

A Narrative-Based View of Coexistence Education

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Collective narratives of groups in conflict—their perceived histories, beliefs, self-image, and those of their adversaries—play a central role in interpreting and fueling the conflict—and, thus, can play an equally central role in facilitating coexistence. One of their main correlates is their implied delegitimization of the “other’s” collective narrative, its pains, its sufferings, its history, and its aspirations. It is this delegitimization that ought to be the main target for change if coexistence is to be promoted, including the acknowledgement of one’s own contribution to the conflict. Four dilemmas are discussed: coexistence programs for the dominant versus the subordinate groups; possible counterproductive outcomes; resistance against antagonistic, dominant narratives; and the problem of short-term intervention programs.

The intractable Jewish-Arab conflict, like other such conflicts, entails two major aspects: a sociopolitical and a sociopsychological aspect (e.g., Fisher, 1997). The sociopolitical aspect pertains to issues of land; self-governance; independence; military might; water resources; civil rights; economic, political, and cultural dominance; and the like. The sociopsychological aspect consists of a community’s sense of identity, the way it perceives itself, the story it tells about itself, its history, the way it portrays its role in the conflict, and its views of its adversary—in short, its *collective narrative* (Polkinghorne, 1988). In this paper I focus on the latter aspect of conflicts and the way it relates to coexistence programs between Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs (interchangeably described here also as Israeli Palestinians).

The sociopolitical and sociopsychological aspects are reciprocally interrelated. Thus, according to Rouhana (1997), collective identities influence political and social change and are at the same time reciprocally transformed as a

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consequence of such change. This is particularly pronounced during conflict when a community's collective narrative gains its centrality in response to the political events while serving, among other functions, as a coping mechanism to strengthen a community's resolve in the face of adverse and traumatic events (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). On the other hand, the events themselves, including the political actions such as the Israeli Arabs' violent demonstration of October 2001 and the police's deadly reactions, receive their significance and meaning from the collective narratives of the two sides of the conflict.

Much depends on the way one chooses to look at conflicts. Whereas focusing on competing political interests (e.g., control over land, independence) leads to attempts to bridge between them, focusing on competing collective narratives and identities (e.g. the way each side sees itself and its role in the conflict) leads to attempts to reach mutual acknowledgement (Ross, 2000). This kind of choice depends, of course, on current states of the conflict also. Reciprocal relations need not always be balanced and symmetrical as one or another aspect may come to dominate over the other. When the political or violent aspect acts up, as was the case in Israel in October 2001 when Israeli-Arabs rioted for greater political and economical equality, coexistence education tends to take a back seat in addressing the psychological aspect of the conflict. But when steps toward peacemaking or reconciliation begin to be taken, the psychological aspect such as changed perceptions and attitudes needs to take a front seat. It is then that coexistence education stands a fair chance of being effective (Bar-Tal, 2002).

The argument I wish to pursue here concerns the central yet dual role that collective narratives play. On the one hand, collective narratives, their underlying belief systems (Bar-Tal, 2000), and their roots in collective historical memories (Ahonen, 1999) play a crucial role in fueling and sustaining a conflict, and, on the other hand, they can play an equally crucial role in potentially facilitating coexistence. The goals of coexistence education, as I will argue below, follow from the superordinate role attributable to collective narratives in contexts of conflict. But before turning to issues pertaining to coexistence education, a brief discussion of the nature of collective narratives and their place during conflicts is needed.

Collective Narratives and Collective Memories

Collective narratives are the comprehensive collection of stories, beliefs, aspirations, histories, and current explanations that a group holds about itself and about its surroundings. *Collective narratives are social constructions that coherently interrelate a sequence of historical and current events; they are accounts of a community's collective experiences, embodied in its belief system and represent the collective's symbolically constructed shared identity* (Bruner, 1990).

To be regarded as a collective narrative, a narrative ought to pertain to the collective: It should offer a community a defined identity in which the individuals

and their actions are regarded not as autonomous but as members with particular roles in it (i.e., soldier, professor, barber, nurse; Margolin, 2000). In this capacity, collective narratives are prime devices for providing the backbone of a group's sense of *shared identity*, and thus, to an individual's sense of *social identity* (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The meaning-providing feature of collective narratives is emphasized by Polkinghorne (1988), pointing out that "narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporary and personal actions" (p. 11). Barthes (1973) speaks of narratives (calling them "mythologies") as giving "an historical intention a natural justification, and contingency appear natural. . . . In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: It abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of human essences. . . ." (p. 155).

Collective narratives do not emerge from nowhere. Their most important source is the group's history, that is, the way the group constructs and construes its past. As some scholars point out, collective narrative and collective historical memories are inseparable (e.g., Barthes, 1973). As Wright (1985) wrote pertaining to Britain: "Far from being somehow 'behind' the present, the past exists as an accomplished presence in public understanding. In this sense it is written into present social reality, not just implicitly as History, National Heritage and Tradition" (p. 142), but restores the "essential and grander identity of the 'Imaginary Briton' . . ." (p. 165). In this sense, as Ignatieff (1996) commented, the problem with the collective memory of the past is that it isn't past at all. It would be quite impossible to understand the Jewish collective narrative without evoking the memories of the pogroms, and even more so—the Holocaust, or the Palestinian narrative without mentioning the 1948 *Nakhba* (Abu-Nimer, 2000).

The importance of the role played by historically rooted collective narratives in a community's sense of identity and way of interpreting its surroundings can be seen in the way that emerging nations contrive new narratives or change old ones. For example, Chen (1999) describes how Taiwan's rulers purposefully constructed a new national narrative, gradually moving from a traditional Chinese-based narrative to a new one based on a "usable past" which is rooted in Taiwanese culture. Similarly, Kit-wai Ma (1998) describes how Hong Kong had to reinvent a new memory and identity in the process of "recinicization," using film and TV as the major agents of change. The process of small nation-states, such as Israel and Armenia, is not much different, with major societal, cultural, and particularly educational institutions constructing a renewed collective narrative from ancient and recent histories (Tiryakan, 1998).

History not only provides the roots for a group's collective narrative, but is reciprocally colored by the narrative: Historical events are "made to fit" the narrative, are added or, more often, are excluded from the narrative. Thus, for example, while the Jewish narrative fails to include any reference to the "disappearance" of

more than 400 Arab villages since 1948, the Israeli Palestinian narrative fails to mention the invasion of seven Arab states into the newly born State of Israel in May of 1948 (e.g., Sezgin, 2001).

When collective historical memories remain unresolved, they continue to linger underneath the public surface and forcefully fuel the conflict (Cairns & Hewstone, 2002). The Northern Irish conflict or the one between Israeli Jews and Palestinians are cases in point. These examples highlight the grip of historical memories that may last for decades and centuries, manifested in such rituals as the Protestant March through Catholic streets, the celebration of a Holocaust memorial day by Israeli Jews, or the Israeli-Palestinian *Day of Earth* to commemorate the killings by police in 1976. If left unresolved and unacknowledged, collective memories fuel and recreate conflicts; coming to know and to acknowledge the painful memories of the other side may be a way to overcome conflicts, as has been attempted, such as through open discussion in Rwanda (Staub, 2002) and through the sharing of personal histories in Israel (Bar-On, 2002).

Collective narratives appear to play a particularly important role in difficult times. The meaning-providing function of collective narratives serves, then, to protect its members from the devastating impact of conflict, disaster, or collective trauma and offers the means to assist the process of healing. It helps to know who we are, what we are suffering for, who are the despised others, and where does all this lead to. Collective narratives serve in this sense as collective coping mechanisms. Abu Heim, Quota, Thabet, and Sarraj (1993) have found that the commitment of the Palestinian children of Gaza to their cultural values and worldview provided them with psychological protection against the threats of the armed conflict with Israel. The recent return of the American public to what journalists have called "old American patriotism," and the return of Israeli Jews to older Zionist ideas at the expense of subdued Post-Zionist voices, in the wake of the October 2000 Palestinian uprising, attest to the coping role played by familiar, traditional collective narratives.

Times of conflict are the days of grandeur for collective narratives. During such times, collective memories become a rallying point, mobilizing a group's hidden energies and reinforcing its sense of unity (e.g., Wright, 1985). During such times, there is highlighting of beliefs that pertain, for example, to how justified "our side" is in its goals and actions; how much it is victimized by the other side (Bar-Tal, 1988); how morally imperative "our" actions toward the other side are (Foster, 1999); how moderate "our" dispositions are; and how much "we," unlike the other side, are willing to sacrifice to end the conflict (Ross & Ward, 1995).

By necessity, the collective narratives of groups in conflict contradict each other and mirror each other, providing interpretations of events that negate those of the other side. Thus, whereas a group's collective narrative bolsters the group's self-identity and justifies its role in the conflict, it, also, invalidates the other side's

collective narrative and its role in the conflict: If “we” are right, “they” are surely wrong, and if “we” are victims, “they” are obviously the perpetrators.

The collective narratives of Israeli Jews and Israeli Palestinians have been studied extensively (e.g., Habibi, 1987), pointing out how contradictory and mutually exclusive they are. Sagy, Adwan, Kaplan, Garhat, and Kassem (2000), have studied the extent to which Israeli and Palestinian youths perceive the legitimacy of salient items in each other’s collective narrative (e.g., the Holocaust and the Nakhba, the ‘67 War and the Intifada). Israelis were found to be more accepting of the Palestinian narrative and were less uniform in their views than their Palestinian counterparts. However, both sides showed little empathy for the other’s narrative, and both sides expressed great anger at it.

Here lies the crux of the matter: Not only do the narratives and their underlying beliefs mirror each other, they also *delegitimize* each other’s goals, actions, history, humanity and sufferings. As defined by Bar-Tal (1988), “Deligitimation [sic] indicates that the characteristics of the delegitimized group, as reflected in its behaviors, attitudes, values, goals, ideology, or traits, are undesirable and negative, and unacceptable according to the norms and/or values of the delegitimizing group” (p. 218). This, for example, is clearly reflected in textbooks (Firer & Adwan, 1998), in the media, and in the arts (Urian, 1997). When Jewish settlers are described as “colonialists,” “oppressors” and “conquerors”; when Palestinian leaders are described as “blood thirsty terrorists”; or when Golda Meir stated her view that “‘They’ are not nice,” the message going out sounds loud and clear: The other side’s collective view of the conflict, of “us” and of itself, is not legitimate (Bar-Tal, 1988). It is this delegitimization that is at the core of the sociopsychological aspect of the conflict and thus ought to be the main target for coexistence education.

The Goals of Coexistence Education

In light of the above, it becomes evident that collective narratives, particularly during times of conflict, play a major societal role, akin to that played by the sociopolitical aspect of conflicts, subsuming and determining hopes, attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices, and actions that emanate from them (Bar-Tal, Raviv, & Freund, 1994). It follows that if coexistence in the Israeli Palestinian context is to mean anything like being able to live in peace, cooperation, and equality side by side within a single political entity, it will have to address the conflict between the two collective narratives. Sarghiesh and Bashir (2000), quoted by Sagy et al. (2000), expressed their view with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that “coexistence between people is unlikely as long as each side is living its own history alongside the other or in isolation from the other. To enable a real dialogue and coexistence, each side will have to assimilate the history of the other, even to make it its own. . . .” (p. 6). Similarly, Halabi (2001) argues that the deadlock

between Jews and Arabs in the intergroup encounters at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam can be overcome “once the Jewish group begins to recognize the Palestinians as a national group that has suffered an historical injustice at the hands of the Jews and recognizes the role that they themselves. . . continue to play in the oppression of the Arabs” (p. 6).

A recent survey, pertaining to the espoused goals of peace education, was carried out by Nevo, Salomon, and Brem (2002) among 66 Jewish and Israeli Palestinian peace educators in Israel. One of the major findings of the survey was that attaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of the other side’s collective narrative was perceived as one of the most important goals of peace education: It ranked as the foremost goal for peace education out of 25 goals for a Jewish target population, and ranked second out of 25 goals for a Palestinian target population.

It follows from the above that the ultimate goal of coexistence education ought to be the mutual legitimization of the other side’s collective narrative and its implications. However, such a goal, as suggested here, may be too much to ask for as an immediate goal for coexistence education. The tensions following the Fall 2000 bloody collision between Israeli Palestinians and the police within the wider context of growing mistrust and animosity would make such an aspiration unrealistic. On the other hand, following Marc Ross’ (2000) call for no more than “good enough conflict management,” it might be challenging enough for coexistence education to aim at the gradual legitimization of the other side’s collective narrative.

Accepting somebody else’s narrative need not mean either agreeing with it or abandoning one’s own narrative. It means only the acknowledgement of the narrative’s “right to exist,” accepting its validity on its own terms. Such acknowledgment is not an all-or-none matter. There may be progressive stages of legitimization. First may come some personal familiarity with the other side’s perspective, possibly through personal stories, as suggested by Bar-On and Kassem (this issue). This would be expected to lead to the acknowledgment of the other side’s fears and suffering, followed by an acceptance of the other side’s right to feel humiliated, oppressed, and discriminated against and possibly leading to the acknowledgment of the other side’s history as the other side sees it.

Gradual steps toward mutual legitimization of each side’s collective narrative are, by necessity, correlated with other changes. First and foremost is the willingness to see things “from the other side.” Changing perspectives is no easy cognitive matter, as all of us are very much captives of our own points of view, particularly when these are socially sanctioned and, therefore, not amenable to change (e.g., Weick, 1979). However, a recent study by Lustig (2003), to be reported in a later section, attests to the fact that taking new perspectives is possible even in the context of the present conflict. A second change correlated with the acceptance of the “other’s” collective narrative is the gradual acknowledgement of the role

played by one's own side in the conflict: The massive expulsions it may have inflicted on the other side; its rejection of past conciliatory moves; the killings; the acts of terror, the loss, pain, and fear it may have caused the other side. Such acknowledgements, touching mainly the emotional and the more difficult aspects of coexistence, require, among other things, a change in one's sense of collective identity. As long as this sense is relatively monolithic that "we are right and they are wrong; we are the victims and they are the perpetrators," acknowledging one's own "contribution" to the conflict is impossible (Bar-On, 1999).

When a community's collective narratives start becoming questioned and "sacred cows" become candidates for slaughter, the monolithic grip of the collective narrative weakens and an examination of each side's actions can take place. It is, no doubt, a soul-searching process: Although it does not pertain personally to the individuals involved in a coexistence program, it, nevertheless, is an assault on their collective identity and pride.

Ultimately, one would expect coexistence education to lead not only to the attainment of the cognitive and emotional goals described above but to see that their attainments lead also to changed behaviors and actions toward members of the other side. When actual encounters are experienced, humane and nonviolent behaviors would be expected to result from the newly acquired legitimization of the other side's narrative.

Can the legitimization of the "other's" collective narrative be attained through educational means? Is there any empirical evidence that such can be attained particularly in light of the current context of the Palestinian-Jewish violent conflict? Lustig (2003) has found that studying a remote interethnic conflict, with its mirror-image narratives, helps Israeli youngsters be more willing to acknowledge the two-sided nature of the narratives involved in the local conflict. Jewish high school students participated in a program initiated by the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) in which they studied the nature of conflicts and focused through role playing and conflict resolution simulations on the Northern Irish conflict. A week following the termination of the program, all of its participants were able to write not only an essay describing the local conflict from a Jewish point of view but also to describe it quite fairly from the Palestinian perspective, maintaining a relatively neutral perspective. This was not so for the youngsters who did not participate in the program. Only 23% of them tried to describe the conflict from the Palestinian perspective, and they did it in a rather negative way, not being able to sidestep their ingroup bias. This study was carried out during the violent conflicts between Jews and Palestinians that started in the Fall of 2000 (the *Intifada*), and hence its findings shed important light on the feasibility of coexistence education that aims at the acceptance of an adversary's perspective even when the conflict flares up.

Another approach is based on the forced compliance paradigm (Aronson, 1988). According to this paradigm, Jews and Arabs are induced to construct the

other side's collective narrative as seen from the latter's perspective, and thus they are expected to experience a disturbing discrepancy between their beliefs and their (publicly shared) construction of the other side's perspective. For example, in a series of experiments, Leippe and Eisenstadt (1994) have found that this approach positively affected Whites' issue-specific attitudes toward Blacks and were generalized to their overall beliefs about Blacks. The question of whether such an approach might facilitate the legitimization of the other side's collective narrative is presently being investigated by us by having Jewish and Arab teachers construct each other's narrative of the conflict via the Internet.

Four Dilemmas

The approach taken here puts the onus on what coexistence education ought to ultimately attain: the legitimization of the "other's" collective narrative. However, this approach is not without dilemmas and difficulties. In what follows, I present four such dilemmas that require much scholarly thinking and research. These dilemmas pertain to (a) the question of whether the strong and the weak sides of a conflict, such as the Jewish and the Palestinian, should be subject to the same kind of coexistence education; (b) the conditions under which the approach taken might be effective or counter productive; (c) the possible conflict between the newly attained legitimization of the "other's" narrative and the more veteran, less accepting, and more consensually held collective narrative; and (d) the possible effectiveness of the "shot in the arm" kind of coexistence programs relative to lengthy processes of coexistence socialization.

Should Coexistence Education Be the Same for Both the Weak and the Strong Sides of the Conflict?

Underlying the approach presented here is the assumption of reciprocity: Both sides are to come to legitimize the other side's collective narrative and its derivatives. However, one of the correlates of most conflicts is the inequality built into them. In the present case of the Jewish-Arab conflict, inequalities are explicit and blatant: The two sides differ with respect to social class, political power, education, and more generally, civil and legal rights. These inequalities are manifested in numerous ways: income, employment, public budget allocations, ownership of land, quality of education, high school dropout rates, infant mortality, and more (e.g., Swirsky & Konur-Attias, 2003). It is obvious that the Jewish-Zionist collective narrative dominates whereas the Palestinian population faces the threat of discrimination and gradual disintegration (Halabi, 2000). Thus, for example, school curricula, even for the Israeli Palestinian population, are focused on the Jewish narrative while their own narrative is mentioned nowhere. Complaints are heard that since Israeli Palestinian students have to acquire two foreign languages, He-

brew and English, their mastery of their own language, Arabic, keeps deteriorating (Al Haj, 1995).

It would make more sense and would be desirable for the majority in a conflict—the Israeli Jews in the present case—to gradually come to accept the legitimacy of the collective narrative of the Israeli Palestinians. But would it make equal sense to expect the Palestinians—who see Zionism as a colonialist force that caused their 1948 defeat (the *Nakhba*)—to accept the Jewish-Zionist narrative as legitimate? Can any conquered, oppressed, or discriminated minority be expected to accept the narrative's legitimacy of the dominating or discriminating majority? Not really. A possible solution might be an asymmetry of legitimizations: While the strong side of the conflict, the Israeli Jews in this case, come to legitimize the perspective of the Arab narrative, the Arabs would be expected to (only) come to accept the Jewish side's right to live securely.

*Could Coexistence Education, as Conceived of Here,
Be Counter Productive Under Some Conditions?*

Quite clearly, coexistence education, particularly as presented here, cannot take place and be effective under all conditions and under all circumstances. Some conditions are easy to imagine, such as the cessation of hostilities and the beginnings of some reconciliation. Other conditions are less obvious. Bar-Tal (2002) argues that for peace education to be effective the objectives and contents of peace education must be agreed upon by members of the society. Moreover, according to Bar-Tal, peace or coexistence education cannot remain a socially isolated affair. Society must spread the ideas of peace education via other means such as the media and political discourse to create a culture of peace that pertains to a significant portion of society.

Another condition pertains to the symmetry between the identity and collective narratives of the two sides in the conflict. As discussed above, it might well be the case that coexistence education cannot be the same for both the strong and the weak side in the conflict. For one crucial point, the asymmetry between the two sides to the Jewish-Palestinian conflict is embedded in the relative frailty of the latter's collective narrative and identity (Rouhana, 1997). Given the split sense of identity of the Israeli Palestinian population between being Palestinian and being Israeli, acceptance of the legitimacy of the Jewish-Zionist narrative might mean further disintegration of their already weakened collective identity, possibly even its gradual extinction.

According to Halabi & Zonenstein (2000), for the Israeli Palestinians to be able to become part of coexistence between equals, they would have to first come from a position of some strength, equipped with a coherent, empowered, and self-assured sense of identity that would allow them to acknowledge the Jewish narrative and that of their own. Thus, as Halabi & Zonenstein (2000) argue, coexistence

education in Israel might have to, first and foremost, cultivate and empower the Palestinian's sense of collective identity.

However, there is reason to suspect that bolstering and empowering a group's collective narrative, although important for its own sense of identity, might become counterproductive as it may increase ingroup centrism and outgroup derogation (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990). Similarly, one may wonder whether coming to legitimize the Israeli Palestinian collective narrative by the Jews might not weaken their own adherence to the Jewish-Zionist narrative. This then poses a double dilemma between (a) strengthening the Palestinian sense of collective identity based on a strengthened collective narrative, while heightening the barrier with the Jewish population, and (b) having the Jewish population come to legitimize the Palestinian narrative at the expense of their adherence to their own. An alternative possibility is that the gradual legitimization of the other side's narrative may lead not to weakened adherence to the narrative of one's group but to a more complex and less monolithic narrative to which one adheres (Bar-On & Kassem, this issue).

*Can Legitimization of the Other's Narrative Overcome
the Resistance of the Veteran, Consensual Narrative?*

Most designs and research studies of coexistence programs are concerned with their internal structure and contents; the social interactions they promote; the knowledge about the "other" they convey; and the cognitive, affective, or behavioral changes they lead to. These are issues on a very specific, concrete level: the micro level of change. But there is a wider, not very hospitable social context that surrounds such coexistence activities. Let us assume for a moment that a well thought out program for adolescents does, indeed, facilitate their legitimization of the adversary's collective narrative as outlined earlier. The youths, now equipped with a new way of perceiving the adversary, would immediately enter into a competition, or worse yet, a collision course with their social surroundings that adheres to the dominant, well-entrenched, and consensually held collective narrative. Such a narrative is resistant to disproof; it is considered by the wider society to be based on unquestionable truths (e.g., Weick, 1979). Coexistence programs, intensive as they may be, would be hard put to produce changes that can withstand not only the eroding forces of time but—even more challenging—the expected resistance of the well-established and more monolithic collective narrative espoused by one's social surrounds: home, school, neighborhood, and the media.

There is indeed the danger that the wider context of events and the belligerent views that accompany them might overshadow the effects of well-designed coexistence programs. However, there are also encouraging findings. Biton (2002) has recently carried out a dissertation study with close to 800 Jewish and Palestinian high school students, half of whom participated in an IPCRI peace education program, which was integrated into regular subject matter classes. The study was

carried out during the *Intifada*, and the question was whether or not participation in the program might bear positive fruits despite the overall increase in animosity, mistrust, and hatred. Biton found that participation in the program tended to lead to more positive and conciliatory perceptions of the concept of “peace” by both Jewish and Palestinian youths. On the other hand, nonparticipation led to an increase of the number of Palestinian youth who advocated war as a means to attain peace. No such negative changes took place among Palestinian or Jewish participants. In other words, participation in the program served as a barrier against the deterioration of perceptions of the concept of peace and ways of attaining it. These are encouraging findings, but we still need to ask: What can make coexistence programs that cultivate less monolithic and more tolerant narratives survive the collision with its older, widely-shared, and less-tolerant narratives? What would coexistence programs need to entail that would allow their graduates to successfully sustain their newly-acquired perspectives in the face of the inhospitable, well-entrenched, dominant collective narratives?

“Shot in the Arm” or Ongoing Socialization?

Many coexistence programs consist of short-term interventions ranging from one weekend encounter to a yearlong series of meetings or projects. As educational research tells us, the acquisition of information, or even scientific, conceptual changes, can be attained under certain conditions through short-term intensive interventions (the “shot in the arm” paradigm). However, such changes are not easily attained when they contradict previous scientific misconceptions (i.e., “The earth looks and *is* flat.”) or beliefs that are close to one’s heart (i.e., “We, the women are discriminated against.”). In fact, as social psychological research tends to show, deep-seated changes of belief and attitude are better attained via the long road of gradual, hardly-felt processes of socialization and acculturation, that are described less by the metaphor of intensive shots in the arm and more by the drip effect of water on rocks (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). Coexistence, entailing the mutual legitimization of collective narratives, has to combat long-held misconceptions and beliefs and, thus, would be better served by continuous socialization rather than by short-term programs. As Rouhana & Bar-Tal (1998) argue, “peaceful resolution of intractable conflict requires not only changes of conflictive ethos but also an active construction of a new ethos consistent with a peaceful relationship” (p. 768).

It would seem that the construction of a new, coexistence-oriented ethos is not a matter of a single program, wise and empirically based as it might be, but rather a matter of both a continuous and all-encompassing culture that includes the media, politicians, educational institutions, and public opinion. Thus, it would seem that to promote effective coexistence that can bear lasting fruits, the whole cultural environment has to become an educational intervention. Relative to it,

the shot in the arm approach of a joint workshop here, two weekly hours of a coexistence curriculum there, won't be of much use. There is a lesson to be learned from research of other kinds of programs: Intensive and costly programs such as Head Start and Sesame Street (Ball & Bogatz, 1971) have been found to yield disappointing results relative to the aspirations and promises that initiated them. Why would coexistence programs, facing far more difficult challenges, fare any better? Ostensibly, the verdict would seem to be against such intervention, well intended as it may be.

But this, as it turns out, is not the whole story. A number of longitudinal studies of early childhood intervention programs have recently come up with surprising results. For example, a longitudinal study of the long-term effects of early childhood televising (Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger, & Wright, 2001), showed that (controlling for relevant background variables) exposure to enriching preschool TV contents at preschool age was positively related with, particularly for boys, the attainment of higher grades, reading more books, less aggression, and stronger emphasis on achievement ten years later. Another longitudinal study investigated the long-term effects of infant and preschool programs such as Head Start throughout a period of ten years (Clarke & Campbell, 1998). The researchers found that participation in these programs was associated with higher scores on cognitive tests and the attainment of higher academic achievements ten years later.

It appears that contrary to the short-term findings, long-term ones were surprisingly far more encouraging, reversing earlier pessimistic conclusions. There may be more to educational *sleepers effects* than meets the eye. Intensive intervention programs can have desirable long-term effects. Does this, then, mean that coexistence programs designed to change one's way of perceiving the narratives of the adversary have a better chance of success than the discussion above would lead us to expect? The paucity of long-term evaluation studies of ongoing coexistence programs leaves us with an unanswered question on this score.

Conclusion

Collective narratives, with their underlying belief systems and their roots in historical memories, appear to play a central role in conflicts, on a par with the role played by the political aspect. Thus, it stands to reason that collective narratives should be the targets of coexistence programs. And since delegitimization of the "other's" collective narrative is one of the ways a group scaffolds its own sense of identity, coexistence education has to reverse this process by leading to the acceptance of the "other's" collective narrative as legitimate. This may well be one of the unstated goals of many coexistence programs that exist in regions of intractable conflict.

But this approach is not without difficulties. The dilemmas brought up in this paper are not necessarily unique to the approach advocated here, but are highlighted by it: Can we expect the weaker side in a conflict, in this case the Israeli Palestinians, to legitimize the collective narrative of those who they consider to be perpetrators, oppressors, or discriminators? If a condition for coexistence were the strengthening of the Palestinian collective identity, would it not stand in the way of coexistence with the Jewish population? Can the newly developed perspective that acknowledges the legitimacy of the other's collective narrative survive in the face of an opposing veteran and widely shared collective narrative? Would a short, intensive program designed to attain the legitimization of the "other" be of more value where long-term socialization processes should have been the main vehicles of change? The main challenge for educators is finding ways for coexistence education to overcome barriers of the kind mentioned here.

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