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# Power relations in intergroup encounters: a case study of Jewish–Arab encounters in Israel<sup>☆</sup>

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine processes and patterns of power relations between majority and minority groups, as manifested in a case study of intergroup encounters between Jews and Arabs in Israel. The research method was qualitative, relying mostly on ethnographic data assembled during the last 4 years of an educational encounter project aimed at reducing hostility and promoting coexistence between the sides. The findings point to two parallel processes of influence: the more expected process of dominance of the Jewish majority, together with an interesting pattern of dominance and influence of the Arab minority that emerged primarily when the encounters focused on the conflict between the sides. It is suggested that the latter process of minority influence is related to a dispute that appeared throughout the project regarding the legitimacy and desirability of discussing the conflict inside the encounter. These processes are outlined and analyzed in accordance with social-psychological theories of majority and minority influence (Moscovici, 1980; Mugny & Perez, 1991) [Moscovici, S., 1980. Toward a theory of conversion behavior. In: L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 13, pp. 209–239). New York: Academic Press; Mugny G., & Perez J.A. (1991). *The social psychology of minority influence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press]. © 2000 Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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## 1. Introduction

Intergroup contacts and encounters have been widely used in the past few decades as a means of reducing prejudice and hostility between rival groups. According to the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969), intergroup contact can be effective in reducing negative stereotypes and mutual prejudices, provided that certain conditions are met. First, the two groups should be of equal status, at least within the contact situation. Contact of unequal status, where the traditional status imbalance is maintained, can act to perpetuate existing negative stereotypes. Second, successful contact should involve personal and sustained interactions between individuals from the two groups. Third, effective contact requires cooperative interdependence, where members of the two groups engage in cooperative activities to achieve superordinate goals and depend one another's efforts (Sherif, 1966). The fourth condition of the contact hypothesis states that social norms favoring equality must be the consensus among the relevant authorities.

A large body of research on intergroup encounters has attempted to assess empirically the results or effects of planned intergroup contacts or encounters, and to define the conditions in which the encounter is effective in reducing hostility (Amir, 1976; Brewer & Miller, 1988; Cook, 1984; Horenczyk & Bekerman, 1997; Kamal & Maryuma, 1990). Several works of research and reviews of research present broad empirical support for the contact hypothesis (Amir, 1969; Gaertner, Dovidio & Bachman, 1996; Jackson, 1993; Schwarzwald, Amir & Crane, 1992; Wood & Soleitner, 1996), provided that contact takes place within those conditions prescribed by the theory as conducive to positive outcome. Although extensive research has been carried out on the effects of the planned contact or encounter, notably few attempts had been made to examine the processes or nature of interactions within the encounter itself (for relevant exceptions, see Bargal, 1990; Katz & Kahanov, 1990; Rouhana & Korper, 1997; Sonnenschein, Halabi & Friedman, 1992).

A key factor in the process of the planned encounter that has not yet been systematically studied is the power relations between the groups in the encounter. The objective of this study is to examine, using relevant social-psychological theories, the power relations and the processes of influence as manifested in an ongoing planned contact, that is designed to reduce prejudice and negative stereotypes.

This study focuses on a series of structured encounters between Jewish–Israeli and Arab–Israeli teachers. These encounters sought to promote coexistence and a

shared civility between the sides (Hareven, 1987). The study reported below examines an encounter between two groups with asymmetrical power relations (Turner, 1985) engaged in a real group conflict of competition for scarce resources (LeVine & Campbell, 1972), where the Jewish majority (some 80% of the Israeli population) is in control of power and resources and determines the national character of the country.

In the context of this reality of conflict and asymmetry, the planned encounter between Jews and Arabs constituted an attempt both to create a protected environment of symmetry between the parties (necessary for an effective encounter), and to foster rapprochement and cooperation. However, the deep-seated tension between the original asymmetrical power structure and the attempt to create cooperation and equality constituted a key characteristic of this encounter, as of other planned encounters between majority and minority groups (such as those between whites and blacks in the United States).

Given this inbuilt tension, or even contradiction in the basic make-up of the planned majority–minority encounter, it is of crucial importance to examine the actual power relations that existed between the two groups within it. Studying the power relations and influence processes in the encounter could contribute significantly to our understanding regarding the evolution of the intergroup contact and the interactions within it.

The goal of this study is to analyze the dynamics of the power relations — that is, the processes of influence and domination, that were revealed between the sides in the course of the structured encounter between representatives of the Jewish–Israeli majority and the Arab–Israeli minority.

## **2. Conceptual framework: processes of majority and minority influence**

The conceptual framework of this study draws on the dual process model of majority and minority influence, which was first proposed by the French psychologist Serge Moscovici (1980, 1985). This model deals with asymmetrical power relations between a majority and a minority, and claims that alongside the known mechanisms of influence of the majority, there are more complex mechanisms of minority influence that account for revolutions and social change (Mugny & Perez, 1991). Based on empirical research, the dual process model proposes that majorities and minorities produce different forms of influence. The majority exerts social pressure that results in a direct but temporary influence based on compliance-inducing mechanisms, which may disappear as soon as the majority leaves or is no longer psychologically salient. The phenomenon of minority influence is radically different, expressing itself in an indirect, private, latent, or delayed manner. In this process, the minority introduces an alternative to the majority's position, thus transforming the definition of the debated object into the crux of the issue. If the minority persists in its position over time, the majority may begin to ponder the correctness of its own views and may be stimulated to think through, process and understand more deeply the position of

the minority, accepting the core values that underlie this position in a process labeled “conversion” (Mugny & Perez, 1991).

Much of the research on minority and majority influence (Levine & Moreland, 1985; Maas & Clark, 1984) has been done in the context of “minimal” groups created in laboratory settings — groups with no history and no future. In an extensive survey of literature on this subject, Chaiken and Stangor (1987) note the need to study real groups with real histories and futures interacting over a length of time; research that examines the impact of social, not just numerical, minorities.

This research is an initial attempt to examine the processes of influence between a majority and a minority as manifested in a natural situation of an ongoing encounter between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

### **3. The case study: structured encounters between Jews and Arabs in Israel**

Encounter activities evolved in Israel in the early 1980s in the harsh political climate that followed the Lebanon war. A series of public-opinion surveys indicated growing right-wing extremism and increased anti-democratic and anti-Arab tendencies among Israeli Jews (Zemach, 1986). These trends evoked concern among Jewish educators and served as a strong trigger for the initiation of Jewish–Arab encounter activities (Hareven, 1987).

The case study reported here focuses on an educational project of structured encounters between Jewish and Arab teachers in Israel, that was conducted in the decade between 1983 and 1993, and aimed at reducing prejudice, and promoting shared civility and coexistence between the sides. The project was initiated and directed by a Jewish–Israeli director at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute — which was at the time a central organization in the domain of coexistence activities organized by Israeli Jews. It also received official recognition by the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture as an in-service teacher training program.

The project staff consisted of two Jewish–Israeli directors, a Jewish–Israeli head of the facilitators team, Jewish and Arab facilitators and Jewish and Arab project administrators and evaluators<sup>1</sup>. The facilitators, administrators, and evaluators were mostly recruited by the project directors and by the head of the facilitators team.

In terms of structure and type of activity, it is possible to identify two main stages in the evolution of the project as follows.

1. The encounters began in 1983 as a series of one time events, in which teachers from several Jewish and Arab primary and secondary schools met for a 2- or 3-day workshop that was conducted in a hotel or guest house. These workshops

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<sup>1</sup> The terms directors, facilitators, etc., are used here to denote various people who held these positions in different phases of the project. It should be noted that there were personnel changes in the course of the project.

were markedly psychological in approach, using group-dynamic techniques to achieve a mutual clarification of attitudes and emotions concerning the Jewish–Arab political conflict. Overall, some 3,000 teachers participated in the encounters project in its first stage, which lasted until 1988.

2. The second stage of the project — which is the main focus of this study — began in early 1989, when the structure of the encounter activity underwent a few major changes. It was decided to develop a continuous process in which the same groups of teachers from fixed pairs of Jewish and Arab secondary schools, will meet for the course of an entire school year. It was also decided that in addition to the Jewish–Arab component, that deals with the relations between the sides, the encounters will also include a cognitive element focusing on neutral educational subject matter.

At this stage of the project, each pair of groups met once or twice a month over the course of one school year. This included joint binational encounters as well as uninationals meetings where Jewish and Arab educators met separately. In addition, meetings of the Jewish and Arab project staff were held every 4–6 weeks during the school year.

In the encounters, the teachers discussed educational topics as well as issues related to the relationship between the sides and their feelings about the conflict. A total of 300 teachers from 25 pairs of Jewish and Arab high schools (about 10 pairs a year) took part in the second stage of the project, which was terminated at the end of 1993. They prepared lesson plans and class discussions, and discussed subjects related to school life.

#### **4. Research method**

The data presented here are based on field research conducted from early 1989 until the beginning of 1996. In line with the grounded theory tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I used an inductive approach in attempting to determine how various participants in the project constructed issues of power, influence, and dominance for themselves. The idea was to identify meaningful themes and critical issues that arose from the discourse of the encounter itself, rather than to impose preconceived categories and classifications. In accordance with this notion, I used qualitative methods, relying on ethnographic research and discourse analysis. The following sources of information were utilized in the collection of the research data.

1. The main source of data for this research came from a 100 observations of the projects' activities, conducted by the author and by an Arab evaluator. These included 70 observations of the teachers' encounters, in which each of the participating 50 groups of teachers was observed at least once, and one pair a year was chosen for a more intensive follow-up that covered most of the meetings. In addition, observations were made of 20 of the Jewish–Arab staff meetings (five meetings were observed every year during each of the 4 years of

activity). These observations were recorded in written protocols (protocols of the uninational Arab meetings that were conducted in Arabic were translated into Hebrew). In accordance with the thick description approach suggested by Geertz (1973), the protocols offered a detailed description of the recorded events, including characteristics of the physical setting, seating arrangements, behaviors and gestures of the participants and their tone of voice. Special attention was paid to behaviors displaying power, status, or dominance. Relying on methods of interaction process analysis (see Bales, 1970) we recorded behaviors defined by these methods as instances of power exertion by the group members. In this vein, we calculated both the amount of time taken by each participant in each turn of speaking and the aggregate amount of “speaking time” taken by each of the nationality groups. Additionally, we recorded behaviors such as that of introducing a new topic to the discussion or shifting away from the current topic; leading group work and determining the nature of activities performed within the group (Maoz, 1995).

2. Another source of data was 40 open ethnographic interviews (Spradley, 1979), which I conducted with various participants in the project: directors, facilitators, the participating teachers, administrators, and evaluators. For some, these were one-time interviews; others had a series of interviews and follow-up conversations through the course of the research. The interviews lasted a minimum of 40 min, and covered such topics related to power and conflict as the nature of power relations within the project; perceptions of symmetry between the groups or perceived indicators of dominance of one of the groups; feelings of powerfulness or of powerlessness; dilemmas and conflicts in the encounter; goals and motivations concerning the project and conflicts among these goals and motivations; relations between the two national groups in the encounter; and issues of national identity pertaining to both sides. As with the observations, these interviews were recorded in detailed written protocols.
3. Some 200 documents related to the encounters were collected. These included internal and external correspondence; plans and project proposals; protocols and meeting minutes; reports of participation in the project by management, facilitators, evaluators, and participating teachers; and articles, studies, and evaluation reports written about the project (Katz & Kahanov, 1990; Maoz, 1995; Maslobeti, 1988; Sa’adi, 1995; Schild, 1988; Suleiman, 1995).

The field research was conducted in two stages:

Between 1989 and 1993, while serving as the projects’ chief evaluator, I actively followed its final 4 years, collecting ongoing material through observation, interviewing, and documents, as described above.

During the following 2 years, I analyzed the written data of the project seeking to identify recurrent themes and patterns related to power and influence that were revealed in the discourse of the encounter and to locate central conflicts and dilemmas in the encounter process. In keeping with the approach recommended by several qualitative researchers (e.g., Glaser, 1978; Miles & Huberman, 1984), I

returned to collect additional data from the field after the initial analysis and formulation of categories and explanations. The additional data were collected by means of summary interviews and follow-up conversations with various individuals who had participated in the project, and through the assembling of additional project documents that were revealed through the initial analysis as relevant to the research topic.

The initial categories and explanations were checked against the additional data in order to further test their validity. Examples and cases that were consistent with the explanations formed, as well as at cases that contradicted them, were examined. The result was a reformulation and refinement of the initial description regarding the main themes of power and influence in the Jewish–Arab encounter.

The following section includes research findings, with participants' comments frequently quoted, in order to substantiate the analysis with their own expressions.

## 5. Findings

An analysis of the discourse and interaction that evolved within and around the encounters from the perspective of majority–minority power relations and processes of influence, reveals an interesting dynamic in the evolution of the project, which centered on the struggle between the majority and the minority over defining the projects' basic content. I will begin by presenting this central conflict, and then attempt to discern both its motivational roots and the function that it served in the power relations between the two sides.

### 5.1. *The conflict about the conflict*

As previously noted, there were two broad categories of topics discussed within the framework of the encounters, which may be defined as follows.

1. “Hot” subjects directly related to political issues, specifically, the relations between Jews and Arabs, and the political conflict and participants' feelings around it.
2. “Cold” subjects related to neutral educational issues or to joint educational work.

This distinction, which was also made spontaneously by the participants themselves, constituted the core of the dilemma throughout the course of the activity: the dilemma between dealing directly with the conflict and dealing with other, neutral subjects not related to the conflict, between inclusion and exclusion of the conflict from the realm of discourse of the encounter.

A chronological examination of the evolution of the encounters indicates a gradual transition from a psychological-dynamic probing into experiences and issues related to the Jewish–Arab political conflict (in the first stage of the project characterized by one time workshops) to task-oriented activities concerning neutral educational subject matter (towards the end of the second stage). Project

plans and protocols show that in the first stage of the project (1983–1988), almost the entire workshop was dedicated to dealing with the Jewish–Arab conflict. With the addition of the neutral-educational component in the projects' second stage, there was a noted reduction in the volume of activities dedicated to the conflict, down to about 50% of each mixed group activities (an average of four meetings per mixed group). The rest of the time, teachers discussed topics related to school life and to their professional work as well as techniques of teaching and of coping with specific problems in the classroom. In the last 2 years of the project (1991–1993) there was a further decrease in the direct discussion of conflict, with each group dedicating only about one third of its meetings (an average of two meetings per mixed group) to these discussions (Maoz, 1991, 1993).

This transition reflects a continuous struggle between participants in the project. Overtime, the Jewish management revealed increased opposition to the encounters' focus on the Jewish–Arab conflict, seeking to limit it by gradually changing the definition of the project, and removing the issue of the conflict from its official agenda. In parallel, from the field, primarily from the Arab teachers and facilitators, came the strong and consistent need and demand to continue to address this issue within the encounter.

The dilemma surrounding the political content typified by the motivation of Arab participants to emphasize political issues vs the recoil of Jews from them is cited in a number of studies that deal with the Jewish–Arab encounter (Katz & Kahanov, 1990; Sa'adi, 1995; Sonnenschein et al., 1992; Suleiman, 1995). I wish to take this observation one step further, however, by examining the dilemma about political discourse within the broader context of power relations and mutual influence between the representatives of the Jewish majority and the Arab minority in the encounter, seeking to clarify the function that discussion of the conflict — or the avoidance of it — served for each side.

### *5.2. Power relations between Jews and Arabs in the encounter*

The analysis of data gathered through the observations, interviews, and project documents shows that two parallel processes of majority and minority influence took place in the encounters, which is consistent with Moscovici's Dual Process Model (Moscovici, 1985), previously cited. The first process is the expected and more frequent pattern in majority–minority encounters of pronounced dominance of the Jewish majority. This process can be considered a reflection and reproduction of the macro-reality of the outside world upon the micro-reality of the encounter. At the encounters dealing with “cold” educational issues, the Jewish teachers tended to take more active stands and had a greater impact on the proceedings of the encounter — they talked more, took more leadership roles, decided what would be done and how, brought new directions for discussion and activity, and had a greater effect on the nature and quality of the shared educational work. Parallel with the dominance of the members of the Jewish majority, a tendency towards passivity or lack of involvement was evident among members of the minority. The Arab teachers tended to show up late for meetings



or not arrive at all, to have only part of the group show up, or to cancel or postpone meetings without prior notice. They also tended not to prepare or to prepare only partially their allocated tasks between encounters, not to carry out their part of the joint educational work, or to do it with a minimal investment of effort.

This pattern of Jewish dominance and Arab passivity appeared primarily, as noted, when the groups dealt with neutral educational subjects or carried out joint educational activity. However, a second and perhaps more interesting pattern of Arab dominance or power emerged at encounters dealing directly with the “hot” issues connected to the Jewish–Arab political conflict. Such meetings were characterized by a higher level of participation on the part of the Arab teachers, who took more turns talking and who tended to talk for longer periods of time than their Jewish counterparts. They were also more active than their Jewish counterparts in determining the nature of conflict discussions, being more frequently the ones introducing new topics to the discussion or leading it to new directions.

Discussion of the conflict served as a source of empowerment for the Arab teachers. These discussions offered them a singular opportunity both to actively express their national identity and to present the minority’s point of view — the Palestinian, less legitimized version of the history and current realities of the conflict.

In their uninational meetings, the Arab teachers expressed positive attitudes toward discussing the conflict in the encounter:

What’s good about discussing the conflict is that through it we are more aware of our culture as Arab people.

The conflict is for keeping us alive. We learned not to assimilate with the other group, to preserve our identity.

Coexistence must not erase the conflict, but emphasize it. Coexistence is a sham.

Another advantage accruing to the Arab side in discussing the conflict stems from their often having more knowledge about Jewish–Arab relations. The Arabs were more acquainted with Jewish claims as well as their own, whereas the Jews were generally not familiar with the experience of the Arabs as a minority. Most of the Jewish teachers had been educated according to a monolithic version of history (passed on to their pupils), that presented the Jewish side as almost exclusively in the right. Additional facts and viewpoints brought by the Arabs that the Jews were previously unaware of (such as personal experiences of discrimination; a different view both of the events surrounding the establishment of the state of Israel and the national rights of the Palestinians; and informative material concerning such matters as land confiscations from Arabs and Israeli

security service monitoring of Arab teachers) often caught them unprepared, thereby giving the Arabs greater power and influence.

The Arab teachers enhanced sense of power and influence in these encounters is conveyed in the following statements made in a discussion among the Arab's participants, following an encounter with Jews:

The Jewish teachers don't know enough about the Arabs.

The Jewish teachers didn't have anything new to say; we understand the problem better than they do.

I had a conversation with two teachers, one Israeli-born and the other who teaches Arabic and is supposed to understand our point of view and problems; in both, I found ignorance about everything related to the Arab–Israeli conflict.

The Arab facilitator also expressed his point of view:

In principle, you as Arab teachers know more about their social problems than vice versa. You know more than the Jewish teachers. They don't know enough about Israeli Arabs, perhaps in order to avoid having to face our political problems. We as Arabs know a great deal about Jewish society; we went to the encounter to impart to them the broad knowledge that we have.

To which one of the teachers responded:

If we had more time, we could have learned and taught them much more . . .

In other discussions, Arab participants gave further voice to their belief in their ability to influence the Jews:

Our methods of influencing others are improving all the time.

I always felt that I could convince them better than they could convince me.

We feel that the Jews are slowly changing and we hope they continue to change.

All I want is to be heard out. I assume it will have an impact because they are hearing things for the first time.

Efforts to influence were also made directly through explicit and detailed messages to the Jewish teachers. Here is what one Arab teacher said in the course of a joint Jewish–Arab meeting:

I want to believe that the teachers from the Jewish school will take the message that we tried to transmit and will really pass it on to their pupils. At this age, students consider only their own side. I want to believe that the teachers will

convey the other side to their class and will make a point of showing that another side exists. If we succeed, as teachers and educators, in instilling in our pupils the notion that the other also has rights, we will learn to think in more humanitarian terms. Because extremism stems from not seeing the other side. If I look at myself in the center and see also the other as being in the center, I will understand that the other has rights just like me, and that I shouldn't oppress him. I understand that Jews in Israel are afraid of being thrown into the sea, but from focusing so much on their fears, they have forgotten the fears of others. A person who values the privacy of another will also value his own privacy. If they understand our needs, they will value their needs.

Other Arab teachers appealed to Jewish teachers as follows:

Why don't you teach the Declaration of Independence of the Palestinian people rather than the Palestinian Covenant? There it says that they recognize UN decisions 242 and 338. That's what you should teach, that they recognize the existence of the state of Israel.

Teach the Declaration of Independence together with the Palestinian Covenant. That's what is missing. One complements the other. Or else make sure that the covenant is clear.

Do you teach your pupil obedience to the law or do you encourage him to disobey the law that is fundamentally dry? I want you to teach that moral considerations take precedence over the law.

Such attempts at persuasion sometimes emerged as direct criticism of the Jewish teachers. The following are some remarks made by Arab teachers in a final joint session of a mixed group:

From the beginning I had the impression that you were a left-winger, but judging from your questions I've learned that you don't know us, and a left-winger has to learn about the deprived minority. Yesterday you tossed out the statement 'You don't have a state', and that was out of place.

I thought I would meet teachers here who really knew about the *intifada* [the Palestinian uprising in the territories between 1987 and 1993, I.M.] But if you don't know about the *intifada*, how can you work?

An expression of the Arabs' sense of advantage in knowledge and their belief in their ability to influence the Jewish participants can also be found in the work of Sa'adi (1995), which focuses on the perceptions of the Arab participants in these encounters.

The Jewish teachers, for their part, also expressed positive attitudes towards direct discussions of the conflict, which were seen by them as significantly contributing to their knowledge and understanding of the relations with the other

side. Evaluation research conducted at the second stage of the encounter project (Maoz, 1991, 1993), found that the direct discussion of the conflict was perceived by Jewish teachers as their most preferred activity, one they enjoyed and learned from the most. Jewish teachers tended to acknowledge the Arab advantage in knowledge concerning the conflict, and to react favorably to Arab accounts and explanations regarding their position in the conflict. This is evident in statements made by Jewish teachers in the final meetings of several mixed groups:

I'm at an early stage. I came to learn. Maybe now I know that I don't know. Your story about the security services and the Palestinian Covenant is what I mean by knowing. It does more for me than a hundred Amnesty reports. What happened to me personally is positive, I was reassured when I heard [Arab] opinions. People impressed me as being credible. If I feel that there is credibility and honesty, then I can convey their side. My problem begins at the personal level at home with my two soldiers, when I tell them. And whether I want to or not, your story will come up.

I have to say that I came with a feeling of skepticism and that I'm leaving with another feeling. I learned a new facet from each of you. It was clear that some things happen only in our minds and this was verified this morning when everything sounded different. I learned things that I hadn't known and I'm leaving with a more optimistic feeling, at least concerning encounters of this kind.

Meanwhile back in the homeroom, I will now know how to better present the Arab side.

I think the work we did as a group changed some things for us and I'm happy about it ... Yesterday when X [an Arab teacher] said: 'What do you know about the *intifada*?' we Israelis thought that we knew everything about it, but it seems that we don't, because in the final analysis we're sick and tired of it, and still we send our sons to the army. People just want to live quietly, and somehow or other it's got to end one of these days. We have to reach an agreement.

It was the Jewish directors of the project, rather than the Jewish teachers, who became concerned about the Arabs' advantage in knowledge, their dominance and ability to influence. A document written towards the end of the first stage of the project (Maslobeti, 1988) reports and summarizes a series of group-dynamics encounters that dealt with the Jewish–Arab conflict. In this document, a Jewish evaluator and member of the steering committee criticizes the focus on political issues and the emphasis on feelings, asserting that what should have been stressed was cooperation, good citizenship, and loyalty to the state:

In my opinion, positive statements about civil loyalty should have been given reinforcement and thus could have served as a bridge for cooperation

and mutual positive attitudes. Instead, participants were pressured to talk about their fears. This poses a problem for the teachers *who are accustomed to discussing cognitive matters and demanding good citizenship ... The opinions presented (in encounters 1 and 2) were generally not consistent with the declared policies of the government of Israel. Proposed solutions emphasized establishment of a Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and negotiations only with Arafat ... The jumping-off point (perhaps because of the dominance of the participants) was ‘the Palestinian map’*. [italics added].

In these statements, the evaluator expresses apprehension of undermining the status quo of the “declared policy” of the Israeli government that occurs when political issues and feelings related to the conflict are allegedly over-emphasized and Arab participants become more dominant.

This document perhaps most clearly and explicitly defines the discussion of feelings and political issues related to the conflict as negative on the grounds that it contradicts the dominant, legitimized (Israeli government) version and brings up subversive and threatening versions (“the Palestinian map”). The cognitive, less political discussion is presented, in contrast, as positive and desirable, as it emphasizes civil loyalty and is consistent with the status quo of Jewish dominance. The sense of threat from the presentation of the Palestinian version and the fear of its impact on Jewish teachers come through clearly in the following passage from the same document:

The knowledge gained about “peace plans” — a Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip with a corridor through Beersheba — the Arab Law of Return, comprehensive equality in all domains, a state governed binationally, the removal of Jewish settlers from the territories and their replacement with refugees from the Arab countries. Some of these are merely wishes, but *one gets the feeling that they are legitimate and acceptable views if you hear no opposing side ... And what will you teach tomorrow in third or eighth grade? Is the goal to spread these ideas in schools and social circles?*

The fear expressed here is that encounters that address the conflict, in which Palestinian views are presented, may serve as a platform for the dissemination of messages that subvert the status quo, i.e., the version acceptable to the majority. The threat perceived in the discussion of “hot” issues related to the conflict, and the concern about the Arab facilitators’ and participants’ dominance in this arena and their undesirable influence on Jewish facilitators and participants, also came up in the comments of other Jewish–Israeli operators of this and other encounter projects. This fear may be the source of the ambivalence among Jewish management over direct discussion of the conflict and may be a factor in the recurring attempts by management to focus the encounters on neutral and more general educational topics (in which the Jews had an edge). As the evaluator quoted above concludes in her document:

The overriding goal of encounters sponsored by the Ministry of Education should, in my opinion, be the educational ‘contribution’ in addition to the personal experience. The political aspect is less important, in my view.

And, indeed, the educational-cognitive discussion presented in such positive terms as consonant with the goals of the Ministry of Education did appear as one of the most important innovations of the second stage of the project, which went into effect shortly after the appearance of the above document.

Towards the end of the second stage, a more extreme position was taken, to the point of near total exclusion of political topics in favor of joint activity on neutral educational topics.

Parallel with attempts by the Jewish management to restrict discussion of the conflict, was a counterattempt by the Arab facilitators and participants to continue discussion of it. Arab participants expressed a lack of identification with the official goal of the project — advancing coexistence and fostering rapprochement between the sides. This goal was perceived to be coerced upon them by the representatives of the Jewish majority, and not reflective of the true reality of Jewish–Arab relations in Israel. These attitudes were expressed by the participants in the uninational Arab meetings:

The coexistence is forced. I’m not the way I really am. It’s phony, I’m compelled to give in.

Conflict is the reality. The goal is to provide tools to cope with the existing situation, which is conflict. That’s the fundamental fact.

They want coexistence. Coexistence is that we’re not afraid and are accepted for what we are. But they don’t accept us in our real beliefs. The reality is conflict and not coexistence.

Similar negative positions concerning the goal of promoting coexistence and closeness can be found in the work of Sa’adi (1995), which deals, as noted, with the reactions of the Arab teachers to these encounters.

The Arab facilitators also expressed disagreement with the official goals of the project, and worked in accordance with goals they believed to be more appropriate for the needs of the participants and the reality of the conflict. Such was the case in particular with one Arab facilitator who was active and dominant throughout the second stage of the project:

My goal in the field is not friendship and love between Jews and Arabs, but that each side get to know itself better, become closer to itself and able to cope with the feelings evoked by the reality of the conflict — the fears and anxieties of the teachers and the pupils.

This facilitator presented his fieldwork as being directed towards helping teachers to cope with the conflict and helping Arab teachers to cope with their

minority status. This was clearly in opposition to the official goals of the project, which sought to emphasize the common ground in order to foster closeness between the sides.

Although the goals of this and other Arab facilitators were evident both in fieldwork and in meetings of staff and management, attempts to raise them at the official level of project plans and proposals were thwarted. In June 1990, the Arab facilitator quoted above wrote a joint paper with the Jewish head of the facilitators team, in which they set out their shared views and the implications of such views for the project. The document was rejected at the official management level. The reasons given for the rejection, which reappeared in similar contexts, were that dealing with hard feelings around the conflict does not enhance what is common between the sides; instead of promoting constructive activity, it accentuates dissent and the problematic aspects of the relations between the sides. At around this time, the heads of the project further restricted its focus, with the result that the political conflict was completely excluded from discussion, the encounters now defined exclusively around joint educational activity.

The loose organizational structure inherent to the encounters, however, did not prescribe detailed plans of action and thus left considerable space for free discussion (Maoz, 1995; Suleiman, 1995). Thus, while discussion of “hot” issues became increasingly restricted on the official level, it continued to constitute a significant element of the encounters, and was in fact defined by both Jewish and Arab teachers as the projects’ most important component (Maoz, 1991, 1995).

## **6. Summary and conclusions**

In various phases of the Jewish–Arab encounter project, there was pronounced dissension over direct discussion of the conflict. On one side was positioned the Jewish management, which initially had reservations about the political discussion and later sought to exclude it entirely. On the other side were the Arab teachers and facilitators, who were the dominant force in the field and who pushed towards continued direct discussion of the conflict.

This dispute can be regarded as directly related to the perception of power relations on each side. The Arab participants and facilitators viewed discussion of the political conflict as enhancing their power and ability to influence, as well as emphasizing their national identity; whereas the discussion about “coexistence”, “rapprochement”, and “emphasizing the common ground” was felt to be coerced upon them by the Jewish majority and not expressive of their real-life situation as a minority. The Jewish heads of the project, however, struggled against discussing the conflict in an effort to limit the number of situations in which the Arabs could have a dominant role, an opportunity to express their national and political convictions, and an opportunity to exert influence over the Jewish participants. This struggle had a significant effect on the structure and content of the project, with the management pushing for ever-greater formal restriction of direct discussion of the conflict, while the Arab participants and facilitators continued to

express their goal of directly discussing the conflict and indeed succeeded, despite the various restrictions, to use the encounters as a platform to voice the minority's version of reality and the events of the conflict.

The findings of this study concerning the power relations between Jews and Arabs in the encounter, closely comply with the dynamics of majority and minority influence as described by Moscovici's Dual Process Model (Moscovici, 1985). Alongside the more obvious process whereby representatives of the Jewish majority attempted to assert their hegemony through definition of the projects' goals and contents (attempts which were primarily reflected in the documents and plans of the Jewish management), there were also complex, latent and less expected processes of influence of the Arab minority. The Arab participants presented a consistent position in their dispute with the Jewish majority (Mugny & Perez, 1991), in which they persistently demanded direct discussion of the political conflict.

The manifestation of minority power in conflict situations is consonant with claims made by Moscovici and his colleagues (Moscovici, 1980; Moscovici & Faucheux, 1972; Moscovici & Mugny, 1983) regarding the importance of conflict in the process of minority influence. According to Mugny and Perez (1991), conflict with an outgroup minority enhances the minority's impact. Such conflict emphasizes the minority position and evokes increased cognitive processing and thought among the majority about the minority's perspectives.

Apart from models of minority influence, there is other social-psychological literature on social power that contributes to the analysis of specific tactics of influence used by each of the groups in the encounter — for example, the often cited power bases classification developed by French and Raven (1959; Raven, 1965, 1983) and Raven's more detailed power/interaction model (Raven, 1990, 1992). In terms of Raven's classifications, the Jewish majority can be seen as using its formal and legitimate power. This source of power is based on the structural relationship between the influencing agent and the target (for example, formal hierarchical relations), in which the target is obligated to comply with the agent (Raven, 1990). Specifically, The Jewish majority, represented in this case by the (Jewish) management, can be seen as using its formal legitimate or position power — drawn from institutional sources of power such as the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Israeli government, in its attempt to define the official content of the project and the boundaries of its legitimate discourse (However it should be noted that, from the point of view of the projects' staff and participants, the Jewish management can also be perceived as using coercive power, by refusing to approve the proposed ideas and plans of those diverting from the official guidelines regarding the contents of the project).

The Arab minority, in contrast, can be seen as relying mainly on informational power or persuasion. This source of power is based on the information or logical argument which the influencing agent can present to the target in order to persuade it (Raven, 1990). Specifically, the Arab participants and facilitators can be seen as using the power of having additional information about the history and essence of the conflict, and on the situation of the Arab minority in it — in order to influence and convince the Jewish side (here, too, an additional element of



coercive power may also be present: the Arab passivity and withdrawal in those encounters discussing neutral educational topics, can be interpreted as an attempt to punish the Jewish side, by refusing to cooperate with it).

This configuration of representatives of the Jewish majority relying mainly on formal legitimate power while representatives of the Arab minority employ informational power is consistent with the dual process model formulation of majority–minority mechanisms of influence, whereby the majority exerts social pressure in order to induce conformity and compliance and the minority uses informational influence and seeks to introduce an alternative to the majority's position (Moscovici, 1980; Moscovici & Lage, 1976). Also relevant in this context are the intriguing findings of Rouhana and Fiske (1995) concerning the perception of power among Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel, according to which both Jews and Arabs attribute more institutional representational power to the Jewish majority, whereas the Arab minority is seen as having social and political integrational power — that is, the power to determine its own national identity and to control the degree of social and political integration it wishes to achieve.

Finally, in terms of theories of social identity (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and especially in light of the classification proposed by Turner and Brown (1978) for unequal status relations, the Arab group can be seen as reacting to an asymmetrical situation, attempting to alter the status quo that it regards as illegitimate and unstable by emphasizing conflict, discrimination, and inequality. In parallel, the Jewish majority's opposition to airing the conflict in the encounter and its support of the concepts of "symmetry" and "coexistence" can be seen as an attempt to preserve the status quo that it regards as illegitimate but stable. This is done by utilizing strategies of denial and repression of the conflict and its elements of asymmetry and illegitimacy.

This study is an initial attempt to conceptualize and describe phenomena related to power relations between a majority and minority in the context of a continuous encounter between natural groups with a real history of conflict. The mapping is preliminary, subject as it is to the limitations of research and observation in a natural and uncontrolled setting. Hence the need for additional, more systematic investigation of the trends and patterns described here.

Still to be explored is the important issue of impact: the actual effect each group in such encounters, has on the attitudes or opinions of the other group. Especially relevant in this regard, would be to determine the impact of the minority group on the attitudes and perceptions of the majority, and the extent to which there is a carry over of this impact into other settings beyond the situation of the encounter.

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