Evaluating the Communication between Groups in Dispute: Equality in Contact Interventions between Jews and Arabs in Israel

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This article examines a new approach for evaluating the process of interactive conflict-resolution interventions by focusing on the quality of communication between the groups in dispute. This approach assesses the extent to which contact interventions, aimed at improving relations between sides in dispute, actually promote among their participants relationships, behaviors, and interactions that fulfill standards of social justice, equality, and fairness. Creating equality in communication models and reinforces values of mutual respect and tolerance. Thus, establishing symmetrical communication can be especially important for many interventions conducted to resolve conflicts marked by unequal distribution of power. One such asymmetrical conflict is the one between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority in Israel. This article describes a study that applies our process-evaluation approach to assess equality and social justice in planned contact interventions between Israeli Jews and Arabs by measuring the degree to which members of the two groups contributed equally to the communication between them. Finally, the article presents guidelines, derived from this and other similar studies, for establishing communication equality in other planned contact interventions.

This article presents and discusses a new approach for process evaluation of interactive conflict-resolution interventions focusing on the quality

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of communication between groups in dispute. This approach examines the extent to which planned contact interventions, aimed at improving relations between sides in dispute, also promote relationships, behaviors, and interactions that fulfill standards of social justice, equality, and fairness. This process-evaluation approach relates directly the “here and now” of the interaction process itself and emphasizes the equal representation of both groups in the communication that occurs within the contact intervention.

The creation of equality in communication reinforces values of mutual respect and tolerance. Thus, establishing such equality can be important in conflict resolution interventions that are conducted in the many asymmetrical disputes that occur around the world and that are characterized by disparity of resources and representation between the involved parties. Such an asymmetrical conflict is the one between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority in Israel. A major focus of the tension between these two communities is an unequal distribution of resources where the Jewish majority has more control of and more access to political, economic, and social resources (Rouhana and Korper 1997). To help bridge this gap, negotiation scholars and others have promoted and organized many types of intergroup workshops over the years. (See Kelman 1995 for a discussion of the problem-solving workshops between Israeli Jews and non-Israeli Palestinians that he initiated and has been conducting for the past three decades.) The overarching goals of such interventions were to reduce the tensions between Jews and Arabs and to build more stable, equitable, and socially just relations.

This article describes a study that applies our process-evaluation approach to assess equality and social justice in communication between Jews and Arabs in such contact interventions. Our approach is to measure the degree to which members of both groups contribute equally to the communication between them. Further, this article offers some guidelines for fostering equal communication in these kinds of planned contact interventions. Finally, it examines how these guidelines for symmetry in communication could be applied to a wide range of conflict-resolution interventions.

Existing Approaches to the Study of Planned Contact Interventions

Before describing this new process-evaluation approach and its application in more detail, existing approaches to the study of contact interventions that process-evaluation paradigm derives from and builds upon will be reviewed briefly. A major theory on how intergroup relations can be improved through planned contact interventions is the contact hypothesis, proposed by Gordon Allport (1954). According to this theory, intergroup contact can, under certain conditions, effectively reduce hostility and prejudice, and also create more positive attitudes between groups. These conditions include:
1. individualized and non-superficial contact between members of both groups;

2. symmetry or equal status between members of both groups within the contact situation;

3. intergroup cooperation to achieve a common goal; and

4. institutional support by authority figures.

Several studies were conducted to investigate the predictive ability of the contact hypothesis (Jackson 1993, Pettigrew 1998). Most compared the attitudes of participants before and after intergroup contact, in an attempt to determine if contact that meets the required conditions is indeed effective in improving intergroup relations (Gaertner, Dovidio, and Bachman 1997). These studies were primarily conducted under laboratory conditions, where contact between artificial groups was created especially for the research. Results were mixed. Some supported the predictions of the contact hypothesis and others refuted them (Jackson 1993, Mackie and Smith 1998).

Not only were the findings somewhat equivocal, but attitude research based on the contact hypothesis has been beset by several additional problems relevant to the present discussion. First, it has been difficult to determine whether the intergroup contact has clearly met the conditions defined by the contact hypothesis for an effective encounter, and, indeed, there has been ambiguity about what the necessary and sufficient conditions actually would be for such an encounter. Several scholars proposed additional points to those defined by Allport (1954). Scholars in this field continue to debate what constitutes an exhaustive list of conditions that are necessary and sufficient for holding an effective intergroup encounter (Pettigrew 1998).

Second, research in social psychology suggests a tenuous connection between attitudes and actual behavior. Therefore, attitude change following intergroup contact does not necessarily indicate that a change in the behavior of all members of one group toward the members of the other group will follow, but instead may simply be a reporting of more positive attitudes at an abstract and interpersonal level (McCauley 2002).

Finally, because the laboratory studies relied on artificial groups created especially for the research — groups that have no real history of conflict or long-range and “natural” group identity — there is the problem of external validity. It is difficult to project conclusions from these studies to encounters between real ethnic or national groups with their own histories, group identities, and relationship dynamics rooted in those histories.

Thus, the criticisms just summarized point to a fundamental problem of research based on the contact hypothesis: Most of these studies relate to the outcome rather than the process of the encounter (D’Estree et al. 2001, Fisher 1997, Pettigrew 1998). Because there has been no clear
description or conceptualization of what has taken place during the encounters themselves — of the actual interactions and communications between the groups — it has been very difficult to draw unequivocal conclusions about changes that have resulted from the encounters. This shortcoming is particularly pertinent with regard to contacts between natural groups, either ethnic or national, which have tension or hostility between them. In laboratory conditions one can control the encounter and claim uniform procedures in the intergroup contact, but during encounters between natural groups, a variety of processes take place and diverse issues emerge that must be understood in order to comprehend the results of the encounter (Maoz 2000).

In light of this criticism, studies of intergroup contact interventions in Israel that have been conducted since the 1990s have developed with the goal of analyzing and describing the process itself and not just to arrive at a quantifiable examination of outcomes. What’s more, these approaches take into account the sociopolitical context in which the encounter takes place. This trend is salient in the work of several researchers. (For example, see Bar and Bargal 1995, Bar-Tal 2002, Bar-On 1999, Maoz 2000, and Salomon 2002.)

However, these studies do not provide clear criteria for evaluating the quality of the communication between groups in the contact situation. Still missing are methods and measures that can help us both identify a contact process that works well and spot and define a problematic one that needs improvement (D’Estree et al. 2001). The process-evaluation approach presented here aims to fill this gap by integrating the two approaches described above. The first seeks to evaluate the outcome of contact interventions by establishing clear criteria of attitude change. The second focuses on the process of the intergroup encounter while taking into account the broader sociopolitical context.

Thus, the process-oriented approach expands on these two existing approaches while combining their strengths. So, like the process-oriented approach, our method focuses on the process of the intergroup encounter and on the communication within it while taking into account the sociopolitical context in which the contact intervention is conducted. Second, like an outcome-measurement-focused approach, our process-evaluation approach defines clear criteria for the evaluation of this process.

A New Process — Evaluation Approach

The approach to evaluating contact interventions presented here is based on the “here and now” of the contact process itself and is directly related to the quality of communication between the two groups participating in the encounter. This process approach presumes that, for the contact to be effective in promoting intergroup understanding and relations, the communication within it must meet certain criteria or minimal conditions. A
key principle in evaluating the quality of communication in the encounter concerns the degree to which there is symmetrical communication in which the involved parties participate equally — as opposed to a situation in which one party is very dominant in the interaction within the encounter while the other one hardly participates.

Symmetrical communication can reinforce mutual respect and tolerance. Thus, increasing the quality of communication by creating equality in representation of involved parties is especially important in many disputes, large and small, around the world that are marked by disparity of resource and representation.

In the classical literature that discusses the contact hypothesis, intergroup symmetry is regarded as a critical factor in the ability of the encounter to improve the relations between the groups (Allport 1954, Pettigrew 1998). Studies and interventions conducted according to the contact hypothesis have defined symmetry as requiring that there be an equal number of participants from each group and that the participants come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. However, these studies did not explore other aspects of symmetry, such as the power dynamics of the groups during the meeting.

More recent literature that deals specifically with encounters between Jews and Arabs in Israel does address the issues of power relations, control, and dominance during and around the encounter (Abu-Nimer 1999, Maoz 2000, Rouhana and Korper 1997). These studies, however, do not clearly define criteria for symmetry and dominance and do not include a systematic evaluation of symmetry-dominance in communication between the participants in the encounter.

The described research defines a criterion for evaluating symmetry in the encounter process that relates to the degree to which there is equal participation of the involved groups — in this case Israeli Jews and Arabs — in the communication within the encounter. This criterion makes it possible to compare contact interventions and to evaluate their suitability for attaining improvement in intergroup relations (Maoz 2000).

The Sociopolitical Context of Asymmetrical Conflict
Establishing and ensuring symmetry and equality within a contact intervention is especially important given the sociopolitical context in which many of these interventions are conducted. Like many conflict-resolution efforts, contact interventions are conducted in the context of an asymmetrical dispute. Relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel are often characterized by inequality. Jews generally have more access to resources, power, and senior positions and also have a greater role in establishing the cultural, religious, and language norms of the country (Rouhana and Korper 1997). In this context, a planned Jewish–Arab encounter can be seen as an experiment of a somewhat paradoxical nature, the goal of which
is to create within the encounter an internal reality of symmetry and cooperation within an external sociopolitical reality having significant elements of conflict and asymmetry (Maoz 2004).

In light of these asymmetrical relations, an encounter based on symmetry between Jews and Arabs could help participants to improve their attitudes toward each other and learn about more egalitarian relations. On the other hand, a meeting that replicates the external asymmetry could serve to reinforce existing negative attitudes and relations in which one group dominates.

Moreover, a symmetrical meeting represents a more equitable distribution of the resources available to the participants based on principles of procedural and distributive justice (Tyler and Smith 1998). In an interactive conflict-resolution intervention such as the planned Jewish–Arab encounter — which has a defined goal of educating for values such as mutual respect, justice, and equality of rights — it is important to actually apply these principles as part of the process of the conflict resolution itself. Otherwise, the resolution process runs the risk of embodying a contradictory principle: glaring injustice in the distribution of resources.

Finally, a symmetrical contact intervention, one in which there is a similar level of participation of both parties, is also responsive to the needs, abilities, and preferences of its different participants and thus more likely to stimulate the interest, motivation, and involvement of both groups and also influence their attitudes. On the other hand, an intervention that is responsive primarily to the needs of only one group will often be marked by the less dominant group’s disinterest, low motivation, and lack of involvement, which could reduce the impact of the interventions on its members. In more extreme cases, a dramatic lack of symmetry can lead to resistance and hostility toward the encounter by the group that is underrepresented.

Defining Criteria for Symmetrical Active Participation

“Active participation” in the study described here is measured by the number and length of each person’s utterances, the degree to which participants of each group determine the conversational subject and shape the character of the activity, and the degree to which participants of each group take part in the exercises or games that are part of the activity.

A numerical scale was created for rating the degree of symmetry of active participation between Jews and Arabs in the encounter meetings (Maoz 2004). On this scale, “1” represents maximum Jewish dominance in participation, or 90 to 100 percent of the active participation was dominated by Jews, while “9” represents maximum Arab dominance, with 90 to 100 percent of the active participation dominated by Arabs. A rating of “5” reflects symmetrical participation of Jews and Arabs, with the proportion of active Arab participation falling between 40 to 60 percent of all
the participation in the encounter. The next section will describe the study that was conducted on Jewish–Arab encounters in Israel, using these above evaluation criteria.

**Description of a Study Applying the Process-Evaluation Approach to Jewish–Arab Encounters**

**Overview**
The objective of the study was to apply the new process-evaluation approach described here to evaluate the quality of intergroup communication in Jewish–Arab workshops, focusing on symmetry and equality between Jews and Arabs in active participation in the interaction. The research population consisted of forty-seven encounter programs between Jews and Arabs that took place in Israel in the years 1999 to 2000 and were supported by the Abraham Fund for Jewish–Arab coexistence, a major supporter of coexistence activities in Israel.

**Description of the Studied Programs**
Generally, the goal of these programs was to improve intergroup relations and to promote social justice, equality, and mutual respect. They typically included a series of intergroup meetings between Jews and Arabs held at a frequency that varied between weekly and monthly and extended from three months to one year. The meetings were generally facilitated by one Jewish and one Arab facilitator and were conducted in the framework of educational and communal institutions and organizations (Maoz 2004). These programs were targeted at different age groups including preschool children, elementary school students, high school students, and adults (Maoz 2004). (See Table One for distribution of programs by target age groups.) The programs varied in content and emphases, but they generally included a component of mutual acquaintance (getting to know each other), a component of intergroup dialogue (on the relations between the sides, on cultural similarities and differences, etc.), and a component of joint activities (i.e., social activities, joint tasks including problem-solving ones, etc.).

Generally, these programs could be categorized, according to the classification offered by Roger Fisher (1997), as belonging to a specific category within interactive conflict-resolution work: process-promoting educational or communal interventions aimed at improving relationships at the grassroots level.

**Data Collection**
Encounter meetings were observed and assessed for the degree of symmetry between Jews and Arabs in active participation in the interaction and rated on the scales of 1 to 9 described previously. The research team comprised the author (principle researcher) and two research assistants, one Arab and one Jewish.
Findings: Equality in Active Participation

Table One presents the ratings on the measure of symmetrical active participation of Jewish and Arab participants by target age group. (This is a partial presentation, for illustrative purposes, of a specific analysis within a larger research program. A more detailed and extensive description of this research, including additional variables and analyses, appears in Maoz 2004.) Because of the low number of cases falling into these categories, ratings 1 through 3 were combined (medium to very great Jewish dominance) and ratings 7 through 9 were also combined (medium to very great Arab dominance) for each measure of symmetry given below.

The table shows that symmetry or near symmetry (a slight dominance of one nationality) was found (a rating of 4, 5, or 6) in active participation for the clear majority of encounter programs (approximately 87 percent) (Maoz 2004). Indeed, a decisive majority of the programs (about 66 percent) were rated as absolutely symmetrical in terms of the active participation of Jewish and Arab participants. In a very small number of programs, there was medium to great dominance in active participation of either the Jewish or Arab participants. In three programs, or 6 percent, the Arab participants were dominant, and in the same number of programs the Jewish participants were dominant (Maoz 2004). The data further indicate that there was no marked difference in symmetry between programs targeted at different age groups. At each of the age categories, the majority of programs were rated as fully symmetrical or nearly so.

Achieving Symmetry

How was symmetrical communication achieved? What were the facilitation practices and group processes through which it was established? The descriptive data from our observations of the Jewish–Arab meetings revealed that many of these encounters were highly structured by the facilitators to ensure an equal division of participation between the Jewish and Arab participants. They accomplished this by using practices that emphasized the importance of equality as a central guiding principle in the activity. Thus, speaking turns as well as turns in participating in the games or skits conducted were alternated and equally divided between Arabs and Jews. In projects where teams worked together on joint tasks, the project directors and facilitators emphasized that a “good” work process is one that enables each participant to contribute — not a process that is led and performed only by a few dominant participants. In most cases, once the facilitators explained to participants the norm of equality and the practices reinforcing it, the participants seemed to see the logic and agreed easily to participate according to these norms. Jewish and Arab facilitators later told researchers that equal participation and equal division of power and control in the group were essential to the effectiveness of the encounter. And indeed, in many of the programs where symmetrical communication
### Table One
Rating of Symmetrical Active Participation of Participants, by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating of symmetrical participation</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Preschool Children</th>
<th>Grades 1–4</th>
<th>Grades 5–8</th>
<th>Grades 9–12</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Total Row</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symmetry</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium to very great Arab dominance</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
clearly occurred, both Jewish and Arab participants expressed satisfaction at this aspect of the interaction.

Our observations of encounter interventions as well as interviews with organizers, facilitators, and participants led to the development of the guidelines detailed below for achieving symmetrical communication. These are divided into three categories: (1) input: guidelines for considerations to be taken when planning and preparing the intervention; (2) process: points to consider during the facilitation of the group process; and (3) output: guidelines for summarizing and trying to learn from the experience of the encounter. Although these guidelines were generated in the context of Jewish–Arab encounters, they can also be applicable in many other contexts and forms of intergroup interventions that are also characterized by asymmetrical communication.

**Input**
The following considerations should be taken when planning and preparing the intergroup intervention, recruiting participants, building the facilitation team, and determining the form of the intervention and the major procedures and contents it will include.

1. The encounter should include an equal number of members from each of the participating groups. Groups should not differ radically from each other with regard to the age or socioeconomic and education levels of their participants. The male-to-female ratio of each group should also be roughly equivalent because, in mixed settings, men often tend to speak more than women. Thus, if one group in the encounter is composed mainly of men and the other mainly of women, this may adversely affect the chances for symmetrical communication.

2. The intervention should be led by at least two facilitators, one representing each participating group (i.e., one Arab and one Jewish facilitator/one white and one black facilitator), who are as similar as possible in age, degree of professional experience, status in the organization, and facilitating ability. Having one facilitator who is much more experienced, older, or of a higher status in the organization than the other can lead to — and model — asymmetrical facilitation, where the facilitator representing one of the involved groups is more dominant than the other. (See also Process, guideline number 2 below.)

3. The intervention should focus on a topic that is interesting, relevant, and similarly familiar to both groups. For example, previous studies of Jewish–Arab encounters (Maoz 2000) found that “hot topics,” directly related to the conflict between the sides, such as equality between Jews and Arabs in Israel and the 1948 war and its results highly interested Jewish and Arab participants who consequently became very involved in discussions and activities related to these topics. On the other hand, interventions focused on “cold topics” not directly related to the conflict such as
cognitive skills of children or pedagogy in classroom teaching, or those focused only on the similarities between the groups — and not on conflict and disagreement — interested and involved the Jews in the discussions and work to a greater degree than they did the Arab participants. This pattern is typical of majority–minority relations where the minority group members are primarily interested in discussing conflict, injustice, discrimination, or other issues related to social change and are much less interested in discussing neutral topics unrelated to the conflict. This should be taken into consideration when planning the intervention and the topics to be discussed.

4. The work process used should be one that members of both groups would feel equally comfortable with and not one that is suitable for one group but not for the other. For example, highly psychodynamic group facilitation methods can be suitable for more westernized groups whose members feel comfortable and familiar with these approaches. However, such approaches may cause discomfort, objections, and ultimately noninvolvement in those less familiar or comfortable with them.

5. The language used in the encounter should be one that members of both groups are equally proficient in. Conducting the group process in a language that one group is much more proficient in than the other may cause asymmetry in communication. Furthermore, this may also serve to construct the reality of the intervention as representing one groups’ identity and culture while marginalizing the others’. (The interventions described here were conducted in Hebrew, which was a limitation on their ability to reach full equality in communication.)

**Process**

The following points should be taken into account during the facilitation of the group process.

1. Facilitators should emphasize to the group the importance of equality and symmetry in communication and introduce as well as model in the interaction norms of equal turn-taking in conversations and equal contributions to group work. For example, in projects involving work on shared tasks, it is important to emphasize that joint cooperative work, in which each member has a contribution, is as important as quick completion of the task. Otherwise, the work may be taken over by a few dominant “efficient” participants while others are left uninvolved (Maoz 2000).

2. Facilitators should be aware of processes of domination and control in the group and discuss with the groups strategies, tactics, and practices in which domination and control is manifested. The group can discuss how some members achieve domination and control within the group and expand the discussion to identify and also discuss methods of coping with domination and control in “real life” — that is, in situations and interactions outside of the facilitated group process.
3. Facilitators should try to identify dominant personalities who could overpower the process and make these participants aware of this possibility, while setting boundaries for their interaction by clarifying that it is unacceptable to interrupt another speaker, to make degrading and silencing remarks to others, or to repeatedly carry on lengthy speeches that take up other participants’ speaking time. They should also try to identify the more passive and quiet participants who would rarely participate and try to create conditions for increasing their participation. Uncovering dynamics of control and domination in the group communication and placing limits on the interaction of overly dominant participants while encouraging the quieter ones to participate, when done early in the process, can markedly increase the chances for symmetrical communication.

4. In addition to intergroup meetings that involve the two participating groups, the facilitated group process should also include single-group sessions in which each group meets separately with the facilitator for that group. Single-group sessions can serve as protected settings where it is easier to reflect on and discuss domination, marginalization, and difficulties in the group process and also to work on coping strategies. Single-group sessions can also provide an opportunity to try to better understand the more passive as well as the over-dominant participants, give support to participants, and help them set boundaries when needed.

**Output**

The following are guidelines for learning from the actual experience of the encounter. This learning can then be used to inform the planning, building, and facilitation of future interventions.

1. Organizers, facilitators, and evaluators of the intervention should talk to participants, both during the process and after it is completed, to try to learn from participants’ experiences and views of the interaction. Specifically, they should try and learn which practices and events in the life of the group were subjectively experienced by participants as equality, as domination, as marginality, or as “mutuality,” which is defined here as two groups working together, responding, cooperating, and holding a two-way conversation. Often participants view and experience inequality and dominance in the group communication very differently than do facilitators, organizers, and researchers. Thus, understanding their different views enables communication that is experienced by those involved in it as equally representing different people and parts of the group.

2. Organizers, facilitators, and evaluators of interventions should document their own reflections both during the group process and after its completion. Their notes, as well as notes and protocols written by participants, transcripts, and recordings of the intervention offer the opportunity to learn about the best and worst moments in the process in terms of equality in participation and about the conditions that lead to or encourage dominance of one group — or of the members of one group — over
the other. Often, looking at the group process in retrospect through several different lenses can reveal patterns (both broader and more specific) of domination, symmetry, and mutuality in the group communication that can be difficult or impossible to identify while the process is still ongoing.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article describes a new approach for process evaluation of interactive conflict-resolution interventions that focuses on the quality of communication between groups in dispute. This approach examines the extent to which planned contact interventions, aimed at improving relations between sides in dispute, actually fulfill standards of social justice, equality, and fairness by measuring the degree to which there is equal representation of the participating parties in the communication within the contact intervention.

Symmetrical communication can reinforce mutual respect and tolerance. Thus, increasing the quality of communication by creating equality in participation of the parties in it is especially important in the many disputes that are marked by disparity of resource and representation. Therefore, equality and social justice in the distribution of communication resources (speaking time, for example) can be considered a valid and relevant criterion for evaluating many different forms of contact interventions — with different subgoals and emphases — within the general category of process-promoting intergroup interventions (Fisher 1997) aimed at improving the relations between sides in an asymmetrical dispute.

Moreover, our process-evaluation paradigm, as well as the “symmetry in communication” criterion it defines, can serve as a basic and important tool for performing formative evaluation that informs and improves practice in a wide range of conflict-resolution activities around the world that are based on communication between the contending parties. “Symmetry in communication” as defined here, is an easily measured and straightforward criterion that enables “real-time” evaluation of intervention processes while they are being conducted as well as identification of interactions that qualify as “good enough” (Ross 2000a) or problematic. Thus, this criterion can be used by researchers, organizers, and facilitators of such interventions for formative evaluation and for improving the quality of communication by fostering equal participation of different parties (i.e., men and women, different racial and ethnic groups, different occupational status participants) in it. There are different devices used by intervention specialists to create symmetrical communication in the encounter by equalizing the quantity of contribution of different status groups (Maoz 2004). In this article, specific guidelines were presented, based on experience gathered in intergroup encounter interventions, for achieving more symmetrical communication. Although these guidelines were generated in the context of Jewish–Arab encounters, they could also be applied...
in many other contexts and forms of process-promoting intergroup contact interventions that are also characterized by asymmetrical communication.

The findings of the evaluation study described here show that most programs were symmetrical in terms of active participation of their participants in the intergroup encounters (Maoz 2004), with no notable difference between different target age groups. These results are encouraging as they imply that Jewish–Arab encounters fulfilled process-evaluation standards of high symmetry and equality in participation.

**Suggestions for Additional Study**

In order to capture other aspects of symmetry, equity, and social justice in intervention processes or procedures, future studies should define and apply additional measures of equality and symmetry in the encounter intervention. One such measure could describe the contents of what happens or is said in the encounter, not just the quantity of participation of each group. Another possibility is a structural measure of the extent to which there is symmetrical or equal representation of members of each group in the different levels of the staff of the organization conducting the encounter program. It would also be useful to apply the equality in communication criteria described here, as well as other process- and outcome-evaluation criteria, in order to get a more complete picture of the effect of these interventions. Such criteria should include external measures that deal with the issue of transfer of effects (Ross 2000b) that are unaddressed by the present internal evaluation criterion.

The encounter programs evaluated in this study can be categorized, according to the classification offered by Roger Fisher (1997) as belonging to a specific category within interactive conflict-resolution work: process-promoting educational or communal interventions aimed at improving relationships at the grassroots level. (For a related classification of interventions aimed at relationship change, see D’Estree et al. 2001.) The question is: can the criterion of equality in the communication as well as the guidelines for achieving such equality described herein be applied and used in other types of interactive conflict-resolution interventions?

Fisher (1997) emphasizes the role of constructive intergroup interaction in different types of interactive conflict-resolution interventions. He writes that the interactive conflict-resolution method assumes that only authentic, open, constructive, cooperative, and effective face-to-face communication among participants will lead to the realization of the goals of understanding, mutual recognition, respect, and improved relations between the sides. Thus, the achievement of equal representation of members of both groups in the interaction process is arguably relevant to interactive conflict-resolution activities more broadly, as well as for the specific category of activities described in this article. Consequently, the
principle of equality in interaction should be considered by mediators and negotiators in different conflict-resolution processes — the tools described in this article can support this process of monitoring and enforcing equality in the human interactions that form the basis of all negotiations, mediations, and conflict-resolution interventions.

NOTES

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1. The study presented here is a partial description of a specific analysis within a larger research program conducted by the author. For a more extensive and detailed description of this research, including other variables and analyses, see Maoz (2004).

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