Youth Crisis
The Well-being of Middle Eastern Youth and Adolescents During War and Peace

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Abstract

This study revolves a round the psychological well being and self-esteem of Palestinian, Israeli Bedouin, and Israeli Jewish adolescents during the time shortly before and after the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Autonomy Agreement.

The study is a partial follow-up to a previous research examining the impact of violence, war-like conditions, and extreme social change on the mental health adjustment of adolescents of this region. Results of the SCL 90-R and Coppersmith Self-Esteem Inventory showed that: i) psychopathology was significantly higher among Gaza youth, while Israeli Jewish and Bedouin youth showed lower levels; ii) youth from Gaza had the lowest levels of self-esteem, while there were no differences between Israeli Jewish and Bedouin youth; and iii) despite the long interval that had elapsed between the first (amidst the Intifada) and the second Intifada (subsequent to the Oslo accords) of the measures, and the changing conditions, there was minimal evidence of change in levels of distress.

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 INTRODUCTION :

A growing body of research has examined the impact of war, violence, and other forms of catastrophic social disintegration on the psychological adjustment of youth and adolescents (e.g. Elbedour et al., 1998), demonstrating such effects as developmental impairment and behavioral and psychological problems (Garbarino and Kostelny, 1996). Within this broader concern, attention has focused on youth and adolescents of the Middle East, who grow up in what can be conceptualized as a 'natural laboratory' for the study of war stress (Klingman et al., 1993). Until very recently, both Israel and the surrounding Arab states have been on a continuous war footing. The first break in this highly volatile and stressful political situation came with the Israel-Egypt peace treaty, and even more recently, with Jordan and the Palestinians. Both the Arabs and Israel have expressed interest in attaining peace (Abu Hien, 1992; Elbedour et al., 1993); however, while both sides espouse this desire, until the past decade neither side has seemed willing to stretch very far to achieve it. As Lerner (1989) put it, "Neither side is able to take the risks necessary to reassure the other side that peace is in fact obtainable" (p. 42).

The psychological core of the problem, Kelman suggests, is that each party is engaging in the phenomenon of zero- sum thinking in which each believes that there must be a winner or loser in any resolution of the conflict. He notes that each "holds the view that only one can be, Nation: either we are a nation. Or they are. They can acquire national identity and rights only at the expense of our identity and rights" (Kelman, 1987, p. 354).

The research literature on social conflict suggests that the most common, indeed the normative, reaction to such a view of conflict (i.e., that it is a zero-sum situation) is to respond in a contentious manner, with the goal of gaining one's own interest without regard for the interests of others, possibly at the expense of others' interests or welfare (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986).

Unfortunately, the behavioral response (i.e., "conflict management style") of contention almost inevitably results in escalation, producing what is referred to as a conflict spiral. The dynamics of conflict spirals include such manifestations as an increase in the use of heavier contentious tactics (possibly including violence) and, perhaps most importantly, a transformation of orientation from simply or only doing well at first, to "winning," and then to hurting the other as retribution for perceived harm done by the other party (e.g., Pruitt and Rubin, 1986).

As in other similar situations of conflict escalation, especially between national, ethnic, ideological, or religious groups, the development

of biases, false perceptions, and prejudices about the opposite camp are inevitable (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986). The development of such stereotypes has several consequences. .First it allows and even encourages further conflict escalation, as when a stereotype of the other holds that they are the "evil" enemy, justifying the most extreme behaviors (e.g., violence) toward them. of perhaps greater consequence is the initiation of self-fulfilling prophecy/expectancy confirmation processes, in which stereotyped views of the other become the assumptions that guide the individual's perceptional of and behavior toward the other. This process often elicits expected behavior, thereby confirming the initially 'false expectations' in this case of a dangerous enemy.

Thus, the consequences of conflict, which are responded to in a contentious fashion and which result in conflict escalation, is what has been referred to as the "residues that change things (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986)"; that is, a structural change in the attitudes about each other held by the parties in the conflict. The research literature indicates clearly that such fundamental structural changes in attitudes and the result strongly held negative stereotypes about those with whom one is in conflict can be a stumbling block to embracing more positive conflict management styles. The stereotypes become a major impediment both to resolving the conflict and to positive interactions between the parties even if the conflict is "technically" resolved (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986; Myers, 1993). The result is that the abnormal situation of contentious conflict and the negative attitudes, stereotypes and behaviors associated with it become the normative condition and are highly resistant to change.

The preceding analysis supports the assertion made earlier, namely, that on a practical level, attempts to foster peaceful relationships by altering conflict-related attitudes and behaviors especially in places such as the Middle East, and in particular with adults, will be a difficult proposition. This suggests the establishing alternative venues for such peace-fostering efforts (e.g., with adolescents in school settings) might offer greater possibilities for success, if for no other reason than that they offer the opportunity for 'natural' interventions to change such attitudes and behaviors through curriculum and program implementation. They also suggest to the Importance of working with youth and adolescents to see how easily they develop strong negative views of groups.

On a normative level, the situation of violence among Middle Eastern adolescents has been found to be similar to adolescents in areas not experiencing international conflict (Horowitz and Frenkel, 1990; Horowitz and Kraus, 1987). However, in such respect, where social conflict and

interpersonal violence are in many ways common place, the normative problems of social conflict and the increasing problem of interpersonal violence are exacerbated by such "macro" factors as the broader international conflict's as well as by such mundane "micro" factors as ethnic, religious, racial, and other inter group differences (Eisikovitz and Karnieli, 1992). Indeed, adolescents, both Israeli and Palestinians, are the ones who have been in the front lines of the active conflict as either the foot soldiers of the Intifada or as the troops of the Israeli army.

Therefore, youth of this region have grown up in a political and socio-cultural climate in which they observe and learn that conflict "is dealt with through hostility, aggression, and violence (Abu Hien, 1992). Given this context, it is reasonable to expect that the adolescents' pattern of response to conflict should carry over to their relations to others, including parents at home, peers in school, and persons in the broader community, as well as to members of the "enemy camp," both in hostile as well as non-hostile settings.

The present study has been conducted relying on previous work (Abu Hein, 1992) during the climax of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict referred to as the Intifada and prior to the signing of the Oslo accords in 1994. This work was followed by other studies (Abu Hein et al, 1993; Elbedour et al., 1998). These earlier studies examined the effects of violence and war on youth and adolescents by assessing the mental health status and its correlations among several different ethnic groups of students within the Middle East. It found clinically elevated levels of maladjustment in 12% to 20% of the adolescents assessed. In addition, elevated levels of reported stress-related incidents were found among Palestine adolescents in the West Bank, Gaza and Bedouin adolescents in Israel. Garbarino and Kostelny (1996) found a similar rate of psychological maladjustment among the Palestinians of Gaza using the Achenbach Children's Checklist.

Indeed, it has been suggested that these high rates of psychological maladjustment are normal among children and youth growing up in situations of social disorganization such as social conflict and war (Cairns and Dawes, 1996).

Elbedour et al. (1993) concluded that the elevated levels of pathology of the Palestinian groups could best be attributed to their proximity to violence. The authors argue that this pattern of results suggests a continuum of catastrophic social disorganization ranging from war at one extreme to endemic social violence to such non-violent types of social disorganization as the extreme social change experienced by the Bedouin. This pattern of results is consistent with Garbarino and Kostelny' s (1993)

contention that the adverse consequences of social disaster on the development of youth reflect a large range of organic and situational factors. It is also consistent with their broader concern of identifying and understanding the forces that push youth away from the norms of adjustment.

 The purpose of the present study is to extend this line of research by generating cross- cultural comparative data on the mental health status of several different groups of adolescents within this region, including those exposed to direct violence as well as those exposed indirectly. It was designed to be a second phase of the 1992 study. Specifically, in addition to assessing Gaza Palestinian and Israeli Bedouin adolescents on levels of behavior and emotional problems, this study includes a group of Israeli Jewish adolescents. Furthermore, the present study examines these variables in a socio cultural context of peace rather than war, for it was conducted after the Oslo accords had been signed between Israel and the Palestinians.

        These three groups allow several different comparisons that can be meaningful for understanding the impact on adolescents of the various stressors in the region (i.e., war, violent conflict, social crisis, and change). For instance, while Israeli Jews and Arab Bedouin are distinctly different cultural groups with different socio-cultural history and religion, both are Israeli citizens. Thus, while living in the shadows of war and violence, they, in fact, live in relatively peaceful circumstances on a daily basis. On the other hand, Palestinians and Bedouin share the same general culture and religion, but are distinctly different from each other due to the political circumstances (i.e., Gaza Palestinians live in the midst of the war-like conditions of the Intifada, in contrast to the peaceful circumstances of the Bedouin). In addition, unlike the Bedouin, who constitute a minority group, the Gaza Palestinians are almost entirely refugees, thrust into Gaza for 45 years of insentient warfare.

        In a previous study, Elbedour et at. (1993) found a significant relationship between mental health state and locus of control. Youth of Gaza scored higher on an externalized locus of control than Bedouin youth and those of the West Bank, and experienced greater levels of Psychopathology. Similarly, Knoff (1986) found that individuals with lower self-esteem tend to use an external locus of control, whereas those who possess an internal locus of control tend to possess higher self-esteem. Gallatin (1975) found positive social adjustment as it was correlated with self-esteem. Therefore, we expect to find relationships among political violence, self-esteem, and psychological distress.

Given the different levels of ecological stress each of the four groups (Israeli Jewish, Israeli Bedouin, West Bank and Gaza) experience, we expect different levels of adjustment to manifest themselves; higher levels of pathology and lower self-esteem among the Gazians.

Palestinians due to the extreme violence of war-like conditions of the Intifada; somewhat lower, but still elevated levels of pathology among the West Bank adolescents attributable to endemic and chronic social violence; and, the lowest levels of pathology and highest self-esteem among the Israeli Jewish and Bedouin groups. The relative levels of Jewish and Bedouin groups is not clear. On one hand, one might predict Israeli Bedouin to be higher due to stresses that come from their marginality as Arab Israelis. This prediction, however, could be tempered somewhat by the common environment they share with Jewish Israelis. On the other hand, because Jewish Israelis are more directly affected by Arab-Jewish conflicts, they could be predicted to display greater stress responses.

Furthermore, comparing pre and post Oslo conditions, from one perspective, the signing of peace accords should diminish threats of violence and improve psychological adjustment.

From another, however, the negative stereotypes, distrust and selective attention given to belief-sustaining information should allow negative attitudes to endure. To the extent that perceptions of conflict remain, adjustment might be expected to be changed minimally, if at all.

Finally, gender is also an important influence in the development of self-esteem and Psychological problems (see, Rutter, 1979, 1983; Werner and Smith, 1982). Adolescent girls typically manifest higher levels of psychological distress than boys do on the SCL-90, Global Severity Index (Derogates, 1983).

METHOD:

Subjects :

Phase (1) (1992). Sample participants consist of a total of 356 high school students from 9th through 12th grades, 13 to 19 years of age (mean age = 15.6 years).and this is the meaning of the youth and adolescents in this research. Each respondent was administered the Derogates Symptom Checklist, revised (SCL-90R). Bedouin students were randomly chosen from three out of five Bedouin high schools near Beer-Sheva (n = 121; 62 boys, 59 girls). West Bank Palestinian students were randomly selected from four Palestinian high schools on the West Bank, two in the city of Hebron, and two in adjacent villages, Dahria and Halhol (n = 126; 83 boys, 43 girls). Gaza students were randomly selected from two high schools in the city of Gaza plus one high school in the refugee camp of Jabalia (n =

109; 53 boys, 56 girls). Geographically, all of the high schools are within one hour drive for from each other. The disproportionate number of boys and girls in the West Bank sample reflect the predominantly male enrollment in West Bank area high schools.

Parental educational background varied considerably across the three groups of adolescents: 58% of the fathers of the West Bank students were reported to have at least a high school education; as compared to 53% of the fathers in the Gaza and 26% of the Bedouin fathers.

Similarly, 42% of the mothers of West Bank students had a high school education, as compared to 33% in Gaza, and only 12% of the Bedouin mothers (Table 1).

Phase (2): (1994). Sample participants consist of a total of 331 10th and 11th grade high school students ranging in age from 14 to 19 years (mean age = 16.5 years). Each respondent was administered the Derogatis Symptom Checklist, revised. (SCL-90R), and the Coppersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Adolescent Version). Students were randomly selected from three groups: Palestinians from Gaza and Israeli Bedouin and Jewish students from the Negev region near Beer-Sheva. There were no West Bank Palestinian students chosen in the second phase.

Bedouin students were randomly chosen from three out of five Bedouin high schools near Beer-Sheva. Two of the high schools were the same as in Phase 1;one was different (n = 94; 46 boys, 48 girls). Gaza students were randomly selected from two different high schools in the city of Gaza plus one high school from the same refugee camp of Jabaliya (n = 125; 96 boys, 29 girls). Jewish students were randomly selected from four Israeli Jewish schools in the Negev region; two from the city of Beer-Sheva, and two from the nearby towns of Arab and Bedouins (n = 112: 46 boys, 66 girls).

Parental educational background varied considerably across the three groups of adolescents: 91 % of the fathers of the Jewish students were reported to have at least a high school education, as compared to 57% of those in Gaza fathers, and 25% of the Bedouin fathers.

Similarly, 92% of the mothers of Jewish students had a high school education, as compared to 46% in Gaza, and only 15% of the Bedouin mothers (Table 1).

Instruments :

The Derogates Symptom Checklist -Revised (SCL-90R). This is a self-administered Inventory of 90 items designed to differentiate measures of distress in nine symptom categories, Plus an overall Global Severity

Index (GSI). "The GSI represents the best single indicator of the current level or depth of the disorder, and should be utilized in most instances where a single summary measure is required" (Derogates, 1983). As for as the subject sample concern, the internal consistency and reliability (alpha) of the GSI was 95 in Phase and .96 in Phase 2.
The Coppersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Adolescent Version).
This 25- item inventory (short school form) is a self-evaluation scale that assesses overall attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which the adolescent believes him/herself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy. The correlation between the short form and longer 58-item inventory is r=0.86 (Coppersmith, 1967). This general measure of self-esteem showed high levels of concurrent validity in its use with a broad range of adolescents (Gilberts, 1983). In comparing the utility of the Coppersmith with other popular measures of self-esteem (e.g. the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale or the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale), Greggo (1986) strongly recommends the use of the Coppersmith with adolescents because of its shorter length, despite its equivalent, or even superiority to the other measures.

The reliability of the self-esteem measure in our sample was 0.80. This is consistent with Coppersmith (1981).

The SCL-90R questionnaire and the Coppersmith Self-Esteem Inventory were translated into Arabic and Hebrew by the first author, and then retranslated into English from the Arabic or Hebrew by different English professors unfamiliar with the initial questionnaires. The re-translation was checked against the original for substantive differences, and the items were reviewed to ensure that they were all comprehensible to students and teachers, and made cultural as well as semantic sense.

Limitations:

Youth ; The young men between 13-19 year of old who are listed in the high school .

 Peace and war .The conflict atmosphere ,killing each other, hating and looking to each other as enemy. This is the meaning of the war .But meeting together which is going under the peace steps and working ,visiting , exchanging groups of young men and doing projects together is the main meaning of the peace atmosphere in this study.

HYPOTHESES:

Phase (1) (1992)

1- Adolescents in Gaza will have higher Global Severity Index GSI) (Derogatis, 1983) scores than adolescents in the West Bank, who, in turn, will have higher GSI scores than Bedouin adolescents.

2- Girls will have a higher GSI score than boys, except possibly in Gaza, where the ongoing Intifada (primarily male activity) and the state of neither war nor peace will result in a high GSI score for both genders.

Phase (2) (1994).

3- Adolescents in Gaza will again have higher GSI scores than Israeli Jews or Israeli Bedouin. Israeli Jews may have higher GSI scores than Israeli Bedouin, for the uncertainty of peace might have a more immediate and direct unsettling effect on Jewish adolescents than on Bedouin.

4- Girls will have a higher GSI score than boys, except possibly in Gaza.

5- Gaza adolescents will have lower self-esteem than either Jewish or Bedouin groups.

There is no reason to suspect particular differences between Jewish and Bedouin groups.

6- There will be--no gender differences for self-esteem.

7- There will be a significant negative relationship (correlation) between psychological distress and self-esteem.

Across Phases

8- Gaza adolescents will have a lower GSI in Phase 2 (1994) than in Phase 1 (1992).

9- There will be no difference between the GSI scores of Bedouin adolescents in Phase 2 and Phase 1

ANALYSES:

Analyses of variance or t-tests were used to test the hypotheses.

Literature suggests that parent's education, a reasonable proxy for SES, may have a substantial impact on GSI scores and self-esteem (e.g. Maruyama et al., 1981; Pur!cey, 1970; Bell & Ward, 1980). Although years of schooling were recorded for both the father and the mother, this relationship was not found to be the case here. In Phase 1, the correlation between GSI and both fathers' education and mother's education was $r = -0.09$. As expected from the correlation's, regression of GSI on fathers' and mother's education found neither education variable to be Statistically significant, independently nor combined.

Self-esteem measures were not collected in Phase 1 and phase 2, the correlation between self-esteem and father's education was $r = 0.13$;

between self-esteem and mother's education, it was r = 0.08. Once again, neither education variable, nor both together, were predictive of self-esteem. Therefore, despite the large differences in parent's educational levels, parent educational variables were not used as co-variables in the analyses.

RESULTS :
Phase (1) :

A two-way analyses of variance found significant groups, F(2,379) = 5.79, p<.O 1, and gender, F(I,379) = 18.21, p<.01, effects, but no two-way interaction, F(2,379) = 1.11, n.s.

Subsequent multiple range tests (Student-Neuman-Keuls) on group differences detected a significant difference between Gaza students (μ= 1.39) and the West Bank and Bedouin students (μ = 20 and μ = 1.14, respectively), but no significant difference between the West Bank and the Bedouin students.

Hypothesis 1 was partially confirmed.

Follow-up t-tests within each of the regions primarily, affirmed what the ANOVAs suggest, namely, that West Bank and Bedouin girls had significantly higher scores than boys did (girls = 1.35, boys = 1.11, t = 2.57, P = 0.01; and girls = 1.32, boys=.97, t = 3.25, P = 0.001, respectively). Surprisingly, given the absence of an interaction, there was no significant difference between boys and girls in Gaza (t = 1.42, n.s.) (see Table 2).

By a way of comparison, the U.S. norm for adolescent girls and boys is median = 0.74; and 0.46, respectively (Derogatis, 1983). All three of our groups were substantially higher than this.

Across all three groups, the median for girls=1.40, while the median for boys = 1.13.

Hypothesis 2 was confirmed.
Phase (2):

A two-way analyses of variance found significant Group, F(2,318) = 26.66, P < 0.01 and gender, F(1,318) =8.95, p<O.Ol effects, but no two-way interaction on GSI, F(2,318)=2.31, n.s. Subsequent multiple range tests (Student-Neuman-Keuls) on the group differences detected a significant difference between Gaza students (μ= 1.38) and the Jewish and Bedouin students (μ=0.91 and μ= 1.06, respectively), but no significant difference between Jewish and Bedouin Students.

Hypothesis 3 was partially confirmed.

Follow-up t-tests on each of the regions paralleled prior analysis in that gender differences emerged for all areas except Gaza. Jewish and

Bedouin girls had significantly higher GSI scores than boys (girls = 1.02, boys = 0.76, t = 3.33, P = 0.001; and girls = 1.21, boys = 0.90, t=2.36, P = 0.02, respectively), while there was no significant difference between boys and girls in Gaza (t=0.11, n.s.) (See

Table (2):

Hypothesis 4 was confirmed.

A two-way analyses of variance on self-esteem found a significant Group effect F (2,318)=7.23, P < .01, but no gender effect F (1,318) = 0.00, n.s., and no two-way interaction F (2,318) = 0.15, n.s. Subsequent multiple range tests (Student-Neuman-Keuls) on group differences detected a significant difference between Gaza students (μ = 40.2) and the Jewish and Bedouin students (μ= 42.6 and μ = 42.0, respectively), but no significant difference between Jewish and the Bedouin students. Finally, self-esteem and GSI were negatively related.

The correlation between self-esteem and GSI was r = -0.46 (p < 0.01).

Hypotheses 5, 6 and 7 were confirmed.

Across Phases

Data were available at the two time points only for Gaza Arabs and Israeli Bedouin. If Hypotheses 8 and 9 were true, one would expect substantial phase by group interaction when comparing GSI across Phases. A three-way ANOV A (Phase by Group by Gender) failed to p<.O5. There also were main effects for Group, F(1,439) = 29.73, p<.Ol, and Gender, confirm this interaction: The only significant effect was Group by Gender, F(1,434) = 5.14, F(1,434)=12.13, p<.Ol. (See Table 3). All effects of Phase had F ratios less than one.

Hypothesis 8 was not confirmed.

Summary of Results

The results show that the psychological responses to stress of adolescents in Gaza were substantially the same at both points in time. Similar results emerged for the Bedouin.

Comparisons between these groups, however, demonstrate that adolescents of Gaza showed the highest psychological problems, as well as the lowest self-esteem, across both points of time, as compared to the West-Bank, Jewish, and Bedouin groups.

In the first phase (1992), there were no differences between the Bedouin and the Palestinians of the West Bank. In the second phase, following the Oslo accord, there were no significant differences between Bedouin and Jewish adolescents of Israel. Interestingly, only for the Gaza, Arabs there were no relations of gender with the dependent variables.

DISCUSSION :

      While the design of the study is not strictly longitudinal, in that the subjects are not followed across time, the study does provide information collected at two points of time. The first phase was conducted in 1992 amidst the Intifada ; a period described in the Israeli- Palestinian conflict by Punamaki (1996, p. 68) as the proximity and constant presence of the enemy.

      The second phase was conducted in 1994, shortly after the Israeli-Palestinian Autonomy Agreement was signed at the ceremony on the White House lawn. Both phases show high levels of stress, and suggest that political violence in the region is adversely affecting Israeli and Palestinian youth. The results of this study should not imply or be understood in terms of "traumatization". But the results demonstrate that the political situation and social change are in fact stressful for Arab and Israeli youth. The use of the same instrument has the advantage of making the results comparable in pre (1992) and post (1994) Intifada political conditions.

      The results show that the level of adjustment status of adolescents has not been improved as a result of the Oslo accords and the change from political upheaval to the promises of peace in their surrounding circumstances. The failure to find effects for the Phase variables (all Fs were substantially less than one) is consistent with the view that underlying negative attitudes and stereotypes are unaffected to the peace process. These results may suggest that a change in the psychological functioning of adolescents must be preceded by a change in their cognitive assumptions (e.g. stereotypes, prejudices) (Folkman and Lazarus, 1988). Unfortunately, potential cognitive moderators that put children at risk, or protect them, were not examined in this study.

      An alternative explanation of the lack of change is that the period after Oslo was highly ambiguous, with inconsistent and contradictory directions exhibited by national leaders, and continuous confrontation between the parties in concern. This perspective is supported by Shalit (1977), who found that ambiguity places individuals under stress, increases the complexity of the situation, and increases the potential of the perceived threat. Quite simply, these adolescents were not going to believe in peace until they experience it.

      Finally, gender is also an important influence in the development of psychological problems (see e.g., Rutter, 1979, 1983; Werner and Smith, 1982). Adolescent girls typically manifest higher levels of psychological distress than boys do on the SCL-90, Global Severity Index (Derogatis, 1983). An important finding of the present study is that, except in Gaza,

girls reported uniformly higher global psychological distress the boys. This is consistent with the GSI norms found among adolescents in the United States, although the levels as a whole are much higher among all of the Israeli and Arab groups studied.

Overall, the present study suggests that although all four groups of youth live in close proximity to each other, the cultural and environmental context differs markedly for each. The findings for Palestinian adolescents from Gaza and Bedouin adolescents from the Negev of Israel are clearly consistent with the earlier findings of Elbedour et al ., (1998, 1993). It is not surprise that psychological distress was highest and self-esteem was lowest in Gaza, both among boys and girls. The catastrophic social disorganization caused by their refugee status ,as well as the violent Intifada, almost assured this finding.

Implication and Proposed Alternative Dispute Resolution Methods:

Clearly, one of the most perplexing problems encountered by both Israelis and Arabs concern issues of social conflict and the continuing cycle of interpersonal violence. As the formal peace talks between representatives of the Israeli government and those of various Arab entities have proceeded, an important question can be raised about their consequences.

Specifically, what next? So .far, one conclusion appears clear: regardless of the outcome of the formal talks, even if they are optimally successful, the more basic task of peace-making would still remain. Efforts aimed at fostering a sustainable peace must necessarily be focused on group and interpersonal levels, and the daily interaction between communities and individuals.

This feeling has apparently reached the level of public awareness, as indicated in an opinion column in The Jerusalem Post, "Pacts are made by politicians. Peace is made by people ultimately, it is day to day interaction between Israelis and Palestinians on the personal level that will either cement or undo peace. Two things must come about: a revolution in the way all inhabitants of this region think, and a total change in interpersonal relationships" (Widetzky, 1994, p. 6). The column goes on to indicate that such goals will not be easily achieved and outlines a series of "dialogues" between various sectors of adult population which, it suggests, will begin the process.

While such approach is both commendable and worthwhile, the prospect of altering the attitudes and behaviors of adults is indeed a daunting one. This is especially the case in the middle East, where a history of conflict and escalation has resulted in structural change in the attitudes

held regarding the "enemy" (Rubin et al., 1986; Pruitt and Rubin, 1986) and where ongoing acts of violence by both sides reinforce such negative attitudes and stereotypes. In the face of these extreme circumstances, it seems that a more fundamental approach, with the greatest likelihood of permanently altering Israeli-Arab attitudes and interactions, is through interventions with youth and adolescents. Such interventions would be designed to alter the attitudes held by adolescents concerning conflict and appropriate responses to it, as well as the stereotypes held concerning those with whom they are in conflict.

To establish the basis for permanent and self-renewing change in the basic attitudes toward members of other groups and appropriate methods for resolving conflict in positive ways, it is necessary to influence relevant attitudes and behaviors as they are developed. By exposing the youth of this region to alternative views and models of conflict and more positive responses to it, as well as altering the stereotypes that they hold of members of the "opposite camp," it can be hoped that the interactions in which they are involved, on both an intra- and inter-group basis, can become more positive and productive. On a short-term basis, this can manifest itself in more peaceful interactions with peers in the schoolyard and on the streets of their communities. On the long-term basis, it can be hoped that future leaders can make better decisions and that the average citizen can feel empowered to interact in positive ways with members of different ethnic and religious groups. Peer Mediation Research: Altering conflict related attitudes and behaviors over the last twenty years, the United States of America has been a witness to what is referred to as the "Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) movement," which involves the application of such dispute processing modalities as problem-solving negotiation and mediation to virtually every manifestation of social conflict (Kressel and Pruitt, 1989). One of the major applications of ADR has been to disputes involving minors who are in conflict with their parents at home, their peers in school, and people in the general community (Van Slyck et al., 1994). A manifestation of this phenomenon has been the development and implementation of didactic educational curricula focusing on the conceptual issues of peace-making and dispute resolution through mediation.

Another development which is the establishment of "peer mediation" programs in which youth and adolescents are trained and behave as mediators in the resolution of disputes between and among their peers (Van Slyck and Stem, 1991). An increasing number of studies have been conducted on this activity (e.g., Van Slyck and Stem, 1991; Johnson et aI., 1992; Koch and Miller, 1988; Gentry and Benenson, 1992; Miller, 1993).

This research suggests a variety of positive impacts that include a reduction in disciplinary problems and violent incidents, improvements in "school climate," enhancement of self-image in such areas of importance as educational and vocational development (Van Slyck and Stern, 1991), and the transfer of skills to settings outside of the school, as well as to the home setting (Gentry and Benenson, 1992) and interactions with parents (Miller, 1993). As a result of these positive findings, peer mediation programs are increasingly being recognized as viable violence prevention programs that promote positive youth development (Van Slyck et al., 1994; Shennan, 1994), community peace (Dejong, 1994), and the reduction of prejudice (Moore and Batiste, 1994). Thus, the research literature suggests that the implementation of peer mediation programs may be an optimal approach to

Positively altering attitudes and behaviors toward conflict and the stereotypes held of others with whom one may be in conflict.

Two major factors have been cited as causal for the apparent positive impact of peer mediation in changing the conflict attitudes and behaviors of adolescents. First, on a more theoretically level, it has been suggested that the various positive effects found in the research stem from the fact that the orientation and skills associated with ADR processes, such as mediation, are "developmentally appropriate" to the adolescent period; i.e., they promote the use of problem- solving coping strategies, whose development is related to positive adjustment (Stem et al., 1992). Second, on a more pragmatic level, it has been further suggested that a necessary component for the positive effect is the combination of the didactic aspect (i.e., curriculum) with an experiential component (i.e., peer mediation program) (Van Slyck and Stem, 1991; Johnson et al., 1992). Indeed, it has been argued that simple exposure to the principles of conflict management, even through experiential training, is insufficient to have a permanent and meaningful impact on attitudes and behaviors concerning conflict and that of ongoing opportunity to make use of conflict management skills is necessary for such an effect (Van Slyck and Stem, 1991; Johnson et al., 1992).

Although the findings are promising, there may be cultural differences when attempting to adapt them to the Middle East, i.e. that cause them to have different effects. To the extent that everyday disputes are not resolved through mediation, but by alternative methods, changes may be needed to adapt the methods to the setting, of, in the worst case, they may be ineffective.

Finally, it is worth noting that these findings on peer mediation are consistent with the research on a similar phenomenon: cooperative learning (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). Taken together, the research on peer

mediation and cooperative learning suggest that the development and implementation of a combined program of didactic curriculum on peace-making and an applied experientially oriented peer mediation program are more likely to result in the acquisition of a permanent positive orientation toward dealing with and resolving conflicts with others than a program limited to a curriculum-only approach, especially for Israeli and Palestinian youth and adolescents who are preoccupied with the conflict, violence and stereotypes, even in their dreams (Bilu, 1989; Masalha, 1993).

Recommendations:

1-More studies in this on going field to fill the psychological gape between the two nations and to help in finding solutions.

2-Ending the Israelian Occupation to help the Palestinian people to feel more safety and security.

3-Other possibility is to establish real communication and trust between the Palestinian and Israelian youth to break down the priors which help them to overcome the Psychological feelings and social problems.

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