

# Making INTERGROUP CONTACT More Fruitful

## Enhancing Cooperation between Palestinian and Jewish Israeli Adolescents by Fostering Beliefs about Group Malleability

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For decades, increasing intergroup contact has been the preferred method to weaken the destructive effects of intergroup conflicts, such as an unwillingness to cooperate. However, even the strongest supporters of this approach acknowledge that the effects of contact are uneven.

In the present study, we tested whether changing perceptions of group malleability in a pre-encounter intervention could increase the quality of interactions during contact encounters.

Contact encounters has been shown to contribute to the reduction of prejudice and improvement in intergroup relations. However, contact encounters are limited by the same inherent psychological barriers that exist in conflicts. When people from warring sides are in a situation in which there are high levels of hatred and dehumanization and low levels of trust, then, the effectiveness of contact decreases. Therefore, thinking about ways to reduce such barriers during the encounter can increase the chance that the encounter would achieve positive outcomes.

In the context of intractable conflicts, one of the barriers for contact is the fact that people are telling themselves “why should I interact with the other side? either way they will not change...”

We predicted that one way to increase the effectiveness of planned contact encounters would be to encourage the general belief that group change is possible.

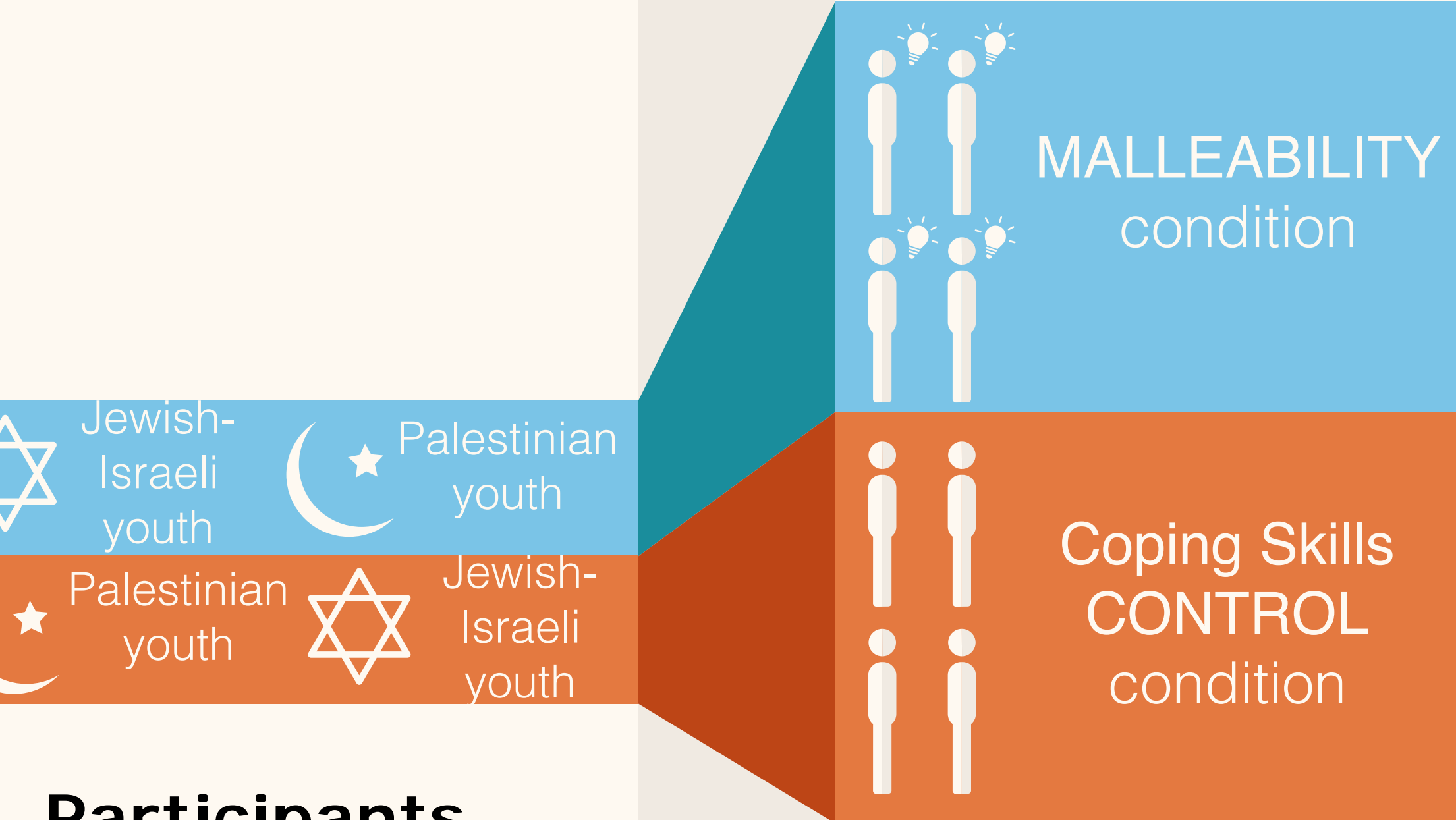
We reasoned that such a belief, may enhance the beneficial outcomes of planned contact because it instills the motivation to engage with the out group.

### Rationale

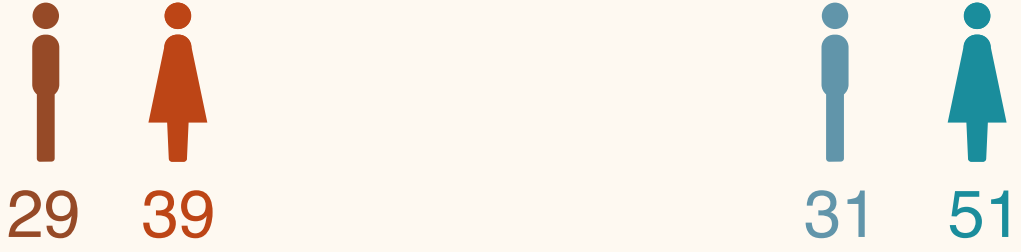
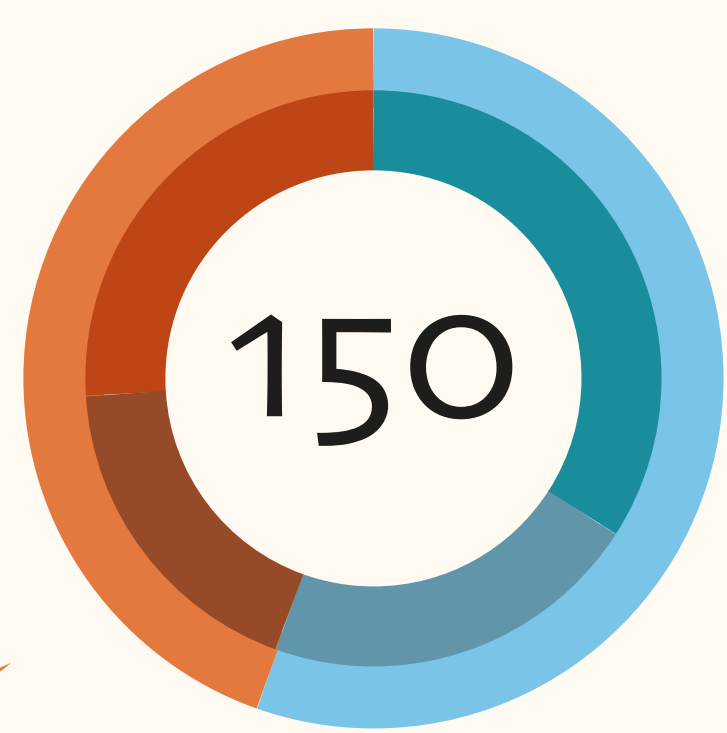
Believe that change is POSSIBLE

Believe that CONTACT can change reality

CHANGE



### Participants



1.5 Hours long

2-3 Weeks apart

2 Schools (Baka'a, Ami- Asaf)

Instructors:  
4 Jewish- Israeli,  
4 Palestinian- Israeli

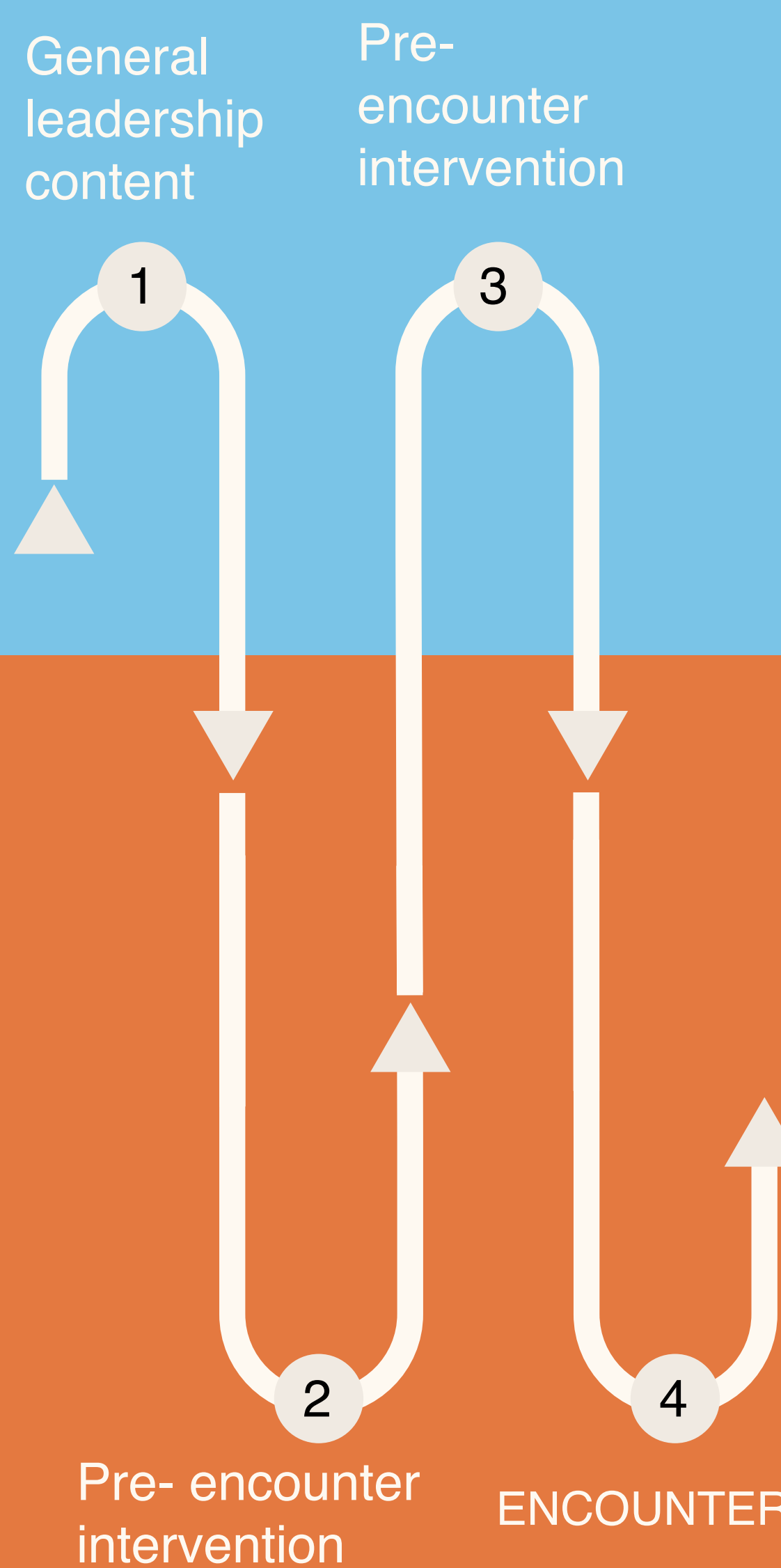
### The METHOD

We conducted a pre-encounter intervention among Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli middle school students. Students in both schools were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: group malleability or coping skills.

### The STUDY

The workshops included four meetings, three pre-encounter workshops and an intergroup planned encounter. In the malleability condition participants learned about leadership and the importance of their belief in group's ability to change. In the coping condition participants explored the destructive impact of stress on leaders and strategies for coping.

### Workshops Intervention Timeline



In the fourth session, participants completed cooperation tasks. At the end of the contact session, participants' evaluation of the encounter were measured. We used external observers to evaluate success in the tasks and perceived emotions of the participants.

### Measurements- Contact encounter



### The RESULTS

Results indicated that participants in the malleability condition, compared to the control condition, showed less negative emotion and enhanced performance on cooperation tasks. These findings suggest new avenues for enhancing the impact of contact.

### The DISCUSSION

- The belief in change is crucial for the effectiveness of contact encounters.
- Extension of the influence of implicit theories about groups to the effectiveness of contact.
- Novel introduction of behavioral measures for the influence of implicit theories.
- Our findings have wide applicability.

### MALLEABILITY CONDITION

