This study examined the cognitive and emotional reactions of 477 Israeli high school students to the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (immediately after the event as well as 5 months later) and to a series of terror attacks. The respondents' reactions to the two events were compared as a function of gender and political orientation. About 50% of the respondents who changed their political views immediately after the assassination reverted to pre-event attitudes 5 months later. Emotional reactions to the assassination showed substantial fading after 5 months, with extent of fading unaffected by gender or political orientation. The intensity of emotional reactions was affected by political orientation: Although Rabin’s supporters and his opponents reacted with equal intensity to the terror attacks, supporters reacted with the same intensity to Rabin’s assassination, whereas opponents’ reactions to the assassination were less intense.

KEY WORDS: national trauma, adolescent bereavement, Rabin assassination.

Trauma resulting from political violence, also called “adverse” or “stressful political events” (Slone & Hallis, 1999), is a relatively new field of psychological research, and the study of its effects on children is of special importance. Research on ethnic and political violence is in its early stages (Ladd & Cairns, 1996), and researchers have commented on the need for a more systematic examination of the
traumatic effects of political events on individuals (Koopman, 1997) and groups (Suedfeld, 1997). The present study makes a contribution by investigating the reactions of young Israelis to two traumatic political events: the Rabin assassination, and a series of terror attacks on civilian targets in Israel that took place shortly afterward.

We base our research on definitions of trauma appearing in the literature (Brewin, Dalgleish, & Joseph, 1996; Suedfeld, 1997): Trauma is defined as any experience that by its occurrence threatens the health or well-being of the individual and involves a violation of basic assumptions of order, predictability, safety, and identity. The types of events likely to violate these assumptions will frequently involve indications that the world is uncontrollable or unpredictable. National trauma has been defined as “a singular catastrophic event that has a pervasive effect on the whole nation” (Witztum & Malkinson, 1998, p. 119). One class of national trauma is political trauma. A collective political trauma is an unexpected, often violent event that affects a community rather than one or several individuals; it results from politically motivated human behavior and has political consequences. It is sudden and intense, penetrating psychological defenses and leaving those affected with strong feelings of vulnerability and fragility (Vertzberger, 1997).

The perception of an event as traumatic depends on variables such as the individual’s beliefs and value systems as well as his or her psychological resources and social support systems (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Markus & Zajonc, 1985; Riley & Pettigrew, 1976). Responses to trauma may vary as a result of interpretation; a given event can be experienced by one individual as irrecoverably crippling, while another may perceive it as an opportunity for change and personal growth. In the case of political trauma, events may be particularly open to personal interpretation based on political and ideological beliefs and values. Different ideologies may cause individuals to attribute different meanings to events, leading to varied emotional responses of varied intensity.

The death of a national leader, especially while still in office and as a result of murder, is undoubtedly a national, collective political trauma susceptible to ideological interpretation. Reactions to the assassinations of leaders and other prominent public figures have been studied (de Grazia, 1945; Fairbairn, 1936; Oren & Peterson, 1967; Orlansky, 1947; Riley & Pettigrew, 1976; Siegel, 1977; Wahl, 1959). The bulk of empirical work in the field of psychology was carried out after the assassination of John F. Kennedy (Wolfenstein & Kliman, 1965). Several studies on children and adolescents were conducted, showing that for them, too, the Kennedy assassination had been traumatic. The studies reported reactions similar to those that followed disasters, such as numbness, shock, helplessness, disbelief, grief, anger, and denial (Ginsparg, Moriarty, & Murphy, 1965; Greenstein, 1965; Wolfenstein & Kliman, 1965). Research has also shown that emotional reactions were affected by respondents’ political partisanship, such that they were stronger among Democrats than Republicans (Sigel, 1965). In other words, ideology affected response intensity.
The dramatic events that took place in Israel during 1995–1996 provided an opportunity to investigate empirically some aspects of national political trauma. Israel has earned the dubious distinction of being a natural laboratory for stress research (Milgram, 1978). Its history is fraught with crises, and Israeli children and adolescents have been exposed to national political trauma such as war and terrorism ever since the state’s independence (Klingman, Sagi, & Raviv, 1993; Milgram, 1998; Raviv, Bar-Tal, Koren-Silvershatz, & Raviv, 1999; Raviv & Klingman, 1983). Nonetheless, the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November 1995, by a 24-year-old Jewish political fundamentalist with the intention of stopping the implementation of the Oslo peace accords, was a shocking and unprecedented event in Israel’s short history. It was the kind of dramatic event that is expected to leave a deep and permanent scar on a nation’s soul. The murder evoked understandable associations with the Kennedy assassination in November 1963. The prevailing feeling, as it was mirrored in the local media, was that this would be a “day the world changed,” and that the event would come to be seen as “a rite of passage to what was called the end of innocence” (L. Wright, quoted in Zelizer, 1992, p. 18). Although it did not directly endanger the lives of Israeli citizens, the assassination of Rabin threatened social order and rocked the foundations of democracy in Israel. Young Israelis’ expressions of grief were particularly salient, and their emotional reactions aroused a great deal of media interest and raised questions regarding the reasons for its intensity, the extent of its genuineness, and its homogeneity across social groups (Green, Mikulinser, & Harari, 1997; Rappoport, 1997).

The assassination was also the tragic outcome of political controversy in Israel, when a rapidly building ideological schism regarding the Oslo peace accords sharply divided Israeli society into doves and hawks (Arian, 1995; Bar-Tal, Jacobson, & Freund, 1995). Therefore, reactions could not be unaffected by political partisanship. Studies conducted after the assassination showed that, in contrast to the initial impression of uniformity in the content and intensity of their emotional reactions, teenagers who supported Rabin’s peace policy responded more strongly and participated in more mourning activities than those who opposed these policies (Green et al., 1997; Rappoport, 1997).

One study that directly investigated the effects of Rabin’s assassination on Israeli teenagers’ emotional, cognitive (i.e., political orientation), and behavioral reactions as a function of age, gender, and pre-assassination attitudes toward Rabin’s peace policy was carried out by Raviv, Sadeh, Raviv, and Silberstein (1998). Because that report provides the critical baseline comparison for the data in the present study, its relevant sections are described here.

To examine emotional reactions to the assassination, Raviv et al. (1998) constructed a questionnaire that asked respondents to indicate to what extent they had felt each of 18 emotions. Factor analysis yielded four factors: Crisis & Bereavement (including pain, anger, crying, sorrow, shock, feeling stunned), which received the highest scores; Vulnerability (despair, helplessness, fear/anxiety,
tension, guilt, weakness, remorse), which received the next highest scores; Coping (hope, strength), which received relatively low scores; and Positive Emotions (joy, relief, indifference), which received the lowest scores. Emotions reflecting coping strategies were included under the assumption that stress and crisis can lead to growth and personal development, thereby eliciting positive coping strategies. Joy, relief, and indifference—reactions that do not regard the assassination as a negative event—were included to balance out the list, both to test validity and to identify genuine positive reactions.

The findings showed that fewer than 2% of the respondents were actually happy about the assassination; on the whole, reactions were typical of crisis and bereavement, accompanied to a lesser degree by a sense of vulnerability and helplessness. The study thus focused on the Crisis & Bereavement and Vulnerability factors, which were called grief factors. Analysis of these factors as a function of political orientation showed that emotions belonging to both grief factors were felt more strongly by Rabin supporters than by opponents. Thus, although opponents did not rejoice in Rabin’s death, they did grieve less than supporters. Age was not a significant variable in respondents’ emotional reactions. However, significant gender differences were found, with girls reporting stronger reactions than boys in most of the grief emotions.

Raviv et al. (1998) also examined changes in respondents’ political orientation after the assassination. They found that 42.9% of the respondents who could have changed their political orientation in a pro-Rabin direction (i.e., either had taken no stand or opposed Rabin’s peace policy) did so, whereas only 1.9% of those who could have moved in an anti-Rabin direction did so at that time. In other words, within 3 weeks of the assassination, a significant change in adolescents’ political orientation took place in favor of Rabin’s peace policy. Of those who moved in a dovish direction, 63% initially had taken no stand, and the remaining 37% had previously opposed Rabin’s peace policy.

Five months after the assassination, we conducted the present follow-up study to examine long-term reactions and the effect of time on grief emotions and attitude change. However, within these 5 months, three terrorist bombings also occurred, killing 65 people. We felt that the impact of these attacks on the variables being studied could not be ignored, and that they in fact presented an opportunity to compare the effects of two different political traumas. This became an additional objective of the study.

Fading of Grief Emotions

Models of personal bereavement and adaptation to loss describe a natural process of attenuation and fading of grief emotions (Bowlby, 1961, 1980; Parkes, 1972; Ramsay, 1979; Rando, 1984, 1994; Sanders, 1993; Worden, 1991). According to the grief literature, the course of individual mourning is characterized by phases, beginning with shock and disbelief and ending with reorganization and a
return to everyday life, although the working through of grief continues long after life has gone back to normal. The intensity of emotion is expected to decrease with time. This fading effect is also expected to occur on the collective level. Witztum and Malkinson (1998), for instance, used an individual bereavement model as an analogy for the collective bereavement processes observed in Israeli society after the assassination, and as a framework within which national trauma and the social and cultural constructions of bereavement can be understood.

Although the fading of emotions is to be expected, we hypothesized that a difference would be found between the fading processes demonstrated by Rabin’s supporters and those of his opponents, such that supporters would need more time to resolve their grief, and therefore their emotions would show less fading over time. This hypothesis is based on individual bereavement models claiming that those closest to the deceased take the longest to work through their grief (Rosenblatt, 1996; Rubin & Schechter, 1997; Witztum & Malkinson, 1998).

Attitude Change

We also examined how the passage of time affected changes in political attitude. Social psychologists and sociologists tend to identify attitude change with slow long-term shifts; they see sudden shifts generated by dramatic events as minor deviations that soon revert to the dominant trend (e.g., Bellisfield, 1972; Dillehay, 1964; Thistlwithaite, 1974). Vertzberger (1997), using hypotheses based on several cognitive phenomena, attempted to explain what he perceived to be a short-lived political attitude change in the Israeli public after the Rabin assassination. Of particular interest are his “unfreezing,” “distraction,” and “bounce-back” hypotheses, which describe the process that takes place after a collective traumatic event and explain its limited effects on people’s attitudes, belief systems, and fundamental values.

Vertzberger’s unfreezing hypothesis posits that a sudden traumatic event penetrates defenses that under normal conditions would suffice to maintain confidence in core beliefs and values, and calls into question their relevance and validity. There is no time to prepare alternative defenses nor to carefully reassess currently held values and beliefs, and the immediate consequence is the unfreezing of key, long-held, primed values, beliefs, and attitudes. No longer able to rely on their inner resources, people seek guidance from external sources of epistemic authority, and the group and community then become the main providers of cues about appropriate views, emotions, and behavior. In this way, attitudes and beliefs diametrically opposed to those held before the event can come to be adopted. However, these responses are induced by panic and anxiety, and they are often the most easily accessible ones; they are also most symbolic of atonement and distancing. The attitude changes are not finalized, and a pendulum effect ensues.

The distraction hypothesis claims that what changes as a result of a crisis is the salience of particular issues. These issues draw attention to themselves, thus
affecting attitudes regarding them. Changes in measured attitudes, therefore, may reflect what is only a temporary attention shift. Once the distraction effect of the critical moment wears off, attention shifts back to normal, and attitudes return to their former state.

The bounce-back hypothesis claims that long-held pre-event attitudes and beliefs never really lose their relevance; they are only conveniently and temporarily suppressed. After the shock and stress wear off, a more systematic assessment of the event begins, triggered by (1) the declining vividness of the traumatic event, leading to a defocusing on the event and a broadening of the attention span to a more inclusive perspective, accompanied by a decrease in self-attributed responsibility for the event; and (2) a reemergence of more deeply held beliefs and cognitions, causing acute discomfort due to incongruence between old and new cognitions. The dual motivation of removing the distress caused by this cognitive incongruence on one hand, and finding release from the guilt over having failed to prevent the traumatic event on the other, is a powerful incentive to return to normality.

An example of reversion to pre-trauma attitudes is given by Bar-Tal and Labin (1999), who measured Israeli schoolchildren’s stereotypical perceptions of Palestinians before a terror attack, immediately after it, and again 3 months later. Results showed an increase in negative perceptions of Palestinians immediately after the terror attack and a subsequent decrease 3 months later. In contrast, Riley and Pettigrew (1976), who studied the effect of the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. on racial attitudes among white Texan adults, did not find a return to pre-event attitudes after 3 months, but rather observed a ripple effect of delayed change in the same direction as the initial changes.

In line with the studies reviewed, this research investigates the effects of time on changes in political orientation 5 months after Rabin’s assassination. As indicated, Raviv et al. (1998) found a strong and significant attitude change in favor of Rabin’s peace policy immediately after the assassination. The question then arises as to how stable these changes would be and how long the new enthusiasm would persist. The hypothesis, based on those of Vertzberger and others, is that these changes would not remain stable.

Reactions to Two Different Traumas

Terror attacks are also national political traumas in that they are directed against a nation, constitute a potential threat to all its citizens, and are politically motivated. In February and March 1996 three such attacks occurred in Israel. These were the Hamas terrorist bombings, two on crowded public buses in Jerusalem and one in a busy Tel Aviv shopping center, killing 65 people in all. These unfortunate conditions presented an opportunity to investigate responses to two different national traumas carrying varying political connotations. After the attacks, opposition parties sounded the accusation that Rabin’s Labor party, together with the
dovish camp, indirectly shared responsibility for them because, in their haste to proceed with the peace process, they had neglected security. Doves were blamed for not being as deeply affected by the death of innocent citizens as they had been by Rabin’s death. At the same time, doves held hawks responsible for Rabin’s assassination, and Rabin supporters blamed opponents for creating the climate of incitement that led to the assassination (Bar-Tal & Vertzberger, 1997). This spontaneous public debate on emotional reactions to the two different traumas sparked our interest in examining the question empirically.

Public debate served as the grounds for hypothesizing that the intensity of emotional reactions to the two traumas would vary as a function of political partisanship. On the other hand, several existing theoretical frameworks could lead to the opposite conclusions. In the first place, theories regarding group identity would suggest that the Rabin assassination, representing the peak of an internal conflict within Israeli society, would focus attention on the differences between opposing political groups and emphasize their social boundaries (Moreland & Levine, 1982; Raviv et al., 1998); therefore, differences in reactions would be significantly affected by respondents’ affiliation with these political groups. In contrast, the terrorist attacks, representing conflict with an external enemy (an outgroup), should weaken the perception of internal differences and enhance unity by directing the focus of attention outward (Coser, 1956). In the case of the terrorist attacks, responses should therefore be unaffected by political partisanship, and emotional intensity would be expected to be the same among doves and hawks.

Second, Maslow’s (1968) hierarchy of needs theory would lead to similar conclusions regarding the response to terrorism. According to this theory, concern for one’s physical safety receives priority over other more abstract concerns, and the fact that terrorism endangers all, regardless of political orientation, makes every person a potential target. The nation’s reaction to such danger thus should not be split by beliefs and values, because the most common basic human needs are involved and internal differences of political opinion are deemphasized. In contrast, Rabin’s assassination threatened more abstract values: law and social order, democracy and the peace process. Values and beliefs, which are also human needs, are less basic to survival and more varied and differentiated, and an attack on them is more open to interpretation and differential reaction.

Finally, a trauma’s impact does not depend solely on objective assessments of its destructive power. It is also a function of respondents’ physical proximity to the event (Bat-Zion & Levy-Shiff, 1993; Houts, 1980; Klingman & Weisner, 1982; Pynoos et al., 1987; Saylor, 1993; Shore, Tatum, & Vollmer, 1986) as well as their psychological proximity. Ayalon and Lahad (1995) defined psychological proximity as being personally acquainted with victims (relatives, friends, acquaintances) or identifying with them because they are of the same age, sex, or social status. Milgram, Toubiana, Klingman, Raviv, and Goldstein (1988) found that the initial and continued stress reactions of schoolchildren to a tragic accident in which their classmates were killed were related to degrees of friendship with the victims, and
not necessarily with actual exposure to the disaster. Pynoos (1993) also found that personal involvement with victims is more significant than physical exposure to the situational stressor, having more adverse effects. Thus, reactions to the Rabin assassination and to the terror attacks can be examined with reference to respondents’ psychological proximity to the victim(s).

To examine the events from this perspective, we wish to take the concept of psychological proximity a step further and elaborate the existing model of political trauma described at the outset. We suggest that when a political traumatic event has ideological significance and its victims represent a particular ideological group, personal ideological preferences will affect reactions. In other words, ideology should be taken into account when assessing the individual’s psychological proximity to, or psychological interpretation of, a political trauma. In our case, reactions to Rabin’s assassination were understandably affected by respondents’ partisanship (as found by Raviv et al., 1998), whereas reactions to terror attacks, perpetrated by an external enemy and striking indiscriminately, might not necessarily depend on left/right partisanship. Hence, the present study examined whether respondents’ political orientation affected the intensity of emotional reactions to the terror attacks (as it had in the case of Rabin’s assassination) and whether there was any difference in the intensity of responses to the two events, also as a function of political orientation.

To summarize, we hypothesized that (a) young people’s emotional reactions to the assassination immediately after the event would be stronger than their emotions 5 months later, and the rate of fading of these emotions would differ as a function of political orientation and gender; (b) differences would be found in respondents’ political orientation before the assassination, immediately afterward, and 5 months later; and (c) differences would be found in their intensity of emotional reaction to the two traumatic events, as a function of political orientation and of gender (based on Raviv et al., 1998).

**Method**

**Participants**

The study was conducted in two phases. Seven hundred thirteen junior high and high school students participated in the first phase of the study within about 3 weeks after the assassination (reported in Raviv et al., 1998); 625 students from the same classrooms in the same schools participated in the second phase, 5 months later. The present report is based on the responses of 477 students who participated in both phases. These included 210 boys and 267 girls, aged 12 to 18 (grades 7 to 12), from two large schools in the Tel Aviv area.
Instruments

In the first phase of the study (Raviv et al., 1998), a questionnaire measuring adolescents’ reactions to the Rabin assassination was administered. Because parts of the data from this questionnaire serve as the basis for the second phase, we first describe its relevant sections. The questionnaire included personal details concerning grade, gender, and political orientation, and assessed respondents’ behavioral and emotional reactions. Political orientation was assessed by two questions: “Did you support or oppose Prime Minister Rabin’s peace policy before the assassination?” and “Now, do you support or oppose Rabin’s peace policy?” (response options: I support/ed it; I oppose/d it; I had/have no stand).

Emotional reactions to the assassination were assessed using a list of 18 emotions: pain, despair, anger, helplessness, fear or anxiety, joy, tension, crying, relief, sorrow, guilt, indifference, weakness, shock, hope, remorse, feeling stunned, and strength. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they had felt each of these emotions, on a scale from 1 (did not feel so at all) to 5 (felt so very much).

The second-phase questionnaire was a follow-up to the first. It assessed political orientation by asking: “Today, do you support or oppose the government’s peace policy?” It included the above-mentioned list of 18 emotions in the same order, and this time respondents were asked, “Consider Rabin’s assassination, and indicate to what extent you feel the following emotions today.”

Respondents were then told: “The country has lately been subject to terror attacks by suicide bombers, which caused the death and injury of many people. Following is a list of people’s emotional reactions in response to these attacks. Indicate to what extent you felt these reactions. Mark the appropriate description in accordance with your own feelings regarding each of the emotions.” The same list of 18 emotions was then presented, in the same order; here too, we used a scale of 1 (did not feel so at all) to 5 (felt so very much).

Procedure

The first-phase questionnaire was administered within 10 to 17 days after Rabin’s assassination. The second-phase questionnaire was administered 5 months after the assassination and about 3 weeks after the last of the series of terrorist bombings, by the same experimenters, in the same classrooms where the first phase of the study had been conducted. The participants were told about the purpose of the study and given instructions on completing the questionnaire. Although the questionnaires were completed anonymously (the condition on which we received permission to conduct the study), the students were asked to write the last four digits of their home phone number, which enabled us to match first- and second-phase questionnaires. (Matching was thus based on the partial phone number, the gender, and the participant’s class, ensuring the match was correct.)
Results

The Raviv et al. (1998) results described participants’ emotional reactions after the Rabin assassination and compared their political orientations before and after the event. The present report is based only on those participants who completed the questionnaire in both the first and second phases; we report the changes that took place in respondents’ political orientations and in the intensity of their emotional reactions 5 months after the assassination, relative to their reactions immediately after the event. We also compare emotional reactions to the assassination (as measured immediately after the event) with reactions to the terror attacks.

Attitude Change

Respondents’ political orientation was assessed with respect to three different time points. In the first phase of the study, respondents reported whether they had supported Rabin’s peace policy, had opposed it, or had taken no stand before the assassination and immediately afterward (i.e., within 3 weeks of the assassination); they reported their political orientation again 5 months later, in the second phase. In total, 294 (62.8% of the matched sample) had supported Rabin’s peace policy before the assassination, 347 (74.3%) supported it immediately after the assassination, and 287 (60.7%) supported it after 5 months. To examine the course of these changes statistically, we compared views held at each of the three time points. A change in position from “oppose” to “no stand” or “support,” or from “no stand” to “support,” was denoted “pro-Rabin change.” A change in position from “support” to “no stand” or “oppose,” or from “no stand” to “oppose,” was denoted “anti-Rabin change.”

A comparison between views held before and immediately after the assassination (First Comparison) showed a significant change in favor of Rabin’s peace policy, where 70 of 77 respondents who changed their political orientation changed it in a pro-Rabin direction ($z = 7.07, p < .01$). (The same trend was obtained in Raviv et al., 1998, using the entire first-phase sample.) A comparison between views held immediately after the assassination and those held 5 months later (Second Comparison) showed that 108 respondents changed their views; of these, significantly more (88 vs. 20, $z = –6.45, p < .01$) altered their views in an anti-Rabin direction than in a pro-Rabin direction. Finally, in a comparison between views held before the assassination and 5 months after the assassination (Third Comparison), 114 respondents (24.8%) changed their political orientation: 50 altered their views in favor of Rabin’s peace policy and 64 altered their views the opposite way; no significant tendency toward change in one particular direction was found ($z = –1.22$, not significant). Thus, an increase in support for Rabin’s peace policy was found immediately after the assassination, with a decrease in support after 5 months to about the same level as before the assassination.

To study the course of ideological change along these three assessments, we looked at the direction of change from one assessment to the next for each
respondent. Table I is a contingency table of students by direction of change from the first to the second assessment (immediately after the assassination; First Comparison) and from the second to the third assessment (after 5 months; Second Comparison). Most of the respondents (316 of 459) did not change their views (i.e., they gave the same answer with respect to all three time points). Of those who changed their views in favor of Rabin’s peace policy immediately after the assassination (designated the “first pro-Rabin change” group), 45.6% still held the same view after 5 months, whereas 52.9% of them altered it back in the opposite direction. Of the students who did not change their views immediately after the assassination (the “first no-change” group), only 4.4% changed them in a pro-Rabin direction 5 months later, whereas 13.3% changed them in an anti-Rabin direction ($z = -4.00, p < .01$). Statistical comparison between the first pro-Rabin change and first no-change groups resulted in significantly different distributions [$\chi^2(2, n = 452) = 58.61, p < .01$]. It showed that more respondents turned anti-Rabin after 5 months in the first pro-Rabin change group than in the first no-change group. Thus, we observed a tendency of reverting to one’s original views among those who changed in a pro-Rabin direction after the assassination.

**Emotions**

Responses to the 18 emotion items were collected with reference to Rabin’s assassination immediately after the event (Immediate-Assassination scores), Rabin’s assassination 5 months after the event (Later-Assassination scores), and the terrorist bombings immediately after they occurred (Terror scores). As described above, Raviv et al. (1998) conducted a factor analysis on the 18 items, yielding the four factors Crisis & Bereavement, Vulnerability, Coping, and Positive Emotions. Table II presents Cronbach’s $\alpha$ values of the four factors for each of the three conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long-term change direction</th>
<th>First pro-Rabin change</th>
<th>First no-change</th>
<th>First anti-Rabin change</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$%$</td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$%$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second pro-Rabin change</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second no-change</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second anti-Rabin change</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* “First change” denotes the direction of political orientation change immediately after the assassination relative to political orientation before the assassination; “second change” denotes the direction of change 5 months after the assassination relative to political orientation immediately after the assassination.
One objective of the present study was to compare two events—the loss of a leader by political assassination, and the loss of lives as a result of terrorism—with respect to their effect on respondents; we did so by comparing Immediate-Assassination and Terror factor scores. A second focus was the fading of emotions with time, which we assessed by comparing Immediate-and Later-Assassination factor scores. Tables III and IV present the factor means and standard deviations of the Immediate-Assassination, Later-Assassination, and Terror scores.

Table II. Reliabilities (Cronbach’s α) of Responses Regarding Immediate-Assassination, Later-Assassination, and Terror, by Emotion Factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion factor</th>
<th>Immediate-Assassination</th>
<th>Later-Assassination</th>
<th>Terror</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crisis &amp; Bereavement</td>
<td>0.819</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td>0.828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td>0.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td>0.630</td>
<td>0.626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>0.459</td>
<td>0.352</td>
<td>0.301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Crisis & Bereavement comprises pain, anger, crying, sorrow, shock, and feeling stunned; Vulnerability comprises despair, helplessness, fear/anxiety, tension, guilt, weakness, and remorse; Coping comprises hope and strength; and Positive Emotions comprises joy, relief, and indifference.

Table III. Means and Standard Deviations of the Two Grief Factors, by Gender and by Political Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grief factor</th>
<th>Immediate-Assassination</th>
<th>Later-Assassination</th>
<th>Terror</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis &amp; Bereavement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support (n = 294)</td>
<td>4.05^β</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>2.94^α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No stand (n = 90)</td>
<td>3.83^β</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>2.72^α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose (n = 83)</td>
<td>3.54^β</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>2.40^α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys (n = 205)</td>
<td>3.66^β</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>2.66^α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls (n = 262)</td>
<td>4.12^γ</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>2.91^α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N = 467)</td>
<td>3.92^β</td>
<td>2.80^γ</td>
<td>2.80^γ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>2.56^β</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>2.10^α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No stand</td>
<td>2.48^α</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>2.01^α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>2.25^β</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.71^α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>2.29^β</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>1.87^α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>2.64^β</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>2.13^α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.49^β</td>
<td>2.02^α</td>
<td>2.02^α</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. In each section of the table, means within a column having the same subscript letter (α, β, or γ) and means within a row having the same superscript letter (α, β, or γ) are not significantly different.
for the three political orientation groups. Respondents were assigned to one of these three groups (supporters, opponents, and a no-stand group) according to their reported political orientation before the assassination.

Tables II and IV show that the Positive Emotions factor did not receive high reliability scores, and its mean scores were very low. Hence, we omitted this factor from further analyses. The Coping factor obtained moderately low scores (Table IV) and relatively low $\alpha$ values (Table II). Because the present paper deals with the subject of grief and mourning, Coping was also omitted from the analysis. The Crisis & Bereavement and Vulnerability factors were analyzed as repeated measures, because we see both as negative, distressful results of loss. Figure 1 presents the Crisis & Bereavement and Vulnerability factor means for the three political orientation groups. The means for supporters and opponents were similar for Terror but different for Immediate- and Later-Assassination. The means of the no-stand group generally fell between those of the other two groups.

Fading of emotions. To examine the effects of the passage of time on grief emotions, we analyzed responses to the assassination with two measurement times (Immediate- vs. Later-Assassination) and two grief factors (Crisis & Bereavement and Vulnerability) as repeated measures. The independent variables of gender, age (three levels), and political orientation (three levels) served as grouping factors. For the multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs), participants were divided into three age groups: 7th and 8th graders, 9th and 10th graders, and 11th and 12th graders. The analysis yielded almost no age differences,$^1$ so the $(2 \times 2) \times 2 \times 3$

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{lcccc}
\hline
\textbf{Emotion factor} & \textbf{Immediate-Assassination} & & \textbf{Later-Assassination} & & \textbf{Terror} \\
& \textbf{Mean} & \textbf{SD} & \textbf{Mean} & \textbf{SD} & \textbf{Mean} & \textbf{SD} \\
\hline
Coping & & & & & & \\
Support & 2.09 & 1.06 & 2.64 & 1.12 & 2.27 & 1.11 \\
No stand & 1.86 & 0.88 & 2.57 & 1.27 & 2.14 & 1.10 \\
Oppose & 1.89 & 0.93 & 2.67 & 1.03 & 2.00 & 1.08 \\
Total & 2.01 & 2.56 & 2.19 & & & \\
Positive Emotions & & & & & & \\
Support & 1.09 & 0.24 & 1.28 & 0.47 & 1.11 & 0.29 \\
No stand & 1.30 & 0.63 & 1.51 & 0.67 & 1.14 & 0.33 \\
Oppose & 1.16 & 0.35 & 1.34 & 0.50 & 1.16 & 0.32 \\
Total & 1.14 & 1.33 & 1.13 & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

$^1$ The only age effects that were found are relatively small: a three-way interaction of Age $\times$ Gender $\times$ Political Orientation [$F(4, 447) = 2.42, p < .05$] and two four-way interactions, Age $\times$ Gender $\times$ Political Orientation $\times$ Emotion Factor [$F(4, 447) = 2.84, p < .05$] and Age $\times$ Political Orientation $\times$ Emotion Factor $\times$ Time [$F(4, 447) = 3.32, p < .05$].
MANOVA results are reported here (Table V) with only gender and political orientation as grouping factors.

A main effect of gender was found, resulting from the higher emotion scores of girls relative to boys. Means are presented in Table III. For both grief factors, girls responded more strongly than boys at the two measurement times.

Table III also shows that the grief factor main effect is due to much higher Crisis & Bereavement scores than Vulnerability scores. The time main effect results from higher Immediate- than Later-Assassination scores. The Grief Factor × Time interaction relates to the fact that Crisis & Bereavement emotions are more strongly affected by time than is Vulnerability. Figure 1 shows this interaction, including a political orientation effect. Detailed comparisons are presented below.

A main effect of political orientation was also found. Post hoc tests comparing the three political orientation groups were conducted using the Tukey method for paired comparisons, with $\alpha = .05$. This was done separately for the two grief factors, because of the significant Political Orientation × Grief Factor interaction. Results were similar for the two time points (see Table III): Supporters had higher scores than opponents regarding the two grief factors immediately after the assassination, as well as 5 months later. The no-stand group also scored higher than opponents in all cases except Vulnerability immediately after the assassination.

We examined the interactions that included the time variable by considering the differences between emotional scores of Immediate- and Later-Assassination measurements, thus measuring the fading of grief emotions. The significant interactions of Gender × Time and Grief Factor × Time indicate that the fading effect is dependent on gender and type of emotion (grief factor). Detailed comparisons yield the following results: Fading was stronger for Crisis & Bereavement than for Vulnerability, yet for both grief factors, Immediate-Assassination emotions were
significantly stronger than Later-Assassination emotions. Fading was greater for girls than for boys, though once again, the fading effect was significantly positive in both groups. The grief factor effect tested for each time point showed the same pattern: For both Immediate- and Later-Assassination, Crisis & Bereavement scores are higher than Vulnerability scores. The Grief Factor × Time interaction is due to stronger fading in Crisis & Bereavement than in Vulnerability (see Figure 1).

Traumatic events. Similar analyses were conducted on the comparison between emotional reactions immediately after the assassination and reactions to the terror attacks (with the two events as repeated measures). Results of the (2 × 2) × 2 × 3 MANOVA on Crisis & Bereavement and Vulnerability as repeated measures are presented in Table V. Table III shows the means of emotional responses to the terror attacks. The effects of gender and grief factor go in the same direction as in the preceding analysis; that is, girls scored higher than boys, and Crisis & Bereavement scores were higher than Vulnerability scores. We examined the two two-way interactions through the significant three-way interaction. To examine the three-

| Table V. Results of MANOVAs for Grief Factors (Crisis & Bereavement and Vulnerability) for Immediate- vs. Later-Assassination and for Immediate-Assassination vs. Terror, by Gender and Political Orientation |
|---------------------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|
| Immediate- vs. Later-Assassination | Effect  | df | F   | Immediate-Assassination vs. Terror | Effect  | df | F   |
| Gender (G)                        |         | 1  | 35.35** | Gender (G)                        |         | 1  | 48.31** |
| Political orientation (P)         |         | 2  | 19.48** | Political orientation (P)         |         | 2  | 3.08*  |
| G × P                             |         | 2  | 2.27    | G × P                             |         | 2  | 0.90   |
| Error                             | 459     | (1.38) |       | Error                             | 459     | (1.35) |       |
| Emotion factor (Em)               |         | 1  | 969.63** | Emotion factor (Em)               |         | 1  | 1496.49** |
| G × Em                            |         | 1  | 1.29    | G × Em                            |         | 1  | 0.51   |
| P × Em                            |         | 2  | 3.40*   | P × Em                            |         | 2  | 1.48   |
| G × P × Em                        |         | 2  | 0.75    | G × P × Em                        |         | 2  | 0.18   |
| Error                             | 459     | (0.35) |       | Error                             | 459     | (0.32) |       |
| Time (T)                          |         | 1  | 453.41** | Time (T)                          |         | 1  | 17.47** |
| G × T                             |         | 1  | 4.71*   | G × T                             |         | 1  | 0.23   |
| P × T                             |         | 2  | 0.46    | P × T                             |         | 2  | 18.65** |
| G × P × T                         |         | 2  | 1.03    | G × P × T                         |         | 2  | 0.72   |
| Error                             | 459     | (0.40) |       | Error                             | 459     | (0.48) |       |
| Em × T                            |         | 1  | 160.74** | Em × T                            |         | 1  | 25.90** |
| G × Em × T                        |         | 1  | 1.11    | G × Em × T                        |         | 1  | 2.80   |
| P × Em × T                        |         | 2  | 0.29    | P × Em × T                        |         | 2  | 3.59*  |
| G × P × Em × T                    |         | 2  | 0.07    | G × P × Em × T                    |         | 2  | 0.56   |
| Error                             | 459     | (0.18) |       | Error                             | 459     | (0.19) |       |

Note. Values in parentheses represent mean square errors.

*p < .05, **p < .01.
way interaction of Political Orientation × Grief Factor × Event shown in Figure 1, we also calculated differences between Immediate-Assassination and Terror scores, measuring the effect of type of traumatic event.

A comparison among the effects of type of trauma in the three political groups shows that for Crisis & Bereavement, the effect was stronger for supporters than for the no-stand group, which in turn showed a stronger effect than for opponents. Regarding Vulnerability, a stronger effect of type of trauma was found for supporters than for the no-stand group or opponents. The Crisis & Bereavement finding is a result of the political orientation differences in Immediate-Assassination, whereas for Terror scores no differences were found among political orientation groups. Comparisons of emotions, where political orientation and events are held constant, show that Crisis & Bereavement scores for Terror are lower than for Immediate-Assassination among supporters and are higher among opponents (Table III). No significant difference was found for the no-stand group. Vulnerability scores were higher than Immediate-Assassination scores for both the no-stand group and opponents. No significant difference was found for supporters. Comparison of the two grief factors reveals that for both events, and in all three political orientation groups, Crisis & Bereavement scores exceeded Vulnerability scores.

Correlation between grief factors. Although differences were found between the grief factors as a function of time and type of traumatic event, correlations between them were quite high and significant ($p < .01$): For Crisis & Bereavement, the correlation between Immediate- and Later-Assassination was $r(474) = .543$; between Immediate-Assassination and Terror, $r(474) = .417$; and between Later-Assassination and Terror, $r(474) = .541$. For Vulnerability, the corresponding correlations were $r(474) = .549$, $r(474) = .487$, and $r(474) = .602$, respectively. [For Coping, the corresponding correlations were $r(470) = .423$, $r(470) = .465$, and $r(472) = .678$, respectively.]

Discussion

Fading of Grief Emotions

A comparison of emotional reactions immediately after the event and 5 months later revealed the expected fading of intensity as a function of time. This finding, which is well documented in the case of individual grief and mourning (Rando, 1984, 1994), is here shown to take place on the collective level as well (Witztum & Malkinson, 1998). We found that the gradient of decrease in emotion intensity was the same for all political orientation groups and for boys and girls alike, leaving original differences between these groups intact. Rabin supporters still felt more pain and grief than the other groups 5 months later, and girls still felt more strongly than boys. In other words, Rabin supporters were still doing more “grief work” than opponents 5 months after the assassination, which supports our hypothesis.
As in Raviv et al. (1998), the present phase of the study focused on the two grief factors, Crisis & Bereavement and Vulnerability, and did not consider the other two emotion factors. The Positive Emotions factor was omitted from the analysis because of the very low scores it received. Although the positive results of trauma are an interesting subject meriting further investigation and discussion (Suedfeld, 1997), we decided not to deal with the Coping factor either. The youth’s reactions had initially focused our attention on grief, and therefore we did not include enough items in the questionnaire to fully represent the various dimensions of positive coping with negative events. Thus, the factor comprised only two items, obtaining a relatively low α score, and we felt the data did not justify developing an extensive discussion of the positive and growth-enhancing aspects of trauma, which would be beyond the scope of this study.

When emotional reactions were compared in terms of grief factors, a differential decrease over time was found, with the Crisis & Bereavement factor dropping in intensity more than Vulnerability, yet remaining stronger. We suggest that emotions of crisis and bereavement are more closely related to the suddenness and acuteness of the event than are the vulnerability emotions, and thus are more strongly affected by the passage of time. For example, feeling shocked is closely related to surprise, the effect of which tends to wear off with time. In contrast, emotions of vulnerability, such as despair, guilt, or remorse, are less affected by the passage of time and can persist in association with the event for longer periods. Rando (1994) also pointed to a differential fading process, commenting that most of the more intense reactions of grief subside within 6 to 12 months, whereas other grief symptoms may take up to 3 years to be resolved.

Attitude Change

Five months after the assassination, 53% of the respondents who had changed their orientation in a pro-Rabin direction changed it back to their pre-event position; however, 47% still held their new pro-Rabin views. Thus, we cannot conclusively show that cognitions that change as a result of dramatic events either persist in the long term or bounce back to a pre-event state. Those who experienced the shock of Rabin’s assassination and its emotional aftermath from close by were perhaps surprised by what they perceived to be a very short-lived effect—a phenomenon underscored by the Labor party’s loss in the 1996 elections. However, the literature suggests that such a short-term effect should be expected (Bar-Tal & Labin, 1999; Bellisfield, 1972; Dillehay, 1964; Thistlethwaite, 1974; Vertzberger, 1997). In that case, our finding of 47% of respondents retaining their newly adopted views 5 months later is perhaps more remarkable. It can be explained by Vertzberger’s (1997) suggestion that the individuals most likely to be lastingly affected by a traumatic experience in the formation of their views are those whose pre-event values, beliefs, and attitudes are less strongly held—in particular, the young. Thus,
Reactions to Two Different Traumas

Although the first phase of the study (Raviv et al., 1998) showed significant differences in the intensity of emotional responses to the assassination as a function of political orientation (with Rabin’s supporters reporting stronger feelings of crisis and bereavement and a greater sense of vulnerability), the present study found no such differences between ideological groups in response to the terror attacks. Notwithstanding accusations of indifference made by some politicians, Rabin supporters reacted to the terror attacks as strongly as did opponents, and also as strongly as they had to Rabin’s assassination. On the other hand, we found a significant difference among Rabin’s opponents between the intensity of their emotional reaction to the assassination and their reaction to the terror attacks: The former evoked a weaker response than the latter.

These findings can be understood in light of the theories suggested at the outset. That is, although the assassination of Rabin was shocking to all, and every social and political group in Israel rushed to denounce it, it exacerbated the existing political schism and directed attention toward the internal conflict. Respondents’ emotional reactions to the assassination were unavoidably affected by their preexisting political beliefs, attitudes, and values, which had fueled the controversy in the first place and through which they now interpreted the significance of the event (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Markus & Zajone, 1985; Riley & Pettigrew, 1976). To some Israelis, Rabin’s death was the loss of all they had hoped for and dreamed of. On top of the loss of their leader, their sense of stability and social order—the naïve belief in the Jewish people’s moral superiority, the illusion of Jewish unity and loyalty—was shattered. For others, Rabin’s assassination meant losing some of these things; but it also brought to a halt a policy they did not believe in and (to varying degrees) were opposed to, and this attenuated the intensity of their grief emotions regarding the assassination. Riley and Pettigrew (1976) similarly found that the assassination of the black civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. heightened group differences in opinion and racial attitudes. The acts of terror, in
contrast, represented a conflict with an outgroup, an external enemy, thus weakening the perception of internal differences and enhancing internal unity by directing attention outward (Coser, 1956). In the case of the terrorist bombings, emotional reaction was not related to political orientation because this factor was deemphasized in the rush to unite against a common enemy.

Maslow’s (1968) hierarchy of needs theory also contributes to an explanation of these findings. According to this theory, a threat to physical safety receives priority over more abstract concerns and is responded to on a wider human basis. Reactions are not split by beliefs and values, because the most common basic human needs are involved and internal differences of political opinion are deemphasized. We suggest that responses to the terror attacks were unrelated to respondents’ political orientation because of their universal reaction to physical threat, and because members of all political groups are potentially exposed to the same danger. The fact that respondents scored higher on the Vulnerability factor in response to terror than to the assassination serves as additional support: The terror attacks touched on people’s basic survival concerns more than the assassination did.

Finally, the notion of ideological proximity to, or affiliation with, the victims of trauma (discussed above) suggests that the reactions of Rabin’s supporters were stronger because of the psychological proximity they felt to him and the relative psychological distance felt by his opponents. In contrast, the terror attacks were not directed against one particular ideological group, and the victims were a random group of people whose only common identity was as Israelis. Both left- and right-wing respondents felt the same degree of proximity to these victims, and political ideology was not a basis for varied intensity of reaction.

We can thus elaborate the existing model of political trauma and say that political traumas should be differentiated along ideological lines. First, political or ideological affiliation is an important factor determining who will be most affected by the event, through psychological-ideological proximity and identification with the victims. Events can have political implications that have deep relevance to some society members. Second, stressful political events are more open to interpretation and differential reaction than, say, natural disasters. There is usually little dispute whether a natural disaster is or is not a traumatic event, whereas political events can be experienced as traumatic or not, according to respondents’ beliefs and values. One person’s loss may be another’s victory. Thus, we conclude that political partisanship or ideological orientation is an important variable determining the impact of a political trauma.

Psychological (and, in our case, ideological) proximity also affects the fading of grief emotions in response to political trauma. Proximity does not affect the rate of fading, which was the same in both political orientation groups; however, the differences in intensity of emotions were maintained throughout the fading process as a function of political orientation and ideological proximity.
Findings regarding gender differences were the same as in the first phase of the study: Girls’ emotional reactions to the assassination were stronger than boys’. Such gender differences have been widely reported in the literature (Baron & Joly, 1988; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1991; Goodman, Brumley, Schwartz, & Purcell, 1993; Hammer & Padesky, 1977; Kazdin, 1990; Vogel & Vernberg, 1993; Worchel, Nolan, & Wilson, 1987) and are associated with females’ greater expressiveness and willingness to disclose emotions, the result of their socialization patterns as girls.

Finally, individual differences in intensity of emotional reaction persisted across different traumatic events as well as over time. The high correlation between individual reports of emotional intensity across assessments reveals an individual emotional response pattern that remains relatively consistent beyond group differences. Thus, both group and individual perspectives must be considered when trying to understand the effects of political trauma on people’s cognitions and emotions.

Summary

National trauma evokes strong emotional and cognitive reactions in many people, with attitude changes most likely to take place among those whose attitudes and beliefs are not strongly held. But even the effects of the most dramatic and traumatic event are limited and tend to fade with the passage of time: Emotions subside, and some of the attitude changes triggered earlier by these emotions eventually revert to pre-event positions. Indeed, recent literature on posttraumatic stress disorder (Saigh, Green, & Korol, 1996), which deals with the long-term effects of trauma on the individual level, indicates that only in a small percentage of affected individuals does the trauma become a turning point whose effects are difficult to reverse.

The study of political trauma, a phenomenon of major relevance to political psychology research, is problematic because of the impossibility of planning prospective studies. There is no control over variables, and the need to act fast creates methodological difficulties. Trauma resulting from political violence in particular has significant effects on children and their development, yet the research literature on such trauma is at a very early stage (Ladd & Cairns, 1996). It is therefore important to continue the study and long-term follow-up of the impact of various national political traumas on children and adolescents.

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Youth Reaction to National Trauma

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