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The Influence of the Ethos of Conflict on Israeli Jews' Interpretation of Jewish–Palestinian Encounters

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This study investigates the psychological effects of a set of societal beliefs termed the *ethos of conflict*, which develops in the context of intractable conflict—as, for example, the Israeli–Arab conflict. The premise was that the ethos of conflict constitutes a type of ideology that serves as a powerful prism through which individuals perceive the reality of an intractable conflict. The study's findings confirmed this premise, showing that participants with a high level of ethos of conflict tended to perceive photos depicting encounters between Jews and Palestinians differently than did those with a low level of ethos of conflict. The former tended to perceive the Palestinians as more aggressive, to blame them more for such attributed aggressiveness, and to explain this perceived aggressiveness more in terms of internal and stable causes. They also tended to stereotype Palestinians more negatively and Jews more positively.

Keywords: *conflict; ethos of conflict; ideology; perceptual-cognitive biases*

T he present study examines the influence of a configuration of societal beliefs termed *the ethos of conflict* on perceptual–cognitive processes, leading to bias and distortion of the reality. This configuration develops in societies that are in a state of a harsh and prolonged (i.e., "intractable") conflict (Bar-Tal 1998, 2007b; Kriesberg 1995, 1993). We first elaborate the concept of ethos of conflict, describe how an ethos is likely to affect individuals' perception of conflict situations, and then deal with these themes within the context of the Israeli–Arab conflict.

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A cluster of shared central societal beliefs[1] that provide a unique, general, and dominant orientation to a society is called an ethos (Bar-Tal 2000). An ethos evolves as a result of continuing experiences of the society, and its beliefs lend meaning to societal life. The ethos, moreover, connects the society's present and its future goals and aspirations. The society's hegemonic state of consciousness is generated by this ethos, equipping members with the justification and motivation to act in concord within the societal system (D. Bar-Tal 2000). We argue that societies involved in an intractable conflict develop an ethos that comes to meet the challenges set by its difficult conditions, including satisfaction of basic needs and successful coping with stress. These challenges, among other things, require a clear view of the conflict, its nature and goals, and of both involved groups, the own and the opponent (D. Bar-Tal 2000, 2007b; D. Bar-Tal and Salomon 2006). The ethos of conflict that we identified and conceptualized and that comprises eight themes of societal beliefs (see below) does this precisely. It mirrors the experiences of the society members and offers a clear orientation for the society's current reality and a path into the future. Being thoroughly institutionalized, it is a part of society members' repertoire, used by leaders for the justification of their policy and modes of actions, manifested in cultural products, expressed in public discourse, and appearing in school textbooks (D. Bar-Tal 2007a). It constitutes a major obstacle to peace making as it fuels continuation of the conflict and inhibits its de-escalation.

The underlying assumption of this study is that the ethos of conflict functions as an ideology that constitutes a basis for the perception and interpretation of reality in the context of intractable conflict (D. Bar-Tal 2007b; Shils 1968). But while this ideology, indeed, supports the society that copes with the intractable conflict, it also leads to the conflict's persistence and perpetuation. To demonstrate the resemblance and correspondence between the concept of ethos and the concept of ideology, the latter's definition will be presented followed by an examination of its psychological implications for those that hold it and emphasizing its influence on perceptual–cognitive processes.

The Concept of Ideology

The concept of ideology has accrued various meanings through the years, including some negative connotations. However, customarily, ideology is a descriptive and neutral concept, defined as an organized construct of opinions, attitudes, and values concerning man and society (Adorno et al. 1950; Rokeach 1960). This definition was also accepted by others who describe ideology as a general

worldview that refers to a present and future reality with the aim to create a conceptual framework that allows human beings to organize and comprehend the world in which they live and to act toward its preservation or alteration in accordance with this standpoint (Eagleton 1991; McClosky and Zaller 1984; Tedin 1987). All these definitions regard ideology as a closed system of systematically formulated beliefs that guide reality perception and behavior (Kerlinger 1984; Shils 1968; Van Dijk 1998).

The concept of the ethos of conflict has similar characteristics: It includes a set of ideas, as well as a number of applications, that pertain to the life patterns of the society members who hold the ethos, and it may even occupy a central place in their lives. It is composed of a distinct number of beliefs and values characterized by a high level of systematization and by a high level of emotional involvement in its maintenance and distribution, since it responds to emotional needs such as the need for a sense of security, the need for self-justification, and the preservation of a positive self-image. A society with an ethos of conflict requires unity and conformity to allocate resources for coping with an external threat (Shils 1968).

Along with the assumption that the ethos of conflict functions as a type of ideology, it may be assumed that it affects the society as a whole, as well as its members, in a way similar to ideology. Its impact on cognitive and perceptual processes, therefore, will be described.

The Psychological Implications of Holding an Ideology

Ideology is a prism that dictates to those who look through it a certain way of observing and interpreting reality. Hence, it reduces their openness to information and its processing. Accordingly, it may be assumed that the mode of thinking of those who hold an ideology is characterized (relatively to those who do not hold it) by an inclination to adhere to that which is familiar, to be selective in information search, and to think in a biased, simplistic, and stereotypical way (Jost et al. 2003). Researchers attempted to explore the nature of the connection between ideology (as defined above) and thinking beyond the specific content of a particular ideology (see, for example, reviews: Feldman 2003; Jost 2006; Jost et al. 2003; Sidanius 1985). Following, we describe some ways in which ideology affects perception and inference making.[2]

Selectivity and selective attention focusing. When individuals hold an ideology, it influences the way in which they seek information and focus their attention. First, they choose to be exposed to information that reinforces and justifies their ideology and choose to avoid information that may undermine or contradict this ideology. Second, from the moment the ideology holders are exposed to information, each item that is associated with and relevant to the ideology becomes more salient and accessible to their cognitive process, and thus, more attention is directed toward it

(see Taber 2003). In their review of the processing of political information, Iyengar and Ottati (1994) showed that people are selectively exposed to certain information, voluntarily and involuntarily, in an attempt to confirm their beliefs (see, for example, Lavine, Lodge, and Freitas 2005; Lord, Ross, and Lepper 1979; Vallone, Ross, and Lepper 1985).

The interpretation and evaluation of information. Exposure to information and focusing attention are followed by a stage in which individuals interpret the perceptual input and attempt to understand it. At this stage, too, holders of ideology try to interpret and understand new information according to their ideological perspective (see Iyengar and Ottati 1994; Taber 2003). Since all information may be interpreted in more than one way, generally, people do not test all possible interpretations of a particular information item. They apply their most accessible interpretation when they are exposed to information (see also Hamilton, Sherman, and Ruvolo 1990; Howard and Pike 1986; Maoz et al. 2002; Pfeifer and Ogloff 1991; Rosenberg and Wolfsfeld 1977; Sommers and Ellsworth 2000).

Retrieval from memory. Finally, when individuals hold ideological knowledge, it affects not only the manner in which novel information is coded and stored but also the way in which the information is retrieved from memory. Ideological knowledge is a type of a cognitive scheme that is activated by relevant memory cues (e.g., Ditto and Lopez 1992; Glaser 2005).

With direct relevance to our case, Silverstein and Flamenbaum (1989) reviewed studies that investigated how the perception of a certain group known as "the enemy" affects information processing of individuals who possess this perception. They found that when people perceive an out-group as hostile or threatening, it influences the various stages of social information processing, such as attention, coding, retrieval, and expectation for future actions. The scope of studies that appears in this review suggests that knowledge of "the enemy" leads to a perceptual bias that is often expressed through unrealistic expectations of hostile behavior. In fact, it is possible to add to this line of research studies in social psychology that demonstrate in-group bias in judging events. That is, group members tend to view events in which two groups are involved as favoring own group. This tendency is especially pronounced when the two groups are in competition or conflict. For example, in a now classic study, Hastrof and Cantril (1954) showed that when fans of two college football teams were shown a film of a performed game, they saw and evaluated it in a very different way. They blamed the other team for the occurred violence and defended the aggressive moves of their own team. This selective, biased, and distorting perception was also found in other studies that examined different events and contexts (see, for example, Crabb 1989; Duncan 1976; Sagar and Schofield 1980).

In sum, the influence of ideology on perceptual processes is thus relevant also to the ethos of conflict, which functions as an ideology. When individuals hold an ethos of conflict, it may lead to perceptual–cognitive bias, especially when it marks certain groups as hostile or as endangering the existence of the group to which the perceivers belong. Among the above-mentioned stages of information processing, the present study mainly examined the stages of interpretation and evaluation of information as well as selective attention. This study concentrates on the influence of the ethos of conflict on the Israeli Jewish society, involved in a conflict with the Palestinian society (D. Bar-Tal 1998, 2007a).

The Israeli–Arab Conflict as an Intractable Conflict

The Israeli–Arab conflict and its focal part, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, constitute one of the most prominent examples of an intractable conflict (D. Bar-Tal 1998, 2007a). It has been going on for many years, it is characterized by a high level of violence, and it was long perceived, by both sides, as total, insolvable, and a "zero-sum game." This is because the conflict has touched on needs that have been perceived as basic and crucial for the existence of each side. Until the 1970s, it was a prototypical intractable conflict, but from the late 1970s, the conflict started shifting away from the intractable extreme (D. Bar-Tal 1998; Oren and D. Bar-Tal 2006). The peace treaty with Egypt in 1979, the Madrid conference in 1991, the Oslo agreements in 1993 and 1995, and the peace agreement with Jordan in 1994 were seen as milestones that have gradually altered the nature of the Middle East conflict. Among wide segments of both societies, these events have caused the conflict to be seen as solvable, and thus, both societies became deeply polarized with regard to the peace process. However, the lack of success to reach a peace agreement in the summit meeting in 2000 and the outbreak of the "Al-Aqsa Intifada" indicated that the Israeli–Arab conflict was moving back toward the intractable extreme. During the time of the study, Palestinian Authority was considered a terror entity, and the Palestinian leader was viewed as no partner to peace negotiations; therefore, the formal contact between the two sides broke down (D. Bar-Tal and Sharvit 2007). In that time, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict was again perceived by at least half of the Israelis as total and unsolvable (Ben Meir and Shaked 2007).

The Ethos of Conflict in Israeli Society

During the long years of intractable conflict, most Jews in Israel have held societal beliefs that are typical of an ethos of conflict as a way of coping with the conflict (D. Bar-Tal 1998, 2007a, 2007b; Oren 2005). This ethos has become institutionalized and was disseminated for many years through the society's institutions and its channels of communication (D. Bar-Tal 2007a). Following are eight themes of the ethos's central societal beliefs.

Societal beliefs that refer to the justness of the goals describe the conflict's goals, indicate their existential importance, and provide their explanations and rationale. In the Israeli–Jewish case, these beliefs have emanated to a great degree from the Zionist ideology that was a major source of inspiration for Jewish people's return to the Biblical land of Israel after 2000 years of exile, as well as for the aspiration to establish a state of their own on this territory (Avineri 1981; Vital 1982).

Societal beliefs that refer to security refer to the importance of both collective and personal security, evaluate the extent and nature of the threats to security, and detail the conditions for its achievement. During the years of conflict, the belief that the security of the state and its Jewish citizens is under constant threat has become deeply rooted among the Jews in Israel (Arian 1995). Therefore, having a sense of security has become a central need and an imperative value of this society (D. Bar-Tal, Jacobson, and Klieman 1998; Lissak 1984).

Societal beliefs that refer to a positive collective self-image reflect the ethnocentric propensity to attribute positive traits, values, and behaviors to one's own society, with the purpose of boosting self-esteem. Thus, Jews in Israel have emphasized their moral superiority and their great respect for human life as well their bravery and heroism (D. Bar-Tal 1998).

Societal beliefs that refer to victimization address the collective portrayal of the group as a victim. Throughout the Arab–Israeli conflict, Jews have perceived themselves as victims (Hareven 1983).

Societal beliefs that focus on the delegitimization of the adversary renounce his humaneness. During the years of the intractable conflict, Jews have developed such beliefs regarding Arab people's humaneness. Mutual delegitimization has in fact been one of the bitterest manifestations of the conflict (Bar-On 2000; Bilu 1994). Israelis have labeled Arabs as primitive, uncivilized, and savage. As the conflict deepened, Arabs came to be perceived as bloodthirsty murderers, vicious, and evil. In addition, the Arabs were accused of instigating all military confrontations and wars, and it was because of their reluctance to find a solution through dialogue that the conflict was believed to last (see review in D. Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005).

Societal beliefs that refer to patriotism, which are defined as an emotional attachment formed between the individual and his or her group and country, nurture loyalty, love, care, and readiness for sacrifice. During the conflict, the Jews in Israel have made special endeavors to form these beliefs, to instill the patriotic spirit in society (Ben-Amos and D. Bar-Tal 2004).

Societal beliefs that refer to unity pertain to the tendency to disregard internal, national conflict and controversy in order to unite all forces against the external threat. During the years of Israeli–Arab conflict, beliefs that propagate unity were often expressed to strengthen the ability to withstand the enemy (Lahav 1993; Negbi 1985).

Societal beliefs regarding peace portray peace as society's most ardent wish despite the ongoing conflict. Indeed, Jewish society in Israel has consistently presented itself as peace loving.

The above societal beliefs complement each other and create a narrative about the conflict that society members share (D. Bar-Tal and Salomon 2006). The ethos

of conflict enables Israelis to understand and organize the chaotic reality of the ongoing conflict and provides a clear picture regarding the reasons for the conflict and its aims, as well as of the society and its opponent. In this manner, the ethos of conflict meets a basic human need: making sense of and organizing reality via an explainable, predictable, and controllable scheme (Burton 1990; Staub 2003). But at the same time, it leads to biased and distorted information processing by justifying the position of the society in conflict, portraying it in a very positive light and as the victim of the conflict, and delegitimizing the opponent.

Through the years, especially during the climatic years of the intractable conflict with the Palestinians, the great majority of the Israeli Jews held the beliefs of the ethos, but with the coming of the Egyptian President Anwar Saadat to Jerusalem, the public began to change their views (see D. Bar-Tal 2007a and Oren 2005 for the analysis of the changes). In times of the present research, the Israeli society was greatly divided on the societal beliefs of ethos—while segments of the society continued to adhere to the various belief of the ethos of conflict, other segments held a repertoire in which they changed.

Zafran (2002) constructed a questionnaire to evaluate the extent to which Israeli Jews hold the societal beliefs of ethos of conflict. She found that these beliefs broadly fall into two general categories that represent dovish and hawkish views, without differentiating among the eight themes of the ethos of conflict (for similar findings, see Borovski-Sapir 2004 and Gopher 2006). The important finding of this study is that the societal beliefs of the ethos serve as a prism through which people evaluate specific issues that appear at any given time on the public agenda.

The Present Study

On the basis of the assumption that the ethos of conflict functions like ideology, the present study examines its impact on perceptual–cognitive processing. This is the first study that empirically examines the effect of holding ethos of conflict on information processing. The main hypothesis that was investigated in this study was that Jews in Israel who show a high level of ethos of conflict tend to interpret information regarding relations between Jews and Palestinians in a manner different from that of Jews who display a lower level of this ethos. There is an essential difference between self-categorization of Israeli society members on the left–right (or the dovish–hawkish) dimension and the degree to which a person holds the ethos of conflict. The self-categorization indicates the political camp with which the person identifies, while the second measure expresses the extent of his or her holding of the ideology about the nature of the Israeli–Arab conflict. Although there is a correlation between these two dimensions, they do not measure the same characteristic. First, research shows that society members ascribe themselves to left or right camps for various reasons, so that there may be people with uncompromising attitudes who will assign

themselves to the left and vice versa (see Arian 1995; Doron 2005; Ventura and Shamir 1992). Second, an ethos that consists of a coherent set of societal beliefs relates to a general concept, a sort of ideology, and does not refer to concrete issues on the public agenda. These issues are specific and change according to context, while the ethos is a general cognitive construct that provides a prism for the judgment of particular reality. It reflects a worldview of the individuals, expressed with particular wide scope of contents, regarding the conflict. The scale thus allows a comprehensive measure of the ideology related to conflict and then differentiation of the individuals on the continuous dimension with regard to the extent that they adhere to the beliefs of the ethos without relying on self-assessment. It provides a real meaning to the notion of hawkish–dovish ideological dimension.

In the present study, we used an indirect measure to assess the dependent variables. The participants were exposed to four photographs of daily situations that are relevant to conflictive life in Israel and portray Jewish and Palestinian characters. Three of the pictures contained aggressive interactions between the Jewish and Palestinian characters. The participants were asked to make up a story that explains what happens in each picture. This indirect assessment and procedure is based on the projective test called Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). The purpose of the TAT is to reveal personality conflicts, motives, emotions, and inclinations of which the examinees are not necessarily aware or whose existence they are not willing to admit (Murray 1971). In the TAT, the examinees are presented with a series of pictures that contain human characters (alone or in an interaction) for whom they are asked to make up stories. The pictures in the TAT allow the examinees to bring up contents and experiences from their internal world and attribute them to the characters in the picture, and therefore, this is indirect measurement. The rationale of the test is based on people's propensity to interpret human situations in accordance with their past experience and in line with their present beliefs (Murray 1971).

The Research Hypotheses

First, we hypothesized that participants of different ethos groups will have a different assessment of the aggressiveness that may be observed in the photos. Participants with a high ethos of conflict will view the Palestinians as more aggressive than participants with a low ethos of conflict. The next hypothesis is concerned with blaming attribution to the Palestinian and Jewish characters. Here, the hypothesis was that participants who blamed Palestinian characters would score higher on ethos of conflict than those who blamed both sides or Jews only.

In addition, we hypothesized that participants with a high ethos of conflict will view the Jewish characters as less aggressive than participants with a low ethos of conflict. Another hypothesis of this study concerns participants' attributions of aggressive behaviors to Palestinian and Jewish characters. This part of the study

refers to Weiner (1986, 1990), who examined people's attributions of their own or others' behaviors. Weiner defined two dimensions of attributions that are of interest for the present study: *locus of control* and *stability*. With regard to the first dimension, the attribution of behavior to internal factors is termed *internal locus of control*. In such attributions, behaviors are perceived as originating from the characteristics of the person (e.g., ability, traits). In contrast, external factors are associated with external locus of control (e.g., circumstances or context).

Weiner's second dimension refers to the question of whether the behavior changes over time or stays constant. On one end of the continuum are attributions that view behavior as stable and as emanating from factors such as personality traits. On the other end of the continuum are attributions that see behavior as temporary (unstable) and as deriving from factors such as circumstances or luck. Our hypothesis was that participants who attribute perceived aggressiveness in Palestinian characters to internal reasons (i.e., disposition) will score higher on the ethos-of-conflict scale compared to those who attribute it to external reasons (i.e., circumstances). Furthermore, we hypothesized that participants who attribute the Jewish characters' perceived aggressiveness to external reasons will score higher on ethos of conflict compared to those who attribute it to internal reasons. Regarding the dimension of stability, we hypothesized that participants who attribute the perceived aggressiveness of the Jewish characters to unstable causes will score higher on the ethos-of-conflict scale than those who attribute it to stable causes. A further hypothesis was that participants who attribute the perceived aggressiveness of the Palestinian characters to stable causes will score higher on ethos of conflict than those who attribute them to unstable causes.

The last hypothesis concerns stereotyping of both Jews and Arabs: those who characterize the perceived Palestinian figures with negative traits, we assumed, would score higher on ethos of conflict than those who characterize them with neutral or positive traits Also, we hypothesized that participants who attribute positive traits to perceived Jewish characters would score higher on ethos of conflict compared to those who attribute neutral or negative traits to perceived Jewish characters.

Method

Participants

Seventy-nine people participated in the research, all Israeli Jews; forty-one of them were women and thirty-eight were men, aged 20 to 34 (average age 24.6). All participants were BA students or graduates (with an average of 13.5 years of education) who were personally recruited to the study. Forty of the participants (twenty women and twenty men) defined their political orientation as "left," thirty-six (nineteen women and seventeen men) stated their orientation as "right," and three (two women and one man) claimed they were "center."

Instruments

A questionnaire of the ethos of conflict. This study used a shortened questionnaire for the assessment of the ethos of conflict constructed by Wolf (2004) on the basis a questionnaire developed by Zafran (2002). The original questionnaire consists of forty-eight statements that represent the eight themes of societal beliefs that compose the ethos of conflict. The present questionnaire includes sixteen items, with two items addressing each one of the eight themes. Half of them were formulated according to a ''dovish'' orientation and half consistent with a ''hawkish'' orientation. The responses were given on a scale that ranges from 1 (*definitely disagree*) to 5 (*definitely agree*). The following is an example of a ''dovish'' item: ''The fact that at the time of the Jews' return to the land of Israel an Arab population was residing in it speaks to the right of the Palestinians to establish their homeland in Israel.'' The following is an example for a ''hawkish'' item: ''The exclusive right of the Jews to the land of Israel derives from its being their historical homeland.'' The reliability of the shortened questionnaire is $\alpha = .90$ (Wolf 2004).

Photos presenting states of encounter. The examination of the dependent variables was conducted with four photographs of situations depicting an interaction between Jewish and Palestinian characters. The selected photographs were taken from Internet news sites and photograph databases. The following criteria were used in selecting them: the photographs are sufficiently ambiguous to allow participants of different ethos groups to interpret them differently, in line with their attitudes; nevertheless, the photographs are clear enough for the participants to consider the depicted interactions as interactions between Jews and Palestinians, based on the following features: in three of the photographs, the participants will see an aggressive interaction between Jews and Palestinians; a fourth photograph was chosen as a neutral picture (without an aggressive interaction). In the first photograph, the Jew appears to be more aggressive than the Palestinian (we name this photograph ''Jewish aggression''); in the second photograph, the Palestinian appears more aggressive (we name this photograph ''Palestinian aggression''); and in the third photograph, it is unclear who is more aggressive (we name this photograph ''aggression from both sides''). In the fourth photograph, a Jew and a Palestinian walk side by side with no sign of violence toward each other (we name this photograph ''without aggression''). To guarantee that the participants perceive the photographs in the manner hypothesized, a preliminary study was conducted in which seven participants holding different political viewpoints were presented with the selected photographs. All the participants evaluated the aggressor in the four pictures in accordance with the initial assumptions of the investigators.

Following the format of the TAT, the photographs served as stimuli, and the participants were asked to tell a story about each of them. The instructions were as follows: ''Now you will be presented with a number of photographs. For each

photograph, you are asked to make up a story. Please describe what is taking place in the photograph and what led to this event. What caused each person in the photograph to act in this fashion, and what characterizes each person? You can make up any story you wish.'' These instructions are based on the *Thematic Apperception Test Manual* (Murray 1971). Later, the participants were also asked, "To what extent did the Israeli person or persons act aggressively?" The response was given on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). An identical question was asked regarding the Palestinian persons. The same questions were asked after the display of each photograph. Finally, the participants were asked to provide their gender, age, years of education, and level of religiosity and to indicate their political orientation on a 7-degree scale (*extreme right, right, moderate right, center, moderate left, left, extreme left*).

Procedure

The research was conducted individually, and the testing of each participant lasted between thirty and forty minutes. The study was introduced as an investigation of social perceptions of various situations taken from life in Israel. The participants were told that there were no correct or incorrect answers, and they were asked to give the answers that suited them best. Also, the participants were told that the study was conducted anonymously and that their responses would be kept confidential and would be used for research purposes only.

The participants were shown four photographs, one after the other. The photographs were presented in two reverse orders to prevent a bias in the results because of the effect of the sequence of photographs. When the first photograph was presented, participants were instructed to make up and write a story for what was happening in the photograph. The experimenter read the instructions to the participants, and then they were handed typed instructions to assist them in writing the story. Next, the second photograph was similarly presented and so forth, until the fourth photograph. After they had finished writing, participants were told that they had been taking part in an experiment whose purpose was to explore the relationship between ideological stances and the interpretation of social situations. The study was carried out between October 2004 and April 2005.

Data Coding

The stories obtained at the end of the experiment were content analyzed by two coders. On the basis of the stories, the following variables were generated:

Who is to be blamed for the violence: Jew, Palestinian, both, or no one is to be blamed.
Attributed cause for Jewish aggression: on locus-of-control dimension (internal cause, external cause, or a combination of both) and on stability dimension (stable cause, unstable cause, or a combination of both).

Table 1
Means of Level of Aggression, by Photo (1–4)
and Nationality (Jews vs. Palestinians)

Photo	Jews		Palestinians		Difference
1 (Jewish aggression)	4.14[d]	(0.92)	2.30[b]	(1.17)	P < J
2 (Palestinian aggression)	1.76[b]	(1.00)	3.39[c]	(1.28)	J < P
3 (aggression of both)	3.39[c]	(1.28)	4.16[c]	(0.93)	J < P
4 (no aggression)	1.05[a]	(0.32)	1.05[a]	(0.27)	—

Note: Means within a column having the same superscript letter are not significantly different at $p = .05$ by the Bonferroni correction.

Attributed cause for Palestinian aggression: on locus-of-control dimension (internal cause, external cause, or a combination of both) and on stability dimension (stable cause, unstable cause, or a combination of both).
Stereotyping of the Jewish characters: positive, neutral, negative, or delegitimization.
Stereotyping of the Palestinian characters: positive, neutral, negative, or delegitimization.

The agreement between the two coders was very high. In 92 percent of the cases, they agreed on the classification. Where there was disagreement, the coders discussed the discrepancies and agreed on the classification.

Results

Examination of Photos' Presentations (Manipulations of the Situations)

First, we checked for the order effect of the shown photos. No differences were found between the two orders regarding the level of violence attributed to the Jews or the Palestinians for all four photos. Then we validated whether the four photos were evaluated in accordance with the intended presentations of the situations. Comparisons between the evaluation of aggression level for Jewish and Palestinian figures in the four photos were tested using 4×2 MANOVA. The results showed a Photo effect, $F(3, 74) = 430.19$, $p < .001$, and a Nationality effect, $F(1, 76) = 8.63$, $p < .01$. We also found a Photo by Nationality interaction, $F(3, 74) = 121.55$, $p < .001$. The results of post hoc means comparisons (Bonferroni) shown in Table 1 demonstrate that the manipulations were successful and the figures in the photos were perceived differently in accordance with the research design. Jewish attributed aggression was evaluated as being very strongly present in Photo 1, then in Photo 3, then in Photo 2, and the lowest in Photo 4. Evaluations of perceived Palestinian aggression were also in accordance with the research design: it was evaluated as highest in Photos 3 and 2, the next level of aggression was evaluated in Photo 1, and the lowest aggression was evaluated in Photo 4. Furthermore, while aggression was

Figure 1
Scatter Diagram of Political Orientation and Ethos Score
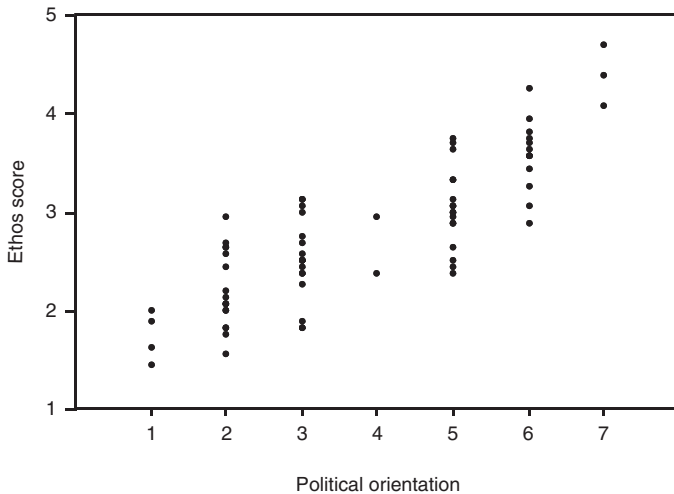
evaluated as higher for the Jewish figure than for the Palestinian in Photo 1, in Photo 2, the aggression of the Palestinian was evaluated as higher than for the Jew.

Scores on the ethos questionnaire were between 1 and 5, and high scores indicate high ethos of conflict. The relation between ethos scores and political orientation is shown in Figure 1. The correlation between the two variables is high, $r(79) = .848$, $p < .001$, indicating that while high ethos score corresponds to rightist political orientation, low ethos score corresponds to leftist political orientation.[3] This result suggests that only one measure should be used, and we decided to use the ethos scores as the most appropriate measure of ethos of conflict.

Relations between Aggression Evaluation and Background Variables

Correlations between ethos scores and aggression evaluation regarding Jewish identified figures were negative for Photos 1, 2, and 3 ($r[79] = -.444, -.301,$ and $-.358$, respectively; all $p < .01$). The correlations between ethos scores and evaluation of aggression of Palestinian identified figures were positive for Photos 1 and 2 ($r[79] = .422$, $p < .01$, and $r[79] = .280$, $p < .05$, respectively). To examine the relationship between aggression evaluation regarding the persons in the photo and the ethos scores, while controlling for background variables, regressions were conducted for each photo predicting the aggression evaluation by ethos score, religion,

Table 2
Regressions of Jews' Aggression and Palestinians'
Aggression on Ethos Score, Religion, and Gender

Variable	Jews' Aggression		Palestinians' Aggression	
	Beta	*t*	Beta	*t*
Photo 1				
Ethos score	−.274	−1.86	.578	3.93**
Religion	−.284	−1.80	−.268	−1.70
Gender	.145	1.28	.265	2.35*
Photo 2				
Ethos score	−.395	−2.47*	.284	1.76
Religion	.109	0.63	−.013	−0.07
Gender	.076	0.62	.094	0.76
Photo 3				
Ethos score	−.464	−2.96**	.031	0.19
Religion	.165	0.97	.105	0.58
Gender	−.070	−0.58	−.052	−0.41

Note: The coding of gender is 1 = man, 2 = woman.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

and gender. Table 2 shows that after controlling for ethos score, religion had no effect on aggression evaluation. Gender explained only aggression evaluation of the Palestinian-identified persons in Photo 1: women attributed higher aggression than men. In the cases in which ethos score was significant for the prediction of Jewish aggression (Photos 2 and 3), higher ethos score predicted lower evaluation of Jewish aggression. In Photo 1, higher ethos score predicted higher evaluation of Palestinian aggression. Regarding Jewish aggression in Photo 1, the nonsignificant relation to ethos score in the regression is because of the control for religion, which positively correlates with ethos score ($r[79] = .709$, $p < .01$). Regarding Photo 4, none of the independent variables had a significant effect either on the evaluation of Jewish aggression or on the evaluation of Palestinian aggression. Thus, the regressions of the data for this photo are not presented in Table 2.

Relations between Ethos Scores and Dependent Variables

As noted, for each photo, blame for aggression, causes for Jewish and for Palestinian aggression, and participants' stereotypes were coded. To examine the relations between ethos scores and the above variables, ANOVAs of ethos scores on each of the first three variables were conducted, for Photos 1, 2, and 3, regarding Jews and Palestinians. ANOVAs for Photo 4 were not conducted because of very low frequencies in all the categories. The results are presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Table 3
Means of Ethos Scores and Results of ANOVAs
Comparing Categories of Blame for Aggression

Photo	Jews	Palestinians	Both	None	df	F
1	1.96[a] (10)	3.12[b] (38)	2.62[ab] (13)	2.74[b] (12)	3, 69	9.16**
2	2.29 (6)	2.98 (41)	2.60 (20)	2.62 (11)	3, 74	2.88*
3	2.36[a] (22)	3.22[b] (17)	2.78[ab] (20)	3.19[b] (6)	3, 61	6.42**

Note: The number of participants who mentioned the category is in parentheses. Means within a row having the same superscript letter are not significantly different at $p = .05$ (Tukey).
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

Table 4
Means of Ethos Scores and Results of ANOVAs
Comparing Locus of Control Categories

Photo	Internal	External	Both	df	F
Causes for Jews' aggression					
1	1.93[a] (6)	2.94[b] (54)	2.44[a] (13)	2, 70	8.48**
2	—	2.78 (35)	2.44 (7)	1, 40	1.46
3	2.54[a] (28)	3.58[b] (12)	2.68[a] (17)	2, 54	13.78**
Causes for Palestinians' aggression					
1	3.33[b] (28)	2.52[a] (9)	2.62[a] (13)	2, 47	10.67**
2	3.10[b] (26)	2.50[a] (28)	2.80[ab] (23)	2, 74	5.67**
3	3.34[b] (22)	2.56[a] (27)	2.54[a] (17)	2, 63	12.61**

Note: The number of participants who mentioned the category is in parentheses. Means within a row having the same superscript letter are not significantly different at $p = .05$ (Tukey).
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

The means were compared using Tukey's multiple comparisons ($\alpha = .05$). We see that for most of the analyzed variables, there were significant differences in ethos scores.

Regarding the attribution of blame, the analyses showed (Table 3) that in Photos 1 and 3, ethos scores of participants blaming Jews were lower than of those blaming the Palestinians or of those who did not blame anyone. The analysis of Photo 2 showed that although there were significant differences between the four groups, we could not detect any specific post hoc difference. As an illustration of responses, we can show an example of a hawkish response blaming the Palestinian characters ("One of the Arabs began to curse and hit the soldier … in reaction, the soldier is aiming his gun") and of a dovish response blaming the Jewish characters ("The settlers approached the house of the Palestinians, who only wanted to protect their home.")

Table 5
Means of Ethos Scores and Results of
ANOVAs Comparing Stability Categories

Photo	Stable	Unstable	Both	df	F
Causes for Jews' aggression					
1	2.29 (6)	2.85 (62)	2.34 (5)	2, 70	2.75
2	2.76 (6)	2.75 (32)	2.39 (4)	2, 39	0.51
3	2.62[a] (27)	3.16[b] (22)	2.45[a] (8)	2, 54	5.57**
Causes for Palestinians' aggression					
1	3.56[b] (9)	2.74[a] (32)	3.36[b] (9)	2, 42	8.79**
2	3.28[b] (18)	2.51[a] (43)	2.95[b] (15)	2, 73	10.87**
3	3.06 (16)	2.69 (41)	2.96 (9)	2, 63	1.89

Note: The number of participants who mentioned the category is in parentheses. Means within a row having the same superscript letter are not significantly different at $p = .05$ (Tukey).
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

Table 4 also shows significant differences, in accordance with our predictions. With regard to the causes of Jewish attributed violence, the analysis of the locus of control in Photo 1 and Photo 3 showed that ethos scores of participants attributing Jewish violence to external causes were higher than of those attributing Jewish violence to internal causes or both (internal and external) causes. Almost opposite results were found in the analysis of the attribution of Palestinian violence: in this case, in Photos 1, 2 and 3, ethos scores of participants attributing Palestinian violence to internal causes were higher than of those attributing it to external causes. Furthermore, in Photos 1 and 3, the participants attributing Palestinian violence to both causes had ethos scores similar to those of participants who attributed Palestinian violence to external causes.

Regarding the causal stability (Table 5) of Jewish violence, we found a significant difference only in Photo 3: the ethos scores of participants who attributed unstable causes to Jews were higher than of participants who attributed either stable or both causes (stable and unstable) to Jews. Regarding attribution of stability for Palestinian violence, in Photos 1 and 2, ethos scores of participants who attributed stable or both causes (stable and unstable) to Palestinians were higher than of those participants who attributed unstable causes.

The following are some examples of statements to illustrate the categorized responses. A hawkish internal attribution to Palestinian aggressiveness was "They like to fight, this is their way of living, otherwise life is meaningless to them." A dovish internal attribution to the soldier's aggressiveness was "The soldiers clash intentionally with the Palestinians and they harass the innocent." A dovish external attribution to the Palestinians' aggressiveness was "The soldier doesn't let the Palestinian pass through the barrier . . . he must bring medicine to his wife . . .

Table 6
Spearman Correlations between Ethos Scores
and Jews' and Palestinians' Stereotype

Photo	Jews' Stereotype	Palestinians' Stereotype
1	.395**	−.414**
2	.307**	−.413**
3	.313**	−.196
4	.119	−.190

Note: Higher stereotype value corresponds to a more positive evaluation.
*p < .05; **p < .01.

he swears at the soldier.'' A hawkish attribution of stable characteristics to the Palestinians' aggressiveness was ''It's always like that . . . the Arabs are willing to do anything for money.'' A dovish attribution of unstable causes was ''An attempt of settlers to destroy and expropriate property resulted in a reaction from the Palestinian side.'' A dovish attribution of stable causes to Jewish aggressiveness was ''Zionist settlers who believe in Greater Israel think that all belongs to them and that the Arabs have no right to be here.'' A hawkish attribution of stable characteristics to Jewish aggressiveness was ''The soldier senses fear and a lot of tension facing the massive crowd and thus acts with violence.''

Correlations between ethos scores and stereotype were conducted using Spearman rank correlations (see Table 6), after recoding stereotype as 1 = *delegitimization*, 2 = *negative*, 3 = *neutral*, and 4 = *positive*. With regard to Photos 1, 2, and 3, higher ethos scores related to more positive stereotyping of Jews. In Photos 1 and 2, higher ethos scores related to more negative stereotyping of the Palestinians. The following are some illustrations to indicate the range of responses. A statement reflecting hawkish positive stereotyping of the Jewish soldiers was ''The merciful Israelis are compelled to wear war clothes, contrary to their nature.'' A statement reflecting a dovish negative stereotyping of the soldier was ''This soldier was embittered because he stayed in the military base over the weekend and decided to take his anger out on them . . . the Arab was killed despite his attempts to cool down the soldier . . . the army commented that they would investigate the circumstances of the incident, but obviously this will not happen.'' A statement reflecting a hawkish delegitimizing view of the Palestinians was ''They behave this way because they have no feelings left, only the lowest feelings, like those of animals.'' A statement reflecting a dovish view of the Palestinians was ''The Arabs are frustrated due to years of occupation.''

The frequencies with which participants gave answers belonging in the above-presented categories are shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5. Table 3 indicates that the majority blamed the Palestinians in Photos 1 and 2, but in Photo 3, the frequencies of blaming are similar. Regarding locus of control (Table 4), participants'

responses interacted with the photos in the following way: in Photo 1, most participants attributed external causes to the Jews and internal causes to the Palestinians; in Photo 2, most participants attributed external causes to the Jews, but no difference was found with regard to cause attribution to the Palestinians; and in Photo 3, the majority of the participants attributed internal causes to the Jews, but no difference was found with regard to cause attribution to the Palestinians. Very few participants made any attributions in telling stories about Photo 4. The stability categories (Table 5) reveal that the majority of the participants attributed unstable causes to both Jewish as well as Palestinian violence in most of the photos.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine how holding the ethos of conflict influences a person's perception and interpretation of social reality. The assumption of this research is that in the Israeli case, the ethos of conflict functions as an ideology and constitutes a prism for interpretation and evaluation of the reality in the context of intractable conflict (D. Bar-Tal 1998, 2000, 2007a). This approach goes beyond the measures of self-categorization or of limited measures of opinions to a broad and comprehensive assessment of worldview regarding the intractable conflict. This study provides a first empirical support to the understanding that the ideological view of the conflict has a considerable effect on information processing. In general, the study's findings confirmed the main hypothesis: significant relations were found between levels of participants' ethos of conflict and the manner in which they interpreted social situations that involved violent interactions between Jews and Palestinians. Following is a brief description of the findings referring to the specific hypotheses, followed by an in-depth discussion.

The findings showed that in general, Jewish Israeli participants with a high ethos of conflict evaluated their fellow Jews as less aggressive and Palestinians as more aggressive compared to those whose ethos of conflict was at a lower level. Also, in line with our hypothesis, participants who apportioned blame to the Palestinians only or those who did not blame anyone for the violence shown in the photographs in which a Jew seemed to be violent (Photos 1 and 3) displayed a higher level of the ethos of conflict than those participants who blamed the Jews. Regarding Photo 2 (which portrays violent Palestinians), the ethos of conflict does not contribute to the differentiation between the attributed blame. In this case, even those with a low ethos of conflict find it difficult to blame only the Jews. Another aspect of this variable can be seen in the frequencies of the participants' blaming Jews and Palestinians for the aggression. We can see that in Photos 1 and 2, relatively few blamed the Jews. This means that although the ethos causes different perceptions, the judgment also depends on context. In certain situations, especially ones that transmit relatively unequivocal information, there is agreement among the Jews about the nature of the

event. Jews who are less ideologically oriented identify the situation in line with the information that it projects.

In addition, our hypotheses regarding the attributions of aggressiveness were confirmed: participants who attributed internal and stable causes to Palestinians scored higher on the ethos of conflict than those who attributed external and unstable causes. Concomitantly, participants who attributed internal and stable causes to Jews held a lower level of the ethos of conflict than those who attributed external and unstable causes to them.

Finally, in line with the hypotheses, participants with a higher ethos of conflict attributed more negative qualities to the Palestinians and more positive qualities to the Jews than participants with a lower ethos of conflict. These findings are strongly connected with the findings presented above. The negative stereotype of Palestinians that characterized those with a higher ethos of conflict is related to their high attributions of aggressiveness to Palestinians, along with internal and stable causality for the latter. In addition, this negative view explains the blame attributions to the Palestinians. The positive stereotyping of the Jews explains the attributions of a low level of aggressiveness to Jews by these participants as well as external and unstable attributions to their aggressiveness.

These results are in line with the findings of other studies that explored interpretations and judgments of violent behavior by participants with different group affiliation or contrasting opinions. In a study conducted by Eshel and Moran (1996), Jewish and Arab participants were asked to interpret and evaluate violent situations that involve Jewish and Arab characters: the shooting of Arab demonstrators by Israeli Jews or of Jewish demonstrators by Arabs. The findings revealed that each side identified more with own-group members in the story, whether they were the demonstrators or the shooters of the demonstrators, and they accordingly evaluated the situation. For example, Jewish participants tended to be more preoccupied with the question of whether it was possible to view the shooting as justified self-defense, while Arabs were more concerned with the legitimization of the presence of Jewish Israelis at the place of the incident (in an Arab town). The researchers concluded that when referring to emotionally charged violent events, there are fundamental differences in the way people interpret and value events. The current study reinforces these findings and suggests, in addition, that the disparities in the perception and judgment may be created on the basis of an ideological background and contents even between groups belonging to the same Israeli Jewish society.

A study about differences within one society conducted by Vala, Monteiro, and Leyens (1988) investigated how participants with radical versus conservative ideologies explain and judge violence. The participants were asked to explain a violent act performed by either a police officer or a criminal toward an unknown victim under unclear circumstances. Participants were asked to choose between internal (personality) attributions and external (environmental) attributions and to rank the degree of violence, responsibility, and severity of the potential penalty. In line with

the hypothesis, it was found that radical and conservative participants used different types of attributions to explain the violent act and judged the act differently. The researchers concluded that the ideology of the individuals influences the attributions that they make (external or internal), the manner in which they interpret the violent act (extent of legitimization of the act, responsibility of the doer), as well as their judgment (deciding about the severity of potential penalty). Also, Howard and Pike (1986) showed that individuals tend to be influenced by ideologies in attributing blame. Similar results were found recently by Skitka et al. (2002), who tested the relationship between ideology, motivation, and attributions. The research found that participants corrected their attributions (personal or environmental attribution) according to their ideology when the level of cognitive load allowed for it. What emerges from these studies is that ideology motivates to make attributions in line with the ideology.

The findings of the present study extend the reported evidence about the influence of ideology on perception, interpretation, attribution, and evaluation to the domain of ethos of conflict, which, in our view, functions as other ideologies. The findings integrate well with the existing theoretical framework and the research literature on the ethos of the Israeli–Arab conflict and the societal beliefs that constitute it (see D. Bar-Tal 2007a). They validate the assumption of the present study that the ethos of conflict serves as a prism for the interpretation of reality by the individuals who hold it.

Participants with a high level of the ethos of conflict who explained violent Jewish–Palestinian situations by ascribing causality, attributing blame, and stereotyping seem to display mainly four themes of the ethos: societal beliefs regarding the justness of their own Israeli goals, societal beliefs that refer to delegitimization of Arabs, societal beliefs regarding positive self-image of Jews, and societal beliefs that are linked with the collective self-perception of victimhood. As we explained in the introduction, at the root of the intractable conflict lies a contradiction between the goals that the involved sides strive to achieve. Each of the parties develops societal beliefs regarding the rightness of its goals, which assume that the opponent's goals are unjust. This theme is accompanied by beliefs that present the rival negatively as being intransigent, violent, and responsible for the outbreak and continuation of the conflict as well as by beliefs that present the in-group in a positive light as being moral and humane and view it as the victim of the conflict (D. Bar-Tal 1998, 2007a, 2007b). The use of delegitimization helps the society to pass the responsibility for the outbreak and prolongation of the conflict to the opposing group. But in fact, these beliefs serve also at the same time as justification for the violence and destruction that the society inflicts on the adversary. Delegitimization involves an important ideological supposition that explains events and acts that occur in the process of the conflict and motivate the society to act against the rival (D. Bar-Tal 1990).

Thus, during the years of the Jewish–Arab conflict, Jewish Israelis developed beliefs that deny Arabs' humaneness. Israeli Jews have perceived the Arabs as primitive, bloodthirsty, murderous, cruel, and vicious. In addition, Arabs were

perceived to be guilty for the eruption of all military confrontations and for the failure to find a peaceful solution through dialogue (see a review in D. Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005; Oren and D. Bar-Tal 2007). During the period of the Oslo agreements, the delegitimization somewhat decreased, but the Al-Aqsa Intifada that broke out in 2000 brought it back (D. Bar-Tal and Sharvit 2007). In many of the studies, it was well established that self-categorized hawks ascribe more negative stereotypes to Arabs than do doves (e.g., Arian 1995; Y. Bar-Tal, Bar-Tal, and Cohen-Hendeles 2006).

This view is complemented by the positive self-image of the Jewish society and its prevailing self-image as the victim in the conflict (D. Bar-Tal 2007a). These beliefs lead those with a high ethos of conflict to deny their own responsibility for the violence, put all the blame on the Palestinian side, and even justify aggression toward them. A salient example appeared in a response one of our participants wrote, claiming that "the merciful Israeli soldiers are compelled to wear battle dress, contrary to their nature."

Returning to the discussion about the ideological mode of thinking, it has been suggested that this mode is characterized by the inability to endure ambiguity or uncertainty as well as by mental rigidity, closure, and dogmatism (Rokeach 1960; Sidanius 1985; Sorrentino and Roney 2000). People holding an ideology tend to perceive ambiguous situations as a source of threat and have difficulty thinking flexibly. Ideologies provide certain answers and dissolve ambiguity. However, as has been indicated, this is not achieved without a cost, which is manifested through selective search for information, perceptual biasing and distortion of the social reality, hasty decision making, and simplistic and stereotypical thinking (Jost et al. 2003). As suggested by Hogg (2005), the ideologies that tend to develop under extreme uncertainty (such as intractable conflict) are conservative ideologies that resist change. According to Zafran (2002), there is a significant positive relationship between dogmatic thinking and adherence to the societal beliefs that compose the ethos of conflict. The findings of the current study support these findings, and we propose that holding a societal beliefs system of the ethos of conflict involves closure and rigid thinking.

It is possible to view the ethos of conflict as an ideology: the ethos indeed assists the psychological adaptation of those who hold it. It provides explanations and certainties and aids in constructing an epistemic basis for the conflict. However, it necessarily leads to perpetual cognitive selectivity, biases, and distortion. As a consequence, espousing this ethos leads to the preservation of the conflict and its perpetuation. This process is circular: the ethos of conflict lessens the uncertainty but creates perceptual distortion that leads to the escalation of the conflict, in the fashion of self-fulfilling prophecy.

We suggest that in essence, the ethos of conflict serves as a major sociopsychological barrier to conflict resolution and peace process (D. Bar-Tal and Halperin forthcoming). It perpetuates the conflict by means of creating a one-sided, black

and white, and very narrow position to illuminate the nature and the background of the conflict, its continuation, and its solution. Recent evidence (Sharvit 2008) suggests that the ethos of conflict remains in the psychological repertoire of most Israeli Jews, that it is automatically activated in the face of relevant stimuli, and that its activation increases in response to stress and affects the processing of novel information. The evidence for automatic activation and high accessibility of the ethos of conflict suggests that it might become a default mode of operation for Israeli Jews and affect their decisions and behaviors in the conflict in ways that are not always readily apparent. We assume that society members who are dominated by ethos of conflict as an ideology have great difficulty to embark on a peace process, because the latter necessitates considerable change of societal beliefs of this ethos (D. Bar-Tal and Bennink 2004). Without such change, societies involved in intractable conflict are doomed to more bloodshed and misery.

Notes

1. Societal beliefs are defined as shared cognitions by the society members that address themes and issues with which the society members are particularly occupied and that contribute to their sense of uniqueness (D. Bar-Tal 2000).

2. In this review, we shall also include studies of the realm of stereotypes that demonstrate the influences of a closed system of beliefs on perceptual and cognitive processes.

3. We would like to note that the high correlation is unusual, as in other studies it was much lower (e.g., Gopher 2006). Also we found that the scores of ethos conflict, which provide a continuous scaling, yield much higher correlations with a number of dependent variables (such as, for example, attributed violence to Arabs) than self-categorization about political orientation.

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