

Small Group Research

<http://sgr.sagepub.com>

Structure and Process in Reconciliation-Transformation Workshops: Encounters Between Israeli and Palestinian Youth

David Bargal

Small Group Research 2004; 35; 596

DOI: 10.1177/1046496404265867

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://sgr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/35/5/596>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Small Group Research* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://sgr.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://sgr.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations <http://sgr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/35/5/596>

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS IN RECONCILIATION- TRANSFORMATION WORKSHOPS

Encounters Between Israeli and Palestinian Youth

DAVID BARGAL

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

This article presents a detailed blueprint for conducting reconciliation-transformation workshops among Jewish and Palestinian youth. The workshops are based on interventions that deal with intragroup and intergroup dynamics. Conflict management workshops, which at one time utilized small group interventions to create a bridge between two conflicting parties, are no longer effective. The recent escalation of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has resulted in a vicious cycle of deaths and casualties on both sides. Thus, in the attempt to generate a dialogue between the two groups, reconciliation-transformation measures should be used as a means of reducing the cognitive distortions, anger, hostility, fear, grief, victimization, and humiliation that have developed. The workshop structure and process proposed in the article reflect the ideal design based on interdisciplinary knowledge and experience gained from efforts to build peace in other conflictual contexts such as those of South Africa and South America.

Keywords: reconciliation; encounter workshops; dialogue groups; Palestinian-Israeli conflict

The recent Palestinian uprising broke out in October 2000, at the height of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. It has escalated to the point of frequent suicide bombings by Palestinians and harsh responses by the Israeli army, which have resulted in a vicious cycle of deaths and casualties on both sides. In this process, relations between the parties in conflict have deteriorated to such a low level that any formal peace agreement attained will not auto-

SMALL GROUP RESEARCH, Vol. 35 No. 5, October 2004 596-616

DOI: 10.1177/1046496404265867

© 2004 Sage Publications

596

matically undo the cognitive distortions, anger, hostility, fear, grief, victimization, and humiliation that have developed.

In light of this situation, any attempt to build and stabilize a long-range peace will have to be accompanied by constructive conciliatory events. The reconciliation process includes many activities that can be considered both processes and outcomes (Bartal & Bennink, 2004). These activities are conducted on a variety of levels and cover a diverse range of domains (e.g., economic, political, and psychological; Kriesberg, 1998). Of these, the article will focus on one type of process—interpersonal, group, and intergroup encounters aimed at achieving reconciliation between adversary groups.

From a historical perspective, it can be noted that encounters and dialogues between former adversarial groups played an important role in the aftermath of World War II. For example, the Mountain House in Switzerland brought together German and French adults and youth (Henderson, 1996). It should also be mentioned that in South Africa, truth commissions have played an important role in bringing about interpersonal and intergroup reconciliation (Krog, 1998; Tutu, 1999); and in Israel, the Oasis of Peace and Givat Haviva have served the same purpose (Bar & Bargal, 1995).

With regard to the youth encounters discussed in this article, it is argued that reconciliation-transformation workshops are an essential and indispensable educational tool for bringing about change in the attitudes, perceptions, feelings, and behavior of youth in an attempt to achieve reconciliation. The article will present the theoretical and conceptual rationale for the structure and process of the workshops, with emphasis on their vital role in preparing future leaders in former adversary societies to develop peaceful and normal interactions.

These activities can be distinguished from interactive conflict resolution workshops (Avruch, 1998; Fisher, 1997). Whereas interactive workshops are based on Burton (1987) and Kelman's (1998) tradition, which focuses mainly on linear problem-solving interactions, reconciliation-transformation workshops focus on educational, emotional, and therapeutic processes.

RECONCILIATION: ITS MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS

The importance of reconciliation as a mechanism for building peace and as a stabilizing force that promotes harmony and normalization of relations between former adversaries has only recently been addressed in the literature (Bartal & Bennink, 2004). As defined by Bartal (2000), reconciliation is a sociocultural process that

encompasses the majority of society's members, who form new beliefs about the former adversary, about their own society, and about the relationship between the two groups. It is not a formal process, because it requires a change in societal beliefs. (p. 356)

Bartal's characterization of the reconciliation process deals exclusively with its cognitive aspects: "At the heart of the reconciliation process is the change of the *conflictive ethos*, which provides the systematic rationalization and psychological investment in the continuation of the conflict and constitutes its cultural foundation" (p. 357).

According to Bartal's (2000) approach, the transformation process that ensues as a result of formal peace agreements between societies formerly entangled in intractable conflicts is rational and cognitive in nature. Bartal and Bennink (2004) provide a more recent characterization of the reconciliation concept, which adds affective and emotional components: "changes of the motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions of the majority of society members" (p. 17). Hence, emotions and interpersonal relations constitute an important component of the reconciliation and transformation process.

The most detailed analysis of the reconciliation process is proposed by Lederach (1997) and includes practical suggestions for interventions aimed at achieving that goal. According to Lederach, the parties that are about to engage in reconciliation processes resulting from peace agreements "have direct experience of violent trauma that they associate with their perceived enemies and that is

sometimes tied to the history of grievance and enmity that has accumulated over generations" (p. 24).

In light of these negative interactions, Lederach (1997) advocates a peace-building process that "focuses on the restoration and building of relationships" (p. 24). Based on this meta-assumption, Lederach puts forth three working assumptions for advancing reconciliation, of which the following two are addressed here. First, embarking from the notion that relationships constitute "the basis of both the conflict and its long-term solution" (p. 26), he highlights the importance of creating means to engage the adversarial parties in a human relationship, as equal human beings. Second, Lederach assumes that reconciliation equals encounter between real people who belong to the two parties in conflict. The aims of these face-to-face encounters are

to find ways to address the past without getting locked into a vicious cycle of mutual exclusiveness inherent in the past. People need opportunity and space to express to and with one another the trauma of loss and their grief at that loss, and the anger that accompanies the pain and the memory of injustices experienced. (p. 26)

Based on the first two assumptions proposed by Lederach, the proposed reconciliation-transformation workshops seem to be the most suitable means for achieving reconciliation.

The workshops are based on the concept of transformative dialogue as introduced by Gergen and cited by Maoz (2000) and McNamee & Gergen (1999), which is succinctly summarized by Maoz as

a process through which sides deal with disagreement or conflict between them through *expressing themselves, listening to each other, and taking in or emphasizing the emotions, experiences, views, and values of the other*. Through such dialogue, the sides come to *construct themselves and the other differently*, extending the boundaries of the other within the self, and thus *including the other within the realm of relational responsibility*. *Perceptions and relations to others are transformed*, and greater understanding, ac-

ceptance, and connectedness to the experiences and positions of the other are formed (p. 722, italics added).

The main characteristics of reconciliation-transformation workshops are that they serve as a corrective emotional experience and as a self-reconstructive process. The workshops utilize the wisdom, experience, and principles that were developed in the contexts of interpersonal and intergroup dialogues (McNamee & Gergen, 1999; Schoem & Hurato, 2001), conflict management workshops (Bar & Bargal, 1995; Bargal, 1992; Bargal & Bar, 1992, 1994), and group psychotherapy (Bloch & Crouch, 1985; Yalom, 1995).

YOUTH AS A TARGET GROUP FOR RECONCILIATION-TRANSFORMATION WORKSHOPS

The reconciliation-transformation workshop proposed here is targeted for high school and university students. The reasons for choosing this target population are fourfold.

First, especially in contemporary Western societies, youth are at a stage of life that emphasizes development of social and personal identities (Erikson, 1968). During this stage of development, young people are open to influences, education, reeducation, and formulation of their personal attitudes and perceptions of the world. In line with Erikson's notion of youth as a moratorium period, recent research suggests that the process of forming an identity continues into young adulthood.

Second, recruitment of workshop participants from high schools and universities guarantees that the participants will be involved in long-range peace-building activities through cooperative projects conducted by corresponding schools and universities in the former adversarial societies.

Third, peer culture plays a central role in adolescent development (Brown, 1990). Peer culture enables the young person to practice new behaviors, to express unconventional beliefs, and to emulate contemporaries and adults whom they admire as their role models. The small-group format of the workshop is an excellent

setting for examination and exchange of views and emotions related to one's own group and to the other group. This setting is especially effective if the process that evolves during the workshop immediately generates an atmosphere of support and encouragement for confrontation.

Fourth, even though the young generation of representative Israelis and Palestinians will be brought up in the aftermath of mutual atrocities, distrust, anxiety, and humiliation, they are probably less contaminated by the bitterness of the conflict than are their parents and grandparents. Investment in education that promotes intimate and intensive relations (between former adversarial groups) may pave the way for meaningful and long-range exchanges between individuals who are likely to be influential figures in those societies in the future.

STRUCTURE OF THE RECONCILIATION-TRANSFORMATION WORKSHOPS

Based on the conceptualization presented above, this section of the article describes our vision of the ideal reconciliation-transformation encounter between Palestinian and Israeli youth.

The discussion is based on the following assumptions:

1. Reconciliation processes are inevitable for building peace between Palestinians and Israelis. This assumption is highly consistent with Lederach's (1997) conceptualization. Notably, the article deals specifically with the psychological dimensions of these processes.
2. The workshop encounter is the ideal setting for conducting reconciliation activities because it provides a supportive environment, generates intensive interpersonal relations, and promotes self-disclosure as well as disclosure of feelings and narratives. The workshops are facilitated by experienced trainers who represent both parties (Bar & Bargal, 1995; Bargal & Bar, 1990a).
3. The workshop proposed here reflects the ideal-type design, based on interdisciplinary knowledge and on experience gained from peace-building efforts in other situations, which differ in many ways from the Palestinian-Israeli case, for example, in Latin Amer-

ica (Hayner, 2001) and South Africa (de la Rey & Owens, 1998; Errante, 1999; Lederach, 1997).

The reconciliation-transformation workshop for Palestinian and Israeli youth will consist of interventions that relate to three different time perspectives (past, present, and future). The notion of time perspectives is rooted in an anthropological, culture-oriented approach (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961), as well as in the psychological tradition (Lewin, 1935). This orientation reflects the individual as evolving in time, that is, as having a past, present, and future. The past may contain painful memories of trauma, oppression, and injustice that need to be addressed before normalizing relations with former adversaries in the present or designing plans for future peace efforts.

Based on research and encounters conducted in the past among Arab and Jewish youth in Israel (Bar & Bargal, 1995; Bargal, 2004; Bargal & Bar, 1992), the proposed reconciliation-transformation workshop focuses on four components that were found to influence the success of the intervention process: participants, trainers, workshop structure, and workshop content (Bargal, 2004).

PARTICIPANTS

The reconciliation-transformation workshops are not intended for all Israeli and Palestinian youth. Because they are a very expensive educational enterprise, they should be targeted for participants who are likely to benefit from the experience and disseminate it in their schools and communities. Hence, participants in both national groups need to be carefully selected and prepared. First, systematic screening procedures should focus on identifying candidates who support the encounter and are motivated to participate in it. Second, participants should have a fair amount of emotional intelligence, which is expressed in empathy for others and the ability to develop self-awareness (Mayer, 2000). Third, the candidates should be considered by their peers, teachers, and community leaders as potentially influential personalities or as gatekeepers. Studies on group dynamics (Moreland, Levine & Wingert, 1996) and

group psychotherapy (Melnick & Woods, 1976; Yalom, 1995) emphasize the importance of advance selection of candidates for group intervention to generate attitudinal and emotional changes.

With respect to preparation for the workshop, Bargal and Bar (1990b) used the concept of anticipatory socialization in reference to the process whereby participants are provided with information about the workshop and briefly exposed to some of the issues and experiences they may encounter during the actual workshops. Because the reconciliation-transformation workshop may involve intense emotional and cognitive confrontations, such exposure may enhance the participants' ability to cope and increase the impact of the intervention.

TRAINERS

The trainers are the main agents of change who are instrumental in modifying the participants' attitudes, beliefs, and emotions in the reconciliation-transformation workshops. Lewin (1948) views the small group and its leader as the best setting for changing conduct and imparting knowledge to instill new values. Yalom (1995) emphasized the role of group psychotherapy trainers in guiding interpersonal interactions among participants in an effort to create a supportive atmosphere and offer feedback that will help the participants deal with the issues discussed.

In reconciliation-transformation workshops for Israeli and Palestinian youth, the encounter may be sensitive and emotionally loaded. For that reason, these encounters should be conducted jointly by two trainers—one Israeli and one Palestinian. The trainers will share responsibility for leading the small binational groups and cooperate in the effort to guide the participants in the direction of the desired change. The group dynamics that may evolve in the workshop will set the stage for the change process. These dynamics are largely affected by the trainers' style and the nature of their intervention. During the course of the encounters, the trainers employ basic counseling principles such as positive regard, empathy, and support for the participants, in addition to applying a non-judgmental approach toward biased and prejudiced discourse in the

group sessions (Egan, 1986). In this context, they may convey the message that the encounter is safe enough for participants to be able to renounce previous beliefs about their own group as well as about the adversary group. In this spirit, participants will be encouraged to deal with feelings and emotions they never allowed themselves to express before.

If the reconciliation-transformation workshops are intended as a corrective experience on the cognitive and emotional levels, then the trainers also need to focus on utilizing skills that will enable participants to confront their contradictory views and feelings about themselves and their in-groups as well as about the other group.

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The workshop will be designed first to involve participants in intensive encounters. The preferred setting is a residential, "cultural island" environment that will enable the participants to detach themselves physically and mentally from their natural environment. Regarding the content of the workshop, the model of "Seeds for Peace" (Wallach, 2000) is a very good one to follow. According to this model, participants develop relations around issues of mutual concern that relate to their social roles as high school or college students and relations with their teachers or parents. The young participants may also share a common concern about issues such as autonomy, normative and social issues, and self-actualization in future life roles.

The main content issues, however, should evolve around the participants' national identities and their group's collective beliefs about their own society and the society of their former adversary. Moreover, issues related to emotional experiences such as suffering, trauma, and humiliation need to be worked through before the groups can proceed to the stage of initiating cooperative economic and educational enterprises. The specific beliefs to be dealt with in the workshops and the emotional processes that the participants are expected to experience will be discussed later.

IDENTITY DISCOURSE IN RECONCILIATION-TRANSFORMATION WORKSHOPS

Reconciliation-transformation workshops are about changes that are expected to occur in the participants' selves or identities. In a recent summary of the social psychology of identities, Howard (2000) states that identity is a "keyword of contemporary society and a central focus of social psychological theorizing and research" (p. 367). Howard asserts that two theoretical perspectives predominate in the literature on social psychology: social cognition and symbolic interaction approaches. According to Fiske and Taylor (1991), social cognition is a theoretical perspective that explains how information is processed and stored. The assumption underlying the social cognition approach is that humans have a limited cognitive capacity to manage the overload of daily social and interactive stimuli. Therefore, the mind categorizes information about situation, object, and people "before engaging memory or inferential processes" (Howard, 2000, p. 368). The cognitive products of these processes are schemata, or representations regarding one's self or one's social world. Howard summarizes the role of schemata in social interaction as follows:

They (the schemata) allow us to summarize and reduce information to key elements. Thus, they also entail losing potentially valuable information. And categorizations are almost always accompanied by systems of evaluation of some categories as better or worse. Schemata are not just perceptual phenomena: they can serve as explanatory devices and justifications of social relationships (Tajfel, 1981). Thus, social identities are embedded in sociopolitical contexts. (p. 368)

Many of the cognitive interventions and processes that take place during the reconciliation-transformation workshops are geared toward modifying the participants' schemata about themselves, their national groups, and the adversary group. This change is accomplished through structural components of the workshop: the participants and their readiness to examine social schemata and

identities, the trainers' skilled navigation of the workshop dynamics, work in uninational and binational group settings, and focus on central issues of the conflict.

With regard to the symbolic interaction approach, Howard (2000) asserts that "identities are strategic social constructions created through interaction . . . language plays a central part in it" (p. 371). Based on this assumption, Howard concludes that "people actively produce identity through their talk" (p. 372). In the context of reconciliation-transformation workshops, dialogue or verbal discourse among participants serves as the means for influencing participants' beliefs and emotions. Moreover, because language links the cognitive and interactive traditions, it has become the main target for intervention. Linguistic expressions such as metaphors, images, fantasies, and slang represent a collective voice and reflect the unique culture of national, ethnic, or other social groups. Language therefore becomes the target for endeavors to create reconciled identities among members of the two groups participating in the encounter.

In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, participants from both groups possess schematic, biased, and rigid beliefs about one another. These beliefs concern their image of their in-group as well as their image of the former adversary group. The images of the other group are significantly tainted by perceptual distortions resulting from the prolonged and intractable conflict (Rouhana & Bartal, 1998). Demonization and delegitimization of the other group have been used to justify and glorify one's own national group at the expense of the adversary group. In this connection, reconciliation-transformation workshops are intended to provide the conditions that will enable participants to modify their distorted and prejudiced beliefs. As far as the social cognition approach is concerned, the workshop setting enables participants to reframe their perceptual and cognitive schemata following meaningful person-to-person exchange of ideas, feelings, and narratives that constitute the building blocks of the symbolic interaction approach toward identity formation and modification.

PROCESSES IN THE RECONCILIATION-TRANSFORMATION WORKSHOP

The content and processes of the workshops can be divided into three main categories: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. This section focuses on the cognitive and emotional processes, which enable participants to formulate more reconciled identities.

COGNITIVE PROCESSES

According to Bartal (1998, 2000), reconciliation requires changes in beliefs in three areas, which constitute the main obstacle to the development of peaceful relations between former adversaries: beliefs about one's own societal goals, beliefs about the adversary group, and beliefs about one's own group. For the purpose of this article, emphasis is placed on the first two aspects.

Beliefs about one's own societal goals. The Palestinian and Israeli participants in the reconciliation-transformation workshop should be convinced that each group has a right to realize its goals and to live in security and dignity. Even though there should be a consensus on major issues established in formal peace agreements, such as territory and reparations, each party should aspire to achieve differential goals for its own society and people. A study conducted among groups of educators from both societies reveals considerable asymmetry in the beliefs and aspirations of Palestinians and Jewish Israelis (Abu-Nimer, 2000). Whereas former adversaries usually share a vision of peace following the process of reconciliation, the Palestinian educators in the study focused on building their society and developing autonomous civic institutions after 30 years of occupation. In this connection, Barakat (1993) argues that Palestinians are reluctant to develop a culture of peace due to the authoritarian nature of their society. Thus, the Palestinian educators in Abu-Nimer's (2000) study focused on basic economic issues as well as on nation building and on development

of democratic and civic institutions as their main goals. The Israeli educators, by contrast, were found to aspire toward a peaceful coexistence with the Palestinian community, despite underlying feelings of animosity and distrust. Primarily, they seek relief from the constant threat of suicide bombers and terrorist attacks. However, owing to the lack of systematic surveys among youth from both national groups, it is difficult to define the aspirations of each national group in terms of specific content areas. In general, it seems that the Palestinian vision relates to rudimentary structures of a democratic and equitable society, whereas the Israeli vision relates to peace of mind that will ensure the continued existence of the Jewish state in an atmosphere of security.

Beliefs about the adversary group. An important component of the reconciliation-transformation workshop is the change in stereotypes and images related to the adversary group and its representatives. Participants in the workshops experience cognitive dissonance, which causes them to change their attitudes about the other group (Festinger, 1957). This dissonance is reflected in a discrepancy between initial perceptions of the other group and the actual behavior of participants in that group, with whom they interact intensively. The process of change in stereotypes has been referred to as decategorization (Lewin, 1948) or as recategorization (Brewer & Kramer, 1985). In this process, negative characteristics attributed to the other national group are gradually replaced by new impressions developed as a result of personal acquaintances. In a case study of a workshop for Palestinian and Israeli youth conducted prior to the recent uprising, Bargal (2000) reports that the Israeli participants described their Palestinian counterparts as follows: "There was not a unified negative attitude among the Palestinians. They have a range of attitudes. They are like us" (p. 22). Following the same workshop, a Palestinian participant indicated that contrary to his previous belief that there would be substantial differences between the two groups, the only major difference was in the area of religion.

However, changes in cognitive perceptions are not immediately incorporated into the psyche. Feelings of frustration may be aroused

by recognizing distorted perceptions and by the realization that the former enemy is a human being. To overcome these feelings, the participants need to reconstruct their perceptions of themselves, that is, they need to abandon the perspective that they are inherently rational, good, and coherent, whereas their adversary is inherently evil, irrational, violent, and uncompromising. At this point, the reality personified by individuals in the other group may clash with the mechanisms of denial and splitting employed by the participants throughout their lives. The ability to use these mechanisms may be impaired by high anxiety. However, the acute nature of this anxiety may cause participants to express intense anger toward one another. It is this emotionally charged and dissonant situation that provides the building blocks for restructuring social perceptions and changing identities. The educational tools for facilitating this situation are group and intergroup dynamics generated through the trainers' interventions.

The trainers will facilitate a process of cognitive reframing in addition to providing information regarding the dynamics that develop in the encounter. Every change in self or identity that the workshop aspires to bring about becomes part of their cognitive framework and is internalized in their consciousness. Words, concepts, rationales, attitudes, and emotions reflect various perceptual and cognitive gestalts or schemata that are elaborated and adopted by the self. Hence, the trainer's function is to explain and clarify the meaning of the changes in participants' attitudes toward and perceptions of other group members. Trainers also provide information and explanations regarding the intra- and intergroup processes experienced by the participants, for example, pressure to conform to the norms of one's own group and demonization of the other group.

The trainers will also use an important strategy referred to by Yalom (1995) as "instillation of hope." This strategy helps the participants reconcile negative beliefs and emotions regarding members of the other group, such as feelings of despair and fatalism about the future of their relations. These feelings reflect passivity, withdrawal from future cooperative activities, and even resistance to changing beliefs and emotions. By instilling an atmosphere of

hope and optimism concerning the ability of the groups to build constructive relations, the trainers convey an empowering message: The conflict and its devastating consequences are brought about by the members of both parties. Hence, there is hope that the same people may be able to reach a peaceful and just coexistence in a process of reconciliation.

EMOTIONAL PROCESSES

As mentioned, most of the literature on reconciliation emphasizes cognitive and behavioral components. Bartal (2000), for example, avoids any discussion of the emotional aspects of reconciliation, as do Gardner-Feldman (1999) and Kriesberg (1998). Understandably, these aspects are disregarded because emotions and feelings are hard to measure. Moreover, emotions are often expressed through irrational behavior such as crying, temperamental outbursts, or even withdrawal and apathy. Furthermore, contrary to Western norms, which advocate rational, controlled, and predictable behavior, such emotional reactions are often unpredictable, harsh, impulsive, and painful. Notably, such behavior may arouse feelings of guilt in addition to reflecting rudimentary needs for revenge and destruction. These irrational feelings are harbored by people who have experienced years of constant fear, anxiety, and loss and are not going to disappear automatically following peace treaties. Therefore, they impede the development of normal relations and peaceful coexistence between the two national groups. Serious efforts should be made to confront this situation, which has been encountered by health and mental health professionals as well as by indigenous community workers such as clergy, educators, and staff member of NGOs. As mentioned, Lederach (1997) emphasizes the vital need to address this aspect of the recovery process in the wake of a prolonged existential threat. Tutu (1999) established truth and reconciliation committees in South Africa, which partially addressed this need. In addition, efforts of this nature were initiated in Guatemala and El Salvador (Hayner, 2001). However, there are also dissenting voices that oppose efforts to deal

with the emotional concomitants of the transition from war to peace. For example, Fisher (1999) warns against turning the reconciliation process into a therapeutic enterprise, and Avruch and Vejarano (2001) argue that "in fact, proponents of reconciliation often turn the discourse of justice into the language of therapy and healing, or the moral and religious discourse of forgiveness" (p. 53). As mentioned below, the emotional costs of intractable conflict, especially for youth, are tremendous. It should therefore be emphasized that without dealing with the emotional repercussions of the protracted conflict on the participants in the encounter, it will be impossible to implement the cognitive and behavioral interventions described above.

Situations of protracted conflict generate intense emotions that result from exposure to life-threatening events such as bombing and shooting. Typical emotions are pain, anxiety, frustration, and perpetual humiliation (de la Rey & Owens, 1998), which may be manifested in physical pain as well as psychological symptoms such as excessive fear, anxiety, and grief. As far as children and youth are concerned, these manifestations may have dangerous implications for their future development, in addition to posing an obstacle for reconciliation dialogue. In a similar context, Errante (1999) reports that young people in Mozambique expressed intense aggression resulting from severe humiliation by their enemy, in addition to feelings of unresolved grief over the loss of friends and loved ones. Because feelings of humiliation and grief may impair the coherent cognitive and emotional functioning of young people, the suggested corrective emotional experience of reconciliation-transformation workshops is all the more important.

In the Israeli-Palestinian context, youth have been exposed to intense and ongoing physical and emotional suffering. In light of this situation, the proposed reconciliation-transformation encounters can focus on the following processes based on the approach of Errante (1999).

1. Establishing a public forum to work through grief. This forum may give participants in the encounters an opportunity to reconstruct

their identity and change their self-image from that of victims or perpetrators to that of people engaging in a reconciliation and peace process (Agger & Jensen, 1990).

2. The workshop will generate close interpersonal relationships between the former adversaries, which may provide a supportive climate for dealing with feelings of shame, grief, and remorse. These feelings are brought to the surface as participants in the workshop share narratives of experiences with violence, suffering, and torture. Such catharsis enables the participants to vent anxiety, shame, anger, and grief and helps them release suppressed emotions. During this process, those who identify themselves in the role of victims, perpetrators, or both learn to acknowledge the feelings of the other group.
3. Last but not least, as Errante (1999) states, the reconciliation-transformation workshops may serve "to engage former opponents in the painful process of making the past 'bearable.' Each generation constructs history in ways that serve their orientation to the future. By the same token, societies that are unable to face their past are limited in their conceptualization of the future" (p. 272).

Conceptualization of the future from the perspective of the participants in reconciliation-transformation workshops means that in the subsequent stage of peace and reconciliation efforts, they will plan long-range cooperative projects. This goal is achieved through continuation of face-to-face interaction between members of former adversarial groups in joint missions that will benefit both parties, such as educational activities or development of economic services (Sherif, 1958; Worchel, 1986).

Cooperative long-range projects devoted to issues that are relevant to both groups may strengthen the bonds created during the workshop. Such cooperation may also help preserve the changes in the participants' cognitive schemata and identities that occurred during the workshop. Furthermore, it may ensure that workshop participants selected on the basis of their ability to serve as gatekeepers will succeed in disseminating the message of reconciliation as they interact with members of their community who were not active in the process.

EPILOGUE

Reconciliation-transformation workshops are an essential and important intervention for youth living in societies involved in prolonged conflict. The structure and processes of the encounters described here are based on psychological and educational principles and aim to help members of the two parties reformulate their identities.

By no means is it the intention of the workshops to blur the unique identities and characteristics that distinguish each group. Essentially, the encounter is designed to allow for expression and development of distinct identities. However, should these differences be given priority over other human needs such as alleviation of fear, grief, humiliation, and trauma? And should the existence of power differences reinforce cognitive distortions or prevail over the need to deal with the situation as suggested above?

The reconciliation-transformation workshops are not designed to reshuffle cultural and societal asymmetries between the two parties. Rather, they constitute goals in themselves that should be pursued on the political and civil levels. The proposed workshops can contribute to fostering the development of reconciled identities among youth belonging to former adversarial groups. In a similar vein, the workshops may encourage autonomous and secure development of these identities under improved environmental conditions. The culture of encounter and the ensuing cooperative relations and projects developed by the parties may contribute to their empowerment. In the formative life stage of youth, this may ensure a future of fulfillment for individual citizens as well as for their societies.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Nimer, M. (2000). Peace building in post-settlement: Challenges for Israeli and Palestinian peace educators. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 6(1), 1-21.
- Agger, I., & Jensen, S. (1990). Testimony as ritual and evidence in psychotherapy for political refugees. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 3(1), 115-130.

- Avruch, K. (1998). *Culture and conflict resolution*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Avruch, K., & Vejarano, B. (2001). Truth and reconciliation commissions: A review essay and annotated bibliography. *Social Justice: Anthropology, Peace and Human Rights*, 2(1), 47-108.
- Bar, H., & Bargal, D. (1995). *Living with conflict: Encounters between Arab-Palestinian and Jewish youth in Israel* [In Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Studies.
- Barakat, H. (1993). *The Arab world: Society, culture and state*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bargal, D. (1992). Conflict management workshops for Arab-Palestinian and Jewish youth: A framework for planning, intervention and evaluation. *Social Work With Groups*, 15(1), 51-62.
- Bargal, D. (2000, April). *Education for peace: Description, conceptualization and evaluation of a workshop for Palestinian and Jewish youth*. Paper presented at the Global Program on Youth, University of Michigan School of Social Work.
- Bargal, D. (2004). Groups to reduce ethnic conflicts. In C. Garvin, M. Galinsky, & L. Guttirez (Eds.), *Handbook of group work* (pp. 292-306). New York: Guilford.
- Bargal, D., & Bar, H. (1990a). Role problems of trainers in an Arab-Jewish conflict management workshop. *Small Group Research*, 21(1), 5-27.
- Bargal, D., & Bar, H. (1990b). Strategies for Arab-Jewish conflict management workshops. In S. Wheelan, E. Pepitone, & V. Abt (Eds.), *Advances in field theory* (pp. 210-229). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Bargal, D., & Bar, H. (1992). A Lewinian approach to intergroup workshops for Arab Palestinian and Jewish youth. *Journal of Social Issues*, 48(2), 139-154.
- Bargal, D., & Bar, H. (1994). The encounter of social selves: Intergroup workshops for Arab and Jewish youth. *Social Work With Groups*, 17(3), 39-59.
- Bartal, D. (1998). Societal beliefs in times of intractable conflict: The Israeli case. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 9, 22-50.
- Bartal, D. (2000). From intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis. *Political Psychology*, 21, 351-365.
- Bartal, D., & Bennink, G. (2004). Nature of reconciliation as an outcome and as a process. In Y. Bar Siman-Tov (Ed.), *From conflict resolution to reconciliation* (pp. 11-38). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Bloch, S., & Crouch, E. (1985). *Therapeutic factors in group psychotherapy*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Brewer, M., & Kramer, R. (1985). The psychology of intergroup attitudes and behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 36, 219-243.
- Brown, B. (1990). Peer groups and peer cultures. In S. Feldman & G. Elliott (Eds.), *At the threshold: The developing adolescent* (pp. 171-196). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burton, J. (1987). *Resolving deep-rooted conflict: A handbook*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- de la Rey, C., & Owens, I. (1998). Perceptions of psychological healing and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 4, 257-270.
- Egan, G. (1986). *The skilled helper: A systematic approach to effective helping* (3rd ed.). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.

- Errante, A. (1999). Peace work as grief work in Mozambique and South Africa: Conflict communities as context for child and youth socialization. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 5(3), 261-279.
- Festinger, L. (1957). *The theory of cognitive dissonance*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Fisher, R. (1997). *Interactive conflict resolution*. New York: State University of New York at Syracuse.
- Fisher, R. (1999). Social psychological processes in interactive conflict analysis and reconciliation. In H. Jeong (Ed.), *Conflict resolution: Dynamics, process and structure* (pp. 81-104). Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Fiske, S., & Taylor, S. (1991). *Social cognition* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Gardner-Feldman, L. (1999). The principle and practice of reconciliation in German foreign policy: Relations with France, Israel, Poland and the Czech Republic. *International Affairs*, 75(2), 333-356.
- Hayner, P. (2001). *Unspeakable truths: Confronting state terror and atrocities*. New York: Routledge.
- Henderson, M. (1996). *The forgiveness factor*. London: Grosvenor Books.
- Howard, J. (2000). Social psychology of identities. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 367-393.
- Kelman, H. (1998). Social psychological contributions to peacemaking and peace building in the Middle East. *Applied Psychology*, 47(1), 29-57.
- Kluckhohn, F., & Strodtbeck, G. (1961). *Variations in value orientations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kriesberg, L. (1998). Coexistence and the reconciliation of communal conflicts. In E. Weiner (Ed.), *The handbook of interethnic coexistence* (pp. 182-198). New York: Continuum.
- Krog, A. (1998). *Country of my skull*. London: Vintage.
- Lederach, P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace.
- Lewin, K. (1935). *Dynamic theory of personality*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Lewin, K. (1948). *Resolving social conflicts*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Maoz, I. (2000). An experiment in peace: Reconciliation-aimed workshops for Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian youth. *Journal of Peace Research*, 37(6/7), 721-736.
- Mayer, J. (2000). Emotion, intelligence, emotional intelligence. In J. P. Forgas (Ed.), *The handbook of affect and cognition* (pp. 410-431). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- McNamee, S., & Gergen, K. (Eds.). (1999). *Relational responsibility resources for sustainable dialogue*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Melnick, J., & Woods, M. (1976). Group composition research and theory for psychotherapeutic and growth-oriented groups. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 12(4), 493-512.
- Moreland, R., Levine, J., & Wingert, M. (1996). Creating the ideal group: Composition effects at work. In E. Witte & J. Davis (Eds.), *Understanding group behavior: Small group processes and interpersonal relations* (Vol. 2, pp. 11-35). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Rouhana, N., & Bartal, D. (1998). Psychological dynamics of intractable ethnonational conflict: The Israeli-Palestinian case. *American Psychologist*, 53(7), 761-770.
- Schoem, D., & Hurato, S. (Eds.). (2001). *Intergroup dialogue: Deliberative democracy in school, college, community and workplace*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Sherif, M. (1958). Superordinate goals in the reduction of intergroup conflicts. *American Journal of Sociology*, 63, 349-356.

- Tajfel, H. (1981). Social stereotypes and social groups. In J. Turner & H. Giles (Eds.), *Intergroup Behavior*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Tutu, D. (1999). *No future without forgiveness*. New York: Doubleday.
- Wallach, J. (2000). *The enemy has a face*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Worchel, S. (1986). The role of cooperation in reducing intergroup conflict. In S. Worchel & W. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 288-304). Chicago: Nelson Hall.
- Yalom, I. (1995). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.

David Bargal is Gordon Brown professor at the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has published extensively in diverse professional journals and books in addition to seven edited books and two books under his authorship, including Living With Conflict: Encounters Between Jewish and Palestinian Youth, with H. Bar (1995).