large settlements and a united Jerusalem serves as the state capital
4.	A transfer in which the Palestinian population is transferred to neighboring Arab countries

solutions is likely to lead to the continuation of the conflict. We refer to these as “noncompromise solutions.”

Each solution was briefly described and respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each solution on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Participants’ ratings of each of the compromise solutions were added (with a minimum possible score of two and maximum possible score of 14) and subtracted from the noncompromise solutions (also with a minimum possible score of two and maximum possible score of 14). Thus the range of the criterion variable was between +12 and -12, where higher scores represented greater disposition toward compromises with the outgroup. The Cronbach’s alphas for this scale was .60.

### Predictor Variables

*Demographic variables.* Most of the demographic questions were taken from the Jewish American Opinion Survey (2007). Political ideology was measured by asking participants, “Where would you place yourself on this scale? Extremely liberal, Liberal, Slightly liberal, Moderate, Middle of the road, Slightly conservative, Conservative, Extremely conservative.” Education level was measured by asking participants, “What is the highest grade of school you completed?” We also included participant age and gender as demographic variables.

*Attachment to the Jewish homeland.* To examine ingroup attachment we used three items from the Jewish American National Survey, traditionally used to examine levels of identification with the Jewish ingroup in terms of its diasporatic aspect (attachment to the Jewish homeland). The three items used to examine attachment to the Jewish collective in relationship to Israel were: “Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew”; “I feel very emotionally attached to Israel”; and “I would feel as if I had suffered one of the greatest

personal tragedies in my life if Israel stopped being a Jewish State.” Responses were made on a scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .89.

*Victimhood in the Diaspora.* To assess respondents’ sense of collective victimhood in the Diaspora, a three-item measure was constructed based on Bar-Tal et al.’s (2009) definition of victimhood. The items included in the scale were: “In the past while living in the Diaspora, Jews suffered extensive anti-Semitism, discrimination and violence”; “The anti-Semitism and discrimination Jews experienced was undeserved and unjust”; and “In general, while living in the Diaspora, most of the Jews were helpless against anti-Semitism and discrimination.” Responses were made on a scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The Cronbach’s alpha was .82.

*Victimhood in the conflict.* To assess respondents’ sense of collective victimhood in the conflict with the Palestinians, the three items that were used to measure victimhood in the Diaspora were adjusted to reference victimhood in the conflict. The three items included in the scale were: “In the present in Israel, Arab and Palestinian attacks cause the Jewish population harm and suffering”; “The Arab and Palestinian attacks on the Jewish population are unjust and undeserved”; and “The state of Israel does not have the power and resources to protect itself against Palestinian and Arab attacks.” Responses were made on a scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The Cronbach’s alpha for the three items measuring a sense of victimhood in the conflict was .51 (see further discussion in the Result and Discussion section).

*Zero-sum view.* To measure the extent to which respondents endorsed a zero-sum view of the conflict, we included an item from Maoz and McCauley’s (2005) study of the Jewish Israeli population: “In the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, there is no place for compromise: either the Jews win or the Palestinians win.” This item was also on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

*Dehumanizing and delegitimizing beliefs.* To measure the extent to which respondents dehumanized and delegitimized the Palestinians, three statements adopted from several different survey studies on dehumanization and delegitimization were presented (Hammack et al., 2011; Maoz & McCauley, 2008; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2006; Smootha, 1987). These statements included both orientalist and essentializing forms of dehumanization. A statement of orientalist dehumanization was, “The Palestinians have a culture that has still not reached levels common in the West.” A statement of essentializing dehumanization was, “The Palestinians are by nature violent” (Hammack et al., 2011; Smootha, 1987). An item related

to dehumanization was, “The Palestinians are primitive people” (Smooha, 1987). Responses were provided on a scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .80.

*Monolithic narrative of conflict.* To assess participants’ endorsement of a monolithic narrative on the conflict, participants were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert scale their level of agreement with eight statements representing the Jewish narrative and eight statements representing the Palestinian narrative.

*Jewish Israeli Narrative* (8 items). To measure level of identification with the Jewish narrative, two types of statement were presented. The first was based on Jews’ positive intentions to live in peace in Israel: “The Jewish Halutzim—early Jewish immigrants to Eretz Israel or Palestine—did not intend to harm the indigenous population living in the area”); the second was based on Jewish Israelis’ need to protect themselves from Arab and Palestinian attacks: “Since coming to Eretz Israel in the 19th century, Jews have had to consistently defend themselves against Arab attacks”; “The Israeli government implementation of checkpoints and the separation fence are motivated by its need to defend Israel from Palestinian aggression.” Items based on the Jewish narrative were framed on three different collective levels: in terms of the Israeli government, the Israeli army, and the Israeli public. All items were presented on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) Likert scale, except two items. These two items asked for estimations of population portions, for example, “What portion of the Israeli population wants to live in peace with the Palestinians?” Questions about population portion were based on a 5-point scale, which is commonly used with proportion approximation questions. The 5-point Likert scale questions were subsequently adjusted (by dividing the score by 5 and multiplying it by 7) to carry the same weight as the 7-point Likert scale questions. The Cronbach’s alpha for the Jewish narrative items was .88.

*Palestinian Narrative* (8 items). To measure levels of identification with the Palestinian narrative, two types of statements were presented. The first was based on the Palestinians’ presence and sense of belonging to the land prior to the declaration of the Israeli state (e.g., “Early Jewish aspiration to settle in Israel ignored the presence and the rights of the Palestinians to the land”), and the second postulated that the Palestinians are suffering and are discriminated against as a result of the Jewish Israeli occupation (e.g., “The Israeli occupation oppresses and causes suffering to the Palestinian population”). All responses were made on a scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach’s alpha for the Palestinian narrative items was .90.

Because we were interested in measuring the extent to which individuals identified with their own collective narrative as well as acknowledged the narrative

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations among Variables ( $n = 176$ )

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender										
2. Age	.17*									
3. Education	-.03	.53***								
4. Political Id	-.17*	-.22**	-.08							
5. Attach JewiHo	-.08	-.06	-.02	.35***						
6. Victimhood	.03	.05	-.08	.23**	.51***					
7. Zero-Sum	-.11	-.17*	-.04	.38***	.22**	.16*				
8. Dehuman	-.18*	-.09	.02	.48***	.28**	.15*	.44***			
9. Mono Narrat	-.11	-.09	-.08	.48***	.51***	.42***	.33***	.31***		
10. Solutions	.20**	-.03	-.13	-.48***	-.44***	-.25***	-.40***	-.46***	-.66***	
<i>M</i>			2.17	2.85	5.53	6.27	2.31	2.49	0.79	-0.16
<i>SD</i>			0.46	1.33	1.76	.87	1.67	1.43	1.20	5.31

*Note:* Political Id = Political Ideology, Attach JewiHo = Attachment to the Jewish homeland, Victimhood = Collective Victimhood (an average of the Victimhood in the Diaspora and Victimhood in the Conflict measures), Dehuman = Dehumanization, Mono Narrat = Monolithic Narrative. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

of the other, we created a composite score of the Jewish narrative scale and the Palestinian narrative scale. To create a composite score for the monolithic narrative scale, participants' average scores on the Jewish narrative scale were subtracted from their average score on the Palestinian narrative scale. This score ranged from  $-6$  to  $+6$ , where a positive score indicated a preference for the Jewish narrative about the conflict over that of the Palestinians. Cronbach's alpha for all 16 items together .93.

## Results

Means and standard deviations of the continuous variables and intercorrelations among all variables are presented in Table 2 (excluding the data reported in the description of participants in the Participants section). Overall, participants were nearly at the midpoint in terms of their support for compromise solutions to the conflict, although noncompromise solutions to the conflict were slightly favored over compromise solutions. On average, respondents tended to *agree* with a sense of victimhood in the Diaspora ( $M = 6.43$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ) and a sense of victimhood in the conflict ( $M = 6.04$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ). Respondents on average *disagreed* with a zero-sum view on the conflict. In addition, respondents tended to *disagree* with statements that dehumanized and delegitimized the Palestinians. Respondents tended to *somewhat agree* with the Jewish narrative on the conflict ( $M = 5.4$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) and *somewhat disagree* with the Palestinian narrative ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ), leading to a positive score on a monolithic view on the conflict measure.

The second step of the analysis was to check if indeed the different subscales of beliefs functioned as separate and independent underlying factors. For this purpose we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Because the zero-sum scale was based on one item, it was not included in the EFA. EFA with principal axis factoring and promax rotation was applied to the 23 items reflecting beliefs. For the first component, all the loading items were items from the Jewish Narrative and Palestinian Narrative subscales. All of the items that loaded on the second factor were from the Diaspora Victimhood scale and the Victimhood in the Conflict scale, with one exception. The one exception was the item, "In the present the state of Israel does not have the power and resources to protect itself against Palestinian and Arab attacks," which did not load greater than 0.2 on any factor and was therefore dropped. A scale of general victimhood averaging the victimhood in the diaspora items with the victimhood in the conflict item (without the helplessness item) was constructed and used in subsequent analysis ( $\alpha = .82$ ). Finally, the third underlying factor was based on the dehumanization and delegitimization scale.

After dropping the victimhood item that did not load on any factor, we reran the analysis (see Table 3). It appears that the different scales centered on three different factors: (1) a monolithic view of the conflict, (2) general victimhood, (3) and dehumanization and delegitimization. These three factors accounted for 53.53% of the variance. The first factor accounted for 36% of the variance (Eigenvalue = 8.66); the second factor accounted for 10% (Eigenvalue = 2.81); the third factor accounted for 7% (Eigenvalue = 2.08).

The main purpose of the study was to test the predictive power of different belief variables theorized to be related to rejection of compromise solutions to the conflict. Therefore, we used a hierarchical multiple regression analysis that allowed us to control for the predictive power of demographic variables and attachment to the Jewish homeland, which were entered in the first step of the analysis. In the second step of analysis we entered the different beliefs hypothesized to play a significant role in individuals' support for or rejection of compromise solutions.

The initial model based on demographic variables and ingroup attachment significantly predicted rejection of compromise solutions to the conflict and accounted for 35% of the variance,  $F(5,170) = 18.57, p < .0001$  (see Table 4). In this initial model, two variables were significantly related to rejection of compromise solutions to conflict: political ideology ( $\beta = -.38, t(170) = -5.55, p < .0001$ ) and Attachment to the Jewish Homeland ( $\beta = -.30, t(171) = -4.55, p < .0001$ ). Participants who reported more conservative ideology were less likely to support compromise solutions to conflict compared to more liberal participants. Additionally, participants who reported greater attachment to the Jewish homeland were likely to reject compromise solutions.

In the second step of the hierarchical regression we added four composites representing beliefs hypothesized to play a role in the perpetuation of conflict.

**Table 3.** Factor Loadings for Principal Axis Factoring with Promax Rotation of Belief Items

Item	Monolithic Narrative	Victimhood	Dehumanization
The state of Israel acted to push the Palestinians out of the land of Israel.	<b>.88</b>	.02	.09
Early Jewish aspiration to settle in Israel ignored the presence and the rights of the Palestinians to the land.	<b>.87</b>	.10	.07
The Israeli army often uses excessive amount of force when dealing with the Palestinians.	<b>.85</b>	.14	-.06
The Israeli occupation oppresses and causes suffering to the Palestinian population.	<b>.77</b>	.10	-.13
The Israeli government is acting to push most of the Palestinian population out of the land of Israel.	<b>.74</b>	-.02	.03
The indigenous Arab population had little power to protect itself against the organized Zionist movement.	<b>.73</b>	.03	.11
The current Israeli political leadership has tried its best to achieve peace with the Palestinians.	-.72	.00	.00
Arab Israelis experience discrimination in Israel.	<b>.72</b>	.25	-.12
What portions of the actions taken by the IDF are solely defensive measures against Palestinians' and Arabs' aggression?	-.66	.09	.12
I think that Jewish attempts to establish a Jewish state in Israel are justified because they intended to create a just and peaceful society.	-.65	.09	.00
To the best of my knowledge, the Jewish halutzim (early Jewish immigrants to Eretz Yisrael or Palestine) did not intend to harm the indigenous population living in the area.	-.56	.25	-.13
Most of the land the Zionist pioneers settled on was purchased legitimately from the Arabs.	-.56	.23	-.01
Since coming to Eretz-Israel in the 19th century, Jews have had to consistently defend themselves against Arab attacks.	-.50	.29	.07
Before the beginning of the Jewish aliyahot (waves of Jewish immigrations beginning at the end of the 18th century) most of the land of Israel was populated by an indigenous (Arab and Christian).	<b>.48</b>	.09	-.06
In your opinion, what portion of the Israeli Jewish population genuinely wants to live in peace with the Palestinians?	-.36	.18	-.15
The anti-Semitism and discrimination Jews experienced was undeserved and unjust.	.08	<b>.91</b>	-.10
Jews suffered extensive anti-Semitism, discrimination, and violence.	.13	<b>.87</b>	.09
In general, most of the Jews were helpless against anti-Semitism and discrimination.	.10	<b>.69</b>	.02
Arab and Palestinian attacks cause the Jewish population harm and suffering.	-.09	<b>.61</b>	.11
The Arab and Palestinian attacks on the Jewish population are unjust and undeserved.	-.40	<b>.48</b>	.03
The Palestinians are primitive people.	.04	.00	<b>.88</b>
The Palestinians have a culture that has still not reached levels common in the West.	-.04	.03	<b>.73</b>
The Palestinians are by nature violent people.	.01	.06	<b>.72</b>

Note: Factor loadings >.40 are in boldface. Correlations between factors: Monolithic Narrative/Victimhood  $r = -.37$ , Monolithic Narrative/Dehumanization  $r = -.32$ , Victimization/Dehumanization  $r = .07$ .



**Table 4.** Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Support for Compromise Solution ( $n = 176$ )

	Step 1	Step 2
	$\beta$	$\beta$
<i>Predictor</i>		
Gender	0.12	0.08
Age	-0.08	-0.09
Education	-0.12	-0.13*
Political Id	-0.38***	-0.10
Attach JewiHo	-0.30***	-0.11
Victimhood	—	.08
Zero-Sum	—	-0.11
Dehuman	—	-0.18**
Mono Narrat	—	-.51***
<i>Model Summary</i>		
$R^2$	0.35	0.57
<i>F-ratio</i>	$F(5, 170) = 18.57^{***}$	$F(9, 166) = 24.89^{***}$
$\Delta R^2$	—	.22
<i>F-change</i>	—	$F(4, 166) = 21.57^{***}$

Note: Political Id = Political ideology, Attach JewiHo = Attachment to the Jewish homeland, Victimhood = Collective Victimhood, Dehuman = Dehumanization, Mono Narrat = Monolithic Narrative. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table 5.** Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Support for Compromise Solutions ( $n = 176$ )

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	$\beta$	<i>T</i>	Sig. ( <i>p</i> )
Victimhood General	.28	.36	.05	.78	.43
Zero-Sum View	-.36	.19	-.11	-1.85	.07
Dehumanization & Delegitimization	-.90	.22	-.24	-4.05	<.0001
Monolithic Narrative	-2.52	.28	-.57	-9.13	<.0001

Note:  $R^2 = .52$ ,  $F(4, 171) = 46.61$ ,  $p < .0001$ .

These included: a *victimhood* composite, a one-item *zero-sum* measure, a *dehumanization* composite, and a *monolithic narrative* composite.

This second model accounted for an additional 22% of variance in the attitude composite, which was a significant improvement over the initial model,  $F(4, 166) = 21.57$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Overall, the final model accounted for 57% of the variance in the solution composite, which was statistically significant,  $F(9, 166) = 24.90$ ,  $p < .0001$ . A monolithic narrative on the conflict ( $\beta = .51$ ,  $t(166) = 7.67$ ,  $p < .0001$ ) appeared to emerge as the most important predictor.

Dehumanization of the Palestinians was also a significant predictor ( $\beta = -.18$ ,  $t(166) = -2.90$ ,  $p = .004$ ), and zero-sum view on the conflict was marginally significant ( $\beta = -.12$ ,  $t(166) = -1.95$ ,  $p = .053$ ). Of the predictors carried over from the initial model, political ideology and ingroup attachment were no longer

significant predictors, but education level emerged as significant ( $\beta = -.13$ ,  $t(166) = -2.07$ ,  $p = .040$ ).

To examine if there was a significant difference in terms of predictive power between the different beliefs, we standardized individuals' scores on each belief by converting all the belief predictors into z scores (Fox, 2008). We then conducted a regression analysis predicting support for compromise solutions from all four belief predictors (See Table 5). This regression analysis accounted for 52% of the variance in the dependent variable,  $F(4, 171) = 46.61$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Two beliefs emerged as significant: A Monolithic narrative on the conflict ( $\beta = -.57$ ,  $t(171) = -9.13$ ,  $p < .0001$ ) and Dehumanization of the Palestinians ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $t(171) = -4.05$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). A test for the equality of regression coefficients for Monolithic narrative and Dehumanization suggests that the regression coefficient for Monolithic narrative is greater than the regression coefficient for Dehumanization,  $t(171) = 4.11$ ,  $p < .0001$  (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003, p. 640).

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore among a sample of Jewish Americans the prevalence of beliefs associated with intractable conflict and to test the role of different beliefs in predicting individuals' support for a compromise solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. We found that the Jewish Americans we sampled tended to agree with a sense of collective victimhood and the Jewish Israeli narrative on the conflict. On the other hand they tended to disagree with the Palestinian narrative on the conflict and with statements that dehumanized the Palestinians and on average did not frame the conflict in terms of a zero-sum game. Jewish Americans in our sample tended to fall in the middle in terms of their endorsement of compromise compared to noncompromise solutions to the conflict. These results are in line with studies from Israel that indicate that Jewish participants tend to disagree with statements that dehumanize the Palestinians (Hammack et al., 2011; Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2008). They depart from study findings from Israel that indicate that Jewish Israelis tend to see the conflict somewhat in terms of a zero-sum game and tend to reject compromise solutions to the conflict (Eidelson & Maoz, 2007). These differences might be explained by the differences in the cultural ethos of Jewish Americans that values social justice and human rights and thus peace, and Israeli society that like other societies living in intractable conflict tend to be less optimistic about peace (Bar-Tal, 2007; Lerner, 2011). That being said, the majority of people in both populations tended to disagree with statements that dehumanize the Palestinians, suggesting a low disposition toward violence usually made possible by a process of dehumanization of the other (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005).

In terms of demographic predictors, our findings are in line with previous studies that suggest that political ideology and attachment to the diaspora homeland significantly predicts noncompromise solutions to conflict (Bilali, Tropp, & Dasgupta, 2012). It also appears that when controlling for variance explained by demographic variables and attachment to Israel, education level emerges as a predictor for rejection of peaceful solutions. Individuals who are more educated were more likely to refuse concessions to the Palestinians. This finding can perhaps be explained by the influence of millions of dollars invested in engaging Jewish college students with Israeli culture and the Israeli view of the conflict; thus spending more time in formal education leads to more refusal to compromise with the Palestinians (Beinart, 2010, 2012).

The central focus of this study was the question of which belief suggested by theorists best predicts individuals' support for or rejection of peaceful solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Our findings are in line with previous research from Israel that suggests that dehumanization and a zero-sum view on the conflict serve an important role in predicting individuals' support for the perpetuation of conflict (Halperin et al., 2008; Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011; Hammack et al., 2011; Maoz & Eidelson, 2007; Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2008). Importantly, our study contributes an additional novel predictor to the current literature based on our operationalization of a monolithic narrative on the conflict. The monolithic narrative variable, which is based on the level of acceptance of the Jewish narrative on the conflict (i.e., “we intend to live in peace but we must continually defend ourselves”) and rejection of the Palestinian narrative (i.e., “the Palestinians are indigenous to the land but are continually dispossessed due to Jewish occupation”), played a considerable role in predicting support for compromise solutions. The importance of the monolithic narrative predictor gives empirical support to theories that suggest that the perpetuation of conflict is based on misrecognition of the other side's narrative identity (Bourdieu, 1977). Specifically, it appears that when Jewish Americans believe that Israel strives for peace but needs to continually defend itself, and when they reject the suffering of the Palestinians and their claim to the land, they are less likely to support conceding land or holy sites to the Palestinians.

Taken together, the fact that dehumanization, zero-sum view on the conflict, and a monolithic narrative played important roles in predicting individuals' rejection of compromise solutions suggests that when individuals fail to acknowledge the narrative of the other they may be more likely to interpret violent resistance by the Palestinians as being caused by the Palestinians' violent nature (i.e., dehumanization). Believing that the Palestinians are violent by nature may be associated with individuals' framing of the conflict in terms of a zero-sum game in which any win to the out group is a loss to one's own collective. Together those three beliefs appear to complement each other in disposing individuals to refuse concession to the other side.

Our operationalization of Bar-Tal et al.'s (2009) definition of a sense of collective victimhood based on three attributions (i.e., harm, injustice, and helplessness) appears to have had a similar pattern of responses when individuals were asked to think about past experiences in the diaspora and current experiences in the conflict, except for a sense of helplessness in the conflict. It appears that whereas Jewish Americans tend to see themselves as helpless in terms of past harm done to them in the diaspora, they do not ascribe the same pattern of helplessness when it comes to the conflict. This finding is in line with Maoz and Eidelson's (2007) finding that Jewish Israelis did not see themselves as very helpless in defending themselves from Arab attacks. Although a sense of victimhood had a significant (negative) zero-order correlation with endorsing compromise solutions, victimhood did not serve as a significant predictor in the hierarchical regression analysis. This is presumably because the variance in the solution scale is shared with the other three beliefs that are central to explaining the variance in the outcome variable. Finally, our results lend indirect support to the construct of inclusive victimhood (Vollhardt, 2009) because acknowledgment of the Palestinian narrative that frames the Palestinians as suffering and as unjustly displaced from their land (i.e., as victims) was strongly associated with support for compromise solutions to conflict. In other words it appears that among a sample of American Jews who (on average) tended to hold a sense of collective victimhood, acknowledging a narrative that frames the Palestinians as victims was highly related to disposition toward compromise.

This study is limited in several ways. The sample used in this study is relatively small. Moreover, this sample was recruited through announcements in social networking sites as well as through Jewish organizations' listservs, many of which were based in California. A selection bias of younger individuals highly involved in the Jewish community is apparent from inspection of the demographics of the survey participants. Another limitation of this study is that the survey questions were mostly theoretically driven, based on beliefs suggested by scholars to be associated with the perpetuation of conflict among members of societies enmeshed in intractable conflict. It can be argued that this framework is not suitable to understanding the opinion of members of a diaspora community who do not see themselves as living under existential threat. Nevertheless, because Jewish Israeli authorities, including political leaders, producers of culture (such as films and books), and the news media are central to how events in the conflict are presented to the Jewish American public, it is likely that the Israeli hegemonic discourse on the conflict influences Jewish Americans.

A key question that still needs to be examined is why some Jewish Americans seem to believe that the Palestinians suffer and are discriminated against under Jewish occupation, whereas others disagree. Is it that some people are simply not exposed to the realities of lives in the Palestinian territories? Or, rather, do individuals have a different way of interpreting Palestinian experiences living under

occupation in a way that does not understand the Palestinians to be dispossessed or suffering? Another interesting direction for future research would be to explore if indeed the same result can be replicated in Israel among members of the Jewish Israeli population who are living under the conditions of intractable conflict and existential threat.

Our results suggest that educational programs aimed at promoting reconciliation between Jews and Palestinians both in the diaspora and in Israel should focus on familiarizing participants with the Palestinian narrative on the conflict. When individuals come to understand the Palestinians as native to the land and as discriminated against and suffering under occupation, they are more likely to support peaceful solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Bar-On, 2002; Salomon, 2004).

In terms of the growing polarization in opinion in the Jewish American community, this study suggests that the schism is less a result of one side's prejudice and racism toward the Palestinians and the other side's tolerance, but rather that the division in opinions is centered on different constructions of the history and present reality of the conflict. Individuals who are more disposed toward compromise seem to see the conflict in part through a Palestinian narrative lens (i.e., they acknowledge that the Palestinians are indigenous to the land and are humiliated and discriminated against under occupation). Jewish communities aiming to bridge the differences in opinion on Israel among their congregants may benefit from direct discussion of these points of contestation.

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ELLA BEN HAGAI is a graduate student of Social Psychology at the University of California Santa Cruz. Her research focuses on connections between ideology, personal narratives and embodied cognition.

EILEEN L. ZURBRIGGEN is a Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She received her Ph.D. in personality psychology from the University of Michigan. Most of her research focuses on the intersections between power, aggression, sexuality, and gender. She is a fellow of the American Psychological Association and served as the chair of its Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls. With Tomi-Ann Roberts, she edited the book “The Sexualization of Girls and Girlhood: Causes, Consequences, and Resistance,” published by Oxford University Press in 2013.

PHILLIP L. HAMMACK, PhD, is Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Professor Hammack’s research broadly investigates identity and politics, particularly the way in which social categorization places individuals in states of relative power and privilege in societies. He is also interested in issues of history, theory, and paradigm in the discipline of psychology (especially social, cultural, and political psychology) and conducts historical research on the discipline, especially in relation to public policy.

MEGAN ZIMAN graduated with honors from the University of California Santa Cruz with a degree in Intensive Psychology. During her undergraduate studies she conducted research on the narratives of Jewish-American young adults.