

# Sociopsychological Infrastructure of an Intractable Conflict Through the Eyes of Palestinian Children and Adolescents

Meytal Nasie and Daniel Bar-Tal

Tel-Aviv University

This study investigates the sociopsychological infrastructure (SPI) of the Palestinian society which facilitates coping with the reality of the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Specifically, the study examines the views of Palestinian children and adolescents toward the conflict, as expressed in their writings in a youth newspaper. The timeline focuses on 3 distinct periods: the peace process (1996–1997), the reemergence of the violent conflict (2001–2002), and a relatively calm period (2005–2007). By examining the SPI in the Palestinian case, the study aims to contribute to the existing research on the sociopsychological foundations of intractable conflict, which has so far focused on Israeli Jewish society. The key findings show that about a third of the writings of Palestinian children and youth focused on the conflict, and demonstrate the existence of the SPI and its elements. In particular, the writings mainly reflect the following components of SPI: (a) societal beliefs of victimization, (b) patriotism, and (c) collective emotion of hope. These results are discussed in relation to the particular experiences that the Palestinian children and adolescents undergo in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

*Keywords:* intractable conflict, Palestinian children and adolescents, sociopsychological dynamics, ethos of conflict, collective emotions

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an example of a prototypical intractable conflict, at least as it appeared between 1940s and 1980s. It was violent, has lasted for many decades, has in-

volved existential goals, and it has been central in the eyes of the participants. It has required investment of immense material and psychological resources, and is still perceived by many participants as insolvable and of a “zero-sum nature” (Bar-Tal, 2007a; Kriesberg, 1993).

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According to the conceptual model of the sociopsychological foundations of intractable conflicts, this type of conflict leads to harsh experiences of threat, stress, frustration, despair, insecurity, uncertainty, pain, and bereavement. These experiences constitute chronic psychological conditions that force society members to adapt both in their personal and in their collective lives. In order to cope with the pressures and challenges that the conflict poses, the involved society develops a sociopsychological repertoire of societal beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. This eventually becomes a *sociopsychological infrastructure* (SPI), meaning that the shared repertoire gradually crystallizes into a well organized system of societal beliefs<sup>1</sup>,

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MEY TAL NASIE is a doctoral candidate at the School of Education in Tel-Aviv University, Israel. She holds Master's degrees in Arabic Language and Literature from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and in Educational Counseling from Tel-Aviv University.

DANIEL BAR-TAL is Branco Weiss Professor of Research in Child Development and Education at the School of Education, Tel Aviv University. His research interest is in political and social psychology studying socio-psychological foundations of intractable conflicts and peace making, as well as development of political understanding among children and peace education. He has published 20 books, over two hundred articles and chapters in major social and political psychological journals, books and encyclopedias and received the Lasswell Award for distinguished scientific contribution in the field of political psychology.

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CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING THIS ARTICLE should be addressed to Daniel Bar-Tal, School of Education, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv 69978, Israel. E-mail: daniel@post.tau.ac.il

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<sup>1</sup> Societal beliefs are cognitions shared by society members on topics and issues that are of special concern for their society and contribute to their sense of uniqueness (Bar-Tal, 2000).

attitudes, and emotions and penetrates the institutions and communication channels of the society. As a result, SPI that develops serves as a foundation for the culture of conflict (see Bar-Tal, 2007a, 2010, 2011, in press).

The purpose of the present study is to examine how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is reflected in the eyes of Palestinian children and adolescents via their written contributions to the children's and youth newspaper *Yara'at (Quills)*, which is distributed in the Palestinian Authority area. Specifically, the study uses the conceptual framework which details the themes that were proposed to appear in the SPI of intractable conflicts and applies it to the analysis of the written material published in this newspaper. This study complements a line of research that has applied the described conceptual framework to the analysis of Israeli Jewish public opinion and leaders' speeches, as well as cultural products, state ceremonies, and school textbooks in Israel (see, e.g., Arviv-Abromovich, 2010; Bar-Tal, 1998a, 1998b; Golan, 2006; Oren, 2005, 2009). Given that the conflict involves two sides, an examination of its reflection on the Palestinian side is needed. Such an examination will allow validation of the proposed conceptual framework in a study of another society (i.e., Palestinian) and also a broadening outlook on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by comparing both parties' points of view.

### Sociopsychological Infrastructure

As proposed by Bar-Tal (2007a, 2011, in press), the SPI consists of three components: the ethos of conflict, a collective memory of conflict, and collective emotional orientation. In earlier work it has been proposed that the challenges of the intractable conflict lead to the development of eight themes of societal beliefs that comprise ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998b). They include: *Societal beliefs about the justness of own goals*, which outline the goals in the conflict, indicate their crucial importance, and provide their justifications and rationales. *Societal beliefs about security* refer to the importance of personal safety and national survival, and outline the conditions for their achievement. *Societal beliefs of positive collective self-image* concentrate on the ethnocentric tendency to attribute glorifying positive traits,

and behavior to one's own society. *Societal beliefs of victimization* concern self-presentation as a victim. *Societal beliefs of delegitimizing the opponent* categorize the adversary into extremely negative categories that exclude him from the sphere of human beings that act within the limits of acceptable norms and/or values. *Societal beliefs of patriotism* generate attachment to the country and society by propagating loyalty, love, care, and sacrifice. *Societal beliefs of unity* refer to the importance of ignoring internal conflicts and disagreements in order to unite forces in the face of the external threat. Finally, *societal beliefs of peace* present peace as the ultimate desire of the society.

*Collective memory* consists of societal beliefs that represent and construct the history of the conflict to society members (Cairns & Roe, 2003; Connerton, 1989; Halbwachs, 1992; Wertsch, 2002). This narrative develops over time and describes the conflict's outbreak and its course, providing a coherent and meaningful picture (Devine-Wright, 2003). *Collective emotional orientation* refers to the characterizing tendency of a society to express a particular dominant shared emotion that develops during the conflict (see, e.g., Bar-Tal, Halperin, & de Rivera, 2007; Halperin, Sharvit, & Gross, 2011). Collective emotional orientation is reflected in sharing an emotion by society members as a result of identifying with their fellow group members (Petersen, 2002; Scheff, 1994). The collective emotions are formed as a consequence of an accumulation of many group-based emotional responses to a societal event that are felt by individuals as a result of their membership in a certain group (Bar-Tal et al., 2007). The most notable emotion is the collective orientation of fear, but in addition, members may be dominated by hatred and anger, as well as guilt, hope, or pride (Halperin, 2011).

The SPI plays important roles both on the individual and on the collective levels and helps to meet the challenges that the conflict imposes: It satisfies psychological needs which have been deprived (such as the need for knowledge, control, safety, and a positive identity) and facilitates coping with stress, tension, fears, and other psychological phenomena that accompany the conflict by providing a meaningful picture of the conflict with the positive portrayal of the ingroup. It is also functional in confronting

the enemy since it creates motivation among the society members to build solidarity and willingness for mobilization and personal sacrifice. The SPI is likely to be universal and appears in every society that is involved in an intractable conflict; however, its specific contents are unique in each case (Bar-Tal, 2007a). It also has to be noted that SPI is not stable, but changes in its strength and emphases in accordance to the conditions of the context (Bar-Tal, Bar-Tal, & Cohen-Hendeles, 2006; Oren, 2009; Sharvit & Bar-Tal, 2007).

### **Socialization for the Conflict**

The described SPI is not only widely shared by society members, but also appears to be dominant in public discourse via societal channels of mass communication. Moreover, it is often used to justify and to explain decisions, policies, and courses of actions taken by the leaders. It is also expressed in institutional ceremonies, commemorations, memorials, and other rituals. In addition, SPI is expressed in cultural products such as literature, TV programs, films, theater plays, visual arts, and monuments. It is a society's cultural repertoire, relaying societal views and shaping society members' beliefs, attitudes, and emotions. Through these channels it can be widely disseminated and can reach every sector of the society. Finally, contents of the SPI appear in the school textbooks, are used by teachers and by schools, and appear prominently even in higher education. These dissemination practices are of special importance because the beliefs presented in educational textbooks reach all of the younger generation (see the Israeli case Bar-Tal, 2007b).

Focusing on the socialization of the younger generations, a number of studies have examined various channels that transmit ethos of conflict. For example, in the Israeli context, Bar-Tal (1998a, 1998b) explored the appearance of ethos of conflict in Israeli textbooks, and Golan (2006) studied its reflection in weekly youth magazines during Israel's wars. In the Palestinian context, Abu Bakr (1990) studied the political contents conveyed in Palestinian children's literature in the years 1948–1990. Firer and Adwan (2004) explored the contents of Palestinian and Israeli history and civic education textbooks. Fanous (2006) investigated the new

history and national education textbooks of the Palestinian Authority, and Arshid (2007) examined the textbooks of the Authority on civic education. They all found in the Palestinian school textbooks contents of conflict such as self-victimization, patriotism, delegitimization of the Jews, hatred, and revenge toward Israel. The findings of the Palestinian studies show that themes of conflict saliently appear in various publication channels.

Common to the above studies is the fact that they contain messages that are written by adults. In contrast, to the best of our knowledge, no one has studied messages regarding SPI expressed by children and adolescents, which are primarily based on personal experiences and learned contents. The present study in contrast is based on data which is generated by children and youth, rather than for children and youth. First, however, we will refer to children's and adolescents' personal experiences in conflict.

### **Personal Experiences in a Violent Conflict**

Personal experiences of the individuals as members of a collective are important determinants in the formation of the SPI during the intractable conflict. Situations of strong impact, such as violent confrontations, and wars influence the way society members perceive their reality. These influences may be so strong that they leave their mark for a long time and ultimately constitute part of their general world-views (de Jong, 2002; Mazawi, 1998; Milgram, 1986; Raviv, Oppenheimer, & Bar-Tal, 1999; Slone, 2008).

Since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with its various forms of violence is an inseparable part of the daily lives of Palestinian children and adolescents, they accumulate significant conflict-related experiences. A research of relevant study that examined the issues that worry and trouble 8–14-year-old Palestinian children from Gaza found that the Israeli occupation and the violent confrontations were among the three most disconcerting reported experiences (MacMullin & Odeh, 1999). In an additional study that was conducted in 2003 among 15–18-year-old adolescents ( $N = 3,415$ ) from Ramallah, 63% of the subjects stated that they had been exposed in the previous year to sounds of bomb-shell, 50% witnessed explosions, 80% saw gunfire, 49% saw a person injured, 28% saw a

stranger killed, and 11% were witnesses of the killing of an acquaintance (Giacaman, Shannon, Saab, Arya, & Boyce, 2007). A recent study of Dubow et al. (2010), which investigated 600 Palestinian children from the West Bank and Gaza strip, aged 8, 11, and 14, showed that most of the children were exposed to political conflict and violence. Specifically, 61% of them experienced a loss of, or injury to, a friend or family member; 73% experienced a nonviolent event that disrupted their life (e.g., spending prolonged of time in security shelter); 88% indicated that the self or significant others participated in political demonstrations; 73% witnessed actual violence; and 99% witnessed media portrayals of political violence. According to Awwad (2001), every Palestinian child is exposed to at least some kind of a violent event because the conflict penetrates to the spheres of daily life. In this context, the data indicate that from the beginning of the second Intifada (September 2000) until 2004, approximately 3,100 Palestinian civilians were killed, and about a fifth of them were children and adolescents under the age of 17 (according to the websites of B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories; HDIP: The Health, Development, Information and Policy Institute). In addition, the data showed that in these 4 years, approximately 10,000 Palestinian children and adolescents were injured (HDIP).

Palestinian children report extensive experiences of conflict-related events, like those children living in other areas of conflict. For example, in Northern Ireland, Muldoon and Trew (2000) found that even in situations where armed conflict was of relatively of low intensity, children were exposed to conflict-related experiences. The research of Straker, Mendelsohn, Moosa, and Tudin (1996), in three conflict contexts in South Africa, found that adolescents reported high exposure to violence. Macksoud and Aber (1996) found that the number of war traumas experienced by Lebanese children during the war in Lebanon between 1975 and 1991 was with an average of six traumas per child as a result of such experiences as displacement, separation from parents, bereavement, witnessing violent acts, exposure to shelling or combat, physical injuries, emigration, involvement in the hostilities, and extreme deprivation of basic needs. In Israel, Landau et al. (2010) found that

both Jewish and Arab children reported considerable exposure to various types of violent events, such as loss, or injury of a friend or family member, witnessing actual violence, and self or significant others participating in political demonstrations. Finally, in Sierra Leone, children and youth, who constitute a majority of Sierra Leone's population, are the most affected, both as perpetrators and victims, by political and economic crises affecting the country (Mcintyre & Thusi, 2003).

In this context, Barber (2008) pointed out that youth experiences with political violence are complex and vary in some elements, including, types and frequencies of political violence exposure, degree of involvement in political violence, perceptions of the meaning and efficacy of the conflict, and their willingness to engage in it. In particular, he found contrasting portraits of youth experiences in two different conflicts: the war in Bosnia (1992–1995) and the first Palestinian Intifada (1987–1993). For Bosnian youth, the salient elements of their experience were the shocking deadliness and destruction of the war and its inexplicability and senselessness. They had little willingness to engage in their own defense, they found it unworthy and regrettable, particularly in the loss of their childhood. Importantly, they came to know themselves by way of targeted, hateful aggression and by being the inescapably helpless victims. Palestinian youth, on the other hand, concentrated on the insulting and humiliating features of their conflict. This fueled in part their readiness to engage in the conflict actively and their willingness to make sacrifices for their struggle.

This line of research points out the importance of the context in which children and adolescents grow up and are reared. Children and adolescents are the litmus of the context. It shapes their beliefs, attitudes, and emotions. Their psychological repertoire reflects not only their unique experiences in the social environment but also the cultural input that is part of the context. The cultural input consists of the tangible and nontangible symbols, including information, models, myths, and goals that the society provides to the young generation. It affects their development to a large extent (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978). In mobilized societies as is the Palestinian society, this input has an imprinting influence. Thus, the expressed

contents reflect the personal and collective experience together with the cultural input.

### **Reflection of the Conflict Through the Eyes of Children and Adolescents**

Studies that have investigated the reflection of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in dreams of Palestinian children indicate that most of the dream contents touch on the conflict. A study conducted by Nashef (1992) in 1984 found that 59% of the investigated children dreamed at least one dream that included a confrontation with Israeli Jews, compared with 93% in a study carried out by Nashef in 1992. In the majority of the dreams, the Palestinians appeared as victims of Israeli violence (Nashef, 1992). Bilu's (1989) study found that Arab and Jewish children dreamed about the other side. However, in their dreams, the Arab children were found to be more troubled than the Jewish children. This study also found that 90% of the dreams about the rival included aggressive and hostile interactions. Masalha's (1993) study demonstrates that 75% of the Palestinian children's dreams in the study included aggression against Israel and 53% included violent interactions between the Palestinian children and the Israeli army. These results were later replicated in studies by Masalha (2003) and Nakhsh (2004). Nashef (1992) also investigated the reflection of the conflict through Palestinian children's drawings and found that most drawings reflected stressful encounters. The drawings included Israeli soldiers, injured adolescents, youngsters in masks, and objects of combat—rocks, weapons, burning tires, and jetfighters.

In addition to dreams and drawings, children and adolescents express their perceptions and feelings toward the conflict in various forms of writing, such as essays, diaries, letters, or poems. In this manner, for example, Shalhoub-Kevorkian's (2006) study examined the views of approximately 300 Palestinian adolescents, 14–19 years of age, through essays that they wrote during the years of 2003–2004 concerning the separation barrier that has been built by Israel since 2003. The writers of the essays raised memories, coping methods, opinions, and feelings in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The findings show that these adolescents "reflected a very deep but painful political understanding" (p. 1120). Ricks (2006) investi-

gated diaries of 17–18-year-old Palestinian girls from Ramallah and Bethlehem and found descriptions and memories of harsh and violent experiences to which they were exposed through the conflict in years 1987–2004. On the Jewish side, Hazan (2002) examined the essays of Jewish children in children's journalism at the time of the 1948 war ("The War of Independence") and found that the children described everyday events from the perspective of the raging war. Kovner (1968) studied letters and poems written by children during the Six Day War and found that all of the children's writings focused on their feelings and experiences of the war.

### **Present Study**

As stated above, the SPI, being a conceptual organizing framework, especially as it appears through personal messages of children and adolescents, has yet to be investigated. Therefore, the objective of the present study is to explore how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is reflected in the eyes of Palestinian children and adolescents via an analysis of their written pieces in a children's and youth newspaper. This explorative study is carried in line of the conceptualized framework of the sociopsychological foundations of intractable conflicts, during three main periods: the peace process (1996–1997), the reemergence of the violent conflict (2001–2002), and a relatively calm period in the conflict (2005–2007). Before turning to the description of the three periods of the present study, it is necessary to describe the wider context of the conflict.

The conflict between Palestinians and Jews has been going on for over 100 years as two national movements clash over territory, resources, self-determination, justice, and religious sites (Dowty, 2005; Morris, 2001). The Israeli-Palestinian conflict started as a communal conflict between the Jews and Palestinians living in British-ruled Palestine and evolved into a full-blown interstate conflict between Israel and Arab states during the War of 1948–49. Since the 1967 war, with the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the conflict continues on both interstate and communal levels (Sandler, 1988). Palestinians who live under occupation since 1967 have severe experiences as an occupied society (Gordon, 2008; Makdisi,

2008). For a long time the conflict seemed irresolvable and total. But in spite of the fact that some intractable features are still present, the nature of the Israel-Palestinian conflict changed with the visit of the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in Jerusalem in 1977. The peace treaty with Egypt in 1979, the Madrid conference in 1991, the agreements with the Palestinians in 1993 and 1994, and the peace treaty with Jordan in 1994 are watershed events in the peace process, and they have greatly affected the Arab-Jewish relations. Nevertheless the failure of the peace summit in 2000 and the eruption of the Palestinian uprising (second Intifada) led to re-escalation of the conflict with different periods of fluctuation.

In the first investigated period in the present study, during 1996–1997, the peace process continued in spite of the fact that Prime Minister Rabin, the architect of the Oslo agreement, which brought mutual recognition between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli state, had been murdered. The newly elected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu carried on negotiations with the PLO and signed the Wye and Hebron Agreements that extended Palestinian rule over the occupied territories. In 2000, following the eruption of the second Palestinian uprising (Al-Aqsa Intifada), the conflict dramatically reescalated and violent confrontations began. In 2005 the conflict de-escalated, as the violence somewhat decreased and the Israeli Government decided to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip and from four settlements in the West Bank. Furthermore, in January 2005, Mahmoud Abbas, who is considered as a moderate leader, was elected as Chairman of the PLO (Rubin, 2004; Salinas, 2007). This event was perceived as a new window of opportunity for the resolution of the conflict. In this new climate, on November 27, 2007, the Annapolis Conference took place with the participation of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, and US President George W. Bush. For the first time, the conference approved the two-state solution as the mutually agreed-upon outline for addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This study concentrates on children and adolescents because their opinions and attitudes regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are immensely important. Their beliefs and attitudes acquired during their early period of life be-

come part of their repertoire of conflict and may influence the processing of their experiences and the acquisition of new information about the conflict, even at a later age (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Beach, 2001). In addition, their beliefs and attitudes of the conflict may also influence the development of their more holistic political attitudes (Ichilov, 2004). Moreover, the acquaintance with beliefs and attitudes of Palestinian children and adolescents allows a glimpse into the world of the Palestinian people.

Two main questions have been examined in this study: (a) To what extent do the writings of Palestinian children and youth reflect themes posited by the SPI? (b) Does the prevalence of the themes vary according to the three described conflict periods?

## Research Method

### Sample of the Writings by Children and Adolescents in the Newspaper

The newspaper that was selected for this study is *Yara'at (Quills)* which prints written work of children and adolescents. The newspaper has been published in Ramallah since 1996 by Tamer Institute for Community Education<sup>2</sup>, and is distributed in all the areas of the Palestinian Authority as a supplement<sup>3</sup> to the daily newspaper *Al-Ayyam (The Days)*, which is one of the most popular daily newspapers among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Khatib, 2003; Thawabteh, 2010).<sup>4</sup> The sampling of the news editions was conducted in two stages. At the first stage, we sampled three time periods that reflected different phases of conflict intensity. At the second stage, we examined all the issues that were published in the selected

<sup>2</sup> Tamer Institute for Community Education is an educational nongovernmental nonprofit organization established in Ramallah in 1989. The institute focuses principally on promoting learning and education for the Palestinian community in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, primarily targeting children and young people. The main purpose of the *Yara'at* project is to encourage young people (aged 8–21) to express their experiences, feelings, and ideas through creative writing. For further information, see the formal website of the institute: <http://www.tamerinst.org>

<sup>3</sup> The supplement is not published regularly but appears periodically.

<sup>4</sup> For online sample of *Yara'at* supplements see the formal website of *Al-Ayyam*: <http://www.al-ayyam.ps/znews/site/>

three periods according to the following breakdown: from 1996, 11 issues; from 1997, 50 issues; from 2001, 25 issues; from 2002, 31 issues; from 2005, 5 issues; from 2006, 6 issues; and from 2007, 5 issues (altogether 133 issues).

The empirical assessment included reading the newspapers in Arabic by the first author<sup>5</sup> and in each issue counting the total writings of the items published—that is, the units of analysis. The unit of analysis was a single and holistic literary piece (i.e., an item) written by an author that was published in different forms, such as a letter, a poem, a story, or an essay. In total, 1,729 units were found (897 items of children and adolescents up to age 18 and 832 items of youngsters over age 18 or writers whose ages were not mentioned). In the next phases, out of all these units, all the units that addressed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were identified. In total, 512 conflict units were identified and they were approximately 30% of all the published units (278 conflict items of children and adolescents up to age 18 and 234 conflict items of youngsters over 18 or writers whose ages were not mentioned). Finally, among the conflict units, 278 items of the children and adolescents up to age 18 were selected for the analysis.

Of the total 278 identified and analyzed units, 12% were written by children aged 9–12; 34% were written by adolescents aged 13–15; and 54% were written by 16–18 year olds; 57% were written by girls and 43% by boys.

### Coding Framework

The research framework included 14 categories which were derived from the guide theory, that is, conceptual model of the sociopsychological foundations of intractable conflicts, and they were content analyzed in each unit. They constitute the themes that reflect the components of the SPI according to the following breakdown (in accordance with Bar-Tal, 1998a, 1998b, 2007a, 2011 and the relevant references cited in them).<sup>6</sup> The definitions of these categories are provided in Table 1 as they allowed the categorization of the themes found in the content analysis.

### Method of Analysis

The analysis method of the written pieces by the children and youths included qualitative and

quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis used content analysis, according to the methodological literature (see, e.g., Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002)—that is, an analysis of the concrete terms that appeared in each unit of analysis (i.e., letters, poems, stories, or essays). The analysis included categorization of the found themes in the units of analysis in accordance with the described coding framework of 14 SPI components (regarding themes of societal beliefs, collective memory, or collective emotions). Fourteen dichotomous variables were formed which are the occurrence variables of the SPI components: 1 = absent, 2 = present. It is worth noting that some of the units contained more than one category of themes. Thus a unit of analysis could be categorized into two or more categories and as a result, in 278 units, 436 categories were found.

Most of the units in the content analysis were categorized by the first researcher since the SPI's categories were clearly prominent. In about 20% of the items, where categorization was ambiguous, an additional reader<sup>7</sup> was asked to analyze them. In all cases, where the categorization of an additional reader was used, there was high reliability between the evaluators (only in 5% of these cases there was disagreement between the evaluators).

The quantitative content analysis included a descriptive analysis of the research variables and chi-square analysis.

## Results

### Distribution of the Children's and Adolescents' Items Concerning the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Figure 1 displays the distribution of the children's and adolescents' items concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (in total, 278) from the total sum of the items in the newspaper

<sup>5</sup> The first author has a master's degree in Arabic language and literature. It should be noted that there was not any special difficulty in understanding the Arabic text.

<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that in addition there was "open code," in case of finding other themes. However, no other themes were found in the analyzed units.

<sup>7</sup> The additional analyzer is a Ph.D. researcher who is proficient in the theoretical model of the sociopsychological components of intractable conflicts.

Table 1  
*SPI Components and Their Definitions*

	Definitions
a. Eight themes of societal beliefs:	
The justness of one's own goals	Includes all the references that justified Palestinians' goals, denied the Israelis' goals, and justified the means to achieve these goals including use of violence against Israelis.
Delegitimization of the rival	Includes very negative and inhuman characterization of the Israelis, including traits, intentions of behavior, or description of their acts.
Security	Includes references to threats that hinder Palestinian security, military activities carried out by Palestinians, and conditions that are needed in order to secure the life of the Palestinians.
A positive ingroup image	Includes positive self-collective characterization with traits, intentions, or behaviors.
Victimization	Includes references to harsh unjust experiences that Palestinians encounter as individuals and/or collectives throughout the conflict as a result of Israeli intentional maltreatment, including killing, injuries, destruction, power, oppression, persecution, expulsion, and other atrocious acts.
Patriotism	Includes expressions of belonging, love, pride, loyalty, and commitment of the individual to his/her homeland and his/her people, and the need of personal self-sacrifice.
National unity	Includes reference to descriptions of society's unity, the necessity of supporting the leaders and the conflict goals, and the high cost that society might pay if unity is impaired. In addition, this theme refers to the importance of solidarity against the external threat and the need for consensus.
Peace	Refers to the nature of peace, devotion, and longing for peace, and the endeavors to solve the conflict in peaceful ways.
b. Collective memory:	Includes reference to past specific events which are related to the conflict.
c. Five collective emotions:	
Fear	Includes direct expression of fear or threats and/or dangers that may be personal or collective. They could be related to personal experiences or based on provided information
Hatred	Includes direct expression of hatred or expressing feelings of revulsion and condemnation.
Anger	Includes direct expression of anger or inferred anger on the basis of presenting the deeds of another group as an unjust and unfair violation of social norms.
Revenge	Refers to direct expression of revenge or wishing to physically hurt the members of the Israelis in retaliation for the violence directed at them.
Hope	Refers to awaiting or wishing for realization of a concrete objective, including the aspiration to be extricated from negative conditions.

which were written by children and adolescents up to age 18 (altogether 897) according to the investigated years.

Figure 1 shows that approximately a third of overall children's and adolescent's items in the newspaper dealt with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, in the period of the conflict's reemergence, over two and a half times more conflict items were written than during the peace process period, and over one and a half times more than in the relatively calm period. This finding illustrates that the conflict is salient in the lives of Palestinians children and adolescents and its salience increases considerably with the rise in conflict intensity.

### **Frequency of the Appearance of the Sociopsychological Infrastructure Components in Total Periods and by Period**

Table 2 assembles the rates of appearance of each of the categories in the analyzed units in total items, over all three periods, and in each of the three periods, and allows a comprehensive picture of the appearance of the SPI components in the three periods. In addition, the right three columns of this table display the findings that were obtained from tests that analyzed the relationships between a period and each of the 14 SPI categories.



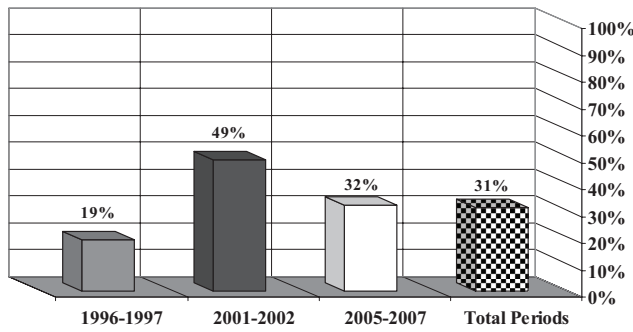


Figure 1. Conflict items from total items of children and adolescents by period.

The findings presented in Table 2 illustrate that the categories of victimization and patriotism and the collective emotion of hope were most frequently expressed in the analyzed items. Only about 8% of the analyzed items addressed collective memory. Collective memory refers mainly to past specific events (Cairns & Roe, 2003). The small number of references to collective memory can be explained by the fact that the focus of attention of Palestinian children and adolescents is their daily reality at present and less to the past events which are distant from their awareness.

In addition, Table 2 shows that all the SPI categories appeared at the time of the peace process and at the reemergence of the conflict,

and that the absolute majority of SPI categories appeared during the relative calm period (not including the societal belief of “justness of one’s own goals” and the collective emotion of anger). This shows that the SPI categories were found to some degree in each of the conflict periods, although the conflict’s intensity varied from one period to another.

Table 2 also shows that the appearance rate of the victimization belief increased statistically significantly from the period of the peace process (about 51%) to the reemergence of the conflict (about 74%), and remained without considerable change during the relatively calm period (about 73%), while the appearance of the rate of patriotism showed a statistical significant

Table 2  
Sociopsychological Infrastructure Categories in Total Periods and by Period

Sociopsychological infrastructure's components	Period			Total periods (N = 278)	χ <sup>2</sup>	Tests	
	1996/7 peace process (n = 81)	2001/2 conflict reemergence (n = 124)	2005-7 relatively calm (n = 73)			χ <sup>2</sup>	df
1. Justness of one's own goals	1.2%	5.6%	0%	2.9%	6.34	2	.04
2. Security	3.7%	16.9%	5.5%	10.1%	11.77	2	.00
3. Delegitimizing the rival	6.2%	13.7%	6.8%	9.7%	4.09	2	.129
4. Positive ingroup image	17.3%	18.5%	2.7%	14%	10.52	2	.005
5. <i>Own victimization</i>	50.6%	74.2%	72.6%	66.9%	13.75	2	.001
6. <i>Patriotism</i>	64.2%	44.4%	27.4%	45.7%	21.11	2	>.001
7. Unity	1.2%	3.2%	11.0%	4.7%	9.20	2	.010
8. Peace	4.9%	1.6%	2.7%	2.9%	1.94	2	.378
9. Fear	7.4%	7.3%	9.6%	7.9%	0.38	2	.826
10. Anger	2.5%	4.0%	0%	2.5%	3.04	2	.218
11. Hatred	2.5%	4.8%	2.7%	3.6%	1.00	2	.606
12. Revenge	7.4%	7.3%	1.4%	5.8%	3.51	2	.173
13. <i>Hope</i>	13.6%	21.8%	12.3%	16.9%	3.81	2	.148
14. Collective memory	11.1%	6.5%	8.2%	8.3%	1.40	2	.496

Note. Italic = the most frequent SPI components.

constant decline throughout the three periods (around 64%, around 44%, around 27%, respectively). In addition, the results indicate that there were statistical significant relationships between the period in which the items were written and the frequency of appearance regarding the following additional four societal beliefs: security, positive ingroup image, national unity, and goals' justness. The remaining SPI categories were not found to be statistically significant related to the particular period. The above findings showed that the frequency of appearance of societal beliefs in the writings of Palestinian children and youth was dynamic and varied through time.

The following are examples that illustrate expression of the dominant categories. As mentioned, in some of the items there was more than one expression of the content category from the SPI. Therefore, the following examples may contain several components and not only these are noted in the titles.

**Content that contains beliefs about victimization** (and also fear and collective memory):

**Suffering** (14-year-old girl; *Yara'at*, October 23, 2002)

The bats live in our homes, fear resides in the hearts of our children, anarchy prevails in our kingdom and our suffering ascends . . . our young men were killed, our families exiled, our wives disparaged, our men humiliated [ . . . ] and our suffering ascends . . . our tents were uprooted, our houses destroyed, our orchards burnt, our lands robbed, they said it is their right and added to our suffering . . . [ . . . ]

**Content that contains beliefs about patriotism** (and also security and delegitimizing the rival):

**Together forever** (12-year-old girl; *Yara'at*, February 26, 2002)

T'air and Osama were friends [ . . . ] connected to each other, partners in sorrow and happiness. When the Intifada broke out, the boys took part [ . . . ] in the protection of their homeland. Among them was Osama who wanted to protect his homeland where he played and on which he was nourished [ . . . ]. He protected it with all his might and threw rocks at the enemies until he hit one of them on his head [ . . . ]. However, a sniper fired a bullet that struck Osama's chest and he became a *shahid* because he was one of the Intifada's heroes, and his friends carried him on their shoulders [ . . . ]. Osama's fall raised T'air's resolve to rebel against the Zionist raiders [ . . . ]. He joined the crowds, held a slingshot and a rock and hurled them courageously in the enemy's direction. Suddenly, a great many shots were fired by a cruel

conquering enemy and wounded the brave T'air and killed him. He then became a *shahid* and joined his *shahid* friend Osama and had a glorious funeral [ . . . ].

**Content that contains collective emotion of hope** (and also revenge):

**Dream and Victory** (13-year-old girl; *Yara'at*, October 30, 2002)

The sun is shining. It is the beginning of spring [ . . . ] and we, we are immersed in our dreams, waiting for liberation! [ . . . ] I will not be humiliated more than I've been humiliated. I will light every dark street, I will bestow happiness for every cry and a smile for every tear [ . . . ] until we banish the occupation from our lands, avenge the blood of the *shahids* [ . . . ] and win.

The following are examples that illustrate expression of the less dominant categories.

**Content that contains beliefs about unity:**

**Against whom you raise your weapon!!!** (17-year-old girl; *Yara'at*, July 2007)

[ . . . ] At the past we said that we have an enemy and we shall resist him. But the symphony has changed, and now we don't distinguish between a brother and an enemy or between a baby and a masked person. Let us unite and stand strong against all those who don't want us to have a homeland.

**Content that contains beliefs about delegitimizing the rival** (and also hatred):

**The criminals** (12-year-old girl; *Yara'at*, April 25, 2001)

Once upon a time there was a house and there were living a mother, a father, two sisters and two brothers. One day, as the siblings went to school, they heard that a man died and became *Shahid*. They were very sad about that, as if he was their relative, and so they started hating the criminal Jews strongly. They heard stories about the criminal Jews, such as they are cruel and heartless, who murder helpless children and youth in their home in a horrifying ways [ . . . ].

**Content that contains collective memory:**

**The terror** (13-year-old boy; *Yara'at*, November 7, 2001)

I heard this word a lot and I did not ascribe importance for it or did I tried not to understand its meaning, because I was afraid to understand it [ . . . ]. Then I realized that the terror is the massacres that Israel did to the Palestinian people, that I am part of them, before I was born. For example, the massacre in Sabra and Shatila which took place in time of my parents; The massacres in Kafr Qasim and Deir Yassin, which took place in time of my grandparents; and many other massacres in my time, as the massacres in al-Aqsa and Hebron [ . . . ].

## Discussion

### Salience of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the World of the Palestinian Children and Adolescents

The results indicated that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict occupied a significant place in the writings of Palestinian children and adolescents and in their daily lives. There is no doubt that the daily agenda of Palestinian children and adolescents reflects one of the fundamental aspects of an intractable conflict, namely, it being a salient component in the life of the society that experiences it. This finding is in line with the results of the studies by Nashef (1992), Masalha (1993, 2003), and Nakhsh (2004), who found that the dream contents of Palestinian children tended to involve violent aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It should be noted that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not reerupt only occasionally nor do the confrontations take place in areas remote from the residents' daily lives, but is part of daily life. This means that almost every day, Palestinian children and adolescents encounter the signs of the conflict. Accordingly, the study by MacMullin and Odeh (1999) shows that the Israeli occupation and war were among the three most worrying experiences reported by Palestinian children and adolescents. The findings of the present study showed that when the violent conflict reemerged, the preoccupation with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the writings of the children and adolescents was more extensive than at the time of the peace process and in the relatively calm period. This shows that at times of conflict escalation, the involvement with the conflict becomes more salient. It seems that, in a violent environment, the conflict takes over a significant share of the children's and adolescents' world, at the cost of healthy aspects that could have found expression had the situation been different (see, e.g., Muris, Merckelbach, Meesters, & Van Lier, 1997; Silverman, La Greca, & Wasserstein, 1995; Tucci, Mitchell, & Goddard, 2007). Nevertheless it is important to note that in addition to the theme of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Palestinian children and adolescents also wrote about other subjects. Although the other themes were not subjected to profound content analysis, we found them worth mentioning. The findings

showed that Palestinian children and adolescents dealt with developmental experiences, such as love and separation, relations with parents and families, as well as school experiences, alongside experiences related to conflict.

### Reflection of the Sociopsychological Infrastructure Components in the Writings of Palestinian Children and Adolescents

The appearance of the repertoire of the SPI components, almost in its entirety, in the three investigated periods can be accounted for by the fact that the period of the peace process of 1996–1997 and the relatively calm period of 2005–2007 included many characteristics of the period of conflict in terms of casualties, humiliations, arrests, land expropriation, movement restrictions, damage to the economy, and others (as reported by Internet sites of B'Tselem; OCHA OPT: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Occupied Palestinian Territory; PCBS: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics). It is possible, therefore, that from a Palestinian point of view, the three apparently different periods examined in this study were in fact one continuous sequence of a violent conflict.

The present study's findings showed that Palestinian children and adolescents emphasize two societal beliefs in their writings—*victimization* and *patriotism*, as well as a collective emotion of *hope*. We will elaborate on them.

**Victimization.** The expressions which reflected victimization in the writings of the Palestinian children and adolescents included general descriptions of Israeli assaults against the Palestinian people, in terms of killing children, deportation, oppression, land expropriation, and house demolitions, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, descriptions of direct and indirect negative personal experiences. These themes were described in terms of abuse, profanities, pain, disruption of a normal way of life (both at day and night), and assault on relatives, friends, and neighbors. It seems that the descriptions touched on beliefs that represent not only the experiences of children and adolescents, but also the life of the whole Palestinian nation, which has developed a collective sense of victimization (Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori, & Gundar, 2009; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). The

considerable prominence of victimization in the writings of Palestinian children and adolescents is in line with the findings of Nashef (1992), Masalha (1993), and Nakhash (2004), according to which, in the dreams of Palestinian children, the Palestinians mostly appear as victims of Israeli violence.

It is possible that the victimization experience intensified since the children and adolescents perceive themselves as being hurt for no fault of their own. Some support for this notion may be drawn from Masalha's study (2003) that demonstrated that the dreams of Palestinian children were characterized by passivity. The examined children perceived themselves as being assaulted by the Israelis without any initiation of hostile acts, and often were not able to defend themselves. The Palestinian children and adolescents experienced the conflict in a personal, direct, immediate, daily, and incessant manner, and therefore, it is not unexpected to find that they related to these experiences through their writings. This explanation corresponds with the findings of Giacaman et al. (2007) and Dubow et al. (2010). Their research shows that most Palestinian children and adolescents reported exposing to violent events involving casualties that take place in their close environment in the framework of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**Patriotism.** The manifestations of patriotism in the writings included depictions of love for the homeland, self-sacrifice, honor for *shahids*, attachment to the land, protection of the homeland and its liberation, and the return of Jerusalem to the Palestinian people. The prominence of the manifestations of patriotism can be a result of the socialization process. Studies that have examined Palestinian textbooks for children and adolescents have found that they emphasize the need to liberate occupied Palestine and to establish its capital in Jerusalem (Fanous, 2006). In addition, Abu Bakr's (1990) research indicates that the contents in Palestinian children's literature address the liberation of the occupied homeland, relate to the love of the homeland, the uprising, and the continuation of the struggle. According to Burdman (2003), as well as to Kimhi and Even (2004), the messages of the Palestinian educational system encourage children and adolescents to carry out acts of self-sacrifice. The Palestinian textbooks, the educational system, and children's literature there-

fore emphasize contents of commitment, pride, and loyalty to the Palestinian people and their land, which correspond to the definition of patriotism (Bar-Tal, 1993; Bar-Tal & Staub, 1997). Textbooks and children's literature are recognized as highly influential socialization agents (Bar-Tal, 1998a; Ichilov, 2004), and hence, many of the manifestations of patriotism among Palestinian children and adolescents in their newspapers, may reflect the socialization processes that they have gone through.

Moreover, the jihad duty, as anchored in Islam and in the Koran, calls its believers to take part in the holy war against the enemy, and for self-sacrifice (*shahada*) (Knapp, 2003). Patriotism, therefore, becomes a superior value since it appears as a religious precept. Literature shows that references to the religious obligation to safeguard the homeland, to liberate the stolen land, and to exalt the holy war appear in Palestinian textbooks (Burdman, 2003; Firer & Adwan, 2004). Studies by the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) also indicate that textbooks in Palestinian elementary and middle schools contain clear messages about *jihad*, sacrifice, and martyr's death. The treatment of the *jihad* identifies it as a religious and national duty for the defense of the homeland. The textbooks convey a message of love and sacrifice for the homeland and glorify the *shahids* for sacrificing themselves for religion, for the nation, and for society (Internet site of IPCRI). In this context, the studies of Masalha (2003) and Nakhash (2004) show that Palestinian children see themselves as *shahids* in their dreams as well. Thus, the frequent expressions of patriotism by Palestinian children and adolescents can be attributed to their socialization process at school and religious agents, mandated by Islam.

**Hope.** The expressions that reflect hope in the writings included descriptions of longing for freedom, victory, liberation from the occupation, return of refugees to their homeland, emancipation of Jerusalem, avenging the blood of the *shahids*, and yearning for a bright future. Hope involves expectation and aspiration for a goal, as well as positive feelings about the anticipated outcome (Staats & Stassen, 1985). Snyder (2000) argues that the feeling of hope arises when one expects the realization of a positive concrete objective or the escape from negative conditions. Accordingly, it may be as-

sumed that, given that the Palestinian children and adolescents experienced a harsh and negative reality, which induces the sense of victimization, as described above, they expressed their aspiration to disengage from this negative reality and to fulfill aspirations seen by them as concrete and positive, such as liberation from the weight of occupation, the liberation of Jerusalem, and the defeat of the enemy. This means that hope has different meaning and does not have necessarily express longing for peace (Bar-Tal, in press).

Indeed it is worth noting that, among the expressions which reflected hope in the writings, no manifestations of hope regarding peace between the two sides of the conflict were found, indicating that Palestinian children and adolescents do not see peace as a means to achieve their goals. This understanding is in line with the study of Sagy and Adwan (2006), and with previous studies of Orr, Sagy, and Bar-on (2000) and Sagy, Orr, Bar-On, and Awwad (2001), which found that Palestinian adolescents tend to disregard the benefits of peace between the two sides, emphasize the costs of peace, and are reluctant to pay the high price that peace demands. Moreover, the researchers found that Palestinian adolescents avoid constructing peace representations as a significant value and are even willing to renounce peace in order to achieve national goals.

Emphasizing patriotism and hope within a context of victimization and suffering may throw light on the resilience of Palestinian children and adolescents. Research on the impact of experiences of political conflict on children shows contradictory findings. Some indicate negative consequences and others suggest enhanced resilience (see, e.g., Engle, Castle, & Menon, 1996; Slone, Lobel, & Gilat, 1999). The salience of victimization themes may reflect pessimism and focus on negative and misery. However, patriotism and hope themes may reflect optimism and activism to face the conflict, which may enhance the sense of resilience. Furthermore, as mentioned, adopting SPI components facilitates adaptation to conflict situations by providing the society members meaning to their experiences in the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007a). In this context, the research of Barber (2008), mentioned above, showed that in spite of their harsh experiences in the conflict, Palestinian youth in the sample were characterized by

a high level of activism, high risk-taking, and by high perceived efficacy and willingness to carry their struggle on forever.

### **Relationships Between the Level of Appearance of Societal Beliefs and the Time Period**

The results found a relationship between the categories of presented societal beliefs and the period in which the compositions of the Palestinian children and adolescents were written and published. First, the appearance of the victimization theme increased through time, from the period of the peace process to the conflict's peak and up to the relatively calm period. One plausible explanation for this trend is the cumulative effect of the conflict on various domains in the lives of the Palestinians, the quantity of negative violent experiences and the extent of casualties throughout the three periods.

Second, the extent of the patriotism theme gradually declined through time from the period of the peace process to the relatively calm period. It could be anticipated that the measure of patriotism expressions would in fact increase in the transition from the peace process period to the period of combat since at times of violent confrontation, the need for social solidarity, for society's active participation in the struggle, and for the willingness for self-sacrifice arises. The findings revealed that the situation is just the opposite and two explanations may be suggested:

**Signs of despair.** Following the Oslo agreements in 1994 and preceding the Camp David negotiations in 2000, expectations for the peaceful resolution of the conflict had developed. The failure of the Camp David summit shattered these expectations and subsequently, the violent confrontations forcefully reerupted and have continued with varying intensity. During this entire period, from 2000 until now, despite the use of military force against Israel, the Palestinian side has not achieved any of its national goals, including the foundation of a Palestinian state approved by the UN, and, at the same time, it has been struck by setbacks that not only did not promote progress in Palestinian society but also caused further deterioration. This may well have weakened the society, and instilled hopelessness and a sense of

despair which in turn reduced the degree of mobilization and patriotism.

**The internal rift in the Palestinian society.** In recent years, Palestinian society has been polarized between two opposing factions: the Hamas and the Fatah, which have different ideologies and goals. The schism created a violent conflict within Palestinian society and society members were demanded to identify with and belong to one of the parties, in contrast to the central motives of the patriotism beliefs, which reflect connection, loyalty, and belonging to the entire nation. The internal rift in the Palestinian society actually created two adversarial Palestinian groups, while the identification with one of them is by definition nonidentification with the opposite side, and a patriotic attitude toward one group is considered antipatriotic toward the other group. Accordingly, in parallel to the decline in patriotism expressions in the writings of the Palestinian children and adolescents, was found a significant growth in manifestations of the theme of *national unity* during the relatively calm period, as opposed to the prior periods. Children and adolescents often called for national unity against the Israeli opponent and expressed a desire for the unity which existed in the past, prior to the schism.

Third, the rate of appearing of the security theme at the peak of the conflict was considerably higher (approximately four times higher) than during the peace process and the relatively calm period. According to Bar-Tal (2007a), beliefs of security are vital for coping with threats, for example, when the conflict is violent and accompanied by hostile acts and wars, and endangers the lives of the individuals, the collective existence, the economic welfare, and primary values. When the conflict escalates, the threats become salient and intensified, and there is greater need for security in order to manage life. In this case, beliefs relating to dangers and threats as well as those concerned with maintaining safety become more salient and central. Regarding the theme of security during the conflict's peak period, Palestinian children and adolescents expressed the wish to be fighters, to protect the nation, and to inflict losses on the enemy side, as well as referring to active participation in the warfare and to the glorification of military operations carried out by the Palestinian side.

### Contribution of the Study

The present study contributes to research on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular and on intractable conflicts in general, considering the following three points.

First, it introduces the Palestinian side in the investigation of the sociopsychological infrastructure (SPI). The research that explores the model of sociopsychological factors of intractable conflicts within the framework of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has focused so far mainly on the Israeli side (see, e.g., Arviv-Abromovich, 2010; Bar-Tal, 1998a, 2007b; Borovsky-Sapir, 2004; Golan, 2006; Sharvit, 2007), while the Palestinian side has not received comparable attention. In the broad context of conflict research, a comparative examination of the SPI of the two sides allows a wider view of the conflict which considers the standpoints of both sides and enables the study of emphasized aspects of each side at a given point in time. However, in order to obtain an accurate comparative possibility of SPI between Palestinians and Israelis, additional studies are needed to investigate the reflection of the SPI components through other distribution methods of Palestinians, such as textbooks, daily newspapers, culture products, leaders' speeches, public opinion polls, and more. In addition, future research may also examine whether the SPI of one side of the conflict changes in a similar or different fashion compared with the infrastructure of the other side from one period to another.

Second, the present study for the first time examines the SPI as it emerges in writings of Palestinian children and adolescents in a children's and youth newspaper. These writings are mainly based on personal authentic experiences and on knowledge acquired through socialization processes. One may hypothesize that the publishing of the Palestinian children's and adolescents' writings in a separate edition, appended to a popular Palestinian daily newspaper (*Al-Ayyam*), turns them into socialization agents by themselves with a rather significant potential influence both on their peer group and on adults.

One must note that the present study is based on the premise that the writings of the Palestinian children and adolescents that appear in the *Yara'at* newspaper are authentic by nature and were published without any intervention or tendentious considerations of the newspaper's ed-

itors in selecting the creations that were eventually published. However, the possibility that the editorial staff acted in contrast to these assumptions may not be completely excluded.

Third, the study examined changes in the sociopsychological infrastructure as a consequence of the changing context of the conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been defined through most of its years as an intractable conflict. However, the period between 1993 and 2000 is perceived as the time of a peace process. Specifically, this was a period when the conflict had shifted from being perceived as intractable to one that was based on dialogue and negotiation (the Oslo agreements and the Camp David negotiations), and thus the intensity of features characterizing intractable conflicts declined. In the subsequent period, between 2001 and 2004, the peace process collapsed, and conflict features became mostly intractable again, along with a strong sense of disappointment on both sides. The shift from a conflict based on dialogue to an intractable conflict brought about a change in the societal beliefs of the Palestinian side, as viewed in the writings of Palestinian children and adolescents. Thus, for example, the beliefs of own victimization, security, and delegitimizing the rival, and the collective emotion of hope expanded considerably, and at the same time the societal belief of patriotism diminished substantially. This indicates that changes in the conflict's context influence personal experiences and then changes in the accessibility and expressions of societal beliefs and collective emotions. These findings show that the SPI components are dynamic and not static because in different contexts different components play important functions meeting the challenges of the conflict.

In summary, the prominent societal beliefs, which are reflected in the writings of Palestinian children and adolescents, address victimization and patriotism, while the dominant collective emotion is hope. Apparently, these are not radical and negative beliefs. Furthermore, the attitudes of the Palestinian children and adolescents include relatively few clearly negative terms of hatred, delegitimizing the rival, and revenge toward the Israeli side. Therefore, one may say that, in general, the messages of the Palestinian children and adolescents who represent the next Palestinian generation are relatively moderate. Nevertheless, these messages

hardly address societal beliefs of peace; on the contrary, they often speak about the disappointment of peace and its painful consequences for the Palestinian side, and the hope to end the conflict by winning over the Israeli enemy, rather than by its peaceful resolution.

It seems that through the dissemination of their messages in the newspaper, the Palestinian children and adolescents become socialization agents carrying the potential to influence both their peer group and adults (as the children's and youth newspaper *Yara'at* is distributed as a supplement in the popular daily newspaper *Al-Ayyam*, which is read mainly by adults). It seems that the children and adolescents who write in the newspaper focus in their writings on a basic description of their harsh daily experiences in order to give expression to their feelings and thoughts regarding the conflict. Their writings constitute a demonstration of the daily human distress and suffering of the Palestinian children and adolescents as a result of the violent conflict, and thus serve as a voice for other children and adolescents who live in the same context.

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