Reconciliation in Intractable Conflicts:

The Informative Process Model and Collective Angst

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PSB3E-BTHO: Honours Bachelor Thesis

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August 10, 2025

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Abstract

Persistent intergroup conflicts often challenge peace-making initiatives, enduring in part due to individuals' entrenched conflict-related societal beliefs such as the justness of their own group's cause and the dehumanisation of the opposing group. To this end, the Informative Process Model (IPM) has been proposed to target these beliefs and increase participants' support peaceful conflict resolution, specifically negotiations. This thesis presents a secondary analysis of Rosler and colleagues' (2022) seminal IPM intervention, measuring the intervention's effects on 483 Israeli-Jewish participants' attitudes towards specific policies. Extending the original model, results indicated a modest increase in support for conciliatory policies and decrease in support for aggressive policies. Additionally, the role of collective angst was explored. A concern for their country's future was found to increase participants' acceptance of the intervention's messages. Despite smaller than anticipated effect sizes, the findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the IPM and highlight the need for future research to focus on a better understanding of the IPM's mechanisms and participants' contextual factors in order to better leverage a move towards reconciliation and resolution in intractable conflicts.

Keywords: intractable conflict, reconciliation, attitude change, collective angst, Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Reconciliation in Intractable Conflicts:

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Armed conflicts are becoming increasingly prevalent, with evidence suggesting an increase in duration and relapse rate of conflicts across the world (Fiedler et al., 2016; International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021; von Einsiedel et al., 2017). Conflicts that concluded in 1990 lasted an average of 16 years; however, by 2020 this average has grown to 30 years. Additionally, more than 50% of conflicts occurring after 1990 were recurrences of prior conflicts (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021). When considering civil wars, this effect becomes even more pronounced, with only 5% of civil wars in 2013 having experienced no conflict in the preceding twenty years. In contrast, the vast majority had experienced previous civil wars or a protracted civil war throughout this period (28% and 43%, respectively) (Fiedler et al., 2016). Many of the conflicts that make up these statistics, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Syrian civil war, and the conflict in Afghanistan, can be labelled intractable. This refers to conflicts that resist attempts to resolve or alter them, as they are engaged in destructive rather than constructive ways. Further, the central issues seem to be of a zero-sum nature and of great meaning to the participants' identities (Coleman, 2003; Kriesberg, 2005)—namely, "questions of life and death, right and wrong, justice and injustice, war and peace" (Coleman, 2003, p. 3). The parties participating in them become invested in the conflict not only due to economic restructuring and the development of their military for instance, but also psychologically in terms of emotions, patterns of thinking, and ideologies. Correspondingly, the parties become extremely polarised and tend to resort to antagonistic communication and violence (Coleman, 2003; Kriesberg, 2005; Kriesberg, 1995 as cited in Bar-Tal, 1998). Clearly, the increases in conflict duration and relapse rate stress the difficulty of achieving true, sustainable reconciliation due to the increasing complexity of

conflicts. This thesis aims to address one contributing factor, namely conflict-sustaining societal beliefs and their impact on individuals' support for negotiations and specific policies.

The Ethos of Conflict and the Informative Process Model

As research in the Israeli-Palestinian context has shown, individuals involved in intractable conflicts often take on certain shared worldviews justifying the continuation of the conflict to protect themselves from the psychological burdens of being involved in intense and lengthy conflicts (Bar-Tal et al., 1998; Bar-Tal et al., 2012; Bar-Tal, 2007). Such societal beliefs represent a consensus formed by the members of the society in question (Orr et al., 2000) and are additionally actively promoted, such as through educational materials, political speeches, and the press, as well as censoring or sanctioning opposing voices (Bar-Tal, 1998; Bar-Tal et al., 2012; Bar-Tal, 2007). Furthermore, they are systemically salient: as a topic of great importance to the society, they are frequently subject to discussion in public and private, provide the groundwork for decisions both private and political, and are incorporated into the community's culture (Bar-Tal, 1998).

In contrast to societal beliefs in other contexts, beliefs relevant to intractable intergroup conflicts, which were first operationalised as a coherent worldview by Bar-Tal and colleagues (2012) as the ethos of conflict (EOC), are defined amongst others by their uncompromising and extreme nature, their conception as unconditionally credible and their highly prevalent use (Bar-Tal et al., 1998). Furthermore, they serve a particular purpose: in representing a status-quo preserving "ideological dogma" (Bar-Tal et al., 2012, p. 41), they strengthen the community's social identity (Bar-Tal, 1998; Bar-Tal et al., 2012; Oren et al., 2004) and provide the members of societies engaging in these conflicts with a way to cope with and make meaning out of the conflict (Bar-Tal et al., 2012; Mumby, 1989). Simultaneously, however, they contribute to the continuation of the conflict by supporting biased perceptions of events which affirm conflict-sustaining beliefs. These, in turn, justify

conflict-sustaining behaviours, which in turn justify the original beliefs, thereby creating a self-reinforcing cycle (Bar-Tal et al., 2012).

To directly address the perpetuation of conflicts through the EOC, the informative process model (IPM) was first suggested by Rosler and colleagues (2022) in the Israeli-Palestinian context to intervene by "unfreezing" the involved individuals' conflict attitudes and making them more receptive to reconciliation. Concretely, this involves having participants watch images of combatants of past intractable conflicts with quotes targeting a narrative theme central to the EOC. The videos explain why such conflict attitudes are taken on, normalising this as a common feature of all intractable conflicts. The concluding moments of the videos then note how the conflict ended, thereby implying that such attitudes perpetuate conflicts and are deeply harmful to the community. Further, participants are supposed to gain the impression that such beliefs can be replaced with more constructive peace-supporting narratives while equally fulfilling the psychological needs of individuals in conflicts (Rosler et al., 2022; Rosler et al., 2024). Subsequent research showed that IPM-based interventions are able to induce gradual change by eliciting feelings of acceptance and ambivalence, that is, supporting participants to formulate more reasons for and against changing their current attitudes—participants move from pre-contemplation to contemplation (see Ben-Ezer et al., 2024; Rosler et al., 2024). This, in turn, increases participants' support for future negotiations to work towards a truce or peace (Rosler et al., 2022), although specific mechanisms remain unexplored. The studies have tested various formats for IPM-interventions, such as four videos targeting the justness and dehumanisation narratives separately and in combination (see Rosler et al., 2022) or two videos targeting dehumanisation and ingroup victimhood (see Ben-Ezer et al., 2024). These interventions have also been tested using both past (see Ben-Ezer et al., 2024; Rosler et al., 2022) and ongoing intractable conflicts (see Ben-Ezer et al., 2024) as examples. On the other hand, the IPM-intervention's investigated outcomes have so

far been limited to participants' reconsideration of their conflict attitudes (see Ben-Ezer et al., 2024) and their support for future negotiations to achieve a truce or peace (see Rosler et al., 2022), both of which seem removed from more concrete behavioural intentions or changes. As such, it is unclear whether the IPM's effects are truly tangible. Lastly, all research on the IPM to date has been conducted on Israeli-Jewish participants in Hebrew.

The current study focuses on an IPM-intervention involving two central conflict-sustaining beliefs, namely justness of the own group's cause and dehumanisation of one's opponent, and further explores the role collective angst may play in this context.

Justness of One's Cause

As mentioned above, the participants of intractable conflicts perceive the central issues in intractable conflicts to be of a zero-sum nature, that is, mutually exclusive (Bar-Tal, 1998). This understanding contributes to the conviction in the justness of one's own cause. If one group's claim is rightful, logic argues that the opponent's claims must be illegitimate and unjust. Clearly, this theme does not only apply to the parties' goals, but, as for all EOC-relevant beliefs, also provides a narrative to understand the cause of the conflict and its perpetuation, namely, that the conflict originated in the absolute necessity of defending the own legitimate claim and that justice must be reinstated by achieving victory (Bar-Tal, 1998). Additionally, the moral certainty represented in the justness theme is associated with intolerance of attitudes differing from one's own (Baumgartner & Morgan, 2019) and reduced willingness to compromise (Delton et al., 2020). Consequently, targeting this belief might support reconciliation by promoting more nuanced, empathetic views of the opponent and the conflict.

Dehumanisation of the Opponent

In conflicts, belief in one's opponent's lack of humanity supplies a justification for the continuation of the conflict, the opponent's violence, and one's own atrocities through moral

exclusion ("when individuals or groups are perceived as outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply" (Opotow, 1990, p. 1)) and moral disengagement (selective disengagement from moral self-sanctions) (Bandura, 1999; Bar-Tal, 1989; Elizur & Yishay-Krien, 2009; Hammack et al., 2011; Opotow, 1990; Succi, 2021). Consequently, targeting the dehumanisation narrative may decrease tensions through supporting empathy and inclusive ethics.

Furthermore, conflict contexts are often associated with meta-dehumanisation—the belief that one's opponent dehumanises the own group—which in turn motivates one to dehumanise the opponent as well (Kteily et al., 2016). In contrast, perceptions of meta-humanisation—the belief that the outgroup recognises the ingroup's humanity—are associated with lower levels of dehumanisation and more conciliatory attitudes (Borinca et al., 2024). Therefore, if targeting the dehumanisation narrative can help individuals understand that perceived dehumanisation by the outgroup may not stem from deliberate malice but the broader psychological factors common to conflicts, this could reduce meta-dehumanisation perceptions and, in turn, the motivation to dehumanise the opponent, as well as promote more constructive intergroup attitudes.

Collective Angst

As a type of anxiety focused on one's group through feelings of group membership and regarding one's consideration of the group's future (non)existence, collective angst is a relevant area of study for the IPM. Groups in conflict experience extinction threat, which can spark a sense of angst, therefore motivating group members to work towards their group's continued existence (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). These responses can be labelled constructive or destructive. Constructive behaviours are more likely to be offered when the group members anticipate efficacy and might include supporting group organisations, working on imparting the group's cultural heritage to subsequent generations, and being more

open to negotiation with their opposing group (Halperin et al., 2013; Wohl et al., 2010). Conversely, destructive behaviours might include opposition to the own group's heterogeneity and support for paths of action that may potentially harm the opposing group, and may be more likely to be performed if the members feel vulnerable or hold conservative values (Halperin et al., 2013; Roccas & Amit, 2011; Wohl et al., 2014; Wohl et al., 2012). Consequently, depending on other background factors, a sense of collective angst may enhance or counteract the IPM's effects.

The Current Study

This thesis is a secondary analysis of data originally collected in 2019 for the second of three studies by Rosler and colleagues (2022), which investigated the IPM-intervention's effect on support for negotiations as serially mediated by deliberation of new information and acceptance of the IPM's messages. This thesis' analysis introduces variables that were collected but not examined in the initial publication.

Hypotheses

The study builds on past research on the IPM-intervention by investigating whether it also affects participants' support of conciliatory (H1a) and aggressive (H1b) policies as mediated by acceptance of the IPM's messages. While the effect on support for negotiations has been investigated (see Ben-Ezer et al., 2025; Rosler et al., 2022), policy support represents a more applied and specific outcome variable which will enhance the practical understanding of the IPM. As such, while participants might in principle become motivated to support ending the conflict and starting negotiations, they might not be willing to truly change their conflict strategies.

Secondly, the understanding of participant characteristics' influence on the IPM is investigated by adding their sense of collective angst to the model. While this dimension was measured as part of Rosler and colleagues' (2022) study, it was not included in the analysis

nor in other prior research on the IPM. As such, potential moderating effects of angst on the mediation models' direct and indirect relationships are explored (H2a, H2b). Additionally, the role of angst is explored within the original context of the mediation model involving support for negotiations (H2c).

Method

Participants

The Israeli-Jewish participants were sampled through the online polling company Midgam in August 2019. After excluding participants who had not completed the survey and/or failed the attention checks, the final sample was composed of 483 participants ($M_{birthyear}$ = 1979.99, $SD_{birthyear}$ = 13.10; 50.3% women), of whom 224 were randomly assigned to the IPM condition and 259 to the control.

Procedure and Materials

The participants watched four succeeding 40 s clips in Hebrew. Those in the IPM condition were shown quotes by individuals whose identity and ethnicity had been concealed and had experienced a violent conflict. Due to narratives established in Israeli society, participants drew parallels and were led to believe the speakers were Israeli and referring to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The quotes focused on two selected narrative themes of the EOC, namely the ingroup's justness (e.g., "If we hadn't believed in the justness of our cause, we would have been annihilated!") and outgroup dehumanisation ("When they murdered women and children, we said they were beasts. […] If we didn't think this way, we wouldn't have survived!"). As the videos concluded, the speakers were revealed to have been part of unrelated past conflicts, namely the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the Algerian War of Independence, the Basque conflict, and the Guatemalan Civil War. Lastly, each clip briefly noted how the conflict had concluded (see clips at https://youtu.be/PDeshDBVT9g). The

clips shown to participants in the control condition depicted four arbitrary commercials of similar length to the intervention.

Finally, the participants completed four attention checks relevant to their respective condition (e.g., "Which conflict did the first video address?", "What drink appears in the third commercial?") and completed the rest of the survey, which included the following measures amongst others (to access the complete questionnaire and dataset, see https://osf.io/qr6jn/?view_only=f0dedb3658a24e9c86f351e9ec03a4fc).

Measures

Collective Angst

Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements related to their confidence in Israel's future on a 6-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). These five items ($\alpha = 0.82$) were primarily adapted from Wohl and colleagues' (2010) scale of collective angst (e.g., "I feel confident that Israel will survive any threat"; "I feel anxiety about the future of the State of Israel"). The fifth and last item ("I feel that Israel is under real threat, and I fear for its existence") additionally targeted participants' anticipated continuity of Israel and was adapted from the same paper's scale of extinction threat.

Acceptance of IPM-based messages

To measure whether participants indeed believed in the intervention's messages, they were asked to indicate their level of agreement with three statements ($\alpha = 0.71$) on a 6-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*): "Perceptions of the opponent as inhuman develop in light of the experiences of nations in conflict", "Perceptions that people in conflict construct about themselves and their opponents increase violence", and "It is possible to end conflicts if we change perceptions of the conflict and opponent". A fourth reverse-coded item ("Perceptions that people in conflict construct about themselves and their

opponents do not affect the course of the conflict") was excluded as it lowered the scale's reliability to $\alpha = 0.61$.

Support for Negotiations

To assess participants' support for negotiations to achieve a truce or peace, they were asked to rate to which extent they supported or opposed negotiations with certain parties aimed at certain outcomes ($\alpha = 0.86$), specifically "negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority aimed at achieving a full peace agreement between the parties", "negotiations between Israel and Hamas aimed at achieving a long-term truce agreement between the parties", and "negotiations between Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab states based on the Arab Initiative aimed at a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians and all Arab states". A fourth item ("a peace agreement to end the conflict and to establish a Palestinian state, while ensuring guarantees from the U.S. and Arab countries for its existence") was excluded from Rosler et al.'s (2022) original analysis for unknown reasons but included in the current study. These items were measured on a 6-point scale from 1 (*strongly opposed*) to 6 (*very supportive*).

Agreement with Conciliatory Policies & Aggressive Policies

Lastly, participants indicated their level of agreement with specific conflict strategies on a 6-point scale from 1 (*strongly opposed*) to 6 (*very supportive*). The two conciliatory policies ($\alpha = 0.80$) participants judged were "In order to calm the situation, Israel should freeze construction of settlements beyond the Green Line" and "In order to calm the situation, Israel should significantly ease the freedom of movement of Palestinians in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]". Regarding the aggressive policies ($\alpha = 0.82$), participants rated to which extent they supported or opposed the following four measures "as the security situation escalates": "Launching a major IDF operation in Judea and Samaria in order to pre-empt Palestinian terror acts", "Carrying out targeted assassinations of senior Hamas and Islamic

Jihad figures, even if innocent people are harmed", "Responding by destroying entire neighbourhoods from which Palestinian terrorists emerged", and "Reoccupying the Gaza Strip and overthrowing the Hamas regime".

Results

IPM and Policy Support

First, a series of one-way ANOVAs aimed to establish whether the IPM-intervention influenced support for the pursuit of specific strategies, an aspect not examined in the primary analysis, in addition to its previously demonstrated influences on participants' general support for negotiation with the opponent (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). Participants who had experienced the intervention did not differ significantly from those in the control group in their support for conciliatory policies (F (1, 481) = 0.20, p = .656) or aggressive policies (F (1, 481) = 0.59, p = .443). Additionally, the intervention did not seem to have a significant effect on participants' support for negotiation (F (1, 481) = 1.77, p = .184). Nevertheless, the following analyses, which were conceptually dependent on the intervention's success, were conducted as planned on the basis of Rosler and colleagues' (2022) success with the same sample.

Policy & Negotiation Support as Mediated by Acceptance of IPM-Based Messages

Subsequently, Hayes PROCESS macro model 4 was used to assess the proposed simple mediation models in which acceptance of the intervention's messages mediated the intervention's effects on policy and negotiation support (see Table 1 for descriptives).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variables by Condition

Condition	Support for Conciliatory Policies		Support for Aggressive Policies		Support for Negotiation		Acceptance of IPM-Based Messages	
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***
Control	2.71	1.55	3.91	1.39	3.57	1.46	3.75	1.18
IPM	2.78	1.52	4.01	1.38	3.74	1.46	3.98	1.23

The mediation model predicting support for conciliatory policies explained little variance in participants' support for conciliatory policies ($R^2 = 0.12$, F (2, 480) = 31.36, $p <$ .001). Despite the intervention not being able to directly influence participants' support for conciliatory policies ($B = –0.04$, $SE = 0.13$, t (480) = –0.29, $p = .768$), the inclusion of the mediator allowed the indirect effect on conciliatory policy support to be positively statistically significant ($B = 0.10$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.21]), estimated by bootstrapping with 5000 iterations. Additionally, the intervention significantly increased message acceptance ($B = 0.23$, $SE = 0.11$, t (480) = 2.14, $p = .033$), which in turn significantly increased participants' support for conciliatory policies ($B = 0.43$, $SE = 0.05$, t (480) = 7.91, $p < .001$).

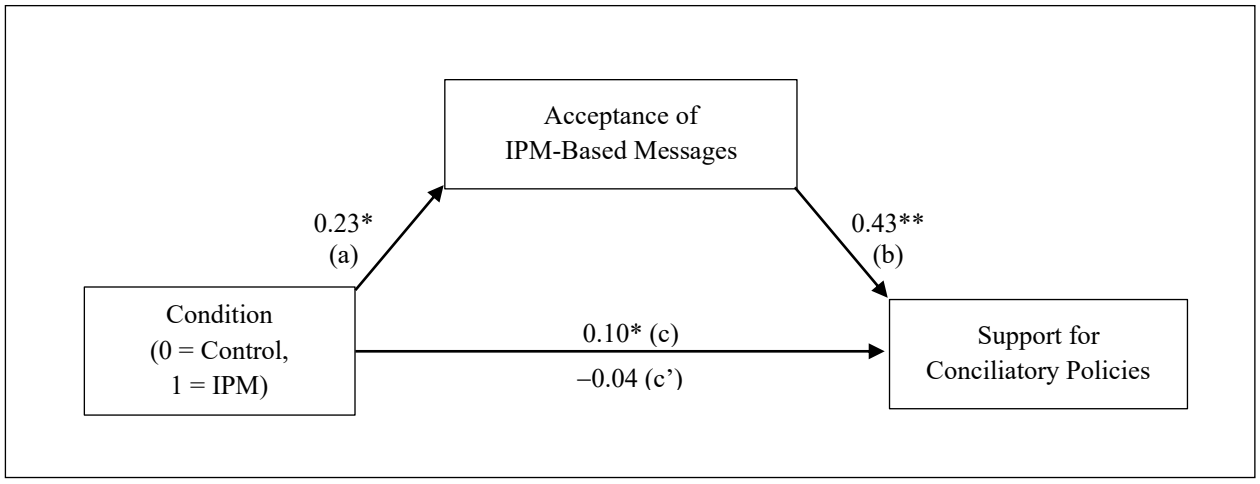
Regarding the mediation model predicting participants' support for aggressive policies, the analysis revealed it to account for little variance in support for aggressive policies ($R^2 = 0.02$, F (2, 480) = 5.47, $p = .005$). As with the previous model, the intervention's direct influence failed to reach significance ($B = 0.14$, $SE = 0.13$, t (480) = 1.08, $p = .280$); however, it indirectly exerted a significantly negative effect on aggressive policy support ($B = –0.04$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI = [–0.09, –0.0003]). The IPM-intervention significantly increased message acceptance ($B = 0.23$, $SE = 0.11$, t (480) = 2.14, $p = .033$),

which in turn significantly decreased participants' support for aggressive policies (B = –0.17, SE = 0.05, t (480) = –3.21, p < .001).

This analysis revealed the final mediation model to explain moderate amounts of variance in negotiation support (R^2 = 0.24, F (2, 480) = 77.75, p < .001). The results further indicated that, similarly to the previous analyses, while the intervention's direct effect on support for negotiation was non-significant (B = 0.04, SE = 0.12, t (480) = 0.32, p = .748), the intervention's effect on participants' messages acceptance (B = 0.23, SE = 0.11, t (480) = 2.14, p < .033) and the effect of message acceptance on support for negotiation (B = 0.56, SE = 0.05, t (480) = 12.38, p < .001) were significantly positive. Finally, the intervention's indirect effect on support for negotiation was revealed to be significant (B = 0.14, SE = 0.07, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.27]).

Figure 1

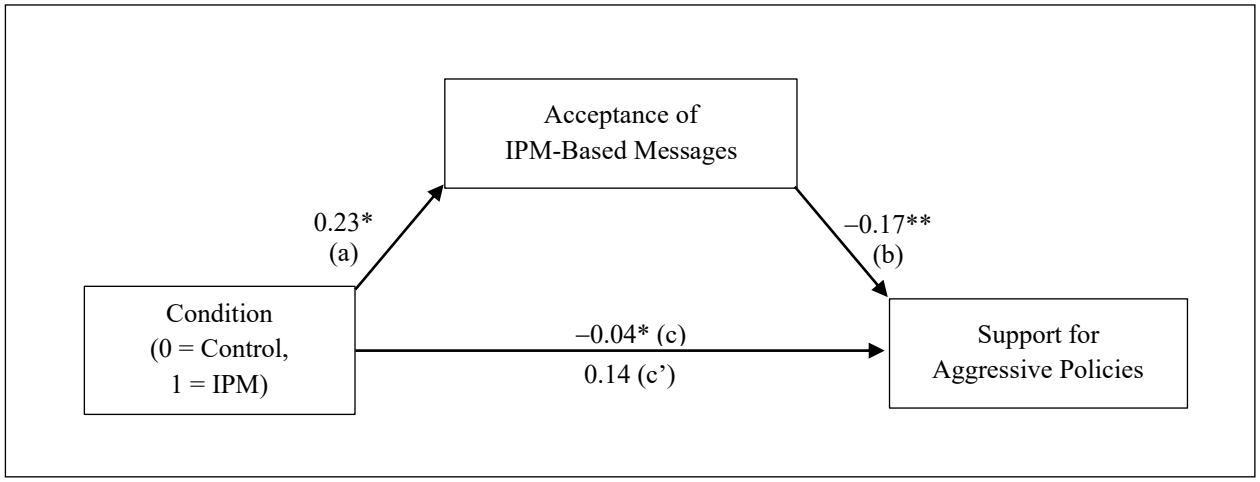
Mediation Model of the IPM-Intervention on Support for Conciliatory Policies



Note. Statistically significant coefficients have been marked (* p < .05, ** p < .001).

Figure 2

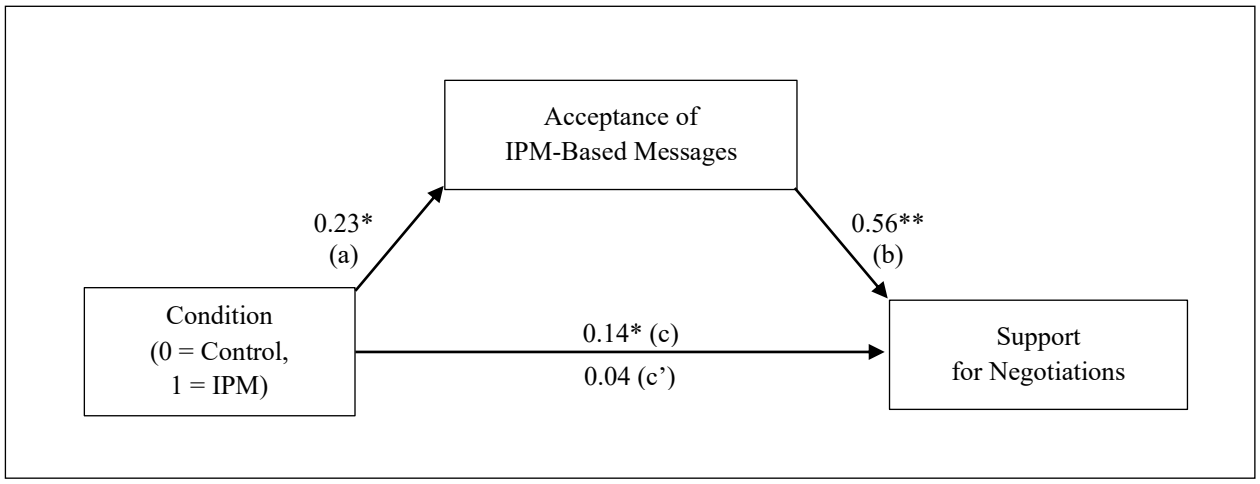
Mediation Model of the IPM-Intervention on Support for Aggressive Policies



Note. Statistically significant coefficients have been marked (* p < .05, ** p < .001).

Figure 3

Mediation Model of the IPM-Intervention on Support for Negotiations



Note. Statistically significant coefficients have been marked (* p < .05, ** p < .001).

IPM and Collective Angst

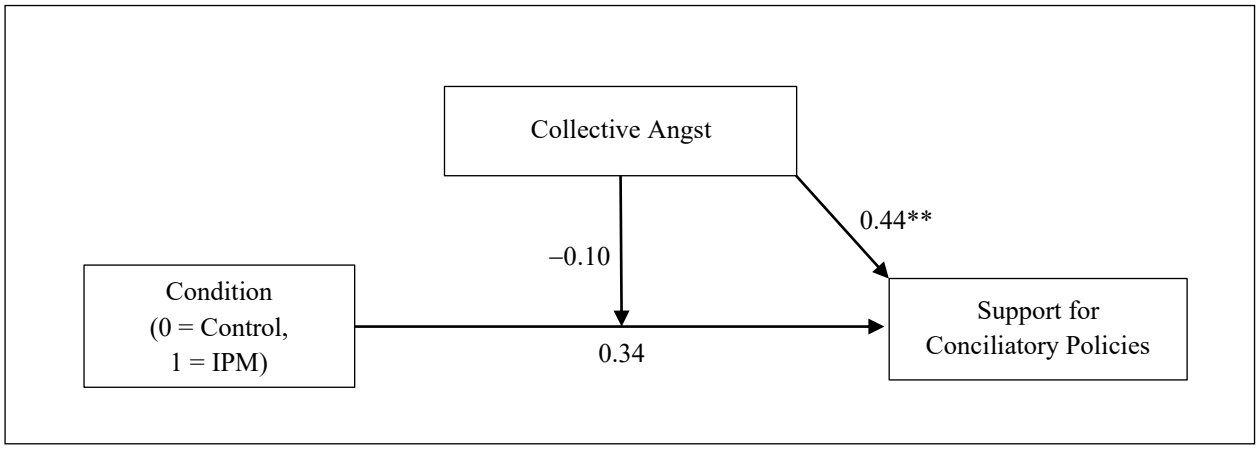
IPM Effects as Moderated by Collective Angst

Finally, a series of moderation analyses was conducted to investigate the role collective angst plays in the IPM. First, Hayes PROCESS macro model 1 was used to test

three simple moderation models in which the IPM-intervention's effects on support for conciliatory policies, aggressive policies and negotiations were moderated by collective angst. The analyses revealed the respective models to account for little variance in support for conciliatory policies (R^2 = 0.08, F (3, 479) = 14.75, p < .001), support for aggressive policies (R^2 = 0.09, F (3, 479) = 15.61, p < .001), and support for negotiations (R^2 = 0.04, F (3, 479) = 5.97, p < .001). Similar patterns emerged across the models. Neither the condition's main effects nor the interaction effects between the condition and collective angst reached statistical significance, indicating that the relationships between the intervention and the measured outcomes were not moderated by collective angst. Interestingly, collective angst independently predicted the outcomes, namely modest increases in support for conciliatory policies and negotiations and a modest decrease in support for aggressive policies, despite not seemingly moderating the condition's effects (see Table 2 for effects).

Figure 4

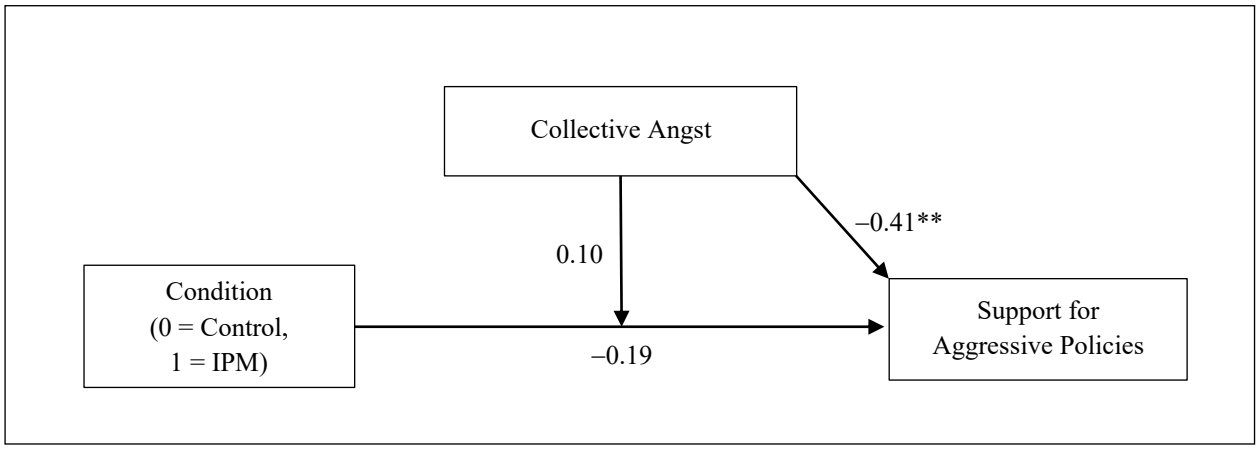
The Moderating Role of Collective Angst in the IPM's Effects on Support for Conciliatory Policies



Note. Statistically significant coefficients have been marked (* p < .05, ** p < .001).

Figure 5

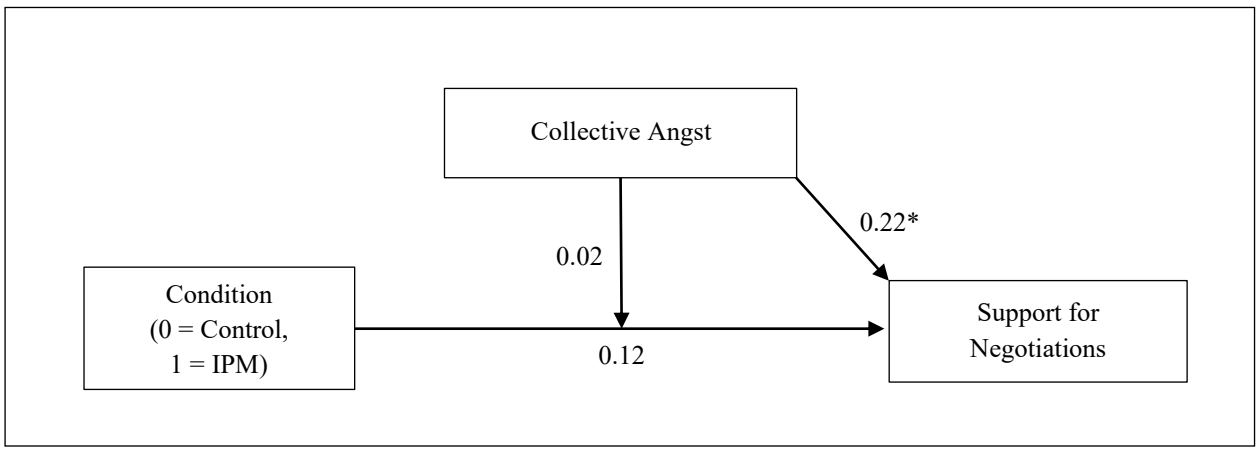
The Moderating Role of Collective Angst in the IPM's Effects on Support for Aggressive Policies



Note. Statistically significant coefficients have been marked (* p < .05, ** p < .001).

Figure 6

The Moderating Role of Collective Angst in the IPM's Effects on Support for Negotiations



Note. Statistically significant coefficients have been marked (* p < .05, ** p < .001).

Table 2

Main and Interaction Effects for Moderation Models Predicting Support for Conciliatory Policies, Aggressive Policies and Negotiations

Effects	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Support for Conciliatory Policies				
Condition	0.34	0.37	0.93	.353
Collective Angst	0.44	0.08	5.25	< .001**
Interaction	–0.10	0.12	–0.84	.401
Support for Aggressive Policies				
Condition	–0.19	0.33	–0.56	.574
Collective Angst	–0.41	0.06	–5.43	< .001**
Interaction	0.10	0.11	0.94	.346
Support for Negotiations				
Condition	0.12	0.36	0.33	.738
Collective Angst	0.22	0.08	2.72	.007*
Interaction	0.02	0.12	0.16	.877

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .001.

Mediated IPM Effects as Moderated by Collective Angst

Lastly, Hayes PROCESS macro model 59 was used to test more complex moderated mediation models in which all paths of the three mediation models were moderated by collective angst, pinpointing whether collective angst might influence participants only at certain stages.

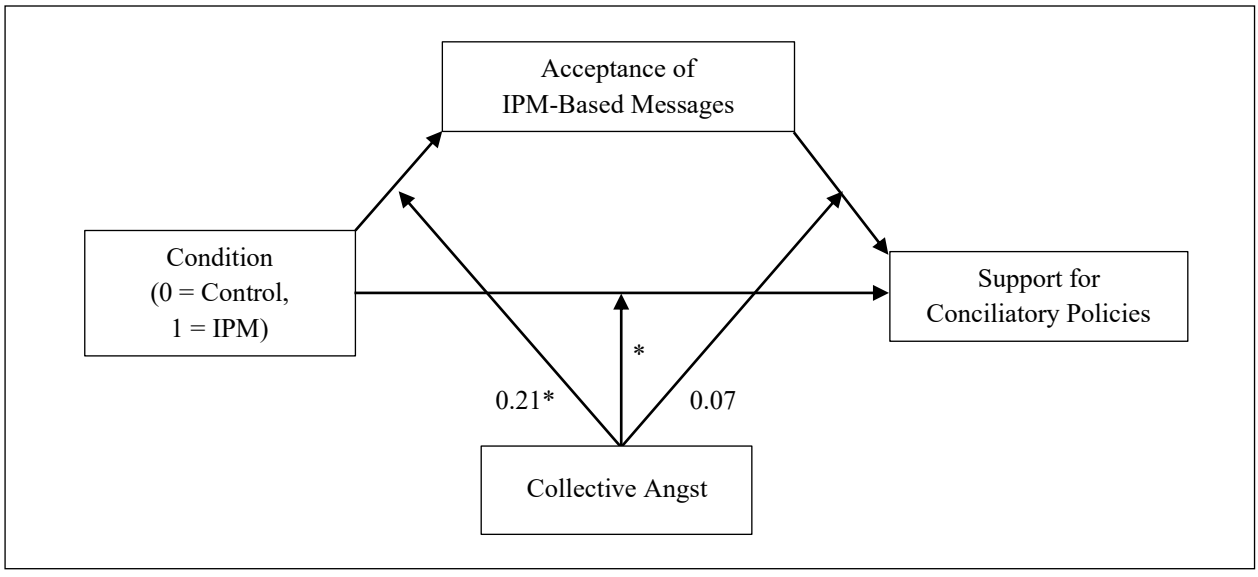
Support for Conciliatory Policies

The analyses regarding the moderated mediation of the intervention's effect on support for conciliatory policies revealed the first stage's moderation model to explain little variance in acceptance of IPM-based messages (R^2 = 0.03, F (3, 479) = 4.76, p = .003). The

significant moderating effect (B = 0.21, SE = 0.10, t (479) = 2.22, p = .027) and corresponding conditional effects (see Table 3) showed that participants with moderate and high levels of collective angst showed higher acceptance of IPM-based messages after the intervention. The second stage's moderation model accounted for moderate amounts of variance in support for conciliatory policies (R^2 = 0.19, F (5, 477) = 22.37, p < .001). While there was neither evidence for a moderation of the relationship between acceptance of IPM-based messages and support for conciliatory policies (B = 0.07, SE = 0.04, t (477) = 1.61, p = .108) nor of the direct path between the intervention and support for conciliatory policies (B = –2.00, SE = 0.11, t (477) = –1.79, p = .074), conditional effects showed evidence for a moderation of the mediated path between the intervention and support for conciliatory policies at moderate and high levels of collective angst (see Table 3). Condition and collective angst could not predict the dependent variables independently (see Table 4 for main effects).

Figure 7

Moderated Mediation Model Predicting Support for Conciliatory Policies



Note. Statistically significant coefficients have been marked (* p < .05, ** p < .001).

Table 3

Conditional Effects of the Moderated Mediation Model Predicting Support for Conciliatory Policies

Level of Collective Angst				
Condition → Acceptance of IPM-Based Messages				
	B	***SE***	***t***	***p***
Low	–0.05	0.17	–0.27	.786
Moderate	0.25	0.11	2.31	.021*
High	0.46	0.15	3.08	.002*
Condition → Support for Conciliatory Policies (Indirect)				
	B	***SE***	**95% CI (LL, UL)**	
Low	–0.01	0.06	[–0.12, 0.10]	
Moderate	0.10	0.05	[0.01, 0.21]*	
High	0.22	0.09	[0.07, 0.40]*	

Note. Levels of collective angst are the 16th (1.6), 50th (3.0) and 84th (4.0) percentiles. Confidence intervals are estimated by bootstrapping with 5000 iterations. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Table 4

Main Effects for Moderated Mediation Model Predicting Support for Conciliatory Policies

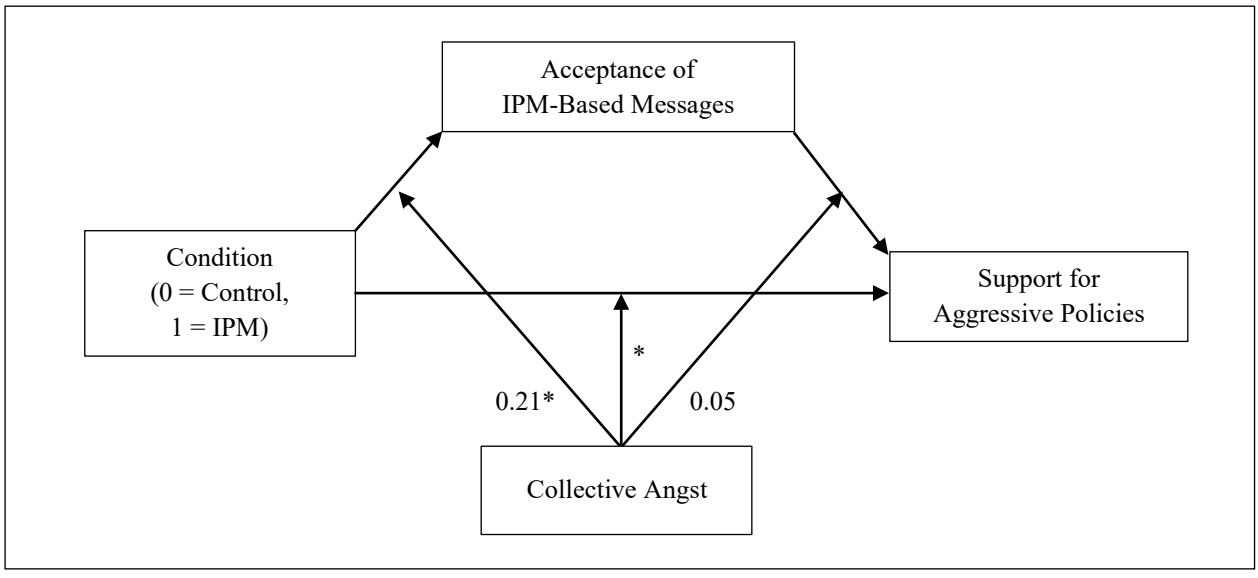
Main Effect	***B***	***SE***	***t***	***p***
First Stage				
Condition	–0.38	0.30	–1.29	.198
Collective Angst	–0.002	0.07	–0.03	.974
Second Stage				
Condition	0.52	0.35	1.50	.133
Acceptance of IPM-Based Messages	0.21	0.14	1.52	.130
Collective Angst	0.19	0.17	1.07	.283

Support for Aggressive Policies

Regarding support for aggressive policies, the first stage model explained little variance in acceptance of IPM-based messages (R^2 = 0.03, F (3, 479) = 4.76, p = .003). This first path seemed to be moderated (B = 0.21, SE = 0.10, t (479) = 2.22, p = .027), with participants moderate and high in collective angst showing significantly higher acceptance (see Table 5 for conditional effects). The second stage model explained little variance in support for aggressive policies (R^2 = 0.11, F (5, 477) = 11.38, p < .001). Neither the relationship between acceptance of IPM-based messages and aggressive policy support (B = 0.05, SE = 0.04, t (477) = 1.20, p = .231) nor the direct relationship between condition and aggressive policy support (B = 0.12, SE = 0.11, t (477) = 1.13, p = .259) seemed to be moderated. However, conditional effects suggested the indirect path may be moderated at moderate levels of angst (see Table 5). While message acceptance could not be predicted by condition or collective angst individually, lower aggressive policy support was predicted both by message acceptance and collective angst individually (see Table 6 for main effects).

Figure 8

Moderated Mediation Model Predicting Support for Aggressive Policies



Note. Statistically significant coefficients have been marked (* p < .05, ** p < .001).

Table 5

Conditional Effects of the Moderated Mediation Model Predicting Support for Aggressive Policies

Level of Collective Angst				
Condition → Acceptance of IPM-Based Messages				
	B	***SE***	***t***	***p***
Low	–0.05	0.17	–0.27	.786
Moderate	0.25	0.11	2.31	.021*
High	0.46	0.15	3.08	.002*
Condition → Support for Aggressive Policies (Indirect)				
	B	***SE***	**95% CI (LL, UL)**	
Low	0.01	0.04	[–0.07, 0.01]	
Moderate	–0.04	0.02	[–0.09, –0.001]*	
High	–0.04	0.04	[–0.13, 0.03]	

Note. Levels of collective angst are the 16th (1.6), 50th (3.0) and 84th (4.0) percentiles. Confidence intervals are estimated by bootstrapping with 5000 iterations. * p < .05, ** p < .001.

Table 6

Main Effects for Moderated Mediation Model Predicting Support for Aggressive Policies

Main Effect	***B***	***SE***	***t***	***p***
First Stage				
Condition	–0.38	0.30	–1.29	.198
Collective Angst	–0.002	0.07	–0.03	.974
Second Stage				
Condition	–0.22	0.33	–0.68	.495
Acceptance of IPM-Based Messages	–0.28	0.13	–2.20	.028*
Collective Angst	–0.59	0.17	–3.53	< .001**

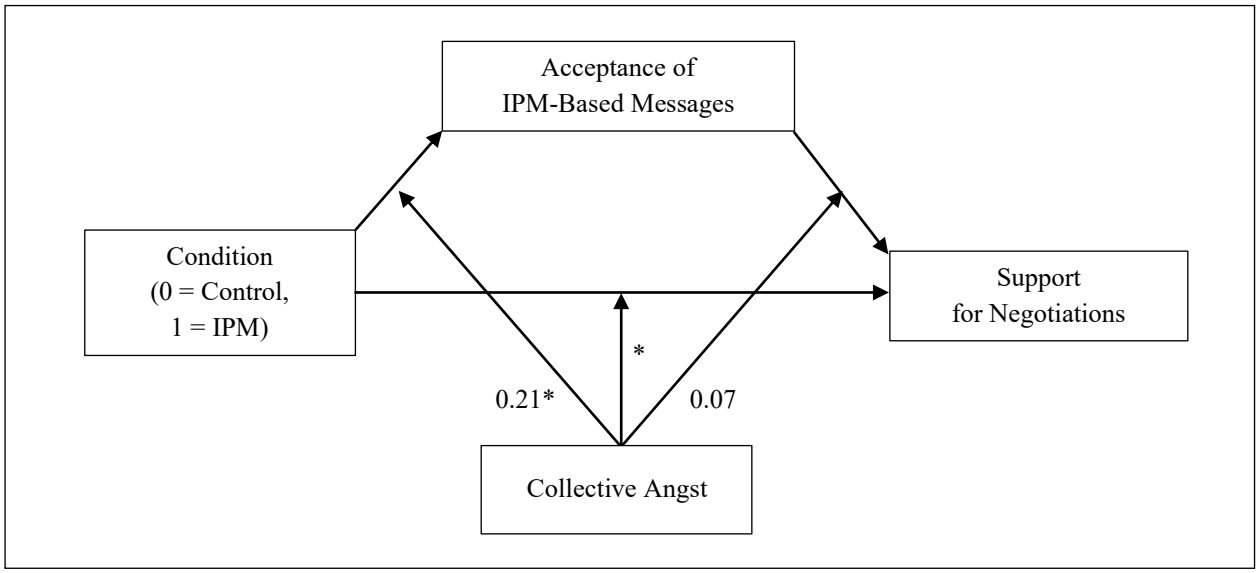
Note. * p < .05, ** p < .001.

Support for Negotiations

Lastly, the model for the first stage moderation accounted for little variance in acceptance of IPM-based messages (R^2 = 0.03, F (3, 479) = 4.76, p = .003). The analysis showed evidence for a moderation increasing message acceptance (B = 0.21, SE = 0.10, t (479) = 2.22, p = .027) for participants with moderate and high levels of collective angst (see Table 8 for conditional effects). The model for the second stage moderation explained a moderate amount of variance in support for negotiations (R^2 = 0.27, F (5, 477) = 35.18, p < .001). The interaction between collective angst and acceptance of IPM-based messages marginally reached significance (B = 0.07, SE = 0.04, t (477) = 1.91, p = .057). When considering the conditional effects (see Table 8), the data suggest a possible moderation across all levels of collective angst. Finally, the direct path between the condition and collective angst did not seem to be moderated (B = –0.12, SE = 0.10, t (477) = –1.20, p = .230), while the condition's indirect conditional effects on support for negotiations were significantly positive at moderate and high levels of collective angst (see Table 8), indicating a moderation of the mediated path. Message acceptance could not be predicted by condition or collective angst individually; however, support for negotiations was predicted by message acceptance (see Table 7 for main effects).

Figure 9

Moderated Mediation Model Predicting Support for Negotiations



Note. Statistically significant coefficients have been marked (* p < .05, ** p < .001).

Table 7

Main Effects for Moderated Mediation Model Predicting Support for Negotiations

Main Effect	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
	First Stage			
Condition	–0.38	0.30	–1.29	.198
Collective Angst	–0.002	0.07	–0.03	.974
	Second Stage			
Condition	0.37	0.16	–0.29	.771
Acceptance of IPM-Based Messages	0.37	0.12	2.98	.003*
Collective Angst	–0.05	0.32	1.18	.239

Table 8

Conditional Effects of the Moderated Mediation Model Predicting Support for Negotiations

Level of Collective Angst	Coefficients			
	B	***SE***	***t***	***p***
Condition → Acceptance of IPM-Based Messages				
Low	–0.45	0.17	–0.27	.786
Moderate	0.25	0.11	2.31	.021*
High	0.46	0.15	3.08	.002*
Acceptance of IPM-Based Messages → Support for Negotiations				
Low	0.49	0.07	6.79	< .001**
Moderate	0.59	0.05	12.22	< .001**
High	0.66	0.06	10.70	< .001**
Condition → Support for Negotiations (Indirect)				
	B	***SE***	**95% CI (LL, UL)**	
Low	–0.02	0.08	[–0.19, 0.14]	
Moderate	0.15	0.07	[0.02, 0.29]*	
High	0.31	0.11	[0.10, 0.53]*	

Note. Levels of collective angst are the 16th (1.6), 50th (3.0) and 84th (4.0) percentiles. Confidence intervals are estimated by bootstrapping with 5000 iterations. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Discussion

This secondary analysis attempted to find evidence for the IPM-intervention's effects on Israeli-Jewish participants' support for specific conciliatory and aggressive policies, thereby extending prior researched effects on support to engage in negotiations (H1a, H1b, H1c). Additionally, potential moderating influences of participants' levels of collective angst were explored (H2a, H2b, H2c).

Hypothesis 1

This thesis firstly attempted to investigate whether the IPM's effects on negotiations can be extrapolated to increase participants' support for conciliatory policies and reduce their support for aggressive policies. The analyses revealed that the significant effects of the IPM-intervention increasing participants' support for conciliatory policies and decreasing support for aggressive policies (as well as the original variable support for negotiations) only came to light when participants' acceptance of the IPM-based messages was accounted for, suggesting that the intervention's effects are small and operate through message engagement and endorsement. The small effect sizes may be partially explained by participants' lack of confidence in the efficacy of negotiations and conciliatory policies—that is, even if participants accepted the intervention's messages, they may have remained sceptical about whether such strategies would lead to desirable outcomes for Israel. The similarly small effects observed for aggressive policy support might be explained by a general sense of disillusionment with established forms of conflict resolution, including violent strategies. Participants may instead prefer alternative methods such as grassroots peacebuilding initiatives or, as surveys suggested (e.g., Shikaki et al., 2023), may have become fatigued and resigned regarding the prospects of resolution.

Further, in conducting the secondary analysis on support for negotiations, an inconsistency in Rosler and colleagues' (2022) initial paper became apparent. While the authors reported that omitting to control for certain demographic factors such as age, gender, and political opinion had no impact on the intervention's effectiveness, this claim does not seem substantiated. The analyses showed that the effects are smaller than expected and only visible when accounting for participants' demographic factors as in the original study or message acceptance as shown in the current study. Additionally, reintroducing the fourth item of the support for negotiation scale, which had been removed in the original study despite not

lowering Cronbach's alpha, further reduced the effects' statistical significance. In this sense, the findings only partially supported the claims of prior studies (see Ben-Ezer et al., 2025; Rosler et al., 2022; Rosler et al., 2024), while also expanding the model to apply to more specific policy domains.

Hypothesis 2

Secondly, this thesis attempted to establish whether participants' level of collective angst influenced the IPM's effects. Collective angst did not moderate the direct effects of the IPM-intervention on support for either conciliatory or aggressive policies. Unexpectedly, collective angst was able to independently predict increased support for conciliatory policies and decreased support for aggressive policies. This suggests that individuals more concerned about Israel's future may adopt more cooperative than defensive, hostile stances. When investigating collective angst in the moderated mediation models, the first stage analyses showed participants experiencing moderate and high levels of collective angst were more accepting of the IPM-based messages, indicating that concern for one's country's future may enhance participants' receptiveness to interventions aimed at reducing conflict-sustaining beliefs. The second stage analyses revealed that once participants accepted the IPM-based messages, their level of collective angst no longer moderated their policy support. The findings indicate that collective angst primarily increases participants' receptiveness rather than influencing how that acceptance is translated to achieve the intervention's desired effects on policy attitudes. Likely, participants' collective angst functions as an emotional motivator increasing participants' openness to reconsider their entrenched conflict-related beliefs. Pettigrew's (1998) intergroup contact process model supports this understanding: The IPM functions as a supportive situational factor cooperating with participants' characteristics, here collective angst, to reduce their group-boundary-reinforcing beliefs. Consequently, their acceptance of IPM-based messages may reflect a form of decategorisation, reducing outgroup

dehumanisation and the victim-perpetrator divide. However, their subsequent policy attitudes may instead be primarily shaped by other factors such as their evaluation of the messages. Additionally, collective angst's moderating role highlights a limitation of the IPM: those who are less concerned about the conflict, and therefore arguably more relevant for intervention targeting, may remain resistant to the IPM-intervention's attempts to influence their support of specific policies.

In contrast, for support for negotiations, a moderating effect of collective angst was found for both the effect of the intervention on participants' message acceptance and in turn message acceptance on negotiation support. This indicates that concern for the country's future shaped participants' responses at multiple points in the model: not only did it increase their receptiveness towards the intervention, but it also strengthened their translation of this acceptance into greater support for negotiations. This highlights a leverage point to bolster the IPM's impact, namely pairing the IPM with strategies which increase participants' perceived efficacy in negotiations and reduce threat perceptions originating from the opposing group, both factors which encourage willingness to engage in negotiations (Halperin et al., 2013; Tabri et al., 2017)

Lastly, the differing roles of collective angst on policy and negotiation support might be due to multiple reasons. For instance, negotiations may be perceived as more directly leading to securing a positive future than the proposed policies and therefore be more susceptible to future-oriented concerns like collective angst. Additionally, negotiation support is a more abstract conceptualisation of intergroup openness than support for specific policies, which may involve more robust ideological positions and defensive mindsets, perceptions of other threats seen as more immediate than a general future-oriented concern, or deliberate reasoning processes. As such, while collective angst may enhance the IPM-based messages effects on agreement with broader negotiation attempts, its influences on the IPM and

specific policy support may be limited by additional factors, which seems consistent with prior research (see Matanock & Garbiras-Diaz, 2018; Smeltz et al., 2024). Nevertheless, investigating the in this context previously unexplored variable provided further insight to the workings of both the IPM and collective angst.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While the findings have provided some insight into the mechanisms and potential of IPM-interventions, they should be interpreted in the context of certain methodological and conceptual limitations. Firstly, due to the secondary nature of the analysis, only limited information about the original study's design and implementation was available and the survey was machine-translated from Hebrew, so misinterpretations might have occurred. Secondly, online convenience sampling may have introduced a bias, although Rosler and colleagues (2022) described the sample as representative of Israeli-Jewish society in terms of self-reported political orientation. In future research, controlling for participants' level of education or ensuring representativeness on this dimension would be beneficial, as this is another demographic variable with the potential to influence results. As the IPM functions via deliberative processes (see Ben-Ezer et al., 2024; Rosler et al., 2022), those with differing extents of practice in analytical or reflective reasoning may react differently to the intervention. Additionally, studies on the IPM have so far neglected to investigate its mechanisms beyond the increased deliberation. For example, this study did not include a check whether the intervention indeed successfully targeted participants' justness and dehumanisation beliefs and how this was received, such as in terms of changes in the conflict-related beliefs, perceived similarity and differences between the groups, or emotional reactions. Another avenue for future research might be to investigate how message acceptance and deliberation lead participants to support negotiations, such as by reducing their zero-sum mindset, uncompromising evaluations, and beliefs related to the EOC or by

increasing hope. Moreover, potential explanations for why collective angsts influenced participants' receptiveness towards IPM-based messages but did not influence how message acceptance translated to policy support can be investigated.

Further, all studies have so far explored the IPM in Israeli-Jewish samples. As such, investigating the IPM in other conflict contexts, such as other ongoing intractable conflicts (e.g., the conflict between Russia and the Ukraine) and past intractable conflicts in which the EOC is still somewhat present (e.g., between ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo), other samples, such as the conflict counterpart and lower-power groups (e.g., Palestinians), and lastly utilising a variety of EOC-related beliefs, would lend insight into whether the IPM's effects are generalisable beyond the Israeli context. Lastly, longitudinal studies would indicate whether the IPM's effects last beyond the immediate impulse and how the intensity of conflict and EOC affect the IPM. Prior research indicates that similar interventions may be successful primarily when the conflict is moderately intense, that is, during times when participants experience a sufficient sense of motivation and urgency but have not yet come to view conciliatory strategies as ineffective (Shulman et al., 2025). As such, the IPM may have become ineffective in the current Israeli-Palestinian context due to the unprecedented escalation of violence since October 2023.

In comparison to other approaches, the IPM offers distinct advantages. Due to its convenient video format, the intervention can be administered quickly, cheaply, and on a large scale without needing particular resources. Furthermore, it circumvents the practical and motivational barriers to contact interventions. Additionally, the IPM's non-confrontational, gradual and accepting nature supports participants in considering its message in depth rather than rejecting it out of hand, as more confronting approaches can be (see Steindl et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2020). Lastly, two-sided messages (see Xu & Petty, 2022) and those coming from similar others (here, speakers who seem to hold similar conflict-

related beliefs) (see Förg et al., 2007) tend to be received better. Clearly, the IPM offers opportunities for those organising peace-making efforts; however, relatively small effect sizes indicate the interventions may be more suited to use as part of a more in-depth programme, rather than on their own, or periodically as part of a larger campaign, which has shown longer-term success (see Bruneau et al., 2022) and would bypass the motivational barriers to seeking out an intervention.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the overall pattern of results, this thesis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the IPM. The analysis provided partial support for the IPM's effectiveness in increasing participants' support for conciliatory policies and decreasing their support for aggressive policies through their acceptance of the IPM's messages. The observed effects were notably smaller than anticipated, partially confirming the first hypotheses. Further, the results pinpointed how participants' level of collective angst influenced these effects. Collective angst was found to amplify the IPM's impacts on policy support by increasing participants' receptiveness to IPM-based messages. Regarding participants' support for negotiations, collective angst moderated both stages of the mediation model, increasing message acceptance and additionally strengthening the link between message acceptance and increased negotiation support. Despite rather modest effect sizes, design limitations, and several inconsistencies in the original paper that cast doubt on the effectiveness of the IPM as a standalone intervention to reduce individuals' conflict-sustaining societal beliefs, the model nevertheless contributes to research surrounding the IPM and collective angst and shows promise as a component of a larger programme or campaign.

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