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Power in History: Contrasting Theoretical Approaches to Intergroup Dialogue

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Groups in conflict routinely use historical narrative to compete for status in intergroup encounters. This study examines power dynamics in conversations about history facilitated according to distinct social psychological theories. Israeli and Palestinian youth participating in an existing intergroup contact program were randomly assigned to either a (1) coexistence condition consistent with a prejudice reduction model in which the goal was to foster the construction of a common in-group identity, or (2) a confrontational condition consistent with a collective action model in which the goal was to raise awareness about identities and empower the low-status group. Dialogue facilitated in the coexistence condition reproduced power asymmetries, with a pattern of Jewish Israeli dominance. Dialogue facilitated in the confrontational condition suggested a pattern of Palestinian dominance, consistent with a collective action model. Findings are discussed in terms of theoretical approaches to intergroup contact and dialogue about history among groups in intractable conflict.

> *History is the reservoir of resentment, the fount of blame. History legitimizes; history thus sanctifies.* (Rotberg, 2006, p. 1)

Social psychologists and practitioners of conflict resolution have increasingly recognized history not just as a formal record of events but as a narrative which maintains and often exacerbates intergroup conflict (e.g., Hammack, 2008;

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Liu & Hilton, 2005), challenging or reproducing existing power asymmetries (Hammack, 2011; Pilecki & Hammack, 2014; Rouhana, 2004). Historical narratives represent interpretations of collective experience and form the basis of collective memory for groups in conflict settings (Bar-Tal, 2007). In intractable conflicts such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, divergent interpretations of history represent fundamental obstacles to conflict resolution (Rotberg, 2006); they form the basis of the competition of meaning upon which conflicts are constructed and through which they endure (Hammack, 2008, 2011). History thus represents a rhetorical tool through which groups vie for legitimacy, recognition, and power (Pilecki & Hammack, 2014).

Can history, however, serve as a tool for social and political change, rather than simply reproduce the status quo? Can certain forms of historical dialogue promote peace and social justice for groups in conflict? If history and individual psychology are co-constitutive (Hunter & Stewart, 2015), can historical narrative become a tool for peace and justice rather than the maintenance and reproduction of conflict (e.g., Adwan & Bar-On, 2004)? Can historical dialogue promote social policies of peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians? This article presents findings from a field study examining the way in which power dynamics in conversations about history vary as a function of the distinct theoretical approach to dialogue facilitation among Palestinian and Israeli youth.

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict affords a "living laboratory" for the study of social interaction (Bar-Tal, 2004), including analysis of how individuals engage with historical narrative (Hammack, 2011). The Israeli historical narrative emphasizes the emergence of Zionism (i.e., Jewish nationalism) and massive immigration to Palestine as a response to exclusionary forms of nationalism in 19th century Europe, the rejection of Palestinian Arabs to the original two-state solution proposed by the United Nations in 1948, and the continued threats to a Jewish state in the eastern Mediterranean (e.g., Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). The Israeli narrative hence emphasizes historic persecution of the Jewish people and antisemitism, culminating in the Holocaust, and the need for a Jewish state to ensure the safety and survival of the Jewish people (Hammack, 2011). By contrast the Palestinian historical narrative views Zionism as a form of ethnoracial nationalism and settler colonialism that has prevented Palestinian autonomy since 1948 (e.g., Rodinson, 1973). The Palestinian narrative hence emphasizes the historic and continued subordination of the indigenous Palestinian people, who remain stateless inhabitants of occupied territory and refugees from the 1948 war living across the world (Hammack, 2011). Dialogue about history between Palestinians and Israelis hence typically involves a clash of historical narratives framed as polarized (Hammack, 2011) or negatively interdependent (Kelman, 1999). The 1948 war, for example, is framed positively as the "War of Independence" by Israelis (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006) but negatively as the "*Nakba*" ("catastrophe") by Palestinians (Jawad, 2006). These divergent historical narratives are typically

used to justify the status quo of continued conflict today (Pilecki & Hammack, 2014), including the Israeli maintenance of military occupation of Palestinian territories and Palestinian armed resistance to the occupation.

Two dominant approaches to intergroup contact have emerged in practice and are common in the Israeli–Palestinian context (see Maoz, 2011). The *coexistence* approach is informed by contact theory (Allport, 1954) and common in-group identity theory (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), in which the goal is to foster a common identity among participants, minimize differences, and emphasize interlocutors as distinct individuals apart from their group identities. Consistent with a *prejudice reduction* model of social change (Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012), the coexistence approach views cooperative intergroup contact which aims to reduce stereotypes and foster empathy as the ideal intervention.

The *confrontational* approach, by contrast, is grounded in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and views the interaction as a site at which larger intergroup dynamics are reproduced (Suleiman, 2004). Dialogue facilitators in this paradigm emphasize participants as group representatives, seek to emphasize differences (including in historical narrative) as a tool for mutual recognition, and seek to raise awareness about power asymmetries (Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004). The confrontational approach is aligned with a *collective action* model of social change (Dixon et al., 2012), in which empowerment, consciousness raising, and coalition building are seen as vital for members of the historically disadvantaged group.

The two approaches diverge principally in the way they conceive of social identity and history. Coexistence facilitators seek to *reduce* the salience of in-group identity and the polarization of historical narratives, assuming that social identity salience is a defining problematic feature of conflict. Confrontational facilitators view conflict as fundamentally rooted in inequality and lack of recognition of social identities and historical narratives (Maoz, 2011). As a consequence, they view the attempt to reduce in-group identity salience or alter the collective narrative as problematic because it may contribute to perceptions of nonrecognition, especially among low status groups. Confrontational facilitators thus seek to raise awareness about social identity status, especially with regard to relative power (Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004).

Although these distinct models are in common practice in the field (Maoz, 2011), and although the theoretical premise of the confrontational model is to alter power dynamics (Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004), few empirical studies have been undertaken to examine whether these distinct models achieve their respective goals. Nearly all research on Israeli–Palestinian contact has focused on the coexistence model or some variant of it, finding success in short-term prejudice reduction but an erosion of those effects over time (e.g., Hammack, 2011; Maoz, 2000, 2011). Importantly, studies that have examined the dialogue process directly for coexistence encounters have discovered a pattern in which the macro-reality

of the conflict, including power asymmetry and essentialist discourse about national identity, are largely reproduced rather than challenged (e.g., Bekerman, 2009; Suleiman, 2004). Among a growing chorus of scholars, these processes and outcomes are viewed as problematic for their inability to contribute to conflict reduction and the possibility that they might, paradoxically, help maintain or exacerbate conflict (e.g., Bekerman, 2009; see Dixon et al., 2012).

Recent studies of Israeli–Palestinian dialogue have increasingly focused on analysis of power and a direct interrogation of the process and content of intergroup contact. Such studies have illustrated the use of mechanisms such as dehumanizing language (Sonnenschein & Bekerman, 2010) and the strategic use of silence (Smith & Bekerman, 2011) for Jews to maintain dominance. Missing, however, is an analysis of how the theoretical model of contact employed influences the power dynamics of intergroup dialogue about history. As distinct models of intergroup dialogue have emerged in practice in Israel and other settings of intractable conflict (Maoz, 2011), it is vital to empirically examine the distinct psychological processes and outcomes they facilitate. While some limited research on Israeli–Palestinian encounters has examined power dynamics, to our knowledge no study has explicitly tested the power dynamics in historical dialogue occurring in two distinct theoretical models simultaneously. That is, the few studies that have examined power dynamics have done so within the context of a single approach to contact, typically the coexistence approach or some variant of it (e.g., Maoz, 2001).

Based on the underlying theories of the coexistence and confrontational models of intergroup dialogue, we hypothesized that (1) historical dialogue in the coexistence model would reproduce the power dynamics of the conflict, with evidence of dominance among the higher status group (Jewish Israelis); and that (2) historical dialogue in the confrontational model would reveal evidence of greater power symmetry between the low status (Palestinians) and the high status (Jewish Israelis) groups, as reflected either in a pattern of equality or Palestinian dominance.

Method

Participants

We conducted a field experiment as part of an existing dialogue program for Israeli, Palestinian, and U.S. youth. The program is located in the metropolitan area of a large Midwestern city in the United States. Founded in 2003, this program views its mission to promote values of peace and coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis and to educate the local community about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by hosting youth from the region. Each summer since 2003, Israeli and Palestinian youth have traveled to the United States to participate in the 2-week program.

For the current study, 16 participants ($Age_{Median} = 17$ years; $Age_{Range} = 14–18$ years') were recruited in secondary schools and extracurricular venues in Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories (West Bank and East Jerusalem; recruitment from the Gaza Strip was not possible due to mobility restrictions), and the large metropolitan area in the United States where the program is located. Program organizers selected participants based on English language proficiency, deliberately recruiting an ideologically diverse group of youth. Though participants endorsed a range of political views regarding the conflict, all were committed to the idea of dialogue as a tool for peacebuilding. In addition, the willingness of parents to allow their children to participate in such a program and study suggests an openness to dialogue and coexistence. These youth and their families thus represent a segment of Palestinian and Israeli societies potentially more predisposed toward peace than others. Though not necessarily representative of the general Israeli and Palestinian populations, these participants were representative of youth who participate in intergroup encounters in the region—the population to which we intended to generalize in the current study.

Palestinian and Israeli participants provided written assent to participate in the study, and parents provided written informed consent. All procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of California, Santa Cruz. Participants traveled to the United States for the duration of the 2-week study and dialogue program. They were randomly assigned to dialogue facilitation condition (coexistence or confrontational) taking care to balance groups in terms of demographics and to separate previously acquainted youth. The coexistence condition consisted of four Jewish Israelis (two females; two males), one female Palestinian Israeli and four Palestinians from the occupied territories (two females; two males). The confrontational condition consisted of three Jewish Israelis (two females; one male), one female Palestinian Israeli and three Palestinians from the occupied territories (one female; two males).

Procedure

Participants met daily for a 2-hour dialogue session, facilitated by one Jewish and one Arab facilitator trained in the dialogue facilitation condition. All dialogue sessions were conducted in English, the common second language for both Israelis and Palestinians. In each condition, history was discussed over a 2-day period, resulting in four dialogue sessions for analysis. Facilitators were not given specific instructions by the researchers on how to conduct these sessions. Rather, the researchers solicited their written plans for the sessions beforehand and found that they conformed to the distinct emphases of the two approaches. Facilitators in the coexistence condition described their plan to motivate participants to "learn to be better active listeners and show respect to others, even when faced with strong

differences." By contrast, facilitators in the confrontational condition described their plan to motivate participants to develop a "deeper understanding of the reality of the conflict, the power dynamic in the group, [and the] 'outside' reality" of power asymmetry.

Dialogue sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Our corpus of data encompassed 516 pages of dialogue transcripts. Sessions were also observed by the coauthors, and observational notes were recorded. The program also consisted of afternoon social and teambuilding activities and occasional evening social events. Although we collected ethnographic data on these other aspects of the program, the focus of our analysis here is on the dialogue sessions because that aspect of the program provided participants with the only opportunity to directly discuss history.

Measures

Power was measured using two distinct approaches common in research on language and social interaction: *social influence* and *gross speaking time*. We operationalized social influence as the degree to which interlocutors "take charge" of a conversation, control its content and flow, take and hold the floor, successfully take turns (i.e., they have successful interruptions and are able to complete their utterances), and are able to shift the focus of conversation and persuade other group members on their positions (see Brooke & Ng, 1986). Six independent raters, blind to the nature and conditions of the study and screened for bias and familiarity with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, listened to each session and completed a questionnaire in which they were instructed to rate the influence (using the above definition) of each participant on a seven-point scale (1 = "not influential at all"; 7 = "very influential").

We analyzed the degree of agreement among raters using Kendall's coefficient of concordance (e.g., Brooke & Ng, 1986). This statistic measures the amount of agreement among raters, with 1 indicating perfect agreement and 0 indicating no agreement; a significant coefficient, moreover, supports the null hypothesis that ratings among raters differs significantly and should be rejected (Garson, 2012). Kendall coefficients for the sessions we examined in this study ranged from .69 to .82, all of which were significant at the $p < .001$ level, indicating that there was general agreement among the raters concerning the perceived social influence of each participant.

Operationalizing power within conversation in terms of gross speaking time is common in studies in social psychology and communication and offers a measure that does not rely on subjective interpretation (e.g., Maoz, 2001). We thus coded each utterance ($N = 4{,}546$) made during the dialogue sessions for duration (in seconds), nationality (Jewish Israeli, Palestinian, United States) and role (participant

or facilitator). Data from nonparticipants (e.g., facilitators) and U.S. participants were excluded from our analysis given that our focus was on the balance of power between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians. Our final sample consisted of 2,983 utterances.

Results

We present the results of our analyses in two sections. In the first section, we review our analysis of social influence ratings of Jewish Israeli and Palestinian participants between dialogue conditions. In the second section, we review our analysis of gross speaking time as a function of national group. These two sections represent different levels of analysis. We were interested in social influence as enacted by *particular group members* within the dialogue sessions devoted to history. Regarding gross speaking time, we were interested in which *national group* spoke the most; thus, our level of analysis shifted from the individual participant to the *utterance*.

Social Influence

We averaged influence ratings across raters to generate a single rating for each participant. Given the small number of participants in our study, we did not analyze between-groups differences in social influence using inferential statistics; rather, we present descriptive statistics along with illustrative examples, which is common in intergroup contact research (e.g., Maoz, 2001; Smith & Bekerman, 2011). As illustrated in Figure 1, two Palestinian participants, Dana ($M = 5.90$) and Ashraf ($M = 5.28$), received higher influence ratings than any Jewish Israeli participant in the coexistence condition. These participants contrast with the remaining members of the Palestinian group—Hadeel ($M = 2.75$), Shadi ($M = 2.38$), and Noora ($M = 1.93$)—who received lower influence ratings than any Jewish Israeli participants. These findings, in conjunction with our observational data, indicate that the Jewish Israeli group—Merav ($M = 5.60$), Maayan ($M = 4.83$), Yuval ($M = 3.85$), and Nir ($M = 3.50$)—were more influential *collectively* than their Palestinian counterparts in the coexistence condition. The following exchange within the coexistence condition illustrates the type of conversational power wielded among Jewish Israeli participants.

> *Maayan* (*17, F, Jewish Israeli*)
> Yeah, we were the winners. So, do you think you wouldn't do something that . . .
> and please answer me very, very honestly . . . .so, you think if you were winning you wouldn't go take some Jewish village and take control of it. I mean, I know you can't like—
> *Dana* (*F, 16, Palestinian citizen of Israel*)
> [interrupts] But we were here before, so why did you do that?
> *Merav* (*F, 16, Jewish Israeli*)
> Yeah, but there is a war, so if you won what would happen?

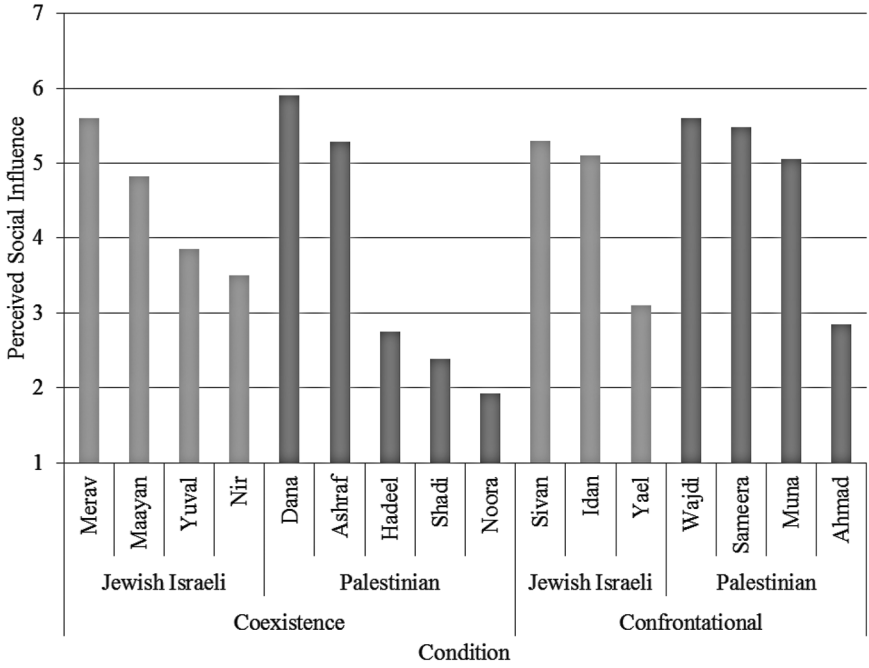

Fig. 1. Social influence ratings (1 = least influential; 7 = most influential) of participants across national groups by condition.

Dana
What would happen to you? We—
Merav
[interrupts] I wanna know, I wanna know. What would happen?

This exchange occurred in the context of claims made by Palestinian participants that the Israeli military purposely and violently expelled Palestinians from their homes during the 1948 war. Rather than denying that this occurred, Maayan and Merav reframe Israeli actions as a routine consequence of war by positing that the Palestinians would have acted similarly had the situation been reversed. Merav's exertion of social influence within this exchange is illustrated by her persistence in her line of questioning despite Dana's attempts to shift the conversation back to the issue of Palestinian claims to the land ("But we were here before, so why did you do that?") as well as her hedges ("What would happen to you?"). Merav repeats her question, and even interrupts Dana, in order to get her to answer.

We did not find such an asymmetrical pattern within the confrontational condition (see Figure 1). Palestinian participants Wajdi ($M = 5.60$) and Sameera

($M = 5.48$) were the highest rated in terms of social influence followed by Jewish Israeli participants Sivan ($M = 5.30$) and Idan ($M = 5.10$). Muna ($M = 5.05$), a Palestinian citizen of Israel, was rated higher than either of the remaining two participants: Yael ($M = 3.10$), a Jewish Israeli, or Ahmad ($M = 2.85$), a Palestinian. This pattern of results suggests a degree of power symmetry between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians or even a slight advantage in power in favor of the Palestinians within the confrontational condition. The following exchange, occurring within a larger discussion regarding Israel's declaration of independence in 1948, illustrates the conversational power enacted by Palestinians in the confrontational condition:

> *Sameera* (*F, 17, Palestinian*)
> How could you expect peace when you declared a country? And that's a big issue for us—
> *Sivan* (*F, 16, Jewish Israeli*)
> [interrupts] What's the problem with—
> *Sameera*
> [interrupts] That is a big problem—
> *Sivan*
> [interrupts] Why?
> *Muna* (*F, 17, Palestinian citizen of Israel*)
> [interrupts] Could I say something?
> *Sameera*
> You could live as Palestinians, why didn't you choose that? No, you had to go and make trouble.

Sameera—like Merav above—uses interruptions to maintain control of the conversation. She problematizes Israel's declaration of independence by framing it as the cause of the 1948 war and thus "a big issue" for Palestinians. Sameera then interrupts Sivan's attempt to shift and possibly reframe the issue in terms consistent with the Israeli narrative ("What's the problem with—") by re-emphasizing the Palestinian frame ("That is a big problem"). This interruption compels Sivan to ask "Why?," which ultimately highlights the Palestinian narrative by giving Sameera the space to elaborate further, which she eventually does ("You could live as Palestinians, why didn't you choose that?") and in doing so points to Jewish Israeli culpability for the start of the war ("No, you had to go and make trouble.").

Speaking Time

Our analysis of social influence offered us a window into the differential power dynamics according to dialogue condition, based on the impressions of raters blind to the nature of the study and naïve with regard to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Due to the nature of the data, however, we could only offer a window into the influence of particular individuals. Our second measure of power, *gross speaking time*, afforded us a more objective indicator of dominance. Consistent with other studies of dialogue (e.g., Maoz, 2001; Smith & Bekerman, 2011), we report our findings in terms of descriptive statistics, since the nonindependence of data do not allow for inferential statistics.

We found that Jewish Israeli utterances accounted for a greater proportion of gross participant speaking time (3,669 seconds; 52.7%) during the history sessions within the coexistence condition than Palestinian (3,296 seconds; 47.3%) utterances. Palestinian utterances in the confrontational condition, in contrast, accounted for a greater proportion of the gross participant speaking time (4,295 seconds; 58.9%) during history sessions occurring in the confrontational condition than Jewish Israeli (2,994 seconds; 41.1%) utterances.

Discussion

History is not a neutral account of events but rather a narrative with which individuals engage as they negotiate personal collective memories, emotions, and identities (Greenwood, 2015; Hammack, 2011; Hunter & Rollins, 2015; Hunter & Stewart, 2015; Rotberg, 2006; Schwartzman, 2015). The representation of history has implications for social justice and social policy (Perlman, Hunter, & Stewart, 2015), as narratives might either promote reconciliation or legitimize violence in contexts of conflict and injustice (e.g., Bar-Tal, Oren, & Nets-Zehngut, 2014; Pilecki & Hammack, 2014). For Israelis and Palestinians, the reconciliation of historical narratives stands to contribute to social policies that promote peace and justice (Adwan & Bar-On, 2004). The negotiation of history in intergroup dialogue represents one attempt to work toward social change in this conflict of major geopolitical significance, but historical dialogue always occurs within a larger context of power and intergroup relations (Rouhana, 2004; Suleiman, 2004).

Our study offers a novel contribution to the literature in three specific areas. First, our focus on dialogue about history as a means to secure or transform power dynamics between rival groups speaks to a longstanding concern for social psychology that has gone understudied. Second, our focus on the process and dynamics of an existing intergroup contact intervention in the field speaks to the call among critical researchers of contact to examine the contact experience in situ among groups in an active state of conflict, rather than the rarefied conditions of the laboratory (e.g., Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005; Dixon et al., 2012). Third, our comparative analysis of two distinct models of intergroup dialogue common in the field represents the first empirical attempt to our knowledge to directly examine differential power dynamics between dialogue facilitation models, thus providing empirical evidence regarding the claims of advocates of one approach over another (e.g., Maoz, 2011).

In a real context of intractable conflict in which groups actively vie for power and status and in which conflict is anchored in structural disadvantage (e.g., military occupation), contact modeled upon a prejudice reduction model has increasingly been critiqued (e.g., Bekerman, 2007; Hammack, 2011). A confrontational model rooted in social identity theory has gradually emerged in the field to more explicitly work for social justice and collective action, yet the

processes and outcomes of such approaches have gone largely undocumented and untested. This study offers support for the utility of the confrontational model, for its ability to effectively challenge asymmetric power dynamics in conversations about history within the contact setting. The pattern of Palestinian dominance in the confrontational condition suggests that this type of dialogue is more likely to achieve a goal identified by most scholars and practitioners as important for conflict reduction (i.e., empowerment of the low-status group). Though empowerment of the low-status group might exacerbate negative intergroup relations in the short term (Maoz, 2011), its long-term consequences are likely to be beneficial both to the wellbeing of low-status group members and to addressing the asymmetry of the conflict (Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004; Suleiman, 2004).

The results of our study further illustrate the intersection of history and power as it emerges within intergroup dialogue. A shared historical narrative is the foundation of national identity (Liu & Hilton, 2005). In the case of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which is marked by mutual identity denial (Kelman, 1999), the presentation of a group's historical narrative becomes a means of asserting the legitimacy and status of the in-group while also delegitimizing the rival group (Bar-Tal, 2007). Previous research has revealed the limits of contact interventions in arresting these processes within the context of historical dialogue (Pilecki & Hammack, 2014). Our findings demonstrate that although the theoretical model of contact may not affect the *content* of historical dialogue (Pilecki & Hammack, 2014), it may influence the conversational power enacted by groups when discussing history. Namely, the confrontational model seems to provide an opportunity for low-status groups to enhance their status within the contact setting through the recounting of their historical experience in the conflict (see also Bikmen, 2015).

These findings have implications beyond the Israeli-Palestinian context, as contexts of conflict are often characterized by power asymmetry and competition of historical narratives. For example, the conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland has been characterized by power asymmetry (with Catholics inhabiting a subordinate position in terms of political, military, and economic power) and divergent narratives of history (Bekerman, Zembylas, & McGlynn, 2009). Conflicts between Greeks and Turks in Cyprus (e.g., Christou, 2007), Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda (e.g., Freedman, Weinstein, Murphy, & Longman, 2008), and groups in the former Yugoslavia (e.g., Wilmer, 2002) are similarly characterized by both power asymmetry and a clash of narratives (see Bar-Tal et al., 2014). Conflict, by its very definition, involves a contest of power, and narratives of history represent a key tool through which groups vie (Bar-Tal et al., 2014; Hammack, 2011). This study thus has implications beyond the Israeli–Palestinian context for researchers and practitioners committed to conflict resolution and social justice for historically disadvantaged or subordinate groups.

Our study was limited in its analysis of a single intergroup dialogue encounter conducted in the U.S. Thus, our findings may not generalize to other encounters and to those conducted in Israel or other national contexts. But a strength of our study was its field experimental design in which participants were randomly assigned to dialogue conditions. Future studies of intergroup contact might utilize this type of design to directly examine the distinct processes and outcomes of particular models of dialogue facilitation.

Two other issues are worth noting with regard to the interpretation of findings. First, the fact that all of our participants were adolescents is noteworthy. Given that adolescents are often in the early phases of identity development (Hammack, 2011), and given that conflict settings such as Israel and Palestine are characterized by social identity threat (Bar-Tal, 2007), adolescents may be particularly likely to reproduce polarized historical narratives in intergroup dialogue (Hammack, 2011). The pattern of power dynamics we discovered here may be unique to adolescents, and future research should examine historical dialogue among adults. Second, cultural differences in communication between Palestinians and Israelis may influence the analysis of power dynamics in dialogue. Israeli cultural communication is typically characterized by direct, assertive statements, whereas Palestinian cultural communication is typically characterized by accommodating statements (Ellis & Maoz, 2002). Hence the distinction in power dynamics we discovered in the coexistence condition could be explained by cultural differences in communication style, though our findings in the confrontational condition suggest that a particular approach to facilitation might thwart this pattern, whether it is rooted in asymmetric status or cultural differences in communication. Previous research examining intergroup encounters in Israel suggested that the process of argumentation between Palestinians and Israelis is better predicted by status differentials than cultural differences (Ellis & Maoz, 2002).

In spite of its limitations, our study offers a novel and significant contribution in its direct analysis of power dynamics that occur in dialogue about history among groups in an active state of intractable conflict. Our approach recognizes the significance of discourse about history in intergroup relations—not as a static account of events passively transmitted but rather as a narrative negotiated in dialogue. Our study offers a blueprint for contact researchers who wish to respond to the call for analysis in actual settings of intergroup antagonism, bringing our theories from the laboratory to the field and engaging in a form of "thick description" (Dixon et al., 2005).

To our knowledge, our study is the first to empirically demonstrate the way in which the confrontational model of intergroup dialogue more effectively challenges existing power asymmetries than the coexistence model in conversations about history. Although the confrontational model has been in practice for some time in Israel, only recently has evidence for its ability to achieve its goals and to counteract the tendency of intergroup contact to reproduce power asymmetries

emerged (e.g., Hammack, Pilecki, & Merrilees, 2014). For proponents of an approach that views empowerment of the low-status group as essential to long-term social change and conflict resolution (e.g., Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004), these findings lend support for the effectiveness of the confrontational model.

Though advocates of a confrontational model of intergroup dialogue and a collective action model of social change may find the results of this study encouraging, we note two problems with the confrontational approach. First, the issue of power relations between Jews and Arabs is complicated by the historical experience of pervasive antisemitism, culminating in the Holocaust, which leads most Jews to think of their power advantage not in terms of an intent to oppress but rather out of a need for existential security (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2007). Put differently, many Jewish Israelis view their relations with Palestinians in terms of the broader global context of existential threat (Hammack, 2011), which makes it challenging for them to acknowledge their power in the dialogue. Second, while confrontational dialogue may be more likely to empower the low-status group, it appears to function in such a way as to reproduce the essentialist paradigm of nationality and identity (Pilecki & Hammack, 2014) which frames the basis of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict—an outcome that appears just as likely to reproduce the "narrative stalemate" (Hammack, 2011) of conflict as coexistence dialogue. In other words, a confrontational approach may in fact reify identity and hence miss the opportunity to foster critical awareness about the historical and political nature of social categories (see Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

Rather than promoting dialogue that either reproduces power asymmetry (i.e., coexistence dialogue) or reverses it (i.e., confrontational dialogue), it might be more effective in the long term to reconsider education about history (e.g., Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012). Many of the world's conflicts are rooted in essentialist views of national identity which emerged in the postcolonial era (see Bekerman et al., 2009)—a time in which "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983) were constructed and often linked to ideologies of exclusion and ethnic hierarchy. A confrontational approach to historical dialogue may fail to inculcate a recognition of the historical emergence of national identity itself as a discourse used to dominate (Bekerman, 2007), thus allowing individuals to appropriate the rhetoric of competitive social relations (e.g., Pilecki & Hammack, 2014).

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