Confronting History and Reconciliation: A Review of Civil Society's Approaches to Transforming Conflict Narratives

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Historical narratives pose one of the most challenging obstacles to peaceful resolution of conflicts and reconciliation. Narratives of conflict typically emphasize the in-group's suffering (Nadler and Saguy 2004; Noor et al. 2008), morality, and the justness of the in-group's goals and actions while delegitimizing the opponent (Bar-Tal 2000). For instance, each group's account of the history of the conflict highlights different events and interprets the same events differently. Typically, each group in conflict blames the opponent for the violence (Staub and Bar-Tal 2003). Narratives of historical events are often manipulated by leaders and elites to justify aggressive action toward the out-group (Berlin 1979; Ramanathapillai 2006). In this manner, historical memory might provide lessons that are not conducive to peace building, and become a basis for the continuation of conflict. The two groups' conflicting views

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of the past have negative consequences for coexistence and reconciliation and might provoke new hostilities and violence. Because of the role of history in fueling new conflicts and impeding reconciliation between groups, addressing the history of conflict is considered important for reconciliation (e.g., Bar-Tal 2000). Reconciliation requires a change in the orientation by groups toward the previous enemy, including acceptance of the other (Staub 2011). Such acceptance requires addressing and coming to terms with the conflictual and violent past, by mutually acknowledging past suffering. Around the world, numerous efforts are underway aiming to deal with the history of conflict in order to promote peace. Some of them, such as revisions of history education curricula in schools or establishment of historical and truth commissions, are government-driven programs. A large number of nongovernmental actors (civil society and international organizations) also design and implement programs that focus on addressing a violent conflict history and transforming conflict narratives to prevent violence and promote reconciliation. Following these practices, there is a growing scholarship on top-down approaches to transforming the narrative of conflict, such as on truth-and-reconciliation commissions (e.g., Hayner 2000) or on revising history education curricula in conflict and postconflict settings (for a review, see Paulson 2015). However, we know little about civil society's approaches to transforming conflict narratives.

There are multiple reasons for examining civil society's practices that target the transformation of conflict narratives. We know little about strategies and approaches that deal effectively with the history of conflict to foster positive intergroup relations. The little empirical evidence on top-down policies and programs reveals a mixed effect on target populations (e.g., Brouneus 2010; Kanyangara et al. 2007; Rime et al. 2011). One important constraint of top-down approaches is that they are often a result of negotiated political processes and might serve specific political agendas, which, in turn, limit the scope and the effectiveness of the implemented programs. By contrast, civil society actors are less constrained by the pressures and political agendas that elites and governments face; therefore, they are likely to use more diverse approaches and more creative strategies to confront the past. Practitioners, through their knowledge and expertise in working directly with communities, might gain important insights on how to effect change. Therefore, in this chapter we review projects developed by practitioners that focus on

confronting the in-group's history around the world in order to gain insights about the principles used to achieve peace and reconciliation.

In the following discussion, we first present our review of civil society's practices that focus on confronting the in-group's history. Then, we report our analysis of the theories of practice underlying these projects. We also link practitioners' theories with research and theory in social psychology and discuss their potential and limits for effecting change. By linking practice with research and theory, we aim to increase communication between scholars and practitioners. Scholars can gain insights into the potential mechanisms of change that might work in the field and design studies to test them, whereas practitioners can assess their strategies and improve their programs based on empirical evidence.

REVIEW METHOD

To identify projects and organizations working on confronting history, we used a variety of tools. First, we compiled a list of scholars and practitioners who work in related fields (historical memory, intergroup dialogue, transitional justice) and sent them an inquiry regarding our search criteria. Second, we posted an advertisement of our research on the *Peace and Collaborative Development Network* web page—an online network of professionals working in conflict settings. Lastly, we conducted a Google search of relevant organizations and projects by using a list of key words related to “confronting history” jointly with each country in the globe. The key words that we used included “writing history,” “historical dialogue,” “facing history,” “history education,” “reconciliation and memory,” “antagonistic narratives,” “storytelling,” “remembering,” “truth telling,” “commemoration,” and “conflicting narratives.” We also used key words denoting different types of projects that might be implemented in this area, such as “history teaching,” “mass media,” “dialogue groups,” “transitional justice,” “photo exhibit,” and “museum.” We examined the information available on relevant projects and retained information only on projects that explicitly focused on confronting history to achieve peace and reconciliation.

We sought information about the goals and the scope of the project, the specific activities, and the target population of the intervention. We collected available project materials online or through e-mail inquiries in order to identify the assumptions underlying each project and their mechanisms of change. We also conducted 16 Skype interviews. After

collecting the available information on each project (documents, transcripts of the interviews, etc.), we produced summaries of those materials. Then, we conducted thematic analyses on the summaries of the projects to extract the underlying assumptions and theories of change.

OVERVIEW OF CONFRONTING HISTORY PROJECTS

We reviewed 127 projects implemented by more than 60 organizations in 45 countries around the world. The projects included a wide range of activities, such as writing history books or textbooks; oral history projects; lectures, seminars, conferences, and workshops; dialogue between adversary groups; exhibits; Web site projects; training of teachers; tours and site/museum projects; public dialogue; and documentaries, children's books, and a variety of other media projects.

A large number of projects that we reviewed focused on teaching history in school settings. The aim of these projects was to provide an alternative more conducive to peace building and democratic values than traditional history education, which typically endorses a nationalistic approach focused on disseminating a linear narrative of the nation. The activities conducted in these projects can be grouped into three interconnected categories: (1) professional development and capacity building for teachers on innovative pedagogies and methods, such as oral histories and digital media; (2) production of educational materials to supplement traditional textbooks that incorporate new pedagogies and more inclusive historical experiences across conflicting groups and borders; and (3) creation of forums to foster cooperation among teachers across borders and conflict lines. Often, history teachers from antagonistic groups are brought together to design history-teaching tools and educational materials that are acceptable to all sides. For example, the *History that Connects* project invites history educators from Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia to assist in developing a curriculum for teaching the history of the region and to set up workshops for training history educators. By bringing together teachers from different countries and groups, the project aims not only to provide professional training but also to stimulate cross-border cooperation and dialogue.

Another set of projects focuses on educating the public and raising awareness about the historical roots and factors that contribute to extremism, prejudice, and xenophobia. These projects engage the public in an examination of racism, prejudice, or anti-Semitism, by exposing

historical materials such as witness accounts, oral histories, and testimonies. Some of these projects also educate and disseminate information about events in world history that are not specific to the targeted population, such as the Holocaust or other genocides.

Other projects include the establishment of physical and virtual museums and galleries or the creation of different art forms as a means of remembering the past. Some of these projects aim to teach the new generations about the devastating effects of conflict and remind them of the historical periods of peaceful coexistence among antagonistic groups. Museums, galleries, and other art expressions give victims time and space to be heard, serving a healing purpose. Intergroup dialogue among members of antagonistic groups with a focus on historical narratives is also common. Such dialogue aims to promote peace by fostering intergroup interactions that would not otherwise occur, in an environment designed to build trust and eradicate stereotypes. The *Peace Processes and Dialogue* project, for example, brings together young Georgians and Abkhaz who have never met before, to jointly analyze the roots of their conflict and better understand the other's concerns as a means to achieve peace.

PRACTITIONERS' THEORIES OF BRINGING PEACE THROUGH CONFRONTING HISTORY

All practice is based on beliefs about how the world works. These beliefs, here referred to as *theories of practice*, explain why and how practitioners expect their programs and activities to have the intended effect (Ross 2000). Theories of practice are often implicit, as civil society organizations do not always explicitly state the mechanisms through which their programs are assumed to impact the target population. Our goal in this research was to make these theories of practice explicit and link them to scientific research and theory. Making theories of practice explicit provides an opportunity to examine each belief closely, test its impact, and assess whether it has the intended effect. We identified the theories of practice by inferring them through analyses of the documents made available by the organizations. Our thematic analysis sheds light on several assumed psychological mechanisms (i.e., theories) regarding how addressing history should influence peace building and reconciliation. The following strategies are thought to effectively confront history to

prevent future violence, counteract xenophobic myths, and foster reconciliation: (1) raising awareness and increasing understanding of history, (2) adopting historical thinking and multiperspectivity, (3) engaging plural perspectives and narratives, (4) creating shared historical narratives, and (5) healing and overcoming trauma. We discuss these mechanisms under the following subheadings, provide examples from practice to illustrate them, and draw links to relevant theory and research in social psychology.

RAISING AWARENESS AND INCREASING UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY

A large number of civil society projects aim to educate the public by raising awareness about the history of relations between antagonistic groups. The assumption underlying these projects is that if people understand the past, they will be able to prevent violence in the future and will work to build peaceful relations. It draws on the idea that ignorance, lack of understanding, and myths and propaganda are the causes of conflict and violence. The idea that ignorance and lack of understanding is the cause of conflict and prejudice has its roots in the Human Relations Movement of the twentieth century (e.g., Pettigrew and Tropp 2011). Combating misinformation about history should thus dispel myths about the past that perpetuate violence and community divisions. Increasing knowledge and understanding of history and its consequences is thought to prevent violent conflicts from happening again and, it is believed, will lead to intergroup tolerance.

Two approaches are used in civil society projects to promulgate knowledge about the past. In the first approach, the projects provide factual truths and disseminate knowledge about specific historic events or about the history of intergroup relations. Many projects that we reviewed do not simply disseminate knowledge about the past but also are involved in history making by gathering evidence to establish the truth and counter the distortions of facts and misinformation that often prevail in conflict and postconflict contexts. For instance, the Documenta project in Croatia and in other countries of the former Yugoslavia aims to establish the factual truths about the war through a systematic collection of materials related to war, human losses, and personal memories. In collaboration with human rights organizations, through oral histories, the project strives to establish the facts about the war and build memory

based on facts rather than myths, so that the war does not become subject to political manipulation and serve to justify further violence. In another example in Poland, the *School of Dialogue* project aims to foster Poles' knowledge of the long-standing presence of Jews in Poland through commemoration of prewar Jewish history. It aims to teach tolerance and eradicate anti-Semitism by connecting knowledge regarding the history of discrimination of Jews in Poland to present-day issues.

In the second approach, rather than providing factual knowledge about the history of relations between the two relevant groups, some civil society projects raise awareness about the roots of conflict and the influences that lead to violence more generally. The assumption is that a general understanding of the influences that contribute to intergroup conflict will equip people with the tools and analytical frameworks to understand their own context (Staub 2011). That is, if people understand the universal roots of xenophobia, prejudice, and violence, then they will be able to prevent and resist such influences in their own society in the future. For instance, projects that focus on exposing the roots and the devastating consequences of the Holocaust and other genocides aim to bring change by increasing people's understanding of the causes of prejudice and violence. This approach might be effective, as it might be easier for people to engage with new ideas by examining a conflict in which they are not emotionally invested. Then, they can apply the lessons learned to their own conflict. In a unique use of this approach, the Dutch NGO *Radio La Benevolencija* produces soap operas to educate the populations in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo about the roots and evolution of mass violence. Rather than making use of existing cases of genocide or violence to explain the roots of genocide, they disseminate fictional stories via media, which listeners can then apply to their own context. The underlying assumption of this approach is that knowledge about the universal factors that contribute to violence will empower people to take action to resist and counteract such influences in their society (e.g., Staub 2011).

In assessing whether and how increasing knowledge of history influences reconciliation, two pertinent questions should be considered. First, to what extent are beliefs about conflict history malleable? For example, does correcting specific misinformation result in changes in the narratives of the past? Second, does change in beliefs about historical events influence intergroup attitudes and behaviors? Historical narratives are coherent and persuasive. They build on cultural schemes and are often

immune to criticism; therefore, they are hard to change. Because historical memory is central to the construction of group identities, information counteracting established historical memories and narratives can threaten people's sense of identity. Self and group images are self-perpetuating, driving schema-consistent interpretations of the past (Hirshberg 1993). Therefore, even in the face of contradictory information, the evidence is likely to be ignored, downplayed, or reinterpreted in ways that reaffirm preexisting beliefs. In the context of history education, Porat (2004) has shown that encounter with history textbooks does not change deeply held views about historical issues.

In the second approach, in which people learn about the influences that lead to violence through distant or fictional conflicts, people are less emotionally invested. Therefore, this approach has the potential to transform beliefs about group-based conflict and violence. However, whether a better understanding or more knowledge about conflicts in general contributes to more positive intergroup attitudes and behaviors is not clear. Research on other forms of interventions, such as intergroup contact, suggests that knowledge (about the other) *per se* might have only a minor influence in reducing prejudice (Pettigrew and Tropp 2008). Furthermore, it is unclear whether participants will draw lessons from the distant or fictional cases and see the parallels between those conflicts and the ones in which they are personally involved or emotionally invested. For instance, the media programs that use fictional conflict to raise awareness about the roots and evolution of violence in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have shown positive effects on intergroup attitudes but not on knowledge about the intergroup conflict (Bilali and Staub 2016; Paluck 2009).

ADOPTING HISTORICAL THINKING AND MULTIPERSPECTIVITY

Some projects focus on fostering historical thinking (i.e., thinking as historians) as a way to deal with historical memory of conflict (Stradling 2003). Historical thinking is designed to teach students how to think critically about the past. Students learn to read primary and secondary sources and to construct narratives based on these sources. In historical thinking, multiperspectivity is especially emphasized as students learn how to analyze, interpret, and reconstruct historical events from a variety of perspectives. Students learn that history can be interpreted differently and subjectively by social groups, as each group can construct

starkly different narratives by using and selecting different primary and secondary sources and evidence and highlighting different aspects of the evidence. Multiperspectivity allows students to take into account the perspectives of marginalized and silenced social categories, including ethnic and linguistic minorities, women, the poor, and ordinary people more generally (see Stradling 2003).

Civil society projects that encourage historical thinking and multiperspectivity in history teaching typically design and implement training programs for history teachers and prepare new educational materials and curricula to supplement traditional history textbooks. Such curricula include oral histories, primary and secondary sources of historical events, and the historical perspectives of different groups. As an example, the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research is an organization whose mission is to contribute to history education in Cyprus by focusing on enhancing the teaching of historical thinking. Specifically, the group aims to foster critical thinking skills with regard to understanding the past, respect for the people of the past, appreciation of the distance between the past and the present, and evaluation of competing narratives of the past (Psaltis et al. 2011). Students are taught to evaluate claims of different narratives and analyze how interpretations of evidence of historical events change over time and are dependent on historical actors.

There are two potential mechanisms through which historical thinking might influence intergroup outcomes positively: critical thinking and perspective taking. Historical thinking raises awareness about the limits of historical knowledge and evidence. Critical thinking pushes students to analyze, interpret, and think critically about historical events. Learning to think historically is likely to counteract traditional history education, which is often ethnocentric and presents only a dominant group's view of the past. Historical thinking breaks down historical myths, propaganda, and monolithic narratives of the past and also encourages perspective taking—the ability to view a situation from different angles. A large body of work in social psychology research has revealed the positive impact of perspective taking for intergroup relations. For instance, perspective taking is associated with less prejudice (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000; Galinsky and Ku 2004), more positive evaluation of out-groups (Batson et al. 2002), and higher levels of intergroup forgiveness (Noor et al. 2008b). However, recent studies have also shown that the benefits of perspective taking might be limited in conflict contexts (e.g., Bruneau and Saxe 2012; Paluck 2010, but also see Bilali and Vollhardt

2013). Negative emotions toward the adversary might reduce willingness to engage with the adversary's perspective. Therefore, it is important to examine the conditions under which multiperspectivity is most influential in improving intergroup attitudes and when it might not be as effective. Barton and McCully (2012) argue that an analytic approach that encourages detachment might leave history solely to the domain of academic study and enterprise but does little to change deeply held narratives. Instead, stronger emotional and empathetic engagement with narratives might be necessary for deeper change.

ENGAGING PLURAL NARRATIVES OF HISTORY

We differentiate between interventions that focus on multiperspectivity as a set of tools and skills necessary to engage with different perspectives and interventions that focus on the content—that is, on creating educational materials that include multiple narratives and exposing people to these different versions of the same historical events. The assumption is that engaging with multiple narratives of the conflict's past will lead to reconciliation and positive relations between groups. In some instances, civil society projects expose group members to each group's dominant or master narrative of the conflict. For example, a textbook project undertaken by the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME), led by Professors Dan Bar-On and Sami Adwan, created a joint history textbook titled *Learning Each Other's Historical Narrative: Palestinians and Israelis* that aimed to give teachers and pupils the opportunity to learn the other's perspective with regard to significant historical events in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (see Adwan and Bar-On 2004). Each page of the booklet provides side-by-side Palestinian and Israeli narratives of a historical event. In the middle of the two narratives, it provides space for students to write their own comments on the two master narratives. Rather than revising the existing narratives of each side or creating a common narrative, the project aims to introduce pupils from both sides to the other group's narrative and engage them with both master narratives. Students are required not only to learn their perspective of the history but to engage with the other group's perspective as well. The idea is not to legitimize or accept the other's narrative but to recognize it (Adwan and Bar-On 2004).

Rather than focusing on each group's master narratives, other projects highlight a variety of narratives and experiences within each group.

This is achieved by providing access to oral histories and testimonies by ordinary people, thereby showing both commonalities and differences in experiences within and across groups in conflict. For instance, the Living Memorial Museum aims to demonstrate that there are different perspectives on the conflict in Northern Ireland—beyond the two master narratives—and that these perspectives can be preserved and shared in a respectful and tolerant way. The Apartheid Archives Project in South Africa examines the nature of ordinary South Africans' experiences of racism in the apartheid period and its continued effects in the present. Rather than highlighting grand narratives disseminated by elites, it focuses on gathering personal stories and individual narratives of ordinary South Africans who might have been silenced.

The plural narrative approach aims to promote an inclusive understanding of the past and foster respect for different experiences, which, in turn, would lead to tolerance toward others. However, it is important to empirically assess this claim: Does exposure to and engagement with different narratives of the past influence intergroup outcomes? In the Israeli–Palestinian context, Bar-On and Adwan (2006) report that exposure to dual narratives of the PRIME project led to resentment and anger among some students. Because students view their group's version of history as fact, some students had a hard time understanding why they were taught the enemy's propaganda. The characteristics and the phase of conflict might also influence how plural narratives are received. For instance, in the context of the PRIME project, acceptance and recognition of the other's narrative were particularly hard for Palestinian kids who lived under occupation (Bar-On and Adwan 2006). This finding is in line with recent research suggesting that engaging with an adversary's perspective might backfire under conditions of heightened conflict (e.g., Bilali and Vollhardt 2015; Paluck 2010).

In a study in Northern Ireland, Barton and McCully (2012) found that despite the presentation of multiple interpretations of historical events in school curricula, students' identification with their communities' historical perspective became stronger over time. Many students drew selectively from the curriculum to form reasoned arguments to support their community's perspectives (Barton and McCully 2012).

In a unique experimental study of the effects of different historical teaching approaches in Israel, Goldberg and Ron (2014) found that both dual-narrative and historical thinking (they call it a critical-disciplinary approach) approaches were effective in increasing students' agreement

about the solutions to various conflict-driven problems. Dual narratives also increased interest in out-group perspectives, especially for members of the Arab minority (Goldberg and Ron 2014). Interestingly, a dual-narrative approach led to a reduction of perceived in-group responsibility among majority group members, Israeli Jews, whereas the critical-disciplinary approach led to an increase in perceived in-group responsibility among members of the Arab minority (Goldberg and Ron 2014).

These mixed findings call for further research and theorizing on the effects of exposure and engagement with multiple narratives in conflict settings. As we argued earlier, it is likely that exposure to plural narratives is more effective when people engage empathetically with different perspectives. However, engaging empathetically with the adversary's position might be difficult when out-group prejudices are high, when the conflict is intense, or when the out-group narrative denies one's experiences of conflict.

CREATING SHARED NARRATIVES OF THE PAST

A number of civil society projects focus on creating a common narrative from the divergent narratives and experiences of the past. The rationale underlying this practice is that if antagonistic and clashing narratives of the past contribute to fueling conflict between groups, then a common and shared understanding of the past should be a basis for overcoming differences. For instance, Kriesberg (2004) argues that for reconciliation to occur, conflicting groups should develop shared beliefs about what happened in the past. Similarly, Staub (2011) also claims that shared narratives of the past are important in developing a common orientation about the future. In order to build a shared peaceful future together, it is important to create a shared common narrative of the past. A common narrative of the past should serve to humanize the adversary, fight xenophobic myths, and promote reconciliation.

Civil society projects use different strategies to create shared narratives, such as through identifying the commonalities in the narratives of antagonist groups, highlighting the similar experiences across groups in conflict, emphasizing the shared struggles of the members of each group, or uncovering shared positive experiences (e.g., periods of peaceful coexistence) in the past. For instance, in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation (IHJR) brings together historians, researchers, policy makers, and civil

society representatives to create and disseminate shared narratives of the past that highlight similarities in experiences across societies. However, in the context of the Armenian–Turkish dialogue, IHJR creates a shared narrative by uncovering the two groups’ shared cultural heritage and by highlighting historical periods when the two antagonistic groups lived peacefully side by side. The goal is to show that conflict is not inevitable and that peaceful coexistence is realistic. By contrast, the Citizens Archive of Pakistan emphasizes the shared struggles of individual members of each group during conflict. Although different projects use different approaches to achieve commonality and shared narratives, they have the same underlying objective of reducing negative attitudes and creating space for a common shared vision for the future.

Because of the important role of narratives in identity construction, creating a common narrative might be an effective strategy to improve intergroup relations: A shared historical narrative can be the basis for establishing a common or superordinate in-group identity. A common in-group identity, in turn, should give rise to positive intergroup attitudes as former out-group members are considered in-group members at the superordinate level (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). One important constraint is that a shared narrative might be hard to negotiate in conflict contexts in which groups hold opposing and competing narratives. However, building commonality based on similar experiences and struggles of individual group members across conflict lines might be easier to achieve. Yet a focus on commonality might be altogether problematic in contexts of asymmetric conflict, if commonality is used by the dominant group as a tool to silence or undermine the experiences of the minority group members. For instance, research (Bilali 2013; Bilali, Tropp, and Dasgupta 2012) in the context of the Armenian genocide shows that the Turkish narrative of that period highlights both groups’ suffering and victimization. In this context, a narrative highlighting similarities might serve to equalize the victimization experiences of the two groups, undermine the victim group’s experience, and absolve the in-group of its responsibility for the violence.

HEALING AND OVERCOMING TRAUMA

Violence and conflict have an immense impact on all segments of society: victims, survivors, and bystanders (Staub, Pearlman, and Bilali 2010). Traumas from past violence are thought to contribute to perpetuating

cycles of violence. For instance, Staub et al. (2010) argue that past violence makes people feel vulnerable and see the world as dangerous, thereby making it more likely for people to engage in defensive violence. In consequence, healing from trauma is thought to facilitate reconciliation. Confronting, acknowledging, and sharing the traumatic experiences under empathetic and supportive conditions can contribute to recovery. Several civil society organizations that we have surveyed have an explicit goal of contributing to the healing process as a way of achieving peace and reconciliation. Most projects in this domain address the historical traumas by exploring and acknowledging the emotional and spiritual wounds due to conflict and seek to address and transform the negative emotions that remain from the past and that might impede reconciliation. For instance, the Remembering Quilt project in Northern Ireland provides therapeutic support for the bereaved and injured of the conflict within a safe environment. The community comes together for remembrance through a creative activity: They create quilt blocks memorializing an experience to share with others and build empathy surrounding it. The Healing the Wounds of History project in the USA uses drama and expressive arts to help participants from different conflicts to heal historical traumas by dealing with grief and transforming their emotions from the conflict.

The degree to which these activities contribute to recovery from trauma and whether healing at an individual level contributes to reconciliation at a societal level are important questions that, to our knowledge, have not yet been explored empirically. The idea that healing is important for reconciliation underlies much of the practice in postconflict contexts. For instance, various truth-and-reconciliation commissions were expected to contribute to healing. However, empirical evidence has questioned this assumption. For instance, in Rwanda, Brouneus (2010) found that witnesses participating in Gacaca tribunals, the Rwandan local truth-and-reconciliation tribunals, reported higher levels of depression and PTSD than those who did not witness the tribunals. Government-sanctioned truth commissions have several limitations and constraints and often do not create the safe environments for sharing traumatic experiences that are necessary for healing. Therefore, it is important to examine whether civil society projects that engage participants in creative activities in safe environments have a positive effect on healing from trauma and whether, in turn, these activities influence attitudes toward reconciliation.

CONCLUSION

History in conflict contexts is a double-edged sword. History is often instrumentalized to perpetuate conflict. Therefore, delving into the past can be dangerous, as it has the potential to fuel negative emotions and actions that might be destructive for intergroup relation. At the same time, ignoring the past is also dangerous, because the legacies of the past tend to linger in the present. Therefore, finding the truth and coming to grips with the past are considered necessary for reconciliation. For instance, the UN document (2004) on the Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies proposes that finding the truth about the past may promote reconciliation. Despite the proliferation of the practice in this domain (i.e., programs and interventions that aim to address the past), we know little about the approaches used, their effectiveness, and the assumptions made about how confronting the past contributes to reconciliation. The review presented in this chapter sheds light on the strategies and assumptions underlying the practice of confronting history to achieve peace and reconciliation. We identified five theories of practice and drew links to theory and research in social psychology. Although we considered each mechanism separately, they are not exclusionary and do not contradict one another. Practitioners use an amalgam of tools and emphasize multiple strategies in order to maximize their impact for social change. Indeed, most of the projects and organizations that we have reviewed, including those that we have mentioned in this chapter, conduct activities that tap into multiple mechanisms simultaneously. For instance, the organization Facing History and Ourselves combines a series of tools to teach history by infusing history with teaching about stereotypes, biases, and democratic values. This method increases knowledge and understanding of past violence, counteracting misinformation, ignorance, stereotyping, and prejudice. At the same time, it adopts multiperspectivity as a pedagogical tool to encourage critical thinking and offers students a variety of voices, perspectives, and conflicting points of view. It also links the study of violence in the past with the study of human behavior and with knowledge about identity formation and understanding of attitudes and beliefs, democracy, race, and nationalism. Studies assessing the impact of Facing History and Ourselves classrooms have shown positive effects on moral development, intergroup attitudes, and critical thinking skills (e.g., Schultz et al. 2001). However, because multiple tools are used simultaneously, it is not

possible to draw conclusions about which strategies, or which combination of strategies, are most or least effective, limiting our understanding of the processes of narrative transformation.

Overall, by linking practice with research and theory, scholars can gain insight into the potential mechanisms of change that might work in the real world, whereas practitioners can assess their theories and improve their programs based on evidence. The present review raised multiple questions and hypotheses that are important to examine empirically. Social psychology can be usefully employed toward this goal, as it is equipped to understand the interaction between social representations and people's attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, it can examine how different approaches affect change in beliefs and attitudes toward peace and reconciliation.

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