

Talking to a (Segregation) Wall: Intergroup Contact and Attitudes Toward Normalization Among Palestinians From the Occupied Territories

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This article examines how Palestinians' intergroup contact experiences relate to their attitudes towards interactions with Israelis (i.e., normalization). We draw on four recent advances in intergroup contact literature. First, recent research indicates that positive contact can impede disadvantaged groups' motivation to challenge inequalities. Second, increased endorsement of normalization mediates this sedative effect of positive contact on motivation to resist in the West Bank. Third, negative contact has been related to increased motivation for social change. Fourth, institutions and societal norms shape the meaning of intergroup contact and its effect on intergroup relations. We hypothesize that negative experiences at checkpoints can act as reminders of institutionalized inequalities and thus attenuate sedative effects. Furthermore, we explore the contextual boundary conditions of such reminder effects. Analyses of cross-sectional survey conducted among a representative sample (N = 1,000) in the West Bank including Jerusalem showed that (1) positive intergroup contact related to normalization endorsement (sedative effect), (2) negative intergroup contact related to decreased normalization endorsement (mobilizing effect), and (3) negative contact experiences (at checkpoints) canceled out the effect of positive contact (reminder effect), but only in Jerusalem. Results suggest that the impacts of intergroup contact need to be interpreted in light of institutionalized forms of group inequality and segregation.

KEY WORDS: sedative effect of positive intergroup contact, negative contact, segregation, normalization, Palestinian–Israeli relations

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Since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and its subsequent territorial expansion, the Arab world, including Palestinians, has been faced with the choice of accepting or resisting this state of affairs. In the resulting controversies (after the Camp David Accord in 1978), the term “normalization” started to be used to refer to the recognition of the State of Israel and to the establishment of normal relations between Arabs and Israelis and to connote the choice of acceptance over resistance (Albzour, 2020). In the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), diverse forms of interactions with Israelis are imposed on Palestinians by the circumstances of occupation. Which interactions with Israelis can be labeled “normalization” is open to controversy. The present study investigates attitudes toward normalization among Palestinians in the OPT and defines normalization as interactions with Israeli individuals or institutions that are potentially perceived as legitimizing (normalizing) the colonial status quo.

The normalization debate increased in the OPT after the Oslo peace agreement in 1993, gaining intensity after the second intifada in 2000 and the expansion of Israeli settlements. On the one hand, voices opposing normalization policies have increased with local and international movements calling for the boycott of Israel (e.g., Al-E’es, 2020). On the other hand, some civil society organizations, private institutions, and the Palestinian Authority (PA) favor continuing specific acts of normalization, such as PA’s coordination with Israeli authorities for “security” purposes (Tartir, 2017). In sum, attitudes towards normalization, the definition of normalization and the identification of normalization behaviors are contested among Palestinians.

Yet, to our knowledge, only two empirical studies have investigated Palestinians’ attitudes towards normalization and their antecedents (Albzour, Penic, et al., 2019; Mi’Ari, 1999). Though normalization seems to have overall a negative connotation, its different facets are not all equally devalued (Albzour, Penic, et al., 2019): While relations that facilitate Palestinians’ everyday life such as civilian policies and diplomatic coordination of the PA are more acceptable, security coordination by the PA and interpersonal relations with Israelis are controversial. Moreover, the more Palestinians have experiences of direct (Albzour, Penic, et al., 2019) and indirect (Mi’Ari, 1999) positive contact with Israelis, the more they endorse controversial forms of normalization. This finding is in line with the growing body of research on “sedative” or “ironic” effects of positive contact for disadvantaged groups (Dixon et al., 2012), which shows that positive intergroup contact fosters harmonious intergroup relations at the cost of disadvantaged groups’ awareness of inequality and motivation for social change (see Reimer & Sengupta, 2021).

In the present research, we extend these contributions in several ways. While prior research on the link between intergroup contact and attitudes towards normalization among Palestinians was conducted among small convenience samples in the West Bank (WB), we investigate this link among a representative sample of Palestinian adults ($N = 1,000$). Heeding the call for a contextualized study of intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 2018), we include Palestinians from Jerusalem and WB in our sample and examine the nature of contact among Palestinians exposed to different segregation regimes. Furthermore, connecting two strands of intergroup contact research—on sedative effects of positive contact and mobilizing effects of negative contact—we argue that sedative effects of contact are sensitive to the institutional context in which contact takes place. We contend that, in contexts of institutionalized segregation and inequality, negative intergroup contact experiences can attenuate the “sedative effect” of positive contact, when they act as reminders of the institutional structure. Our study takes place in the OPT, where segregation is an explicit and militarily enforced policy, whereas most previous studies on the sedative contact effects have been conducted in contexts of informal segregation (and some form of principled equality). Concrete policies and experiences of segregation differ, however, between the WB and Jerusalem, which has a complex and potentially more ambiguous institutional setup. We thus explore whether the specific reminder effect of individually experienced negative contact differ between Jerusalem and the WB.

Intergroup Contact in Contexts of Segregation

The “contact hypothesis” originated in the context of abolition of legal segregation in the United States (see Durrheim & Dixon, 2018). Desegregation, however, was not universally supported. The key concern was that abrupt proximity between different “races” might result in conflict and social unrest. At the time, Clark (1953) and Gordon Allport (1954) made the case that such intergroup contact, under the right conditions, would instead beget more tolerance. The contact hypothesis thus originated as a plea for the viability of desegregation policies.

Since then, social psychologists have accumulated a large body of evidence indicating that positive intergroup contact generally reduces prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and fosters outgroup forgiveness and trust (Hewstone & Swart, 2011; Tam et al., 2009). Policymakers around the world (e.g., United States, Northern Ireland, and post-Apartheid South Africa) have implemented planned contact interventions to foster intergroup harmony (Lemmer & Wagner, 2015). Such interventions have also been implemented to improve intergroup relations inside Israel (e.g., between Israeli Jews and indigenous Palestinians Muslims and Christians, see Amir, 1969, Maoz, 2011) and among Israelis and Palestinians in the OPT.

However, the central hypothesis is frequently dissociated from the call for desegregation. Originally conceived as a mechanism operating within, and thereby facilitating, a process of desegregation implemented at the institutional level, it is now frequently considered an instrument for solving intergroup conflict regardless of the sociopolitical context. Durrheim and Dixon (2018) argue that this decontextualization has reversed the assumed relationship between prejudice reduction and structural social arrangements. Allport (1954) and Clark (1953) understood intergroup contact as a mechanism facilitating the abolition of structural and legally enforced inequalities. Subsequent research, however, increasingly treated prejudice reduction resulting from positive contact as an aim in itself, more or less explicitly assuming that such effects could generalize into large-scale social change (Dixon et al., 2013).

If prejudice reduction were always compatible with the reduction of inequalities, systematically treating it as a desirable goal would be unproblematic. But evidence suggests otherwise. A growing body of research from a variety of contexts marked by strong intergroup inequalities (Reimer & Sengupta, 2021) shows that positive intergroup contact is related to reduced awareness of and motivation to challenge intergroup inequalities among disadvantaged groups. Generally, this “sedative effect” (Cakal et al., 2011) suggests that the model of social change underlying contact research focusing on prejudice reduction among the advantaged is in contradiction with an alternative model of social change based on the collective mobilization of the disadvantaged (Reicher, 2007; Wright & Baray, 2012). These two paths towards social change are not always incompatible. For instance, Becker et al. (2013) found experimental evidence that, when an advantaged group member described inequality as illegitimate, positive intergroup contact reduced disadvantaged group members’ prejudice, but not their willingness to challenge inequalities through collective action.

Intergroup Contact and Endorsement of Normalization in Palestine

Yet, what is the nature of intergroup contact for Palestinians in the OPT? The peace process based on a two-state solution is facing seemingly insurmountable, tangible obstacles: the segregation wall, the separation of Jerusalem from the rest of WB territories, the blockade of Gaza, the wide deployment of military checkpoints, and escalation of Israeli settlement activities across the WB. Being under occupation, Palestinians in the WB and Jerusalem are forcibly integrated within the Israeli economic structure. Various forms of governmental, institutional, and interpersonal interactions with Israelis are imposed. The role of the PA is limited to the local administration of

Palestinian affairs in the WB, in addition to coordination with the Israeli authorities (e.g., for issuing passing permits to work or access hospitals in Israel). Additionally, some private Palestinian economic, academic and cultural institutions have ties with equivalent Israeli institutions (e.g., Grandinetti, 2015). As the peace process deteriorated, most of these interactions became subject to criticism. Specifically, the term “normalization” is commonly used to stigmatize certain (individual and institutional) interactions with Israelis as establishing normal relations with the occupier under abnormal conditions (BDS, n.d.; Samara, 2011). These interactions, critics argue, aim at dismantling Palestinian resistance movements by enhancing Palestinian acceptance of the settler colonial structure. Palestinians’ voluntary interactions with Israelis, such as participation in joint “peace” meetings (Pundak, 2012) and the PA’s coordination with the Israeli military forces for “security” purposes are the most controversial and criticized interactions.

Academic debates on the desirability of intergroup contact for achieving social change (Dixon et al., 2012) thus have a striking equivalent within Palestinian society, where public debate entails contrasting viewpoints on the meaning and acceptability of interactions with Israelis (e.g., Albzour, Penic, et al., 2019). This controversy gravitates around the notion of normalization, involving debates about what types of interactions with Israelis are acceptable and the consequences of such interactions on the Palestinian perspectives of national liberation. Scrutinizing the type of intergroup contacts Palestinians have with Israelis and how they relate to support for controversial forms of normalization is therefore crucial.

In the WB, Albzour and colleagues (2019) found that the more Palestinians had previous experiences of mundane contact with Israelis, the less they were motivated to engage in revolutionary resistance against the colonial regime. This sedative effect of contact was mediated by heightened endorsement of more controversial forms of “normalization” (i.e., interpersonal interactions and “security” coordination). Endorsement of normalization thus appears to work as an ideological justification underlying the sedative effect of positive contact. Accordingly, we expect that

H1: Positive and mundane intergroup contact are related to support for such controversial forms of normalization.

Thus, an important novelty of the present research is to investigate how intergroup contact relates to an ideological mechanism involved in the sedative effect, namely normalization endorsement. Several reasons justify this choice. First, one aspect of normalization being “security” coordination between PA and Israeli military to prevent specific acts of resistance (e.g., armed resistance), endorsing normalization is incompatible with supporting these specific forms of resistance. Second, when asked to define normalization in an open-ended question, 46% of Albzour et al.’s respondents *spontaneously* specified that normalization implied acceptance and/or strengthening of the colonial status quo (only 10% specified positive implications). Thus, both Palestinian public debate and empirical findings indicate that normalization endorsement implies acceptance of the colonial status quo and that such “sedative” implication is common knowledge among Palestinians. Third, and more essentially, the normalization debate constitutes an instance of disadvantaged group reflexively arguing over the dilemma between intergroup harmony and conflict as paths for achieving social change. Compared to defining the dilemma between conflict and harmony in a theoretical, top-down fashion (see Durrheim et al., 2016), investigating attitudes toward normalization presents the advantage of acknowledging disadvantaged group members’ awareness of this dilemma and examining circumstances that relate to different stances toward it.

Yet, when examining the links between intergroup contact and Palestinian support for normalization, we must also pay attention to negative intergroup contact, produced by institutionalized segregation.

Negative Contact in Contexts of Segregation

Although often overlooked, recent literature calls for attention to negative instances of intergroup contact (Barlow et al., 2012; Hewstone & Swart, 2011). Indeed, Palestinians within the OPT face a combination of “security”- and reconciliation-oriented policies in their everyday life (i.e., ensuring the security of, and reconciliation with, Israelis; Kotef & Amir, 2011). The intensification of settlement activities in the OPT has increased Palestinians’ exposure to Israeli military forces, led to the construction of a segregation wall, the establishment of a permit system regulating Palestinians’ movements, and the deployment of military checkpoints. Mundane activities such as going to work, studying, getting medical treatment, or visiting friends can require passing through one or more checkpoints during the same day (Kotef & Amir, 2011). Palestinians experience these checkpoints as dehumanizing due to treatments they face (e.g., being delayed for long hours or denied crossing), the very design of the barrier (e.g., the iron crossing cages for pedestrians on foot), and acts of military violence ranging from insults to executions. This is the form of negative intergroup contact Palestinians experience in their daily life in the OPT (see also Pettigrew et al., 2011, p. 277).

Negative intergroup contact is often measured with items sampling experiences such as “being belittled, intimidated, or insulted by an outgroup member” (Aberson, 2015, p. 3; see also Hayward et al., 2017). This literature generally indicates that negative contact experiences predict negative outgroup attitudes and emotions (see Stephan et al., 2008). Recent research has identified an asymmetry between the effects of positive and negative intergroup contact, where the latter affects intergroup attitudes more than the former (Aberson, 2015; Aberson & Gaffney, 2009; Barlow et al., 2012; Hayward et al., 2017; Paolini et al., 2010). For instance, Graf et al. (2014) found among students from four European countries that although positive contact with foreigners was more frequent than negative contact, negative contact’s (negative) relationship with outgroup attitudes was stronger than positive contact’s (positive) relationship with the same outgroup attitudes.

Research also suggests *interactive* effects of positive and negative contact (see Paolini et al., 2010, 2014). In the context of relations between a minority (Polish immigrants) and the majority (Icelanders) in Iceland, Árnadóttir et al. (2018) found that negative contact moderated the relationship between positive contact and prejudice, although differently depending on the group: Among Icelanders, positive contact was more strongly related to positive outgroup attitudes when participants experienced negative contact than when they did not (i.e., facilitation effect). The same interaction also indicated that positive contact buffered the harmful effects of the negative contact (i.e., buffering effect). Among Polish participants, the authors found evidence that negative contact experiences were related to weakened relationships between positive contact and outgroup attitude (which they labeled “poisoning effect”).

While these studies enrich our understanding of an understudied phenomenon, two limitations are noteworthy. First, these studies do not consider the broader context in which negative contact occurs (Pettigrew, 2018). Numerous recent studies indicate that contextual norms and institutional policies shape the relationship between positive contact and outgroup attitudes (Christ et al., 2014; Kauff et al., 2016; Kende et al., 2018). For instance, Green and colleagues (2020) found that institutional support—one of the optimal conditions in the initial formulation of Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis—operationalized as inclusive integration policies strengthened the prejudice-reducing effect of contact (and predicted more frequent intergroup contact). Thus, the question arises whether negative contact may also produce different effects depending on the normative and institutional context.

Second, existing studies mainly focus on how negative contact fuels prejudice, while its effect on collective mobilization among disadvantaged groups has typically been ignored (Durrheim & Dixon, 2018). However, more recent research examines the effect of negative intergroup contact on disadvantaged group members’ willingness to challenge group inequalities

(Bagci & Turnuklu, 2018; Hässler et al., 2020; Hayward et al., 2017; Lutterbach & Beelmann, 2020; Reimer et al., 2017), akin to the link between perceived discrimination and minority activism (Van Zomeren et al., 2008). For instance, in a survey among members of ethnic minorities in the United States, Hayward and colleagues (2018) found that negative contact with White Americans predicted participation in collective action. Importantly, this effect was mediated by the perception that their group was *generally* discriminated against. Thus, their results suggest that, if negative contact motivates disadvantaged groups members to challenge inequalities, it does so because negative contact experiences are believed to reflect a generalized, systematic phenomenon.

On that basis, we argue that the implications of negative contact experiences require consideration of the type of negative contact individuals endure: An “awkward”¹ interethnic interaction hardly carries the same meaning (or weight) as an altercation with a soldier in a context of military occupation. Moreover, negative intergroup encounters need to be conceived as a direct expression of institutional inequalities. This echoes the notion of authority support. Although in their meta-analysis Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) concluded that the contact-prejudice reduction relationship remains substantial even without authority support, this conclusion might be valid only for the contexts and indicators of authority support included in the analyzed studies. In the debate about the viability of desegregation policies (see Durrheim & Dixon, 2018), the meaning of support from institutional authorities is more substantial than mere approval (as operationalized in Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). It implies the implementation of policies abolishing segregation and their unequivocal enforcement by authorities. Since 89% of the samples used in Pettigrew and Tropp’s (2006) meta-analysis came from the United States, Europe, Canada, New Zealand, or Australia, their findings arguably generalize only to contexts where segregation and explicit discrimination are at least formally outlawed.

When institutional support for contact is blatantly absent, such as in the OPT, instances of intergroup contact occur in the context of *institutionalized* inequalities and segregation. The enforcement of institutionalized segregation, imposed in a top-down fashion, operates through the use of force (e.g., military violence). This necessarily induces the systemic occurrence of negative intergroup encounters. We argue that such systematic (individual-level) negative contacts act as cues or reminders of structural (collective-level) inequalities. This has two implications. First,

H2: As it makes structural inequalities salient, negative contact is likely to mobilize disadvantaged group members to challenge them (e.g., Hayward et al., 2018) and thus to reject normalization.

We label this predicted relationship a “mobilizing effect.”

Second, the effects of negative and positive contact should not only be considered independently from each other, but also in interaction. More specifically, if negative contact experiences act as reminders of institutionalized intergroup inequalities, they should attenuate “sedative influences” and moderate the effect of positive contact. Thus,

H3: Positive contact should produce less pronounced sedative effects when it is accompanied by negative contact experiences.

We label this predicted moderation “reminder effect.”

Importantly, this hypothesis still calls for a clarification regarding the levels of analysis involved. For individuals to be reminded of something, it must be possible for them to forget it.

¹An item used by Hayward and colleagues (2018) to assess negative contact.

Thus, we would only expect individual-level reminder effects if the collective context leaves at least some ambiguity about the nature of the unequal intergroup structure. Clearly, all contexts are not equally ambiguous in this regard. More specifically, we will test for the possibility that a reminder effect of individual contact experiences is more likely to occur in Jerusalem than in the WB.

Indeed, even within Palestinian society, important institutional and material differences between WB and Jerusalem exist. WB, including East Jerusalem, was occupied by Israel in 1967. Although Palestinians from both areas are “stateless” (Tilley, 2012), different citizenship laws were imposed on Palestinians in Jerusalem compared to those in the WB. Palestinians in Jerusalem live under the rule of the Israeli government while inhabitants in the WB are ruled by the PA, but under the military control of the Israeli colonial forces. These differences have very concrete consequences.

First, for WB Palestinians, due to implemented “security” measures (i.e., measures to control occupied populations), the usually studied forms of positive intergroup contact are close to nonexistent. Indeed, Albzour and colleagues (2019) found that Palestinian-Israeli friendships (considered the most effective type of positive contact, e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) are extremely rare (see also Mi’Ari, 1999). To detect some “positive” contact experiences, they complemented their measure by including mundane contact in settings that *potentially allow for* positive encounters (i.e., work and treatment settings). Even these mundane contacts require applying for permits (see below). Segregation, in this context, constitutes a clear-cut reality compared to Jerusalem. The Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem implies a greater proximity of its Palestinian inhabitants with Israeli governmental and private institutions, and thus greater economic dependence, which means many more frequent opportunities to interact with Israelis than Palestinians in the WB. Alongside this greater proximity, Jerusalemites are also daily confronted with a strong military/police presence and violence (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2017) in the city and its suburbs, as well as acts of blatant discrimination, such as the demolition of houses.

Second, because of the segregation wall, the WB is isolated from Jerusalem and other areas under direct Israeli rule (see Pappé, 2017). In order to access these areas, Palestinians holding WB ID cards are required to apply for a permit. The granting of permits is conditional on passing security checks and on specific purposes (e.g., to work in settlements or access Israeli hospitals). Once WB Palestinians are granted a permit, they have to pass highly militarized checkpoints, so-called “terminals,” which they are only allowed to cross by foot (Griffiths & Repo, 2018). The most militarized terminals are those which separate WB from Jerusalem (Mansbach, 2009). By contrast, Palestinians holding a Jerusalem ID are, in principle, relatively free to move within Israeli ruled areas. When going to the WB, they do not have to apply for permits, and they can pass the checkpoints by car (see, Rijke & Minca, 2018). But despite relatively greater freedom of movement and less tedious crossing conditions, the segregation wall implies that Jerusalemites need to pass through the most militarized checkpoints (“terminals”) each time they visit their family, friends, or other acquaintances in the WB (where most Palestinians live).

Overall, Palestinians experience a much more contrasted and hence potentially ambiguous social reality in Jerusalem than in the WB. On the one hand, they enjoy a relative freedom of movement and typically intermingle with Israelis in their everyday life while, on the other hand, they can be exposed to harsh inequalities, discriminations, and military violence. Such relative ambiguity suggests that Jerusalemites’ experiences resemble more those of disadvantaged group members in contexts typically studied in the contact literature, leaving more room for a reminder effect of individual contact experiences to occur in Jerusalem than in the WB. We will consider this possibility by comparing contact experiences and their correlates between Palestinians living in Jerusalem versus the WB.

Current Study

The present study examines sedative and mobilizing effects of intergroup contact among the general population in the OPT. Based on the “sedative” contact literature, we predict that previous experiences of mundane contact are related to heightened normalization endorsement (implying acceptance of the status quo; H1: sedative effect). Based on previous evidence that negative intergroup contact fosters collective mobilization among disadvantaged groups, we further predict that negative contact is related to decreased normalization endorsement (H2: mobilizing effect). Furthermore, considering negative contacts (at checkpoints) as potential reminders of institutionalized segregation and inequality, we predict that negative contact experiences attenuate the sedative effect of positive contact (H3: reminder effect). The underlying mechanism of such a “reminder effect” presupposes that institutionalized segregation and inequality are not permanently salient to everyone. As we expect the social reality of segregation to be more ambiguous in Jerusalem than in the WB, we will examine whether the reminder effect is more pronounced in Jerusalem than in the WB.

Method

Participants and Sampling Procedures

This study analyzed cross-sectional survey data based on face-to-face interviews among a stratified representative sample of the Palestinian adult population in the OPT ($N = 1,000$) conducted in 2017 (Albzour, Nasser, et al., 2019). Participants were sampled from 49 localities which were randomly selected from 480 localities in the territory of the WB and East Jerusalem. The survey included a multistage stratified probability sample with unequal selection probabilities, where participants from Jerusalem, living in proximity to settlements and refugee camps were oversampled. The survey weights have been computed in order to correct for different selection probabilities of respondents.² Accordingly, all descriptive analyses reported in the article are based on weighted data and hence represent estimated values in the reference population (i.e., all adult Palestinians living in the WB or Jerusalem). The sample comprises 20% Palestinians from Jerusalem and 80% from the other areas in WB. 49.2% were women and 50.8% men. The mean age was 38.6 years ($SD = 15.07$). The questionnaire was administered in Arabic. The survey design was developed in collaboration with an experienced local professional survey agency. The survey items and response scales were pretested in a pilot survey.

Measures

Normalization Endorsement

To measure respondents' *normalization endorsement*, we used an eight-item scale ($\alpha = .90$), adapted from Albzour, Penic, et al. (2019). Items presented forms of relations with Israelis that are controversial among Palestinians and typically labeled as “normalization.” They include, “appearing in Israeli media,” “buying Israeli goods,” “security coordination,” “participation in the joint struggle with the Israeli peace movements,” “participation in joint Palestinian and Israeli cultural activities,” “having Israeli friends,” “discussing with Israeli Jews in social media,” and “associating with a normalizer.” Participants were

²For details on the procedure, see (Albzour et al., 2019).

asked: To “what extent do you oppose or support the following types of interactions?” Responses ranged from 1 (*Strongly oppose*) to 4 (*Strongly support*).

Predictors and Moderator

Mundane (Positive) Contact

Since we expected interactions commonly assessed to measure positive contact to be rare in the Palestinian context, we tested our hypotheses involving positive contact using the broader concept of *mundane contact*, that is, frequency of contact in contexts potentially allowing for positive encounters. More specifically, we assessed the frequency of contact with Israelis in work and treatment settings (see also Albzour, Penic, et al., 2019) at the market and in leisure time. We asked the respondents: “How much contact have you had with Israeli Jews in the following setting?” Responses ranged from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*; $\alpha = .82$).

To check whether our measure of mundane contact can meaningfully be called positive, we further included items to assess the quality of contact in each of these settings.³ We asked participants reporting at least “rare” contact with Israelis in a given setting: “How would you evaluate your typical contact with Israeli Jews in these settings?” Responses ranged from 1 (*Very negative*) to 4 (*Very positive*; $\alpha = .84$). The majority of respondents (56.3%) had an average score higher than 2.5 (i.e., the theoretical middle and neutral point of the scale) and a one-sample *t*-test showed that participants rated contact in these settings on average significantly more positively than the theoretical middle of the scale ($M = 2.6$, $SD = 0.68$, $t(537) = 3.35$, $p < .001$).

For descriptive purposes, we still included more traditional measures of positive contact. For *intergroup friendships*, we asked the participants: “Do you have Israeli Jewish Friend?” Responses ranged from 1 (*None*) to 4 (*A lot*). For *extended friendship*, we asked: “Do you know personally Palestinians who have Israeli Jewish friends?” Responses ranges 1 (*None*) to 4 (*A lot*).⁴

Negative Contact as Checkpoint Experiences

To assess *negative contact*, respondents were asked: “During the last three months, have you experienced the following at a checkpoint?” They were presented with four negative experiences at checkpoints: “I was delayed for a long period of time at checkpoint”; “I was refused to pass through a checkpoint”; “I was humiliated when stopped at a checkpoint”; “I experienced or witnessed violence against a fellow Palestinian at a checkpoint” (0 = no, 1 = yes). *Negative contact* was computed as a dichotomous variable distinguishing respondents reporting at least one negative experience at checkpoints from those who reported none.

For descriptive purposes, we also assessed *contact in negative settings* by asking the respondents: “How much contact have you had with Israeli Jews at the checkpoints?” Responses ranged from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*).

³We did not use quality of contact to test our hypothesis as the question was not applicable for respondents who reported no mundane contact, that is, 46.2% of the whole sample. Hence, performing analyses based on this variable would have meant excluding almost half of the sample.

⁴A (principal axis) factor analysis with varimax rotation showed that items designed to measure (1) normalization endorsement, (2) mundane contact, and (3) positive contact (friendship and extended friendship) loaded on three distinct underlying factors. The only problematic item was contact in work-related situations, which loaded on both positive contact and mundane contact factors. Mundane contact correlated only moderately with extended friendship ($r = 0.29$, $p < .001$) and intergroup friendship ($r = 0.43$, $p < .001$).

Results

Descriptive Analysis: Contact in the Context of Segregation

Examining a typical measure of positive intergroup contact, namely intergroup friendship, reveals the striking scarcity of this type of contact. Asked whether they have Israeli friends, 90.2% of all respondents ($N = 995$) declared that they had none. This proportion was higher in the WB (91.6%) than in Jerusalem (80.1%; $\chi^2(1) = 31.02, p < .001$), but it constitutes the overwhelming majority in both areas. With regard to extended contact, participants reported average frequencies between “none” and “few” ($M = 1.52, SD = 0.79$). As expected, Jerusalemites ($M = 1.59, SD = 0.85$) reported on average more extended contact than participants from the WB ($M = 1.51, SD = 0.79$; $t(269.1) = -2.26, p = .025, d = 0.2$).

On average, participants reported having mundane contact between “never” and “rarely” ($M = 1.61, SD = 0.91$). We expected much more mundane contact in Jerusalem, which is indeed the case (for Jerusalem: $M = 3.10, SD = 0.86$; for the WB: $M = 1.43, SD = 0.73$; $t(977) = -26.6, p < .001, d = -2.18$).⁵ The large effect size further emphasizes that segregation is more systematic in the WB.

Turning to *contact in negative settings*, when asked how frequently they had interactions with Israelis at checkpoints, participants answered on average slightly more than “sometimes” ($M = 3.09, SD = 1.24$). This contact item was the only one for which the Jerusalem sample ($M = 3.33, SD = 1.34$) did not differ from the WB ($M = 3.06, SD = 1.22$; $t(993) = -1.56, p = .119$), suggesting that contact at checkpoints constitutes the one common form of intergroup contact experience.

Considering actual *negative contact* (i.e., contact experiences at checkpoints explicitly identified as negative) leads us to nuance the previous conclusion, however. Among the whole sample ($N = 995$), 36.7% reported having experienced at least one instance of negative contact at checkpoints. But respondents from Jerusalem reported these substantially more often (62.8%) than respondents from the WB (32.5%; $\chi^2(1) = 35.8, p < .001$; descriptive statistics for each separate item measuring the different forms of contact broken down by location are reported in the online supporting information, Figure S1 and Table S1).

Relationship Between Intergroup Contact and Support for Normalization

We first regressed normalization endorsement on demographic variables, including the Jerusalem dichotomous variable (see Table 1, Model 1). According to this model, which explains little variance ($R^2 = 2.3\%$, $F(4, 932) = 5.494, p < .001$), Jerusalemites were on average less supportive of normalization than WB residents ($\beta = -0.14, p < .001$). Since Jerusalemites had more (mundane and negative) contact with Israelis, we controlled for contact variables before interpreting this effect. The only other significant predictor is gender, indicating that men endorsed normalization more than women ($\beta = 0.07, p = .040$).

In a second model, we included mundane and negative contact as independent predictors, in addition to demographic variables. We further included intergroup friendship and extended friendship to ensure that the hypothesized effect of mundane contact is not explained by these covariates.⁶ These additions to the model significantly increase the amount of explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = 8.82\%$, $F(4,$

⁵Since the distribution of mundane contact is strongly skewed within the WB sample, we also performed a Mann-Whitney U test which led to a similar conclusion ($Mdn_{WB} = 1, Mdn_{Jerusalem} = 3, U = 328,289, W = 11,879, Z = -18.760, p < .001, r = 0.59$).

⁶The distributions of (extended) intergroup friendship variables being highly skewed, we also tested the models in Table 1 without them. The results are virtually identical.

Table 1. Linear Regression Models Predicting Normalization Endorsement (standardized coefficients; N = 937)

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Jerusalem	-0.14***	0.03	-0.25***	0.04	-0.25***	0.11	-0.34***	0.06
Men	0.07*	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.03
Education	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.03
Age	-0.02	0.03	-0.02	0.03	-0.02	0.03	-0.02	0.03
Intergroup friendship	-	-	0.19***	0.04	0.19***	0.04	0.18***	0.04
Extended friendship	-	-	0.08*	0.04	0.08*	0.04	0.08*	0.04
Mundane positive contact	-	-	0.14*	0.05	0.16*	0.05	0.16**	0.05
Negative contact	-	-	-0.14***	0.03	-0.14***	0.03	-0.07	0.04
Mundane positive contact × Negative contact	-	-	-	-	-0.06(*)	0.03	-0.06	0.04
Mundane positive contact × Jerusalem	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.09*	0.04
Negative contact × Jerusalem	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.12*	0.05
Mundane positive contact × Negative contact × Jerusalem	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.11*	0.04
R ² (%)	2.3		10.6		10.67		10.95	

Note. Due to the large sample size and small percentage of missing data on outcome variable (0.3%), cases with missing values were deleted listwise (see Allison, 2002).

(*) $p < .09$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

928) = 23, $p < .001$). Supporting Hypothesis 1, mundane contact ($\beta = 0.08$, $p = .003$) was related to increased support for normalization. In line with Hypothesis 2, negative contact was related to reduced support ($\beta = -0.16$, $p < .001$). Interestingly, the effect of living in Jerusalem net of the effect of the contact variables was stronger than without controlling for the latter ($\beta = -0.35$, $p < .001$). This indicates that Jerusalemites' lower endorsement of normalization compared to WB residents cannot be explained by their individual experiences of contact (e.g., negative contact), and, if anything, controlling for the latter makes this contextual difference even clearer. Furthermore, positive contact variables included only as covariates are significant predictors of respondents' endorsement of normalization: Intergroup friendship ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < .001$) and extended friendship ($\beta = 0.06$, $p = .028$) were both related to increased support for normalization.

While we expected and found independent effects of both mundane contact and negative contact, our key hypothesis (H3) concerns their interaction (Model 3). The interaction made no significant contribution to the model ($\beta = -0.06$, $p = .084$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.28\%$, $F(1, 927) = 2.98$, $p = .084$), when tested on the overall sample.

To test whether the interaction between mundane contact and negative contact depend on the context, we tested a three-way interaction between mundane contact, negative contact, and location (Model 4) ($\Delta R^2 = 0.98\%$, $F(3, 924) = 3.44$, $p = .016$).⁷ The three-way interaction effect was significant ($\beta = -0.11$, $p = .004$), indicating that the interaction effect between mundane contact and negative contact was significant for the Jerusalem sample ($\beta = -0.29$, $p < .001$) but not for the WB one ($\beta = 0.004$, $p = .935$). Simple effects analyses show that, within the Jerusalem sample,

⁷The three-way interaction explains little additional variance presumably because it improves fit only among Jerusalemites, who represent only 20% of the sample. When testing the two-way interaction between mundane and negative contact among Jerusalemites only, it explains 3.71% of the variance ($F(1, 174) = 7.71$, $p < .01$).

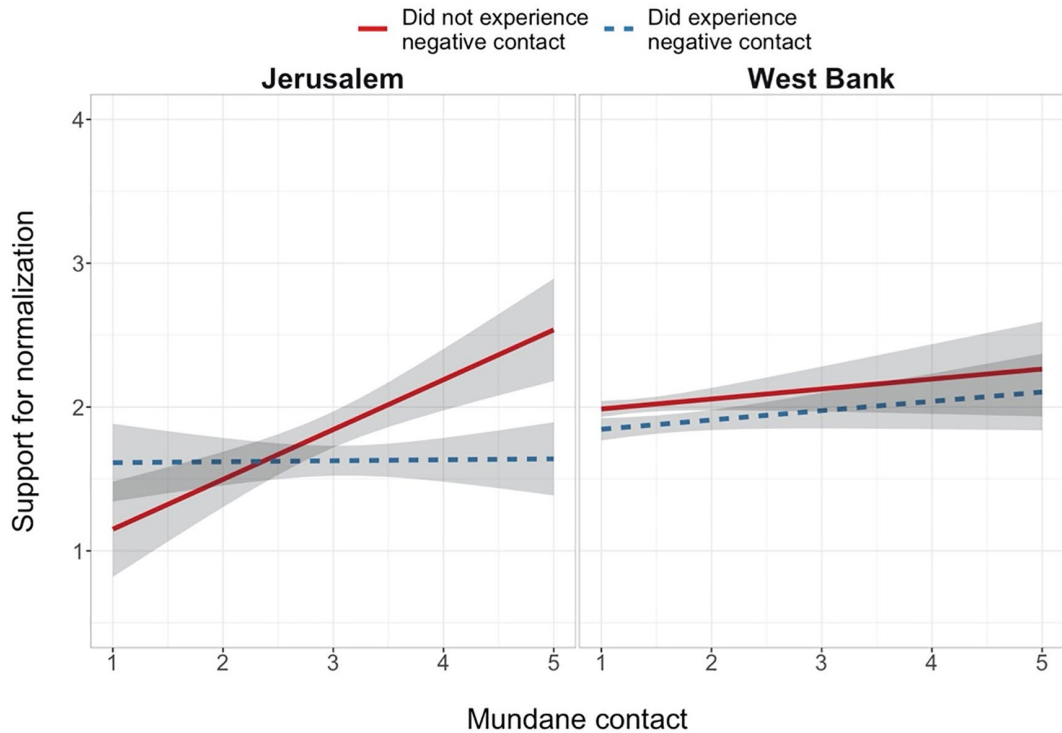


Figure 1. Simple effects of mundane contact on normalization endorsement as a function of negative contact and location. Values are predicted according to Model 4. Shaded areas represent 95 % confidence intervals.

mundane contact predicted normalization endorsement among respondents who did not report any negative contact ($\beta = 0.59, p < .001$), but not among those who reported negative contact ($\beta = 0.01, p = .914$, see Figure 1).

Finally, we checked whether there was a main effect of mundane contact, as well as of other contact variables, on normalization endorsement in the WB sample. We fitted a model identical to Model 2 with the WB sample only (not shown in Table 1). This model explains relatively little variance ($R^2 = 7.46\%$, $F(7, 762) = 8.77, p < .001$), presumably because only a small portion of the sample had experienced any positive contact with Israelis. The effect of mundane contact was not significant ($\beta = 0.06, p = .110$), but the effect of negative contact experiences was ($\beta = -0.14, p < .001$). Although rare among WB respondents, friendship with Israelis ($\beta = 0.17, p < .001$) and extended contact ($\beta = 0.08, p = .048$) positively predicted normalization endorsement.

Discussion

The present study examined, in the WB and Jerusalem, how Palestinians' previous experiences of positive and negative contact with Israelis relates to their endorsement of normalization. We found that both negative contact experiences and context moderate the relationship between positive contact and normalization endorsement (i.e., the sedative effect). This result can be broken down into several key points. The most basic one is that, generally speaking, positive (mundane) contact predicts higher normalization endorsement. This is in line with research showing that, in societies with deeply entrenched inequality, positive contact can act against the interests

of disadvantaged groups by affecting the social psychological mechanisms of social change (Reimer & Sengupta, 2021).⁸ We also showed that negative contact experiences can be consequential in two ways: first, by having a mobilizing effect—negative contact is related to decreased normalization endorsement; second, by moderating the “sedative” effect of positive contact.

These findings echo the increasing attention paid to the effects of negative contact (Aberson, 2015; Barlow et al., 2012; Paolini et al., 2014), but they are original in several ways. Research on negative contact typically examines its effect as independent from positive contact (e.g., Graf et al., 2014). Some studies, however, found evidence for an interactive effect whereby negative contact experiences neutralize the “beneficial” effect of positive contact (Árnadóttir et al., 2018; Paolini et al., 2014). Examining this moderating role from the perspective of a collective mobilization rather than a prejudice-reduction model of social change, we found that negative contact can act as a reminder of institutionalized segregation and moderate the sedative effect of positive contact. More specifically, Palestinians’ negative experiences at checkpoints canceled the sedative effect of their positive contact experiences with Israelis. Furthermore, we found that this “reminder effect” only occurred in Jerusalem. WB Palestinians’ positive contact experiences were unrelated to their support for normalization in any case (i.e., there was no sedative effect), whether they individually experienced negative contact at checkpoints or not. This finding is consistent with recent research showing that institutional (Green et al., 2020) and normative (Kende et al., 2018) contexts shape the effect of intergroup contact. We suggest that the existence of a sedative effect in Jerusalem and its absence in the WB reflect differences in the normative and institutional realities between the two contexts.

The colonial annexation of East Jerusalem implies institutional structures imposing a relative promiscuity between Palestinians and Israelis. This is likely to create spaces where it is acceptable and morally legitimate to entertain relations that go beyond the purely necessary and utilitarian. The existence of such spaces is most likely impossible in the WB, where mundane intergroup interactions are almost inexistent. Even when Palestinians from the WB have such interactions with Israelis, they occur on the other side of the wall (or within settlements), and they are restricted to special categories of Palestinians, who are granted a permit (e.g., workers in Israeli settlements, the few who manage to acquire access to Israeli health care). Such a context hardly allows for the existence of social circles where normalization is acceptable. Furthermore, WB Palestinians arguably experience various evidence of their sharp disadvantage, making negative encounters at checkpoints all but superfluous to remind them of this fact. Daily restrictions of movement, administrative challenges linked to the permit system, forced displacements, sporadic incursions of the Israeli military within the WB, or unimpeded settlers’ attacks on Palestinian persons and property are examples of such reminders (see OCHAOPT, 2021). The present findings therefore call for future research to assess a variety of experiences reflecting the reality of occupation among respondents. Doing so would allow empirically accounting for differences between WB and Jerusalem and elucidate the psychosocial mechanisms producing the phenomena documented by the present study.

Overall, our research provides important contributions to the social-psychological literature on intergroup contact. Dixon et al. (2005) argued that the vast majority of contact research has ignored

⁸We also assessed respondents’ support for different means of resistance. Normalization endorsement correlated significantly and negatively with support for “armed resistance against military power of Israel” ($r = -.44, p < .001$), for “armed resistance against settlers” ($r = -.39, p < .001$), for “Palestinian boycott of Israel” ($r = -.39, p < .001$), and for “international boycott of Israel” ($r = -.38, p < .001$). However, normalization endorsement correlated positively with support for “peaceful resistance” ($r = 0.16, p < .001$) and “joint struggle and collaboration with the Israeli peace movements” ($r = 0.39, p < .001$). Interestingly, boycott is technically a peaceful form of resistance. However, normalization endorsement correlates negatively with it, while positively with “peaceful resistance.” It appears that normalization correlated positively with all items including the word “peace.” Thus, normalization endorsement seems sedative specifically towards confrontational forms of resistance, as opposed to those which implies the term of “peace.” Future research should investigate more systematically what forms of resistance are (in)compatible with normalization endorsement.

the meanings that particular social contexts impose on contact experiences. The effects of positive and negative contact are typically apprehended through supposedly context-independent psychological processes, thereby neglecting the way concrete institutional arrangements and social norms shape the meaning that individuals give to such interactions. Our finding that specific experiences encountered by Jerusalemites at checkpoints moderate the sedative effect is best understood in light of the reality of segregation at the institutional level: Checkpoints are the concrete expression of segregation and are generally understood as such by Palestinians.

Our results also have practical implications, pertaining to the implementation of intergroup contact theory. The conclusions of academic research have been widely used by policymakers and civil-society organizations as a tool for conflict resolution (e.g., Dixon et al., 2013). In Palestine, despite intensifying segregation, some civil-society organizations are still holding joint meetings between Israelis and Palestinians from Jerusalem and WB, presuming that intergroup contact effectively reduces conflict (Maoz, 2004). These planned contact interventions have been criticized, notably for their incompatibility with the everyday reality of the participants and with the structural context of asymmetric power relations in which they occur (Maoz, 2011; Rouhana & Korper, 1997). We further stress that the increased inclusion in such peace-promoting interventions of Palestinians living in the WB has coincided with a rise in infrastructures and policies that confronts the same Palestinians with blatant forms of segregation in their daily lives. To put it bluntly, in order to participate in a peace program with Israelis, a Palestinian living in the WB or in Jerusalem areas beyond the separation wall first needs to apply for a permit to cross the wall through a highly militarized checkpoint. In short, our results sustain the notion that in (rarely studied) formally segregated societies, positive contact experiences are neither “beneficial,” nor “sedative.” They might be experienced as plainly anecdotal, or just too disconnected from normal social life to affect understandings of intergroup relations in a meaningful way. If contact interventions are to be held and have a meaningful impact, Becker et al. (2013) suggest an interesting avenue. They found that, when advantaged group members described inequality as illegitimate, positive contact reduced prejudice among the disadvantaged without undermining their commitment to collective action. In the present context, future research should investigate the effect of contact interventions involving Palestinians and Israelis who condemn the occupation of the OPT.

As Durrheim and Dixon (2018) recently reminded us, Allport formulated the contact hypothesis to explain intergroup relations in societies moving away from segregation (i.e., the 1950s’ United States). Since then, intergroup contact research has been consistent with this initial assumption, examining contexts involved in a process of desegregation (Duckitt, 1992). However, when it sees the prejudice-reduction effect of contact as an aim in itself (rather than a means to consolidate desegregation), contact research loses sight of the theory’s foundational context and aspiration. Over the last two decades, the social reality of Palestinians has evolved in the exact opposite direction than that of Black Americans during the 1950s: Segregation has become ever more deeply entrenched. Our finding that positive contact does not foster an ideology of intergroup harmony in the WB (nor for many Jerusalemites) therefore begs the question whether the contact hypothesis still provides a relevant frame of reference when positive intergroup contact implies talking to each other through a segregation wall.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

Figure S1. Distribution of individuals according to mundane contact, negative contact, and location.

Table S1. Weighted Relative Frequencies of Intergroup Contact Experiences Broken Down by Location and Individual Items