

**Behind the Narrative Bars;
Taking the Perspective of the Other in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:
Case Study with Israeli Children.**

Submitted by Asi Sharabi for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Psychology at the London School of Economics and Political Science (University of London), August 2005.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is twofold. First, to put forward a societal explanation to the concept of 'taking the perspective of the other'. Secondly, and based on the first, to investigate the difficulties of Israeli children to take the perspective of the Palestinians. I argue that perspective taking is mediated by social representations, power interests and ideologies, by minds shaped by particular socio-historical circumstances, to reproduce or challenge, sustain or resist the diverse realities of the conflict. Aiming to break away from previous individualistic conceptualisations of perspective taking, the theoretical perspective developed through this thesis is grounded in G.H. Mead social and ethical psychology, and eclectically draws on contemporary ideas such as dialogical epistemology, narrative, social representations, and rhetoric. While not disputing the relevance of emergent cognitive skills to the child's ability to role take, the view put forward in this thesis proposes that taking the perspective of the other is something whose nature is social and whose origin lie, in some good measure, in the interpersonal and social-ideological matrix of which the child is part. The concept of perspective taking is operationalised along two interrelated dimensions: (a) the ideological construction of the other and (b) perspective negotiating. The research comprises three empirical studies: (i) ethnography description of the Israeli (collective) self (ii) children's drawing of the other and (iii) children role-play narrative compositions. This study has shown that 'entering' the perspective of the Palestinians is impeded by the ideological comprehensions of the conflict as experienced by the Israeli children. That is to say, the ability to construct the Palestinian viewpoint is constrained by the boundaries of the Israeli representational field and discourse in relation to the conflict, and the dynamics of knowledge, affect and practices that maintain them.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
INTRODUCTION	7
BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM	9
THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL GAPS	9
LEVELS OF ANALYSIS: THE ABSENCE OF SOCIETAL EXPLANATION	11
UNJUSTIFIED GENERALISATIONS – EQUATING SIGHT WITH UNDERSTANDING	13
FAILURE TO DISTINGUISH ABILITY FROM PROPENSITY AND PERFORMANCE	14
DE-CONTEXTUALISED RESEARCH	15
EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF DOING RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN	17
TOWARDS A DIALOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF PERSPECTIVE TAKING	20
PLAN OF DISSERTATION	22
1. G. H MEAD’S CONCEPT OF TAKING THE ROLE OF THE OTHER	28
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN MIND: ROLE TAKING IN EVOLUTION	30
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL SELF: ONTOGENESIS APPLICATION OF ROLE TAKING	33
PLAY	34
GAME	36
ROLE TAKING ON THE MACRO LEVEL	39
ROLE TAKING AS THE MECHANISM FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SHARED WORLDS	39
ROLE TAKING AS THE MECHANISM OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION	41
ROLE TAKING AS A METHOD FOR SOLVING MORAL PROBLEMS	45
SUMMARY	50
2. ORGANISED OTHER/S, LACK OF COMMUNICATION AND THE NARROWING OF THE MORAL SELF: LINKING MEAD TO NARRATIVE.	52
INTRODUCTION	52
THE IDEAL SOCIETY	53
THE GENERALISED OTHER: A GOOD OR A BAD THING?	53
THE RESTRICTIVE NATURE OF THE GENERALISED OTHER	56

FROM ‘GENERALISED OTHER’ TO ‘ORGANISED OTHERS’	57
THREE PHASES OF MORAL CONDUCT	58
PERSPECTIVE TAKING: FROM COGNITIVE ABILITY TO (LACK OF) COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY	62
FROM PERSPECTIVE TAKING TO THE NARROWING OF THE MORAL SELF	66
FROM PERSPECTIVE TAKING TO ACKNOWLEDGING THE OTHER’S NARRATIVE	69
WHAT IS NARRATIVE?	69
OPPOSING REALITIES AS OPPOSING NARRATIVES	71
NARROW SELF AS BOUNDED NARRATIVE	72
SUMMARY	75
3. METHODOLOGY	78
DEFINING THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	78
GENERAL METHODOLOGY: DIALOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY	79
RESEARCH STRATEGY	83
FROM ABILITY TO ACTIVITY: OPERATIONALISING PERSPECTIVE TAKING	83
SOCIAL GROUPS AS ORGANISED OTHERS	85
DATA COLLECTION:	88
TAKING THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE OTHER IN TWO MODES OF COMMUNICATION	88
DRAWINGS	89
PROCEDURE	90
NARRATIVE COMPOSITIONS: ROLE-PLAYING AS PERSPECTIVE TAKING	90
PROCEDURE	92
RESEARCH TECHNIQUES: OUTLINE OF ANALYSIS	92
ETHNOGRAPHY: MY STORY OF THE ISRAELI “VICTIMISED-OCCUPIER SELF”	92
SELF AND SOCIETY IN PERSPECTIVE TAKING	96
SOCIOLOGNETIC ANALYSIS – THE POLYPHONY OF THE ISRAELI SELF	97
INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS – THE POLYPHONY OF THE PERSONAL	100
OUTLINE OF EMPIRICAL CHAPTERS:	102
4. THE “VICTIMISED-OCCUPIER” SELF	103
THE EARLY YEARS- THE HOMOGENOUS PHASE	104
NO ALTERNATIVE & PURITY OF ARMS	109
THE PALESTINIAN OTHER	112
THE DISCREPANCY PHASE	114
PEACE & SECURITY	120

BACK TO HEGEMONY?	123
SUMMARY	128
5. THE IMAGE OF THE OTHER: PERSPECTIVE TAKING IN DRAWINGS	131
INTRODUCTION	131
THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS	132
THE IMAGE OF THE 'OTHER' AS REFLECTED IN HUMAN FIGURE DRAWING	133
ANALYSIS 1: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DRAWINGS	136
THE DRAWN CHARACTER AND THE ACTIVITY	136
SYMBOLS OF CONFLICT	139
SYMBOLS OF THE STEREOTYPICAL PALESTINIAN	143
ANALYSIS 2: INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS	146
THE TERRORIST /DESPISED PALESTINIAN	146
EQUALITY/PEACE	149
DISMAL REALITY	152
THE STEREOTYPICAL PALESTINIAN	155
UNIDENTIFIED PALESTINIAN	157
SUMMARY	163
6. NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE OTHER: SOCIOGENESIS ANALYSIS	169
ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE	170
PALESTINIAN ACTIONS: AGGRESSION OR LIBERATION?	172
DELEGITIMISATION – RECONSTRUCTING THE SAVAGE OTHER	173
LEGITIMISATION –CONSTRUCTING A COUNTER IMAGE OF THE PALESTINIANS	181
THE ISRAELI ACTIONS: OPPRESSION OR SELF-DEFENCE?	189
GUILT & RESPONSIBILITY	189
JUSTIFICATION – RECONSTRUCTING SECURITY AND 'NO ALTERNATIVE' ETHOS	193
ISRAELIS – VICTIMISATION OR SUPREMACY?	199
ISRAELI VICTIMISATION AND DEEP SENSE OF VULNERABILITY	199
ISRAELI SUPREMACY	200
PEACE- IMMENSELY DESIRED BUT IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE	205
YEARNING FOR PEACE	205
DISBELIEF IN THE POSSIBILITY OF PEACE	211
SUMMARY	214

7. TAKING THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE OTHER: INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS	217
1. GIRL - SETTLEMENT.	220
2. BOY - SETTLEMENT	227
3. BOY - CITY	233
4. GIRL - KIBBUTZ	238
5. BOY - CITY	244
6. BOY -SETTLEMENT	250
7. GIRL-CITY	255
8. GIRL - KIBBUTZ	261
9. GIRL - KIBBUTZ	266
8. DISCUSSION: BEHIND THE NARRATIVE BARS	272
MEADIAN ROLE TAKING	272
TOWARDS A DIALOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF PERSPECTIVE TAKING	277
PERSPECTIVE TAKING IS PREDICATED ON SOCIAL EXPERIENCE	277
FROM COGNITIVE ABILITY TO SOCIO-COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY	281
PERSPECTIVE TAKING IS NOT EITHER-OR, ALL-OR-NOTHING ABILITY.	284
THE LIMITED POWER OF COMPREHENSION: BEHIND THE NARRATIVE BARS	287
PERVERSIVE OBSTACLES: "THEY UNDERSTAND ONLY FORCE"	288
REFLECTIVE OBSTACLES: "FOREVER VICTIMS, FOREVER MORAL"	292
COMMUNICATIVE OBSTACLES: "BEHIND THE NARRATIVE BARS"	294
POINTS OF CONVERGENCE	298
AMBIVALENCE	301
PROSPECT FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	303
FINAL WORDS	307
BIBLIOGRAPHY	309
APPENDIX I	325

INTRODUCTION

Twenty-eight years ago, the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, in his historical visit to Jerusalem declared that the greatest obstacle to overcome in the process of establishing peace between Israel and the Arab world was of a psychological nature. Addressing the Israeli Parliament (the Knesset), he stated:

“Yet, there remain[s] another wall. This wall constitutes a psychological barrier between us. A barrier of suspicion. A barrier of rejection. A barrier of fear of deception. A barrier of hallucinations around any action, deed or decision. A barrier of cautious and erroneous interpretations of all and every event or statement. It is this psychological barrier which I described in official statements as representing 70 percent of the whole problem.”

More than a quarter of a century later, the suspicion, rejection and misinterpretations only seem to have deepened and intensified. This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of the workings of these ‘psychological barriers’ by investigating how young Israeli children are constructing the Palestinian perspective and narrative of the conflict. The *raison d’être* of this thesis is to identify and modify the major socio-psychological cause-and-effect of inter-group conflict, that is, distorted communication and the lack of understanding of the other’s perspective. It is difficult to think of a more significant topic in the context of social psychology of intergroup relations than the ways in which the rivals come to understand each other’s beliefs, intentions, feelings, values and goals. If we had a better grasp on how Israeli children construct the Palestinian version of the conflict, and what the social processes, power interests and ideologies that mediate the symbolic construction of the other’s viewpoint, which is habitually distorted by the very nature of the conflict, we might be able to influence these constructions towards more inclusive orientations, in order to come to full recognition and reconciliation, not only with the Palestinians but within their own society as well. In thoroughly exploring the ways in which Israeli children construct meaning of the Palestinian perspective we perhaps would be able to find creative channels for intervention and building a basis for dialogue between

Israeli and Palestinian children in order to move from mutual denial through recognition to peaceful orientations and reconciliation.

Background to the research problem

This endeavour was initiated during previous research in which I sought to explore how Jewish-Israeli children construct meaning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Children, aged 8 to 9, drawn from three social groups or milieus differing in their cultural and geographical background (kibbutz, settlement and city) took part in the research. While talking to these children, I was particularly surprised by the immense difficulties they experienced in taking the perspective of the Palestinians, or, put differently, in acknowledging the Palestinian narrative. The different ways of understanding the Palestinians' perspective of the conflict across the three milieus, as well as individual differences, have intuitively lead me to believe that the ability to take the role of the other or to acknowledge other narratives is not determined solely by the development of cognitive ability. It is also a knowledge-based capacity, and as such, the ability, propensity and rendering of taking the perspective of the other are determined by socio-ideological and contextual factors. This observation paved the way for the current investigation. For this reason, I have become interested in the concept of **'taking the perspective of the other'**.

Theoretical and empirical gaps

After extensive reading of previous developmental, social psychological and sociological research on perspective taking, in the hope that these studies would aid my understanding, I became aware of the conceptual shortfalls in this field of research. The concept, which attracted great deal of attention between the mid-1950s and mid-1970s, seems to suffer from diversification and a mushrooming of independent, interrelated mini-theories and sub-models that eventually contributed to the decline in interest. It simply wasn't leading anywhere interesting. The literature associated with this stream of research is extensive, consisting of many confusing near-synonymous propositions, such as role playing, role taking, role enactment, empathy and so forth. The explanations provided by these theories and models of role, or perspective taking, left me with the impression of strangeness. It had little

relevance to what I had experienced while talking to Israeli children about the Palestinians and the conflict. Put differently, they were simply insufficient in accounting for the difficulties of Israeli children in taking the perspective of the Palestinians¹. The vast majority of these studies, which typically come from psychological paradigms such as cognitive-developmental and information processing, have entrenched the individual child at the centre of their explanatory and methodological frameworks. Contextual, social, cultural, ideological and historical aspects were almost completely ignored. Even when they were taken into consideration, (predominantly in the sociological studies) they were faintly acknowledged as factors impinging on the individual, thus remaining for the most part external impositions, in no way internally related to individual functioning, and hence outside the purview of psychological explanation.

For example, according to the prominent structural-developmental model of Selman (1971a, 1976, 1980), the children in my research have purportedly reached the fourth stage of role taking development, labelled 'social and conventional system role taking' (also labelled 'society or in-depth perspective'). According to this model, at about 12-15 years of age, manifold perspectives are perceived as forming a network or system of necessary social conventions that are understood by all members of society regardless of their position, role, or experience. There is, in addition, an understanding that the mutuality of persons and perspectives exists not only at superficial levels of shared expectations but also at deeper levels of unverballed feelings and values (Shantz, 1983). Now, how can one draw any meaningful conclusions from this formulation? How can this model aid our understanding regarding the difficulties of Israeli children in taking the perspective of the Palestinians? The same feeling of strangeness arose when I turned to theories of moral development such as Piaget and Kohlberg's. The only theory that had something meaningful to say in regard to my research problem was Sherif's Realistic-Group-Conflict-Theory, yet the notion of taking the perspective of the other is only indirectly

¹ It is important to note here that I have no intention to lay blame on these scholars for failing to answer questions they had no ambition to answer in the first place. However by ignoring some important dimensions in regard to role taking scholars have left many questions unasked and therefore unanswered.

inferred, leaving the theoretical gap open. The problems with previous theories and research on perspective taking can be summarised in four points:

Levels of analysis: the absence of societal explanation

The problem with levels of assessment and types of explanation is a well-known debate in social psychology (e.g. Doise, 1986; Zajonc, 1989). As in most mainstream cognitive psychology research, the vast majority of role taking studies seem to be overwhelmingly individualistic, dominated by the information processing approach. Based on Doise's (1986) four levels of analysis, previous research falls mainly within the first category, namely the psychological or *intra-individual* processes, which accounts for the manner in which the individual organises his or her cognitive resources for role taking. Holding the view that role taking is based solely upon internal mechanisms, researchers tend to focus their investigation on the logical-formal aspect of perspective taking, conceptualising it as universal sequence of stages (e.g. Feffer, 1959, 1970; Flavell et al, 1968; Kurdek, 1977).

Role taking is strictly conceptualised as an individualistic ability, that is, the solitary individual, child or adult who faces perspective-coordination tasks and needs to activate his cognitive resources in order to exhibit role taking. These scholars reduced 'cognition' to the minimal level of inner-mental activity regardless of interaction and communication. However, our cognitions are chiefly the products of communication with others, and many of these cognitions are eventually communicated to others. As Zajonc (1989) rightly notes "the constraints on communication and the transmission of mental content between minds, the transformation of these contents, and the resulting change in the participants, are rarely studied in mainstream social psychology"(p. 357).

Sociological research applies mainly to the second level of analysis, namely, the *inter-individual* and *intra-situational*, where the focus is on the relationship between psychological dynamics and specific characteristics of the interaction between individuals (e.g. Turner, 1956; Lauer and Boardman, 1971). With minor exceptions sociologists have regarded all normal adults as equally competent role

takers, a fault that has led to another problematic tendency: similarly to the psychologists, role taking in most sociological research is usually conceptualised as a one-dimensional cognitive ability.

Cognition in both traditions of research was reduced from thinking to information processing or problem solving, where the study of the contents of cognition (what people think about or know of social contexts) has been replaced by the study of how information processing functions without social contents (Flick, 1988). An example at this level can be seen in Blumer's (1954) definition of role taking as "interpersonal process consists of one person imagining another person's probable line of activity" (p.190), or Sherohman, (1977) who describes role taking as a "cognitive process in which an individual constructs the roles of the other persons engaged with him in a transaction, for the purpose of coordinating other's lines of activity with his own"(p.121). Few studies have fallen within the third level of analysis, that is looking at positions or social status as intervening factors to account for variations in adult role taking ability (e.g. Thomas et al 1972, Stryker, 1962), yet this overall approach is narrow and focused on accuracy as the only acknowledged variable in the study of role taking.

The essentially individualistic point of view describes the lone individual struggling single-handedly to coordinate perspectives. Moreover, most of the psychological research does not even distinguish between social and physical objects, thereby losing the extremely important dialectical unity between self, other and the context. It was reduced from taking the perspective of the other to a person's perception and attributions. My criticism here is very much in line with Farr and Anderson's (1983) critique on Jones and Nisbett's (1971) 'divergence in perspectives between actor and observer'. Apart from a few sociological studies that deal with self-conception and others, (Couch, 1958; Reeder et al, 1960; Maehr et al 1962) in all other studies the phenomenology of both self and other has disappeared and instead of an existential contrast between self and other, we have a cognitive one. As Farr and Anderson put it: "we are here in the realm of mind rather than in the realm of cognition *per se*...we are dealing with states of awareness, and not merely with cognitions" (p. 49).

In light of the current research problem, it seems that a highly crucial perspective is missing, namely, the societal explanation, which takes into account the general conceptions of social relations, systems of beliefs, ideologies, and the political structure of situations. Previous analyses clearly address the intra-individual level in cognitive and perceptual terms (e.g. Openheimer 1982) and to some extent the inter-individual level in the form of social influence (e.g. Couch, 1958; Reeder et al, 1960; Selman, 1980) but they have nothing to say about the motivational, positional, or ideological, and the complex relations between these levels.

Unjustified generalisations – equating sight with understanding

In a recent critical assessment of the psychological research associated with perspective taking, Chandler (2001) provides an initial indication on the deficiency of the common approach. He tries to understand how the narrow study of spatial perspective taking initiated by Piaget and Inhelder's (1949) renowned 'three mountain task' experiment, managed to become the detonator for the explosion of research in every possible domain of perspective taking. Scholars have extended Piaget's classic study to increasingly complex domains of inquiry while, naturally, importing models and endorsing diffusions of conceptual frameworks and methods of research². The fundamental inaccuracy that Chandler indicates is based on erroneous epistemological assumptions. This issue has been discussed at length by Markova (1982). She points out the importance of constantly acknowledging and reflecting upon the basic presuppositions from which scientific enquiry stems. Lack of awareness of the foundations of one's scientific domain "is associated with several potential dangers" (p.3). First, it leads to intellectual fixation, that is, maintaining practices without considering alternatives. Additionally, it increases the potential of "unjustified generalisations across different subjects" (p.3). The generalisation of spatial

² These are often referred to as **spatial** (visual) perspective taking; **cognitive** (conceptual) perspective taking; and **affective** (emotional) perspective taking. Interrelating role taking with other domains of inquiry has lead to further differentiation between social inferences about other people, visual perception, feelings, intentions, thinking, and person perception in general (i.e. what is the other person like?)

perspective taking to whichever domain of social perspective taking is a fine illustration of the dangers to which Markova refers. This inappropriate tendency seems to be legitimately owed to what Gallup and Cameron (1992) describe as our “peculiar predisposition to equate sight with understanding” (p.97) and as a result, to logically associate visual perspective taking with the rich and complex nature of knowing and understanding processes. The consequence of the ‘unjustified generalisations’ discussed by Markova, or the common confusion of “making a single conceptual piece out of the otherwise disparate matters of visual and social perspective taking” (Chandler, 2001 p.49) is a poor theoretical elaboration of the social aspects and determinants of perspective taking.

Failure to distinguish ability from propensity and performance

The content-less formalisation of role taking theory and research has led to an additional problem. There is oversimplification of the concept as a one-dimensional cognitive ability with accuracy as the only acknowledgeable variable and the disengagement from real life problems. Researchers in the field are therefore inclined to ignore the significant distinction between the ability to role take, the willingness or tendency to role take, and the variations in role taking performance or activity. Although Turner (1956) mentions this deficiency by arguing that “the *tendency* to empathise, in whatever sense this is meant, is at least as important a variable as the *ability* to empathise (p.326, *italic* in original), this notion remained disregarded until Schwalbe (1988) brought it back into light.

Researchers treated inadequacy in role taking only in regard to ability, which was measured in terms of accuracy. Accurate role taking has been operationally defined as the correct prediction of the response of others (Stryker, 1962). It refers to the degree of similarity between the estimates of another’s plan of action by the role taker and that other’s actual plan or role. The only distinction that was made was between role taking ability and role taking accuracy. In this regard, Sherohman (1977) argues that whereas role taking accuracy is a situational, interpersonal construct, role taking ability is a trans-situational, psychological construct.

Even if we are to agree that perspective taking is determined solely on internal mechanisms, a substantial problem immediately arises: is role taking just an '*either-or*' ability? As Schwalbe (1988) rightly observes "role taking has been seen as all-or-nothing proposition, something people either do or don't do" (p.412). Unfortunately, no means were provided by the content-less, knowledge-free approach to help us understand how or why individuals employ a system of internal mechanisms for generating concrete perspectival thinking. By restricting their attention to structure and neglecting the content, or by examining nothing but the notion of accuracy, both psychologists and sociologists have failed to provide an explanatory conception for the causes that will eventually determine whether or not the individual will engage in role taking and how and with what strategies he will do it. In real-life situations what finally moves the people to consider and reflect upon perspectives other than their own? Or what inhibits them from doing so? Apart from Schwalbe (1988, 1990) who made a significant contribution to the theoretical distinction between ability and propensity, those who tried to tackle this issue endorsed the notion of motivation. It was perceived as yet another cognitive variable that needed to be taken into consideration (see for example Selman, 1980). This notion was elsewhere systematically problematised by Gergen (1989). In critically discussing the complex relations between cognition and motivation in social cognition research, he shows how cognitivists got entangled with deprived conceptualisation of cognition and motives: "yet, if we grant to the motivational source these kind of capabilities, it rapidly become clear that we have created yet a second domain of cognition. That is, we have endowed motives with the ability to recognise and retain information. We now have not one cognitive system within the individual but two. The theoretical edifice begins to buckle under the strain of its own weight..."(p.471).

De-contextualised research

The most serious problem with previous analyses of role taking is that it totally lacks ecological validity since it operates in a socio-cultural void. It is thoroughly academic in orientation and divorced from real life social issues occurring in the world at large. It views perspective taking as a secluded aptitude which is therefore inapplicable to significant social problems. With minor exceptions in the

more recent sociological research (Franks, 1985; Scully, 1988; Schwalbe, 1988), there is little discussion in most role taking research of the social interactive, and the cultural or political context within which perspectives are being negotiated and coordinated. Holding the view that perspective taking is based solely upon internal mechanisms, researchers tend to focus their investigation on the logical-formal aspect of perspective taking, conceptualising it as a universal sequence of stages in the psychological research, or, role taking accuracy in the sociological. Thus, social influence is only recognised as facilitating logical operations within problem-solving strategies for perspective taking tasks. There is no past, no collective memory, no social representations, no interests and no ideology.

Additionally, perspective taking is considered as a knowledge-free assignment whose solution is subject solely to the maturation of cognitive structures. This is well presented in studies based upon Flavell's model (privileged information task) where perspectival thinking seems to concern problem-solving instruments, which operate in the absence of any knowledge about the world except from what is immediately presented by the experimenter. As Emler and Ohana (1990) explicitly criticise, "problem solvers do not bring with them to new cases any beliefs, implicit or explicit, about the nature of society or its occupants; they bring only a set of mental operations to be applied to the fact of each case" (p.53).

This point is crucial and needs farther clarification. Hardly any of the studies investigated the children or adults in 'real-life' situations. It was neglected that participation in social life means that the individual is presented with problems to be solved as well as the various solutions and array of arguments prevalent in his society (Billig, 1987). While studying role taking two highly important questions have not been asked: *what other?* And, *which context?* Most crucially to the present case, there is not a single contemplation of a state of affairs where the individuals concerned in the research are deeply involved with the context (*real* 'real-life' context) and therefore face and need to comprehend opposing perspectives. Not just contrasting perspectives that derive from interpersonal relations but rather emotionally loaded conflicting versions of reality with protracted socio-historical origins. In real life situations, role taking, like various other cognitive activities is always dependent on underlying worldviews. Taking the perspective of the other is not a value free,

unmotivated, purely cognitive, 'either-or' ability as it has been conceptualised. Rather, as this thesis argues, it is a social-communicative *practice* mediated by social and ideological representations.

Epistemological aspects of doing research with children

In traditional cognitive-developmental theory and research on perspective taking, which predominantly rely on Piagetian views³, we are afforded the image of the child as a rational inquirer, endowed with an inherent repertoire of skills by which the child methodically makes his way about in the world. Perspective taking is implicated as the proximate source of the age related changes that have been observed in the structure and content of children's self (and other) understanding. According to these theories and models, the child undergoes a predictable developmental transformation in a direction consonant with increasing logical mathematical competence. In other words, the nature of a child's role taking competence reflects the nature of his emergent and intrinsic cognitive abilities. As the social bears no constitutive significance for the workings of the child mind, it is not surprising that the concrete, content-filled perspectives and discourses that the child hears, reconstructs and imbibes are not on the cognitive-developmental view, which gives rise to particular forms of reasoning. These other voices and perspectives remain subordinate to the univocal, content-less voice of reason. It is the universal, structural, logico-mathematical language of development, and not the socially and culturally specific representational field of the child's everyday existence, that constitute the ability to take the perspective of the other. The aim of my thesis is to turn this formulation over and to affirm the formative role of the social in the individual's functioning of the mind.

³ Role taking has a number of theoretical ancestors. As a significant construct in developmental and social psychology, the theoretical concept goes back to George Herbert Mead's (1934) notion of 'taking the role of the other', and Jean Piaget's (1926, 1963) 'egocentrism' and 'decentration of thoughts'. As this thesis proposes a revised Meadian perspective, it is beyond its scope to relate to Piaget's ideas as well. Nevertheless, my criticism on the Piagetian approach stems from the fact that in developing their models, researchers have done great injustice to Piaget's original ideas, especially in regard to downplaying the significance of what children learn from their social communicative dealings with others.

Although the subjects of my research are children, this is not a developmental research. Rather, it is a social psychological research with children. The approach to children in the current study is influenced by the relatively new paradigm of sociology or social psychology of childhood. Attributable to a growing dissatisfaction with well-established orthodoxy in understanding human maturation mainly from developmental psychology but also from theories of socialisations, scholars in this emerging field promote the view that children should be seen as 'human beings' rather than 'human becomings' (Qvortrup, 1994). In line with this paradigm, the current study is distinctive in promoting the view that children should be understood as social actors, shaping as well as shaped by their circumstances, and their voices should be heard and studied in their own right.

Developmental psychology has traditionally projected a standardised image of childhood, which has for so long become part of the conventional understanding of the child, determining scientific research as well as common sense and everyday understanding. As James and Prout (1990) illustrate, 'developmentalism' has been a key concept shaping the ways children and childhood have been studied. The concept of development embodies three themes predominate in relation to it: 'rationality', 'naturalness' and 'universality', all derived from a post-Darwinian and post-Enlightenment comprehension of development as a natural, positive and progressive process. As Morss argues "Perhaps the most fundamental assumption concerning an overall picture of individual development is that of progress. Derived from or at least legitimated by biological sources, the notion that the individual gets better and better as time passes has been central to developmental thinking" (1990, p.173). The view of the child as an 'incomplete' creature⁴ is the underlying assumption that generated the deep-seated positivism and strict empiricism so dominant within the developmental framework. Modern child psychology inherited a universalistic legacy, that all humans are part of nature and as such are subject to general laws and thus can be encompassed within positivistic scientific principles (Jahoda, 1992; Woodhead,

⁴ The problem with developmentalism is two-fold. The problematic view of the child as 'incomplete' stems from the fallacious view of the adult as 'complete'. Both children and adults are not static, unchanging beings. Rather, we are social, psychological and physiological processes that unfold ceaselessly into each new instant of experience.

1999). This view is strongly reflected in the developmental models of perspective taking

I do not wish to convey the view, often implied within the studies of sociology of childhood, that developmental psychology is a bad thing. On the contrary, it is impossible to overstate the contribution of this discipline to our knowledge of children. Moreover, it is impossible to imagine how this vast and extremely important discipline could conduct research in a radically different way. Yet its limitations, especially in regard to the current study, must be acknowledged.

From the other side of the social sciences, namely sociology, the concept of socialisation as the main interpretative device to the socially developing child, shares certain chronological and incremental characteristics with the naturally developing child outlined above. The implied binarism (child/adult; immature/mature; irrational/rational) of developmental psychology is well circulated among the theoretical underpinnings of socialisation theories. As stems from the over-socialised conception in classical sociology (e.g. Parsons, 1951), children are perceived as defective forms of adults and the study of their movement towards a completed adult state is taken to provide a means for explaining the reproduction of the social order (Jenks, 1982; Lee 1998). In this sense, “the socially developing model is not therefore attached to what the child is naturally is so much as to what society naturally demands of the child” (James et al, 1998, p. 23).

Hence, socialisation was employed to describe the path and methods of whichever successful transmission or reproduction of the social order came to pass. In this sense, sociological theorising begins with a more or less formally established concept of society and works back to the necessary means by which its order, norms and rules are being inscribed into the consciousness of its potential participants. As Lee argues, “not only does ‘socialisation’ relegate children to being of only passing theoretical interest, but it also understands them as voiceless, passive objects” (1998, p.461).

The children in the current study, all aged between 12-13 years, are regarded as the subjects rather than the objects of the research. I see them as social, political and moral actors in their own right and ontologically, as ‘beings’ rather than

'becomings'. Children form a social group that never disappears even if its members change continuously. They are part of the very constitution of social life and should therefore be understood as an integral form within every social system. This implies that their perspectives, opinions and feelings are accepted as genuine valid evidence, not entirely separated, yet independent from the perspectives and concerns of adults. They are actively involved in the construction and reconstruction of their own social life, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live. I want to make their own voices and views audible and recognise them as participants in the reality of the conflict.

That research with children should not take the child/adult distinction for granted is already a popular mantra in the sociology of childhood. None the less in the current study, I found this position gaining redoubled force in my data. When I presented some of the transcriptions to Israeli acquaintances without indicating the children's age they all reacted with the same bewilderment: are these children using very mature arguments in relation to the conflict or...are adults in Israel using a very immature arguments in relation to the conflict? The question remains open to the reader's interpretation. Finally, I believe that children can be of a great mirror to society. They present their views in a very unique and honest way, presumably since they are not yet confined by the rules of political correctness. In that sense, social psychological research with children can be taken as *'looking at our children and seeing ourselves'*.

Towards a dialogical understanding of perspective taking

On reflection, the evolution of my thesis from my initial observation to the final product is by no means a linear progression but rather a complex, painstaking and occasionally gruelling learning process of trying to make sense of theory, data and the relations between the two. The theoretical perspective put forward in this study regarding the Israeli children's difficulties in understanding the Palestinian perspective and the social, historical and ideological factors that determine these difficulties evolved and changed significantly as I engaged with the writings of G.H Mead, as well as long hours of trying to make sense of the empirical data. It started

with a crude intuition that the social environment influences, that is, impedes, or enhances otherwise naturally emergent cognitive processes, but it does not, as Urwin notes, “actually enter into the structuring of cognition itself (1986, p.261). Indeed, my initial idea on the ‘social’ was that while necessary for completion of structures of knowledge, it is not at the source of these structures. It was only after prolonged engagement with the writings of both Mead and Bakhtin, social representations theory and theories of narrative, as well as the children’s works, that I arrived to the final comprehension of the dialogical understanding of perspective taking.

This dissertation, thus seeks to unfold a conception of perspective taking which affirms the formative role of the social in taking the perspective of the other. It espouses a view that social communicative factors are foundational for the emergence of distinctively human psychological processes. The achievement of mutual understanding is a matter of improved communication. That is to say, perspective taking should be considered as communicative activity rather than cognitive ability and its enactment or restraint should be explored under particular social relational context. In the absence of symbolic mediation, higher thought could not be developed, nor could the ability to take the perspective of the other.

According to the Meadian view, individual psychological functioning is inherently or constitutively social. In that sense, this study represents an effort to move beyond concepts that seem to be articulated primarily in terms of the ‘single-subject’, unmediated ‘present-at-hand’ mode of engagement with the world and with others, and to put forward a view that the individual and the social are the two poles of the same process. Both the Meadian and the dialogical epistemology approaches put forward in the present study deny the dichotomy of self and society and see an ontological and epistemological continuity and mutual interdependence between the individual and the social. That is to say, while acknowledging the activeness and agency-ness of the individual subject in his or her formation of the perspective of the other, it recognises the equally active, formative role of the social in the life and cognition of the individual self.

This thesis therefore has two interrelated ambitions. The first is to elaborate a societal theoretical perspective that emphasises the notion of symbolic mediation in the study of taking the perspective of the other. Secondly, to explore in-depth the

origins and dynamics of the mediational means that generate the difficulties of Israeli children in taking the perspective of the Palestinians. The idea of 'looking at our children and seeing ourselves' acquires a meaning beyond the apparent, a meaning that is strongly reflected in the overall theoretical approach and the research design. This thesis is not just about Israeli children, but rather it is about the Israeli society, or as formulated across, it is about the Israeli (collective) self and the narratives that this self is comprised of. I will argue accordingly that the construction and experience of the perspectives of self and other are both dialogical achievements. Both our sense and knowledge of self and our awareness and knowledge of others are delineated and embodied in our dialogical encounters with different others in our social environment. My contention is that the origin of individual, as well as group variations in role taking ability, propensity and actual performance lies in the experiences associated with different locations in the social and political domains. Given that, I argue that constructing the perspective of the Palestinians is mediated by the ideological comprehensions of the conflict as experienced by the Israelis. That is to say, the ability to construct the Palestinian viewpoint is both enabled and constrained by the boundaries of the Israeli representational field and discourse in relation to the conflict, and the dynamics of knowledge, affect and practices that maintain them.

In the remainder of this introduction, I provide an overview of the dissertation's general itinerary and a broad sketch of the major themes and conclusions that are treated in greater detail in the ensuing chapters.

Plan of dissertation

Chapter 1: G.H. Mead's concept of taking the perspective of the other

Much of the above reviewed research has cited G.H. Mead as providing conceptual and theoretical grounding, yet in fact Mead's ideas are almost always (especially in psychological research) misinterpreted and even diametrically opposed. Since nowhere could I find a satisfactory assessment of Mead's notion of 'Taking the Perspective of the Other', I decided to dedicate a chapter to exploring in depth his various applications of the concept. Mead has used the 'role taking' concept in various applications (such as the inner dialogue of human thought, the participation in

a world of shared objects and the distinctive human social organisation to name but a few) in the course of explaining certain aspects of human social conduct at quite diverse stages of its development. In the current examination of Mead's concept of taking the perspective of the other, I suggest a systematic analysis based on four separate yet interrelated levels of assessment.

Chapter 2: Organised other/s, lack of communication and the narrowing of the moral self: linking Mead to narrative

While the previous chapter introduced the variety of applications of G.H. Mead's concept of taking the role of the other, this chapter explicates in more detail the theoretical framework which I employ. The chapter commences with a critical examination of Mead's cornerstone concept of the 'generalised other'. Based on occasional indications in Mead's theorising I offer an extension to the concept in order to better acknowledge both the enablement and constraints of the generalised other and its relevance to inter-group conflict. Following that, I elaborate on two relevant applications of the role taking concept identified in the former chapter as explanatory concepts to the research problem. The first regards communication and role taking as the mechanism for the production of shared social worlds. The second concept, which associates role taking with morality, discusses the narrowing of the moral self. In the third and final section of this chapter I combine the two Mead formulations with the notion of narrative. I advocate a 'strong' version that views narrative as an essential means of human cognition and communication that speaks both to epistemology and ontology.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I draw on Bulmer's (1977) distinction between *general methodology*, *research strategy* and *research techniques* for the purpose of articulating the methodological approach and the research design. In accordance with the theoretical postulation, the general methodology is based on the dialogical epistemology of both Mead and Bakhtin. In the research strategy section I delineate the operationalisation of perspective taking and formulate the research targets: (i) to explore the ideological construction of self and other and, (ii) to explore the system of ideas, images and beliefs that mediate perspective taking. Additionally, in this section I discuss the rationale for the three social milieus and the methods of data collection. The research

strategy chosen to investigate the research questions is based on exploring perspective taking in two modes of communication, i.e. drawings and narrative compositions with children from three social groups, i.e. city, kibbutz and settlement. Finally, in the section titled research techniques, I delineate the outline of analysis. I provide the rationale for exploring self and society in perspective taking and explain the chosen methods of analysis. I discuss my choices of ethnography, sociogenesis and individual analyses.

Chapter 4: The Israeli 'victimised-occupier' self

In this chapter I offer an ethnographic exposition of what I call the Israeli 'victimised-occupier' (collective) self, as a special case of generalised other. This self, I argue, is the locus for the assortment of beliefs, ideologies, moral contradictions and prejudices from which the Israeli children derive their interpretations, evaluations and judgements regarding the conflict and hence their perspective of the Palestinians. Structured around three successive phases, I draw on popular, discursive channels of narrative dissemination in order to provide a glance on the assortment of voices and ideologies comprising the Israeli self in relation to the conflict. The Israeli victimised-occupier self comprises of contradictory elements. It is constitutive of a strong sense of victimhood and vulnerability even when it clashes markedly with Israel's military might, while maintaining an illegal and unscrupulous occupation against the rule of international law. It is trapped between an ethos of self-control and restraint while willing to exercise its military might in unrestrained manner. It is both aware of the injustice it inflicts upon the Palestinians and completely disregards their sufferings.

Chapter 5: The image of the other – perspective taking in drawings.

The chapter begins with a detailed account of the rationale for choosing drawings as a research method in the current study. Loosing sight of individual works, the analysis is done in two phases. First, I draw eclectically upon techniques from Hummel et al (1995) and Teichman (2001), for content analysis of the drawings. I look at the drawn *actor/s*, the attributed *actions* and the *decoration*, that is, the assortment of symbols, images and other icons within the data for composing the coding frame. Applying basic SPSS functions, I discuss patterns within and between the groups. The second phase is more qualitative-interpretative. I look at the drawings as whole units in trying to capture the exact meaning within the range of

ideas and perspectives exhibited in the drawings. Patterns indeed emerged, leading me to construct five different genres of children's engagements with the 'other' through their drawings. Here, again I discuss themes with relation to the three social milieus. The analysis has shown an organised set of responses regarding the Palestinians underlying the content of the drawings. These responses represent the range of voices, or ideologies that reverberate within Israeli society in relation to the Palestinians, of which the children actively reconstruct in their works. Images of Palestinians as violent and fundamentally evil, rejoicing in aggression and deadly deeds dominate the drawings, especially those by children from the city and settlement. Yet, there are also alternative voices that view the Palestinians as partners for peace and even as victims. These responses are predominantly seen in the kibbutz children's drawings.

Chapter 6: Narrative construction of the other

Drawing upon notions of rhetoric and ideological dilemmas (Billig, 1987, 1991) and the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1984, 1988), while using knowledge of the verbal-ideological contexts surrounding the children's textual productions, I develop an interpretive process that helped me excavate, sort out, and analyze many of the voices speaking through their written texts. Four ideological dilemmas or evaluative dimensions were found. The first regards the Palestinian character and actions. Here, two distinct voices reverberate. First, there is the dominant voice of delegitimation that depicts the Palestinians in the most negative manner. In contrast, there is a counter voice, the voice of legitimisation that depicts the Palestinian resistance as rightful and as a means to reclaim their occupied land. Additionally there are representations of the Palestinians as economically deprived and even as victims of the Israeli aggression. The second polemic arises in the analysis regards the Israeli actions. Here again, I found two competing rhetorics. On the one hand, there is a tendency to construe the Israeli actions as aggressive and iniquitous. On the other hand, there is the opposite tendency that rhetorically justifies the Israeli deeds as inevitable self-defence against the Palestinian aggression. Thirdly there is an intriguing polemic between self-perception as defenceless victims and a rhetorical tendency that maintains the Israeli supremacy, mainly military but morally and economically as well. Lastly, found in the narratives was an ambivalent approach to the notion of peace. Peace is represented as the ultimate opposite to the current situation and regarded as highly desired concept. In contrast to the comprehensive

peace rhetoric, a counter voice resonates in relation to peace that is both contradictory and complementary and that can be described as a strong disbelief in the possibility of peace. I argue that the content boundaries of the narrative compositions, from the harsh to the empathic, are reflections of the boundaries of the Israeli self, of which the children through their construction of the Palestinian narrative strived to protect.

Chapter 7: Taking the perspective of the other: individual analysis

In the last results chapter, I bring the individual back to the centre of attention. Building upon the findings and discussion from the previous chapters, I present the analyses of nine individual works. The question I ask in this chapter is: how are the competing voices discerned both in the ethnographic and sociological analyses, being actively orchestrated as the children construct an objectified and finalised perspective of the Palestinians? Specifically, I aim to address the complexity of individual's texts (both drawing and narrative), that is, the layers of voices and ideologies embedded within the composed Palestinian perspective, to identify how particular rhetorical connections are forged and, more importantly to understand the investment that has been made in them. I examine how different, sometimes contradictory perspectives and ideologies are being negotiated, challenged, resisted, or accepted in the work of single individuals and how they mediate the construction of the other's perspective.

Chapter 8: Discussion-behind the narrative bars

In the final chapter I summarise the findings and discuss the two aims of the thesis. I link the theory and the data used in this research to suggest the following: first, in relation to the social dimension of perspective taking I argue that (i) perspective taking is predicated on social experience; (ii) perspective taking should be regarded as communicative activity rather than cognitive ability; and (iii) perspective taking is not either-or, all-or-nothing ability. Secondly, regarding the difficulties of Israeli children to take the perspective of the Palestinians, I suggest looking at three interrelated clusters of obstacles. The first, of which I called perverse obstacles, regards the *perceptions of the other* and the workings of extremely negative stereotypes of the other, which lead to the devaluation, and even dehumanisation of the Palestinians. The second, reflexive obstacles, relates to *perceptions of self* and the problems of missing self-reflection, suppression of divergent thinking and dissent, and diminished sense of responsibility for the effects of one's actions on others. The third cluster

regards the (lack of) *interaction* between self and other. It reflects the institutionally rooted segregation and the lack of opportunities for encountering with the other and his national and historical narrative. These three clusters mingle and coalesce, therefore feeding and maintaining each other in a negative feedback to perpetuate the different realities of the conflict. The chapter is sealed with some suggestion for future research and final reflections.

1. G. H MEAD'S CONCEPT OF TAKING THE ROLE OF THE OTHER

Introduction

Mead's key philosophical venture concerned the social dimension of consciousness and human conduct. His endeavour is to show that the mind and the self are without residue social emergents. Set against the prevailing Cartesian assumption of the time, that the nature of consciousness is personal and private, Mead's ambition was to trace the mechanisms by which the mind and the self emerge out of relationships between individuals and their (social) environment. He wished to "emphasise the temporal and logical pre-existence of the social process to the self-conscious individual that arises within it" (1934; p.186). Strongly influenced by Darwin's evolutionary approach, Mead sought to depict the development of social beings out of their antecedents in animal behaviour. In this regard, (unlike many behaviourists that seek to emphasise what man shares with other animals), Mead's main concern was the decisive features that differentiate man from other species, such as self-consciousness, reflexiveness, and the use of language.

These unique features are all principally associated with the fundamental concept of 'taking the role of the other'. His critical scrutiny of the social aspect of human conduct is founded on, and rooted in the mechanism of 'taking the role of the other', which serves as a key explanatory concept for all of his further inquiries, from the emergence of self conception, to ethics and the ordered society. As will be shown in this chapter, the significance of the concept of 'taking the role of the other' is to be found in almost every aspect of Mead's writings, be that his philosophy, social psychology or ethical theory. However a central concept in Mead's social psychological theory, Meadian role taking has suffered great confusion of meaning (See Lauer and Boardman, 1971; Coutu, 1951; Cook, 1993). As Cook (1993) notes, "despite the prominence of this concept in his writings and lectures, however, he nowhere offers a sustained and systematic analysis of the behavioural mechanisms to which it refers" (p.78). Shalin (1989) rightly argues that bewilderment over Mead's usage of role taking is due to his tendency to move back and forth between

phylogenetic and ontogenetic perspectives in his account of such phenomena as language, reflexiveness, and thought.

Certainly, Mead's commitment to unifying all facets of his theory – biology, psychology, sociology and even the history of ideas- in terms of one internally consistent set of general laws (Baldwin 1986), contributed to the perplexity in comprehending the 'role taking' concept. Mead has used the concept in various applications (such as the inner dialogue of human thought, the participation in a world of shared objects and the distinctive human social organisation to name but a few) in the course of explaining certain aspects of human social conduct at quite diverse stages of its development. In the current examination of Mead's concept of taking the perspective of the other, I suggest a critical systematic analysis based on four separate yet interrelated levels of assessment.

Firstly, role taking on the **phylogenetic** level accounts for the evolutionary origins of the human mind and self-consciousness. Secondly, the better-known **ontogenetic** level of analysis which is comprised of Mead's social psychological theorising mainly from *Mind, Self and Society* (1934). Here, role taking accounts for the development of the social self, that is, the growth of the human individual into a fully-fledged member of society. Thirdly, the **macro-social** perspective relates to the macro level of society. Role taking is conceptualised as both the consequence, and the enablement mechanism, of living in the same socially produced worlds as well as a mechanism of social control that constitutes and maintains the unique form of human social organisation. The fourth level of assessment is **ethics and morality**, in which Mead considers the function of role taking as facilitating the capacity to occupy and compare in thoughts different spatio-temporal perspectives and hence, as a vital instrument for solving moral problems.

It is my attempt to connect his social philosophy, social psychology and ethical theory in order to get a better grasp on his approach and to provide a critical assessment of the various applications of 'taking the role of the other'. By that, I hope to establish and highlight the social dimension of 'perspective taking' and to found the theoretical base for understanding difficulties in perspective taking in the context of intergroup conflict.

The development of the human mind: Role taking in evolution

The initial utilization of the concept of ‘taking the role of the other’ in Mead’s theory is based upon phylogenetic observation. His position seems to be that only the human organism has the neurological makeup necessary for the emergence of consciousness. Mead’s initial discussion on communication and intelligence, where he commences the concept of ‘taking the role of the other’, refers not to a particular individual but rather to all mankind. “Reflective thought, in this early view, was seen as an element of phylogenetic differentiation that held certain implications for man’s effort at social reform and control” (Petars 1973, p.150).

Mead’s evolutionary approach to communication and intelligence is inaugurated with the analysis of the ‘social act’⁵. For Mead “the unit of existence is the act...”(1938, p.65). The social (communicative) act is a collective act involving the participation of two or more organisms. This basic unit of analysis serves Mead in depicting the vast range of human’s social relations, from simple to complex. These acts result in a process of developmental adaptation, termed ‘evolution’ which, in Mead’s view, is a functional adaptation of the parts of the act in terms of the perspective of completing the act. Completion of an act will be, to some extent, novel and the participating organisms will be transformed. These consequences are termed ‘emergence’, a key theme in Mead’s general philosophy.

Mead distinguishes three levels of emergence which have appeared in the history of evolution. These are the physical, the biological, and the reflexive. Reflexive behaviour emerges out of the biological and the biological out of the physical. The reflexive level, that of the self-conscious social individual, emerges when the organism not only responds to its own organic states, but also responds to its own responses; this is “made possible physiologically through the mechanism of the central nervous system, and socially through the mechanism of language” (1934 p.254, n.7).

⁵ Mead’s theory of the act begins with the analysis of the ‘act-as-such’ that is the ‘individual biological activity’ as the initial development of the relation between the individual and his environment. However, since Mead’s presupposes the pre-existence of the social, and relates to the individual as a member of a social organism from birth, his acts must be viewed in the context of social act. (See Cronk 1987, p.17-27; Mead, *The Philosophy of the Act*, 1936, p.3-25)

That is to say, the mechanism of taking the role of the other can be explained in terms of the physiologically required condition of the central nervous system, and the socially required condition of symbols. In order to comprehend the evolutionary process that led to human reflexive intelligence and communication ability, Mead begins his inquiry with the basic, instinctual forms of communication seen in lower species, i.e. the 'conversation of gestures'. He argues for their being the first overt phases, that is, "the earliest link in the chains of behaviours that constitute social act" (Baldwin, 1986, p.71). His renowned illustration of the confrontation between two hostile dogs (1912, 1934) serves to emphasise gestures as the primary means of communications in animals and as such, they have imperative social functions. Hence, gestures must be seen in a larger context as "part of the organisation of the social act, and highly important elements in that organisation" (Mead, 1934, p.44). The meaning of a gesture, according to Mead, lies in the information it carries. The communicative act is based on a triadic structure consisting of a gesture, response, and result. Mead notes that "this threefold or triadic relation...is the basis of meaning...For the existence of meaning depends upon the fact that the adjustive response of the second organism is directed toward the resultant of the given social act as initiated and indicated by the gesture of the first organism"(1934, p.80)⁶.

Principally interested in 'vocal gestures', Mead pointed to the most crucial phylogenetic disparity between humans and animals. In the animal world, gestures do not elicit in the producer of the stimulus the same reaction that arouses in the other. It is a uniquely human facility that gestures affect the individual who accomplishes them the same response as it elicits in others⁷. "The human animal can stimulate himself as he stimulates others and can respond to his stimulations as he responds to the stimulations of others" (Mead, 1912/1964, p.139). Thus, a higher animal may be aware or conscious of meanings *in* the act but not to its *own* meanings in relation to

⁶ Even though gestures have meaning, awareness of the meaning is not necessary for animals to respond to the predictive information in gestures. Meaning can exist without awareness of meaning. From an evolutionary standpoint, Mead suggests, meaning is present in different ways at different levels of the phylogenetic scale but emerges in terms of symbolisation only in the conduct of human organisms.

⁷ Mead does not imply that all human communication is reflexive. He uses the phrase "unconscious conversation of gestures" to describe elementary forms of communication where individuals respond to each others gestures but they are not reflectively aware of their meanings. (Mead, 1934).

the act. On the human reflexive level, meanings are symbolised and therefore may be held self-consciously.

Role taking in this regard originated as a biologic competence, an impulse, and developed through the course of evolution to attain a reflexive level. At that level, there emerges “the unique characteristic of the human individual; that he can place himself in different perspectives”(1938 p.182). Mead strongly emphasises the importance of the vocal gestures, which sequentially evolved to significant symbols and language. When a gesture calls up the same meanings in both the speaker and the listener, Mead defined it as a ‘significant symbol’. These gestures whose meanings are shared, “implicitly arouse in an individual making them the same responses which they explicitly arouse, or are supposed to arouse, in other individuals, the individuals to whom they are addressed...”(Mead 1934, p.47). Thus, the vocal gesture “is the actual fountainhead of language proper and all derivative forms of symbolism; and so of mind” (Morris, 1967, p.xxii).

The importance of language, for Mead, rests first and foremost in its function as a differentiating element in the phylogenetic continuum, and only subsequently in its function as a medium of communication. Through the course of evolution, humans became reflectively aware of the (social) meaning of their own gestures, and were able to carry on their interactions and the overall social acts in the light of this awareness. Hence, Mead asserts “the fundamental importance of gesture lies in the development of the consciousness of meaning - in reflective consciousness” (1910/1964, p.110).

Mead’s evolutionary approach aims at explaining the advancement of the individual’s mind within human communities. In this theoretical domain, the emphasis is on the natural history of the human mind. As Roberts (1977) notes, Mead depicted human evolution, which “takes place through a relation between human life and the environment” as well as evolutions in the relationship between people – “an evolution in social relations” (p.154). Rudimentary forms or impulses of role taking have founded the human capacity to effectively communicate by means of significant symbols. A person’s use of abstract symbols enables him to impose himself and his ideas on the environment in such a way as to control and manipulate it. As humans

have reached the reflexive level and are able to act self-consciously by way of perspectives taking, they can deliberately form the 'trial and error' process of evolutionary adaptation into a conscious method of progress. This process, according to Mead, is the scientific method which is "the evolutionary process grown self-conscious"(1936, p.364).

Mead makes a robust link between role taking, communication and reflective intelligence. The evolution of language and human intelligence, are natural emergences of the interaction between the organic individuals throughout communal life. Once the aforementioned requisite physiological condition is present, the accumulated number and breadth of symbolised meanings available will determine the scope and effectiveness of human behaviour. Thus, role taking, symbolisation and communication of meaning are central concepts in Mead's social-psychological theorising.

The development of the social self: ontogenesis application of role taking

In the previous section, role taking was considered as a rudimentary competence that does not presuppose language, self-consciousness and thought, but rather played a significant part in the genesis of these phenomena. In what follows, Mead's concept of 'role taking' will be examined on a different level of assessment. Although based on similar assumptions, role taking will account for the emergence of the mind and self of a *particular individual*, i.e. the development of the individual's (social) self in the course of ontogenesis.

Mead is concerned with the development of self-consciousness, that is, the ways in which the individual appears to experience a sense of self as a separate object. For Mead, the 'self' is not innately present at birth. Rather it emerges through interaction with others. We are not born selves, rather, we become selves. The developmental assumption is that the child first takes the role of the other before it is conscious of itself. It becomes conscious of itself by looking at its behaviour from the standpoint of the other. He writes: "The child fashions his own self on the model of other selves.

This is not an attitude of imitations, but the self that appears in consciousness must function in conjunction with other selves. The child's consciousness of his own self is quite largely the reflection of others toward him" (1910/1964, p.154). Owing to the pre-existence of the social process, Mead stresses that it is only in the course of social interactions that selves, as distinct from biological organisms, can arise; selves as beings that have become conscious of themselves. The self-as-object in Mead's perspective is a basic structure of human experience that arises in response to other selves in an organic social symbolic world of intersubjective relations. The self is always in the process of development. Following Mead's behaviouristic approach it might be accurate to regard the self not as an entity, but rather, as a coherent pattern of reflective behaviours generated, sustained and transformed by the mechanism of role taking. This concept becomes clearer through his interpretation of two crucial stages in the emergence of the self, namely 'play' and 'game'.

Play

Early childhood play, according to Mead, is a crucial stage in the genesis of the self⁸. It is a fundamental process that allows for the development of all social behaviour. The child's play emerges from a stimulus that calls out a detached act. This response, in turn forms the basis for the emergence of all aspects of the mind, i.e. reflexive-intelligence, self-awareness and communication skills.

Play seems to be a necessary outgrowth of the physical and social nature of humans (Ritchie and Koller, 1964). From birth, the infant gradually engages in impulse directed activities, which aim at exploring and manipulating his immediate environment. Although in the early stages the child is merely passive in his conduct with his caretakers, play experiences multiply rapidly, and the child is increasingly able to respond to his environment. Mead demonstrates that the earliest observation of role taking mechanism in early childhood, is when the infant is crying, and then "uttering the soothing sound which belongs to the parental attitude of protection"

⁸ Mead's concept of play as a stage in the genesis of the self is the best known, and often the only known, aspect of this concept. However, his conceptualisation of 'play' is much more sophisticated and is expanded with broader implications such as education, art, and woman in community to name but a few. For a full assessment of this concept, see G.H. Mead (1999), *Play, School and Society*. Edited and introduced by M. J. Deegan.

1934, p.364). This elementary conduct is rapidly extended to the “countless forms of play in which the child assumes the roles of the adults around him”(ibid). As the child increasingly acquires significant symbols and language through interactions with various individuals, he correspondingly expands his solitary-play repertoire. He now turns inward to the ‘imaginary companions’ – “Play in this sense...is a play at something. A child plays at being a mother, at being a teacher, at being policeman - that is, it is taking different roles, as we say” (Mead, 1934, p.150). These conversations and the assuming of alternate roles provide a means of reflecting back upon the self as an object.

In his thorough analysis, Cook (1993) identifies three distinct functions of the role taking mechanism. The first, *anticipatory*, is particularly related to the pre-play phase. The child’s self-stimulation calls forth anticipatory responses, which can be modified in the course of the child’s social experience. Past experience of the conduct of others, such as his caretakers, may play an important part in modifying the child’s social responses so that they more accurately anticipate and more successfully adjust to the action that the other’s gesture portends. Role taking in this regard is successful “to the extent that the child adequately reconstructs these actual responses of the other in the anticipatory attitudes they call out in themselves with their own gestures” (Cook, 1993, p.92). Additionally, role taking conduct is said to be carrying out a *reflexive* function. This function is emphasised by Mead as highly significant, enabling individuals to attend to themselves and to grasp the social meaning of their own conduct. In Mead’s words, “reflexiveness is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind” (1934, p.134). The child’s tendency to role-play sensitises him to his own gestures in a reflexive manner. This process, which is also characterized as the internalisation of the conversation of gestures, is for Mead ‘the essence of thinking’. The third function of role taking, the *appropriative*, will be discussed shortly in relation to the ‘game’ stage.

To sum up this point, the child’s (role)-play is a crucial context for the development of the self. It is the development of the individual’s mind in relation to the existing social environment. Role-play in this regard underlies the acquisition of significant symbols, which in sequence makes possible the inner dialogue of the individual’s thought. These achievements ultimately lead to the accomplishment of

self-consciousness and reflexive intelligence. Through interactions with others, the child hears and engages with other subjectivities and 'voices'. He actively appropriates or internalises them, that is, makes them his own, and in the process achieves a sense of self that has a determinate (yet ever-changing) form.

Game

The game stage for Mead is the child's early experience in a more complex social matrix. The games are microgenetic occurrences through which the child exercises collective and cooperative behaviour, as well as a process through which the child acquires a more complex understanding of the self. Differentiation between play and game is made on the basis of the number of participants and the existence or absence of rules. Multiple person games imply a more advanced and sophisticated role taking conduct than seen in role-play. As Meads explains, "If we contrast play with the situation in an organised game, we note the essential difference that the child who plays in a game must be ready to take the attitude of everyone else involved in that game, and that these different roles must have a definite relationship to each other"(1934, p.151).

With the help of the rules that govern the game, the child develops the ability to take the place of all other players and to anticipate and comprehend their responses. The genuine significance of the game stage, as conceptualised by Mead does not lie in the child's capacity to comprehend complex rules or multiple roles. Rather, Mead sees the game as metaphorically representing the dynamics of the overall social process and communal living. As Natanson puts it, the rules of the game "mark the transition from simple role taking to participation in roles of a special standardised order. Through rules, the child is introduced to societal compulsion and the abrasive texture of a more nearly adult reality" (1973, p.59). The variance between play and game corresponds with the distinction between the 'other/s' with which Mead is concerned in each stage. Whereas in play it is only a particular other i.e. the person (real or imagined) actually present in the interaction, in the game stage, the child assumes to integrate a myriad of attitudes that represent the common norms, rules, social expectations and values to which Mead refers as the "*generalised other*".

The generalised other for Mead is “the organised community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self” (1934 p.151). It is in this stage that the *appropriative* function of role taking is fully realised. The generalised other is not a configuration of people but a powerful system of selectors, a frame of reference in the form of assembled conditioned judgements on the propriety of a given behaviour in a given situation. By taking the attitude of the generalised other, the reality and ethos of the group or the community is internalised in the individual consciousness. When the child expresses himself, he is now aware both of the attitudes of particular others and of the organised (generalised) other, and is able to monitor his behaviour accordingly. He now becomes self-aware in the full sense, i.e. he becomes an object to himself.

Mead strongly argues that there can be no self apart from society. This assertion should be understood in a twofold manner. On the one hand, the individual for Mead is in a pre-given relationship to others. Here comes to light the reflexive function of role taking as a mechanism for the genesis of self-consciousness. In this sense, the individual “could never reach the goal of becoming an object to himself as a whole until it could enter a larger system within which it could play various roles...it is this development that a society whose life process is mediated by communication has made possible” (Mead, 1932, p.85). On the other hand, Mead stresses the appropriative function of role taking as a mechanism for the development of the social structure of the self. Therefore, “only in so far as he takes the attitudes of the organised social group to which he belongs towards the organised, cooperative social activity or set of such activities in which the group as such is engaged, does he develop a complete self” (1934, p.155). Thus, it is through role taking conduct that the individual acquires the basic structure of his self or personality by importing into his conduct the organised roles displayed in the conduct of others.

The game, from an ontogenetic point of view is the stage at which the individual attains *selfhood*. Taking the role of the other leads to the acquisition of those organised response tendencies that provide the social structure of an individual’s self or personality. By exercising the appropriative function of role taking the child is able to operate and participate in the ongoing social process and develop awareness to the socially shared values, obligations, rights and goals of his community. For Mead, ‘self’ involves norms as anchors or points from which to view

and evaluate events. In Couly's (1949) words, "The norms of one's group are the flesh of one's generalised other"(p.336).

Before proceeding to the macro level, an additional notion of Mead's conceptualisation of the social self must be grasped. According to Mead the development of the social self is the process of the internalisation of the social process through the mechanism of role taking. The concept of the generalised other involves the individual's adoption of a set of social roles, rules and conventions for group's conduct. One could argue that this can only lead to the emergence of conformist, homogeneous human beings undifferentiated from one another. But for Mead the self is not merely a passive reflection of the generalised other. Instead, each self is a unique configuration, which results from a dialectical relationship existing between two aspects of the self: the 'I' and the 'Me'.

In its constitutive nature, the self is composed of two behaviouristic phases. These are the internalised perspective of the (generalised) other, the 'me', and the novel response to that perspective, the 'I'. Both the I and the me necessarily relate to social experience. But whereas the I is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others, the me is the organised set of attitudes of others that are internalised through the course of ontogenesis. A point worthy of note in this regard is that Mead's distinction between the I and the me is functional rather than ontological. The me for Mead is the social incorporated into the personal. It is the "representation of society through the organisation of attitudes, expectations, and meanings derived from the group" (Roberts 1977, p.165). It is the number and scope of perspectives which one can appreciate and hence gives the self its reflective and responsible character. Mead defines the me as a "conventional, habitual individual" and the I as the "novel reply" of the individual to the generalised other. (1934, p.197)

These two poles of the self make it an 'open' self. The self as a whole, as it appears in social experience, is a compound of the stabilised reflections of the generalised other in the object me and the incalculable spontaneity of the subject I. The me is essentially present in memory and any action performed by the I will eventually be incorporated within the me alongside with the other sets of social attitudes already assumed by the me. To sum up this point, for Mead, the subject I is

the agent and source of freedom, i.e. the indeterminate component of the self, which enables human beings to reconstruct their environment and depart from the constrictions of the “generalised other” they have internalised in the form of the me. To be self-reflexive, therefore, is to take the role of the other with respect to the self. It is only due to the inner dialogue between the I and the me that the individual can be both subject and object and consequently, to effectively engage in human interaction.

Role taking on the macro level

The third level of assessment that Mead employs for the role taking concept is the macro level, where he conceptualises the social organisation of the ordered society. On this level of assessment there is a synthesis of his philosophical ideas and his social psychological theory.

I suggest articulating this synthesis from two separate yet interrelated points of view. In the first, the more philosophical perspective, role taking should be considered as an elementary mechanism for the production of shared realities. The second, a social psychological perspective, accentuates the complementary pole of the ontogenetic process from the previous section. Since self and society are for Mead dialectical poles of a single process, the importance of the role taking mechanism for the macro level of society will be emphasised.

Role taking as the mechanism for the construction of shared worlds

It is significant to relate Mead’s theory of meaning to his conception of subject and society in order to apprehend the social function of taking the role of the other from the standpoint of society. Common experience is, for Mead, the bedrock upon which meaning and perspectives are predicated. As previously indicated, it is within the communicative (social) act that meaning arises. To share a meaning with an other is to take the role of the other and vice versa. This two-way process becomes possible through the emergence and use of significant symbols. Gestures appear to have a universal meaning, and are thus communicable to others. The individual not only

takes the role of the others actually involved in the social act in which he is using his gestures, but also the role of the “generalised other”, that is “the total linguistic community in which the gesture is utilised and responded to”(List, 1973: 114).

According to Mead’s philosophy, the world as it exists for anyone, arises out of that person’s responses to that world. Therefore, the content or meaning of physical as well as social objects one experiences, is derived from their role in one’s conduct and action. Our responses to the world, according to Mead, come from the past, have been socially structured and are inscribed on our central nervous system. People thus build up meaning between themselves and things around them through ongoing interactions. Significant communication among individuals creates a world of common (symbolic) meaning within which further and deliberate social acts are possible. Therefore, it is by way of the social act that persons in society create their reality. For Mead, different ‘perceptions’ of the world are not set off against a reality ‘out there’. Rather there are ‘multiple realities’ which ascribe to the process of social interactions.

This implies that if a number of individuals or groups respond in different ways to a ‘stimulus’, the ‘stimulus’ means different things to them. The process of symbolic interpretation cannot be, as the cognitive theories imply, an individual or “subjective” one. Significant symbols are not processes going on in a mind as such. Rather, we must imagine this process to be taking place within a whole community of ‘gestural users’. It is in that community that individuals carry out and participate in a common social process of experience and behaviour and it is here that their gestures have “the same or common meanings for all members of that group”(Mead, 1934, p. 90). Intersubjectivity achieved through sharing a common outlook is the enabling ground of dialogue. Individuals respond to significant symbols in terms of shared meanings or “universals”, and it is the mechanism of role taking that enables them to participate in a world of public or shared objects.

From that stems a crucial assumption for the context of the present research: in so far as different individuals or groups have built up different responses to the world,

so they do in fact live in different worlds⁹. The concept of taking the perspective of the other is not a mere cognitive act in the sense that the cognitive psychologists ascribed. Experiencing the world as ‘other’ experiences is an inevitable and effortless consequence of living in the same socially produced reality. Language is the agency or the medium through which interactions, meanings, relationships and structures are formed and reformed and taking the role of the other is the communicative mechanism whereby such interactions and meanings are accomplished. Put differently, role taking is the spine of all communication practices between individuals and groups and the mechanism that enables the existence of the human social fabric¹⁰.

Role taking as the mechanism of social organisation

Mead points out that “in the same socio-physiological way that human individual becomes conscious of himself he also becomes conscious of other individuals; and his consciousness both of himself and of other individuals is equally important for his own self development and for the development of the organised society or the social group to which he belongs” (1934, p. 253). Thus, the division, in the current scrutiny between the individual self and the macro level of society, relates only to the ontogenetic perspective aimed at explaining the process of socialisation of individuals into their social and cultural environments, which enables them to take part as active participants within these environments. At the macro level of analysis comes to light the relations of mutual dependence between self and society.

For Mead, self and society is an ontological unit. They are dialectical poles of a single process. He presupposes the interdependence between the individual and society and argues for the co-development of the individual and society as a mutual adjustment and readjustment (Dodds et al, 1997; Markova, 2000). Each self for Mead represents a unique organisation of perspectives, and since the individual participates

⁹ Non-symbolic animals, according to Mead, do not live in the same worlds. It is only (symbolic) humans that can share worlds and this ascribed to the use of language.

¹⁰ Given that, I argue that regarding the conflict, Israelis and Palestinians are living in two different worlds. This idea will be farther elaborated in the next chapter.

in the social acts out of the perspectives of this self, each individual contributes to the expansion and amendment of the community of symbolised meanings.

Hence, role taking is on the one hand a fundamental process for the emergence of the individual's mind and self. On the other hand, "the very organisation of the self conscious community is dependent upon individuals taking the attitudes of the other individuals"(Mead 1934, p.256). Communication involving participation *in* the 'other' is a basic principle to human social organisation, as it makes possible the progressive 'universality' of our understanding. The various parts of society function in relation to each other by means of communication of symbolic language. Individuals taking the role of other individuals, as well as the generalised other, form the unique configuration of human communities.

For Mead, there can be no self apart from society as the essence of selfhood is embedded in society by way of taking the common attitude of the whole group. In turn, society must be understood as a dynamic form that emerges through the ongoing transactions between individuals who are mutually oriented towards each other.

Human social activities are predominantly dependent upon social cooperation, which according to Mead, "results from the taking by individuals of social attitudes toward one another" (1934 p.300). Through reciprocated interdependence arise what Mead terms common or organised responses, which are reflected and actualised in the community's institutions (e.g. law, education, religion etc.). For Mead, it is the process of communication with the experience of other people that facilitates the peculiar distinguishing character of both human intelligence and its distinctive social organisation. "We enter in that way into the attitudes of others, and in that way we make our very complex societies possible"(1936, p.375).

The immediate effect of the role taking mechanism, when viewed from the standpoint of society and the overall social process, lies in the organisation and control which individuals are able to exercise over their own responses. Individuals are able to talk to themselves in terms of the community to which they belong and take upon themselves the responsibilities of the community. Therefore, the internalisation or importation of the social into the personal is for Mead a great value

to the organised society as it facilitates “the superior coordination” of “society as a whole”, and the “increased efficiency of the individual as a member of the group”(1934, p.178-179). Control in this sense is not something administrated externally, but rather the group exerts control over its members by becoming an internal part of their selves. Feelings and sentiments, which are directed towards oneself, such as guilt, embarrassment, pride, shame and vanity cannot occur without putting oneself in another’s position or, taking the perspective of the other to oneself. The common denominator of these feelings is the consideration of how one’s self appears to others, in the sense that these emotions stem from seeing ourselves as others see us. As such, they make us amenable to social control. The fact that these sentiments can be evoked without the presences of concrete others implies that they are also mechanisms of self-criticism and self-control (Shott, 1979).

The idea of a socialised conscience as an integral part of the individual’s character is central to Mead’s biological adjustment model of action, which viewed individual behaviour as based upon impulses which could be channelled into socially constructive behaviours. For the socialised conscious not only introduces the community process into the inner life of the individual but is also the source of rationality¹¹. As Roberts asserts, “the socialised conscious is, in effect, society’s representative to a debate within the personality: the self is the forum for an inner parliament” (Roberts 1977, p.159).

Communities are for Mead whole organisms and are viewed not only in terms of mutual dependence with the individuals that constitute them but also as naturally continuous and even analogous to them, with ongoing feedback and change processes between individuals and the social. Whereas the individual has character or personality, the group or society has institutions, and Mead perceives these institutions as natural extensions of the human organism. He writes: “the institutions of society, [the libraries, systems of transportation, the complex interrelationship of individuals reached in political organisations], are nothing but ways of throwing on the social screen in enlarged fashion the complexities existing inside of the central nervous system, and they must express functionally the operation of this system”

¹¹ This idea will be problematised in chapter 2.

(1934 p.242). Social institutions thus can be seen as both analogous to and continuations of individual selves, and constantly in tension of co-development and change.

In search for the largest common denominator, Mead identifies two of the greatest universals: economic and religious conduct, both seen as the largest social foundations of co-development of self and society throughout history. These institutions, the economic and the religious systems of values, are, for Mead, the most fundamental of all shared principles in a sense that they are cross-national, cross-cultural and are embedded in the very fibre of human's social relations. They "represent the most highly universal, and for the time being, most highly abstract society" (1934, p.259). Both universals are evidently anchored in humans' ability to take the role of the other. The universal process of exchange is founded on participation in the attitude of need where "each putting himself in the attitude of the other in the recognition of the mutual value which the exchange has for both" (1934, p.258). The universal religious system has imprinted on human beings "such fundamental attitudes toward each other as kindness, helpfulness and assistance"(*ibid*)¹². The process of communication, i.e. taking the perspective of the other is the process that facilitates the above cooperative universals. It is "the medium through which these cooperative activities can be carried on in the self-conscious society" (*ibid*).

Mead considers his scrutiny on self and society as the guiding principles with which to elaborate his ethical theory. He argues that morality is constituted where a person has in his own conduct the universals that govern the whole community. The internalisation of the social process and the generalised other into one's self generates conduct controlled by principles, and for Mead "a person who has such an organised group of responses is a man whom we say has a character, in the moral sense" (1934, p.163). Mead is very straightforward in associating the social and the moral. His ethical theory is directly derived from his social psychology theory in which he explores the moral order and conventions through the reciprocal influence of

¹² Mead indeed has the tendency to emphasize the harmonious nature of society and in this sense he chooses to ignore the horrible deeds executed by humans in the name of religion. This problem is dealt in length in the next chapter.

individuals being mutually dependant elements within a society. The social aspect of human society, Mead proclaims, “with its concomitant feelings on the parts of all these individuals of co-operation and social interdependence, is the basis for the development and existence of ethical ideals in that society” (1934 p.321).

Role taking as a method for solving moral problems

In an early essay titled “The Social Self” (1913) Mead provides the first link between his social view of the self and moral conduct. He writes: “there is one further implication of this nature of the self to which I wish to call attention. It is the manner of its reconstruction. I wish especially to refer to it, because the point is of importance in the psychology of ethics” (p.147). For Mead, all nature, but especially the living organism, addresses, reconstructs and solves problems. He views life as a process of continuous reconstruction providing solutions to problems that occur in the overall act when there is a lack of adjustment between the organism and the environment. As long as conduct proceeds smoothly there is no need for reflective thoughts and reconstruction. It is only when we are confronted with situations whose undetermined and therefore challenging character calls forth conflicting tendencies to respond that reflection and reassessment are required. Put differently, problems arise when habits are no longer adequate guides to action and there is a need to reassess alternatives.

Due to the human ability to reflectively interrupt the flow of conduct and to expand the situation by attaching new meanings and evaluations to the situation, conscious intellectual and moral reconstruction is possible. Intellectual reconstruction implies solving a problem by way of finding a method to set conduct in motion for the accomplishment of its goal. Mead insists that the moral dimension in human conduct is not an isolated domain but rather an integral part of the overall social dimension (Mead, 1913/1964; 1934). Every social act or conduct is accompanied by a moral dimension and the potential to turn into a moral problem - there is no sharp break between social and moral problems. Neither a situation nor a behaviour is inherently morally problematic, nevertheless they have the potential to become so. The natural validation of ethics for Mead is based on the idea that evolution has produced an

organism capable of reflective intelligence, namely, capable of responding to its own responses by means of a social perspective.

Humans' reflexive capacity and the achievement of control over the environment necessitated responsibility in relation to that control. Responsibility in that sense is a counterpart to morality. To understand properly the moral dimension of the human experience, we must regard moral meanings as values that arise within the ongoing relationship of mutual determination between individuals and their environments (Cook, 1993). Values arise when the impulses of organisms become attached to objects in the social act and therefore express the interests and patterns of conduct that relates to self and other. In accordance with his theory of meaning Mead asserted: "the problem itself defines the value"(1934, p.388). The value of an act is one of that act's meanings. Since meanings arise only in the act, value can have no meaning apart from the act. Hence, values arise and reside in the relation between subject and object where people assign values arbitrarily to natural objects and various other symbols. It is the symbolisation of values that make it possible for humans to share these meanings with one another and to act upon them.

A moral problem is "a significant conflict of ends-relations in a human social act which blocks the completion of the act"(Broyer, 1973; p.173). Moral situations must imply important consequences for the individual or for the social group. As already discussed, Mead described the character or personality of the individual as a "mere organisation of habit". These "habits" are the gamut of traits that the self is not conscious or reflectively aware of. However, when an essential problem appears, "there is some disintegration in this organisation, and different tendencies appear in reflective thought as different voices in conflict with each other" (1913, p.147). The same occurs on the macro level when the problem calls different voices in conflict within the community's institutions or groups. Moral problems, thus involve social relations which are not arbitrary or conventional but rather essential to the furtherance of the social process.

From his naturalistic point of view, Mead regarded ethical problems as essentially problems of social adjustment and adaptation to the interests and conduct of other individuals or groups. They involve competing tendencies in the social

organisation of the self. According to Mead they are always internalisations and reflections of conflicting values arising in the community and are indispensable to the continuation of the community process. For this reason, moral problems are always social problems.

Mead explicitly ruled out the existence of a fixed, ideal moral order independent of the natural world. The emphasis that categorical ethics places on abstract moral principles is utterly wrong. By ignoring the inescapable particularity of moral agents, categorical (e.g. Kantian) ethics disregards what according to Mead is the real source of ethical value and meaning. He contends that meanings and values are socially constructed and are always prone to revaluation and change: "You cannot lay down in advance fixed rules as to just what should be done. You can find out what are the values involved in the actual problem and act rationally with reference to them...that is the only method that an ethics can present"(1934, p.388). Morality therefore, is not categorical or transcendental, but local and specific, concrete and particular that lives in particular subjects and particular contexts.

It is just the lack of a fixed moral order that allows incessant space for intelligent reconstruction and reflective morality to take place. He argues that moral advance "consists not in adapting individual natures to the fixed realities of a moral universe, but in constantly reconstructing and recreating the world as the individuals evolve" (1908/1964 p.90). Following this view, moral conduct is not about aiming as close as possible to a fixed ideal order. Rather, as Cook (1993) notes "it involves a dialectical process in which creative selves repeatedly devise new moral syntheses in the face of recurring moral conflicts"(p.120). Stemming from Mead's theory of the self, minded behaviour is the reflective use of significant symbols by self-conscious individuals in the solution of a problem. Living in a symbolically mediated reality, a person is able to formulate, preserve and communicate his past experience and his future schemes. It is the accumulation of past experiences and variety of future preferences which make possible a reflective present, and hence a reflective mind.

Mead's conception of ethics is thus characterised by resistance to all fixed systems of values, and as such, is similar to the scientific methods of examination and enquiry. As Joas (1985) notes "science and ethics are as much intertwined with one

another as are the search for the appropriate means to attain ends and reflection on the suitability of the ends themselves in practical situations”(p.129). The appropriate method to approach a moral problem is as follows: “All of those interests which are involved in conflict must be considered. ...Now, if we ask what is the best hypothesis, the only answer we can make is that it must take into account all of the interests that are involved”(1934, p.387). Yet, Mead counselled: “Our temptation is to ignore certain interests that run contrary to our own interest, and emphasise those with which we have been identified”(ibid). Solving moral problems requires creative intellectual effort and consideration of all values relevant to the given situation.

The formulation of a moral hypothesis is no different than any other type of reflective hypothesis. It must include an examination of all the conflicting values and perspectives that are represented in the problematic situation and an attempt to discern precisely how they conflict and how they converge. In other words, solving moral problem necessitates role taking. The implementation of ‘taking the role of the other’ in the context of moral problems is effectively different from, yet closely related to, the previous utilization. In the previous discussion on self and society, role taking was conceptualised as both the inevitable and effortless consequence of individuals living in the same socially produced reality and as a natural conduct, through which the emergence of selfhood and social organisation occur. In the context of moral problems and moral problem solving Mead regards role taking as a vital method, which must be employed in an active-reflective manner. It is an imaginary exercise, which has the practical effect of reducing conflict through the better understanding of the other and its needs. Role taking in this regard implies exploring, realising, appreciating and testing the diverse perspectives involved in the moral problem in order to attain the preferred solution which best represents and respects all the values and interests relevant to the problem. As Mead noted “the hard task is the realisation of the common value in the experience of conflicting groups and individuals”(1929/1964, p.365).

Indeed it is a hard task and the cognitivists conceptualise this as a logical puzzle to which formal rules are applied to arrive at a correct solution (See especially Kohlberg, 1969; Rest 1986). Here again I argue against the over-cognitivism of role taking and moral problem solving. The problem of appreciating all of the diverse

perspectives involved in a moral situation is not a cognitive one but rather, it is a problem of *communication*. The subject matter of ethics is the establishment of paths of communication amongst rival parties, not in a procedural manner, but rather to create significant interaction in a sense that each party is able to see the act and itself from the perspective of the other. Thus, the ultimate objective is to bring the two parties to a mutual acceptance of standards of fairness and broad equity by realising each other's worldviews and discovering creative ways to conflate them. As Broyer (1973) notes, "If a moral hypothesis is adequate in direct proportion to the range of relevant perspectives that it encompasses, then ethics is essentially a matter of communication" (p.175).

In regard to the cognitive developmentalists conception of logical puzzles, Schwalbe (1991) rightly argues: "If there are puzzles of any kind, they are communicative ones whose solution arises out of negotiating new meanings and social relationships, not out of de-contextualised philosophising" (p.287). Moral reconstruction is not a matter of cataloguing de-contextualised right and wrong values, but is a matter of "re-defining the situation in such a way that the maximum number of values can be realised harmoniously" (Broyer, 1973 p.182).

Significant communication among individuals creates a world of common (symbolic) meanings within which further and deliberate social acts are possible. As previously argued, to share a meaning with the other is to take the role of the other and vice versa. Whether effortless or demanding, communication between two individuals or groups can come to pass effectively only through shared meanings and significant symbols. It is worth emphasising in this regard that the only universality that Mead endorsed in relation to ethics is methodological, that is, a statement of the formal required conditions which must be present in order to discover a morally adequate solution. Ironically, Mead returned to the ancient Hebrews in his quest for universal standards to guide the making of a pragmatic morality. The Hebrews according to Mead tell us that "you are to regard other person's interests as your own; the Golden Rule stated in the most extreme form.... [They had] the assumption that what is in the interests of others is in your interest, and that you could have society formed on this basis" (1927, p.79).

There are, therefore, two necessary conditions for moral reconstruction: communication and reason. The first necessary element is significant communication, in order to discover and comprehend the various conflicting values present to each of the organisms participating in the act. The second is the adoption of the rational perspective of the generalised other. Once we have reached a significant understanding of the perspectives of the other participants in the act, we must, according to Mead, adopt a rational attitude towards those perspectives.

Reason, therefore, functions in a moral inquiry to discover hypotheses, which will harmonise and maximise the greatest possible number of these value perspectives. Moral problems are resolved by getting all the value facts, and then by acting rationally towards all of them. These two conditions are inextricably intertwined with the mechanism of role taking. The relation between role taking and significant communication is already established. On the relation between role taking and rationality Mead asserted: "if the individual can take the attitudes of the others and control his action by these attitudes, and control their action through his own, then we have what we can term 'rationality' "(1934, p.334). Ethical universality thus, "is possible only through the universality of human capacity of role taking...comprehensive communication with one's partners in a moral situation and orientation to the realisation of this ideal society are, then, two rules for the solution of a moral problems" (Joas 1985, p.135-137).

Summary

In this chapter I aimed to demonstrate that Mead's 'taking the perspective of the other' is a multifaceted concept that is employed across various theoretical domains. I suggested four different yet interrelated applications of the concept as it stems from Mead's writings. The first concerns phylogenetic theorising where Mead asserted that it is the human being, alone among the animals, that is able to elicit in himself the same response he elicits in others. It is this ability to react to our own vocal gestures in the same manner as the other reacts that has facilitated the evolution of language and self-consciousness.

The next domain in which Mead employed the concept of role taking is ontogenesis. When a child is able to assume different roles in his play, he becomes aware of himself and of others in the mutual relations of social interaction. In that sense, as Mead argued, we must be others if we are to be ourselves. From the many roles assumed, there gradually arises the social self, a self that develops in the process of communication and participation as the individual takes the role of the 'generalised other' and enters the perspective of the community.

Thirdly, I explicated the function of role taking on the macro level of society. Here two ideas were discussed. First, role taking is considered as an elementary mechanism for the production of shared realities. Living in a socially constructed reality necessitates participation in shared communication practices, and role taking is the core and essence of the communicative act. The second idea on the macro level relates to self- and social control. Individuals taking the role of other individuals as well as the generalised other, form the unique configuration of human communities, since the alliance between self and community emerges by way of role taking. Role taking thus is necessary to coordinate joint action and to sustain community life.

The last theoretical domain in which Mead incorporated the notion of taking the perspective of the other is ethics and morality. It is employed as a means to resolve conflicts by way of realising the conflicting values in the act. In order to arrive at a moral hypothesis, one must try to imaginatively experience the other objective and subjective worlds for a better understanding of the dilemma at hand.

In the next chapter I will try to bring these ideas closer to the research problem. I will further problematise the concept of taking the perspective of the generalised other and discuss the relevance of two of the above applications to the current research problem: role taking as the mechanism for the production of shared worlds, and role taking in ethics. Linking these concepts to the notion of narrative I am hoping to provide the theoretical grounds for the research problem.

2. ORGANISED OTHER/S, LACK OF COMMUNICATION AND THE NARROWING OF THE MORAL SELF: LINKING MEAD TO NARRATIVE.

Introduction

While the previous chapter introduced the various applications of G.H. Mead's concept of taking the role of the other, this chapter explicates in more detail the theoretical framework which I employ to account for the research problem. By drawing on Mead's social psychology and ethical pragmatism I offer a social-psychological account for why one group - Israeli children - exhibit consistent difficulties in taking the perspective of another group - Palestinian children.

This chapter is organised in four main sections. The first offers a critical examination of Mead's concept of the **generalised other**. I draw upon both his social psychology and ethical theory in order to examine the constraints of the 'generalised other' and its function in generating and disseminating conflicts.

I will then elaborate on two interrelated Meadian approaches to perspective taking, discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the current research problem. The first will emphasise the notion of **communication**. Taking the perspective of the other is equated with living in the same socially shared world with the other. I argue that Israeli and Palestinian children live in very different social realities in relation to the conflict and are thus principally constrained from taking the perspective of the other.

The second discusses the concept of the **narrow moral self**. An underdeveloped concept in Mead's ethical pragmatism, it suggests that the difficulties Israeli children have in taking the perspective of the Palestinians is embedded in the Israeli (collective) self in relation to the conflict. The narrowing of the moral self signifies a self that is underdeveloped in its ability and motivation to take the perspective of the other.

In the last section I offer to coalesce the two Meadian propositions under the theoretical umbrella of **narrative**. The concept of narrative speaks both to epistemology and ontology, as it is through narratives that we know and understand the social reality and ourselves. My contention is that the Israeli and Palestinian narratives, which contradict in almost every aspect, constitute different and opposing realities. Drawing upon Ricoeur's theory of narrative and its ethical function, my contention is that the narratives which constitute the Israeli collective self mark the moral boundaries of this self and therefore determine the Israeli children's ability and motivation to take the perspective of the other.

The ideal society

Mead has a vision of the ideal human society that he envisages as the ultimate goal of human social progress. The ideal of human society "is one which does bring people so closely together in their interrelationships, so fully develops the necessary system of communication, that the individuals who exercise their own peculiar functions can take the attitude of those who they affect" (1934, p.327). In this utopian society, social reciprocity and cooperation will govern; opposing classes will appreciate each other's needs in order to be able to find a new social practice that is acceptable to all and beneficial to a reconstructed social order. In this human ideal society, "all human individuals would possess a perfected social intelligence, such that all social meaning would each be similarly reflected in their respective individual consciousnesses – such that the meanings of any one individual's acts or gestures would be the same for any other individual whatever who responded to them" (ibid, p310). However, in reality, human beings neither share worldviews in complete accord nor do they attach the same meaning values to social objects. Rather, they are divided one against another in all sorts of groups, subgroups, races, social classes, and nations, to name but a few, competing in a battlefield of symbols, each striving for power and domination.

The generalised other: a good or a bad thing?

As previously discussed, the generalised other is "the internalised audience with which the thinker converses; a focalised and abstracted organisation of attitudes

of those implicated in the social field of behaviour and experience” (Mills, 1939 p.627). The significance of the generalised other lies, from the ontogenetic standpoint of the individual, in the acquisition and preservation of selfhood and personality (the ‘me’) since “the individual possesses a self only in relation to the self of the other members of his social group and the structure of his self expresses or reflects the general behaviour pattern of this social group to which he belongs” (1934 p.164). Society in its turn is conceptualised as an organism that emerges through an ongoing process of communicative social acts, through transactions between persons oriented towards each other. Furthermore, the community benefits from the control which the internalisation of the responses of the generalised other inflicts upon its members and the resultant social order. By taking the role of the generalised other thus emerges the affinity of the individuals to the community’s venture and, sequentially, the responsibility and commitment they sense towards the community’s goals.

Mead tended to lay emphasis on the overall benefits of taking the attitude of the generalised other. Although it seems that he is aware of the boundaries and limits that are imposed upon us by the generalised other, this implication is somewhat overlooked. Both on the interpersonal and the social levels, most of his writings gave prominence to a view of natural harmony. Concerning interpersonal relationships, Mead paid little attention to the existence of discrepancies in interpretations of behaviour and patterns of miscommunication. Put differently, just as in the current case, Mead rarely considered social situations where one may be required to put oneself in place of another who occupies a different interpretive horizon than one’s own. As Gurevitch (1990) rightly observes, role taking is always seen as an ever-present possibility for Mead, something rarely fraught with problems and difficulties and the potential for misunderstanding. Ichheiser’s (1949) critique is also explicit: “Even a man like George H. Mead, who in principle adheres to a radically sociological theory of personality, never analysed and described the various specific and concrete mechanisms which shape and misshape the perceptions and conceptions we have about others and about ourselves”(p.10).

However, Ichheiser is only half right in his critique. Mead's theory is indeed inherently social and in this sense he does appreciate the mechanisms by which we come to learn the world around us as well as the societal apparatus in the form of the

generalised other that constitute our conceptions of others and ourselves. Yet these are merely universal principles of communication by significant symbols, interaction and role taking. Hence, inappropriately to my view, Ichheiser accuses Mead for failing to answer 'various specific and concrete' questions he has no ambition to answer in the first place. The one sense in which Ichheiser is correct is that Mead's theorising has a propensity to an 'ideal type' and therefore by and large neglects the frequent patterns of miscommunication, the existence of discrepancies in interpretations of reality and the associated conflicts.

Regarding the macro level of analysis, again, the centre of attention is on the assenting and harmonious nature of society. When a person is said to be taking the perspective of the generalised other and internalises the norms and values of his entire community or social group, it might furnish the erroneous impression that there exists enough harmony and consistency between the various sub-groups to which one belongs for one to derive a general 'attitude' out of the often conflicting relationships actually prevailing.

Furthermore, Mead strongly associated the generalised other with rationality. He stresses that "Man is a rational being only because he is a social being" (1934, p.379) and hence "if the individual can take the attitudes of the others and control his action by these attitudes, and control their action through his own, then we have what we can term rationality"(1934, p.334). Yet time and again reality proves this theory problematic and hence, the tensions, significant fragmentations and contradictions between various social groups or classes are somewhat downplayed.

Social organisation is a symbolically manifested form of life that emerges as a common response to common aims and goals, and therefore, it is by and large rational, since "common ends are *ipso facto* rational ends"(Mead, 1938, quoted in Hinkle, p.329). By associating social conformity and rationality on the theoretical level of an abstract society, Mead left too little room in his theorising for understanding multiple rationalities which might elicit protracted and irreconcilable conflicts. As critics have pointed out (e.g. Feffer 1990; Hinkle 1992), his theory only explained a limited set of social relations, those in which parties agree beforehand that rational and amicable resolutions of conflict shall be reached. For that reason his

expectations for cooperative reconstruction seems, to some extent, unrealistic, both psychologically and politically. Clearly, Mead distinguished between the specific and generalised other, but he does not expand upon the problems in contrasting different sorts of generalised others and hence overlooks possible relations of intergroup conflict as well as the prospect of multiple rationalities of modern society. In what follows I aim to elaborate on the idea of multiple generalised others in a more definite form. Based on occasional intimations by Mead, I wish to further elucidate the problematic nature of the generalised other¹³.

The restrictive nature of the generalised other

Although he does not discuss this in length, Mead recognised the potential restrictive nature of the generalised other. He notes: "We are individuals born into a certain nationality, located at a certain spot geographically, with such and such family relations and such and such political relations"(1934, p.182). On another occasion he writes: "Any self is a social self, but it is restricted to the social group whose role it assumes, and it will never abandon this self until it finds itself entering into the larger society and maintaining itself there"(1924-1925/1964, p.292). Mead implied that the self is always a reflection of specific social relations which themselves are founded on a specific mode of activity of the group to which it belongs. We have to bear in mind that any mode of activity, or 'way of life' of a certain group always have specific social and historical foundations and symbolise the interests and values of that group. Communities define themselves by a common voice, the voice of the generalised other which is always embedded in historical, cultural and political foundations. Given that, human communities live through their defining limits of the generalised other, which operate as a fence, keeping members in and non-members out. "Conscious, imperious and ubiquitous, the generalised other marks the limits of our environment" (Coutu, 1949 p.343).

¹³ The idea of multiple rationalities and 'generalised others' in modern society is an extremely important issue yet somewhat outside the scope of this thesis. The current discussion will focus on that issue from the narrow perspective of inter-group conflict.

From 'generalised other' to 'organised others'

As previously discussed, Mead's theory of the self suggests two stages, the play and the game, in the emergent development of the mind and the social self, each stage and the correspondent sort of 'other' with whom the individual interacts and role take. At the play stage, the other is a particular individual, whereas at the game stage the child (or adult) is said to be taking the role of the 'generalised other', that is a set of knowledge, norms and expectations shared by a community and which represents the concerns of the whole community.

On various occasions regarding ethics and morality Mead offered an extension of this model where he distinguishes between the constraints of the group's viewpoint and a wider perspective. He writes:

“The human individual who possesses a self is always a member of a larger social community, a more extensive social group than that in which he immediately and directly belongs. In other words, the general pattern of social or group behaviour which is reflected in the respective organised attitudes – the respective integrated structures of the selves – of the individuals involved, always has a wider reference, for those individuals, than that of its direct relation to them, namely a reference beyond itself to a wider social environment or context of social relationships which includes it, and of which it is only a more or less limited part” (1934, p. 234).

Drawing upon the above observation, Mead delineated two types of communities in the modern civilised society (Cronk 1987), both conceptualised through taking the attitude of the generalised other. The first type refers to the immediate and concrete social groups to which we belong such as nations, political parties or social classes, “which are all actually functional social units, in terms of which their individual members are directly related to one another” (Mead 1934, p.157). The second type indicates those abstract communities where members are related indirectly but nevertheless “afford or represent unlimited possibilities for the widening and ramifying and enriching of the social relations among all the individual members of the given society as an organised and unified whole” (ibid). Such abstract

social groups, Mead asserted, facilitate a radical extension of the definite social relations which constitute the individual's sense of self and which structure his conduct. Mead actually called for individuals to widen their conception of the generalised other by associating themselves with a larger community than the actual group to which they belong. The most abstract universal illustration that Mead provided is what he termed the 'universe of discourse'. This utopian concept transcends the boundaries of different races, nationalities and languages. It is a space of indefinite opportunities for a variety of social relations where individuals belonging to any given social group or community are invited to become conscious of a wider social context, the context of humanity.

Three phases of moral conduct

The aforementioned distinction between the immediate group to a larger and abstract one was made explicit by Mead in his unpublished ethical writings (1927, see also Broyer, 1973), where he maintained that moral conduct, which evidently involves perspective taking, might occur at three levels:

Individualised/personal- the concrete other

The first is the instinctive or personal level which corresponds to the 'Play' stage. At this level, the moral self is able to take the perspective and realise the values of other individuals. The self engages in interaction with other individuals and tries to take over the perspective of *particular* other/s. The 'others' with which the individual communicates are particular and concrete individuals and from that interaction he learns to differentiate himself from these 'others' as he comes to see himself as an object from the perspective of others. At this phase the moral self appreciates the present discovered values of other individuals and hence takes the role of the present moral perspective of other selected individuals. Mead (1932) termed this stage the 'individualised' or the 'specific' other.

Socially determined- the organised other

The second is the 'socially determined' level, which corresponds to the 'game' stage. Here the moral self is determined by the organised set of values of the immediate group to which he belongs - national, religious, political etc. From an

ontogenetic perspective, during this stage the child develops beyond individual relationships to participate in group relationships. The development of this process is “dependent upon getting the attitude of the group as distinct from that of separate individuals “(1934, p.168).

It is the ‘me’ component of the self that develops during this stage in the form of the symbolic representative of the group, gradually taken over from society as the individual grows up. The ‘me’ as a set of behavioural expectations of one’s social surrounding that have migrated into the person, places limits from the intersubjective perspective of a social ‘we’ on the impulsiveness of the ‘I’. In this phase the individual takes the role of the present moral perspective of his or her society. That is to say, the individual carries his group with him as part of his environment in the form of concepts which make up the generalised other. However, for the current formulation, it is more accurate to define it as the ‘*organised* other’, a term which Mead used interchangeably with the generalised other.

By distinguishing between the ‘organised other/s’ and the ‘generalised other’, we acknowledge the confining nature of the group over the individual’s perspective, since the self is always a reflection of specific social relations founded on the particular ideals of the group. That is, our social perception is in its very structure conditioned by the fact that we belong to certain social groups whose moral order we espouse. The set of responses, which the individual internalises and reconstructs as an integral part of his personality, are those of the ‘organised other/s’. At this level the individual takes only the perspective of the group to try to determine which specific behaviour will be approved or disapproved, and thus his conduct is characterised as ‘ritual conformity’ (Schwalbe, 1991).

The immediate or primary group in the form of the internalised ‘organised other’, provides the individuals with an assortment of culturally transformed standards, ideals, prejudices, fears, goals, truths, obligations, rights, duties and so forth. The ‘organised other’ provides the perceptual frames and the normative judgement boundaries around situations and events within which thinking, arguing and rationalising take place. In short, at this level, moral conduct comes under the authority of the institutionalised common ideals of the society of which the individual

is a member and their normative constraints must always be acknowledged. As will be elaborated below, in a situation of intergroup conflict each group is operating morally within the boundaries of its historically constructed standards and shared definitions of the situation. Israeli children (and adults) are operating morally from the level of the socially determined moral conduct, and by the very nature of the conflict, the perspective of the Palestinians is both opposed to, and excluded from, their shared understanding and definitions of the conflict.

Rational universality- the generalised other

The third level of moral conduct is the level of 'rational-universality'. Here the individual is assumed to be associating himself with a wider community, reflecting back upon his 'organised other/s' and challenging its values and ideals. The moral self takes the abstract universal perspective of the epistemological form of the social act itself, that is, the perspective of one who wishes to step outside of his immediate community, to reassess existing values, discover new and reconstruct the order of society. Standing outside his community, he can evaluate and reconstruct this community. As Mead described:

“A person may reach a point of going against the whole world about him; he may stand out by himself over against it... But to do that he has to comprehend the voices of the past and of the future.... that is the only way which the self can get a voice which is more than the voice of the community. We must not forget this other capacity, that of replying to the community and insisting on the gestures of the community changing. We can reform the order of things; we can insist of making the community standards better standards. We are not simply bound by the community“(1934, p.168).

Therefore, it is only when reaching the third level that the individual is able to “question whether the standard of society is the right thing” (1927, p.237). The concept of the generalised other is restricted to the higher level of universality, a symbol that stands for sociality and humanity. The moral perspective in this phase goes beyond the possible egocentric and sociocentric perspectives of the former phases. The individual perceives himself as part of a larger community than his

immediate group, a community that comprises of various subgroups and organised others. The individual, by ascribing himself to a wider generalised other is able to perceive reality beyond the socially determined definitions of the group and to act morally beyond ritual conformity. The inclusiveness and hence also the unity of the self becomes increasingly established as one incorporates a wider and wider array of complexly organised self-other relationships. Mead indeed believed in the value of such inclusiveness and therefore defines ethical progress precisely in terms of the formation of universalistic selves.

To sum up, Mead's model of the three phases of moral conduct is grounded on his social psychology and the premise of participation in the other. They are distinguished by the scope and complexity of the role taking they entail. The stages in the formation of the self are correspondently stages in moral development from the 'particular other' of different individuals, through the 'organised other' of the immediate group, to the rational universal of the 'generalised other' which take him beyond the group and beyond conflicts among different organised others.

Following this model, we can now begin to apprehend the difficulties that Israeli children exhibit in taking the perspective of the Palestinians. Mead would say that Israeli children, and indeed the majority of adults, are operating morally from the second stage, that of the 'socially determined'. Their interpretation of the reality of the conflict, and hence their moral judgements are inevitably limited by the ideals, values and interests of their immediate group, which reflects the history of the group.

This can be further explained through two complementary Mead's notions of perspective taking that were indicated in the former chapter, and have a particular relevance to the present research endeavour. The first regards the notion of communication between individuals living in a shared social reality. The second associate role taking with morality and difficulties are regarded as narrowing of the moral self.

Perspective taking: from cognitive ability to (lack of) communicative activity

As discussed in the previous chapter perspective taking is regarded as an ineluctable and effortless communicative consequence of individuals living in the same socially formed reality. Taking the perspective of the other in this regard constitutes such an elementary and pervading feature of ordinary social interaction that it remains entirely inaccessible to the reflective consciousness (Rommetveit, 1979). As long as individuals are operating in a shared social reality, i.e. a common here-and-now, a successful and flow dialogue can take place. Common experience is for Mead the bedrock upon which meaning and perspectives are predicated, hence, it is within the communicative (social) act that meaning and intersubjectivity arise¹⁴.

Perspective taking of this type is what we 'do' habitually in any communicative or interactive setting as we wave our hands, nod our heads, speak, listen, write, read – from a wordless sigh to a rejoinder in dialogue, to a multi-volume philosophical investigation - in short, in any verbal or non-verbal communicative practice that involves self and other. As long as individuals are interacting within the same socially shared set of responses, i.e. in a commonly defined environment, they are persistently, (however unconsciously) taking the perspective of each other, as this mechanism is the core and essence of the communicative act.

Stemming from that is the assumption that individuals, who live in different socially produced realities, do not have common experiences and therefore have established different responses to the world, will inevitably face communicative complications. In such a case, perspective taking will be hindered by different perceptions and interpretations of the world and communication will not take place or will be brought to a halt until the situation of conflict in communication is resolved. This point is nicely illustrated in a simple communicative efficiency experiment (Blakar, 1973) where one subject explaining a route through a map to the other subject, who also has a copy of the map with the exception that the latter's map has an

¹⁴ Intersubjectivity for Mead is based upon a basic prerequisite of subjects acting towards the same object.

additional street. This seemingly minor detail has the power to produce a conflict in communication since it violates the elementary precondition for a successful communication - participants operating within a common social environment.

Perspectives, according to Mead, represent particular ways of structuring the world. Ultimately he used the concept of “perspective” in order to describe “the world in its relationship to the individual and the individual in his relationship to the world” (1938, p.115). He argued: “perspectives have objective existence” (*ibid*, p.114). Rather than defining reality arbitrarily, we are bound to define reality on the basis of previous experience with the environment and its intersubjective expression in language. Thus, what humans take to be objective knowledge and truth is actually the result of perspective. None the less, the world that individuals and groups create and recreate in the process of social exchange is a reality *sui generis*. As Schwalbe (1988) points out, rather than asserting that people *have* perspectives, it is conceptually more accurate to stress that individuals and groups are *in* perspectives. Given that, “taking the perspective of the other should thus be understood to mean entering the perspective of an other” (p. 415).

For Mead, the world as it exists arises out of a person’s responses to the world. The relations to which the environment stands to our own responses are its meanings¹⁵. It follows from the first assumption that in so far as different individuals or groups have built up different responses to the world, so they do in fact live in different worlds. Different perceptions of the world are not set off against a reality ‘out there’ and thus attributed to an error ‘in there’. Instead, Mead takes the difference to mean that people do in fact live in different worlds. Backing this point with (to some extent) a hyperbolic example, Mead argued that “you cannot build up a society out of elements that lie outside of the individual’s life process...you cannot start to communicate with people in Mars and set up a society where you have no antecedent relationship... a community that lies entirely outside of your own community, that has

¹⁵ This means for example that when you look at the world around you, you see it in terms of how you can react to it. You see the pen because it means writing, and the chair because it means sitting. The responses to these objects come from the past, have been socially structured and are inscribed on our central nervous systems.

no common interest, no cooperative activity, is one with which you could not communicate” (1934, p.257-8).

Perspectives and worldviews emerge, reconstituted and maintained through participation in common communication channels such as the media, rituals, school curricula, folk songs and ordinary conversations to name but a few. Variations in outlook arise through institutionalised segregation, and differential contacts and associations. Furthermore, maintenance of social distance through conflict and segregation leads to the formation of distinct and contrasting perspectives. Each ‘world’ is an organised outlook, built up by people in their interaction with one another, hence, each communication channel gives rise to a separate world, or as we can now define it - a separate organised other.

If we are to follow Mead’s view, it is possible to assert that regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israeli and Palestinian children live in completely different worlds. They participate in disconnected communication channels and hence live in two different social worlds of their respected communities or organised others. Each world has a boundary created not only by territory or formal membership but also by the limits of effective communication. Based on that, my contention is, to paraphrase Ichheiser (1949) that *the inability or failure to take the perspective of the other in the context of inter-group conflict is the norm and the ability or success to do so is the exception.*

This idea needs further elaboration. Taking the perspective of the other is not a cognitive magic but rather it is both an inevitable consequence of, and the enablement mechanism of communicative practice. It means sharing perceptions and definitions of reality. Hence, as long as there are similar or universal objects (significant symbols) between self and other, there is a communicative platform and both subjects should ‘be able’ to take the perspective of the other. They can view the same objects in the world around them and share the meaning of these objects. In this sense one could think of various objects that both Israeli and Palestinian children share in their realms and thus are able to communicate about. It is precisely because of the assumed parallel worlds shared by Israeli and Palestinian children beyond and even within the conflict that make it conceptually inaccurate to discuss perspective taking as either/or

ability. In this sense we cannot simply say that Israeli children can or cannot take the perspective of the Palestinian children and vice versa.

It is precisely because perspective taking is not a cognitive capacity that it varies with the context and the subject matters considered. To bring it closer to the current study, if instead of asking the children about Palestinians and the conflict, we would ask them about other children (who happened to be Palestinians) and their favourite food, toys or what they like to do after school hours, I suspect that the 'ability' to take the perspective of the other in these domains would be much 'improved'. It seems to me that a cognitive model would have trouble dealing with such variation as it is related to content. From a Meadian perspective, however, this is to be expected. The explanation is that in regard to food, toys and school, Israeli and Palestinian children (although participating in different communication channels) live in a roughly shared world. The difficulties of the children to take the perspective of the other vis-à-vis the conflict relates to the children living in two different worlds *in relation to the conflict*.

To illustrate this consider a Palestinian militant and an Israeli soldier walking up to an Israeli and a Palestinian child. How will each child react? The Palestinian child may react with fear and palpitations and a sense of foreboding as the soldier approaches, while he may feel a sense of comfort and pride when the militant approaches. For the Israeli child the situation would be the reverse. Again we can ask, is this difference due to different processing of the same stimulus? Or is the stimulus in fact different in both cases? Mead would argue that since stimulus does not naturally 'enter' the brain, how could the stimulus be the same? The response of the body determines the stimuli (the meaning of an object is in its use), and because the responses are different in both of these cases, so the children are in fact not even presented with the same stimuli. The point then is that there is no cognitive magic in taking the perspective of the other. It is as straightforward as responding to the world around you, except that in this case it happens to be a shared world. The problem then is not how we take or not take the perspective of the other, but rather how do we come to live in the same socially shared world?

Approaching the research problem from a Meadian perspective will entail asking how these different realities of the conflict are sustained. Where are they sustained? Which power interests and ideologies are mediating this construction? What social processes are organising the responses that the children form in relation to the key objects of the conflict? What are the systems of ideas or social representations that organise the Israeli children's worlds or responses in relation to themselves, the Palestinians and the conflict and thus confine the ability and motivation to take the perspective of the other?

From perspective taking to the narrowing of the moral self

The answers to these questions are embedded within the Israeli (collective) self, or as we can now depict it – the Israeli organised other/s in relation to the conflict. The organised other of groups in conflict is always formed and reproduced in opposition to the organised other of the enemy. In the context of inter-group conflict or 'war-time' as described by Mead, societies derive their sense of solidarity and unity from the virtual or actual existence of an 'enemy'. This label not only implies attribution of negative characteristics to the opponent, but also describes the confrontational and hostile relations between the two groups.

“In time of war, for example, the self-protective impulse in all the individual members of the state is unitedly directed against their common enemy and ceases, for the time being, to be directed among themselves. The attitude of rivalry and competition which that impulse ordinarily generates between the different smaller, socially functional groups and those individuals within the state are temporarily broken down; the usual social barriers between these groups are likewise removed; and the state presents a united front to the given common danger, or is fused into a single unity in terms of the common end shared by, or reflected in, the respective consciousnesses of all its individual members. It is upon these war-time expressions of the self-protective impulse in all the individual members of the state or nation that the general efficacy of national appeals to patriotism is chiefly based” (1934, p.306)

Whereas the former utilisation of perspective taking was equated with communication and sharing definitions of reality, the one I wish to elaborate now can be, from a pragmatic point of view, associated with moral capacity. Perspective taking remains unconscious as long as communication proceeds uninterrupted. As long as conduct proceeds smoothly there is no need for reflective thoughts and reconstruction. It is only when we are confronted with situations whose undetermined, and therefore challenging, character calls forth conflicting tendencies to respond that one needs to reflect and re-evaluate the situation.

Moral problem as discussed in the previous chapter is a significant conflict of ends-relations in a human social act, which arises whenever incompatible goals and interests are sought simultaneously, and thus prevents the completion of the act. In the context of moral problem solving, Mead regarded role taking as an essential means, which must be employed in an attentive-reflective manner. It is only through role taking that one discovers where conflict truly lies and what the moral problem really is. In that sense, it is an imaginary exercise, which has a practical effect of reducing conflict through better understanding of the other and the conflicting tendencies or values involved. The first step towards reconciliation of a conflict is the disentanglement and realisation, in a largely analytic way, of the incompatible values attached to objects in the act, namely, role taking.

My contention is that since there is little or no communication between Israelis and Palestinians, what remains is communication within the group. That is to say, interactions, and hence exposure, to the contents and interpretations of the conflictual reality are confined to the communication channels of the Israeli society. Consequently, Israeli children's (and the adult's) 'ability' to take the perspective of the other is shaped by the 'socially determined' phase of moral conduct, i.e. from the standpoint of their organised other, and are thus constrained by the ideological definitions of the paramount social reality as based exclusively on the experiences of the Israelis. In other words, taking the perspective of the Palestinians is undermined by the ideological organisation of symbols in the Israeli society, the rules that govern their manipulation, and the ways they are used to organise perspectives regarding the conflict. The Israeli children approach the world of the conflict, or, in the current specific case, they approach the perspective of the Palestinians, from the perspective

of the Israeli self, or organised other in relation to the conflict. They think, perceive, rationalise and form judgements according to the frame of reference of the Israeli self.

Organised others, which both bind and define communities are relational in their character. That means that there exists an organised other in relation to or in opposition to a Palestinian organised other, which is outside the boundaries of the Israeli self in terms of its communicative channels as discussed in the previous section. Such sets of responses function to organise and dictate what is taken for granted about the attributes of various objects and events regarding the conflict. Special meanings and symbols regarding the conflict further accentuate differences and increase social distance from the Palestinians.

Moral judgement and action are never simply matters of abstract reasoning by solitary individuals. They are processes of negotiation between individuals and groups whose actions are based on socially constituted understandings of themselves, others and the world. In real life contexts communicative practice is often distorted due to a variety of reasons including unequal relations of power, misinterpretations and clashing values. In order to better understand why in a concrete moral situation, individuals or groups exhibit consistent failing vis-à-vis other individuals or groups there is a need to explore in depth their socially constructed understanding of themselves, others and the situation. There is a need to take into account the historically defined understandings of the self in relation to the community and society. By critically examining the co-development of self and the community to which he belongs the underlying characteristics of the community's histories become evident.

I draw on Schwalbe¹⁶ (1992) to argue that *historical, material and ideological factors narrow the moral selves of Israelis in relation to the Palestinians*. The concept of the 'narrow moral self' is derived from and complementary to Mead's notion of 'self-enlargement' by way of moral reconstruction. According to this concept, the individual's self develops through moral inquiry into the consideration of the values and interests of others. When perspective taking takes place as a means to formulate a

¹⁶ Schwalbe utters a similar argument that socio-historical factors narrow the moral self of men in relation to women.

successful moral hypothesis, Mead asserted that “the old self has disintegrated and out of the moral process a new self arises” (1913/1964 p. 147). Accordingly, the concept of the narrow moral self refers to a self that is underdeveloped in its ability and motivation to take the perspective of the other and thus decreases the probability of moral problem solving. Following this I argue that the very context of the conflict and its history narrow the Israeli self in relation to the Palestinians. This means that the perspective of the Palestinians is, by and large opposed to, and therefore excluded from the shared understanding and definitions of the conflict.

This self, which I call the ‘victimised-occupier self’ and describe at length in Chapter Four as a special case of overlapping organised others, is, as I hope to demonstrate, the locus for the assortment of beliefs, ideologies, moral contradictions and prejudices from which the Israeli children derive their interpretations, evaluations and judgements regarding the Palestinian perspective. It is a knowledge structure that determines those aspects of the environment taking into account, how they are interpreted and how they are situated in relation to the dictated moral order. This self is a product of historical development of collectively constructed representations of a society that has lived in a protracted conflict ever since its establishment. In that sense it is due to this socially reconstructed ‘victimised-occupier’ self that the children are systematically inhibited from taking the perspective of the Palestinians.

The problem now is how to reconcile the two interrelated Meadian postulations of **opposing realities**, and the **narrowing of the moral self** and their relations to perspective taking in a way that will be theoretically meaningful and empirically testable? These concepts, I suggest, are highly compatible with the notion of **narrative**.

From perspective taking to acknowledging the other’s narrative

What is narrative?

...[N]arrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. Narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself.” (Barthes, 1987 p. 79).

Narrative is an essential means of human cognition and communication across languages and cultures. A group's stories create a shared history. The particular stories that a society cultivates in various contexts can provide an important clue to the ideological motivations and cultural images that inform processes of self and other identity formation and social legitimisation. As Bamberg and McCabe (1998) note, "With narrative, people strive to configure space and time, deploy cohesive devices, reveal identity of actors and relatedness of actions across scenes. They create themes, plots, and drama. In so doing, narrators make sense of themselves, social situations, and history"(p.3).

Narrative is gradually coming to be comprehended as the ground on which, the relations through which and the vehicle by which humans develop knowledge of themselves and the world they inhabit. It can be seen that human agency, intentionality, actions, perceptions, and experiences are conceived, understood and mediated by social, cultural and personal narratives, and that the struggle for recognition is played out between individuals and groups in the narrative field. Through a process of ongoing creation and recreation, a continual dialectical movement between memory and anticipation, and the relations between humans that it facilitates, narrative brings forth the human processes of knowledge, ideology, culture, tradition, truth, reality, consciousness and identity.

Recently, a new theory developed which began to make more substantial claims about narrative. The argument around which these more recent writings unify is that "social life itself *storied* and that narrative is an *ontological condition of social life*" (Somers and Gibson, 1994 p.38, *Italic* in original). Thus, narratives speak to social epistemology *and* social ontology. It is through narratives that we know the social reality and ourselves, and it is through stories that we make sense of the world and construct our identities. "What we take as the reality of our world is a function of the story we evolve to create it, *and of the very same story we act into*" (Penman, 1988, p. 406, *Italic* added). By telling or speaking a story we construct the world as we know it and the world that we act into. It is not just an explanatory device, but is actually constitutive of the way we experience things. Promoting the ontological view

of narrative Carr argues that “narrative is not a dress which covers something else but the structure inherent in human experience and action” (Carr 1997, p. 42-43).

Thus, it is through narratives that we know social reality and ourselves. Individuals and groups, in other words, live storied lives (Reissmann, 1993) and it is through stories that we make sense of the world and construct our identities. We tell stories about our experiences and the meanings that these experiences have for our lives. It is by means of these stories that our experience is shaped, ordered, interpreted and stored. And it is by means of these stories that differences in ways of thinking and perspectives are brought to light as we all view the world (and consequently shape, order and interpret that experience) through the symbolic system of our culture. All cultures and societies possess their own stories or narratives about their past and their present, and sometimes about their view of the future. It is exactly this interplay between the social and the individual that makes narrative a valuable concept for the current research that wishes to shed a socio-historical light on the notion of perspective taking.

Opposing realities as opposing narratives

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, viewed from that perspective is a tragic story of two clashing national narratives. Since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has served as an enduring source of political and ideological discourse influencing personal and national identity, collective memory, social beliefs, myths and language (Bar-Tal, 1998a,b). The Israeli and Palestinian narratives of the conflict are contradictory in almost every aspect and detail. The theoretical proposition regarding Israeli and Palestinians living in split and rival realities can be translated to mean (both epistemologically and ontologically) that they essentially live in split and contradictory narratives. My concern with the ability (or disability) of Israeli children to take the perspective of the Palestinians is in effect their ability to acknowledge the Palestinian narrative of the conflict.

The most obvious example for my contention that Israeli and Palestinians are living in opposing and contradictory narratives is regarding the very same moment in history, 14th of May 1948. A story of independence and redemption to the Israeli people, it is the story of the “Nakba” (the catastrophe) to the Palestinians. The Israeli

narrative regards this day as the climax of Jewish aspirations to have a state or to fulfil a long dream of returning to a homeland after what they regarded as 2000 years of exile. In the Palestinian narrative, this day remains as the time when their land and freedom were stolen and since which have yet to be returned. Moving to a more contemporary example, the Palestinians armed uprising is, according to the Israeli narrative an outbreak of murderous terrorism while through the eyes of the Palestinians, it is a justified and legitimate resistance against a prolonged brutal occupation.

Thus perspectives and narratives are interchangeable and the shift to narrative represents the theoretical and conceptual shift in my understanding of perspective taking. From the narrow and reduced one-dimensional, either/or cognitive ability I propose a much broader and holistic conception with strong interest in notions like content, meaning construction, ideology and history and the ways in which they mediate our cognition. Perspective taking in the context of intergroup conflict involves the realisation and use of symbols, representations and imagery, by individual minds shaped by socio-historical processes, in order to either challenge or reproduce the group's history and ethos embedded in that group's narrative.

Narrow self as bounded narrative

The concept of narrative is also compatible with Mead's notion of the "narrowing of the moral self". As previously argued, the difficulties of Israeli children to take the perspective of the Palestinians or, as we can now formulate it, to acknowledge the Palestinian narrative, are embedded in the Israeli (collective) self.

According to the 'strong' narrativist claim the self is constituted by narratives. Individuals and groups construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories. Self as narrative considers the human capacity to evaluate, modify, and move between a plurality of communal and communicative contexts in the creation of meaningful narratives of selfhood. Collective self is no different as self-narratives are constitutive for the identity of individuals as well as groups.

Narratives specify a society or group's founding and values, its critical events, and its aspirations. As Somers argues, "we, as individuals and collectives, come to be who we are by being located and locating ourselves ...in social narratives" (1994, p.606). The formation of national identity is particularly dependent on the narrative form of myth, past-oriented stories that recount formative moments of the group's history, "moments in which enduring tensions that divide rival groups were dramatically at issue" (Lincoln, 1989 p.21). These narratives are particularly important in maintaining group identity, cohesion and continuity. In that sense narrative construction and reconstruction is an integral mechanism of identity formation and reformation. They are the transmission belt through which a collective identity is reproduced and constantly made known to the individuals.

This point is further accentuated in the writing of Ricoeur (1984, 1985) who perhaps produced the most extensive philosophical exploration into the notion of narratives. He stresses the point that narratives, which play a prominent role in the respective tradition, mediate the self-understanding of groups as well as individuals. Narrative identity constitutes the identity of a group, making a plurality of individuals and subgroups one collective. He writes:

"Our own existence cannot be separated from the account we can give of ourselves. It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity. We recognize ourselves in the stories that we tell about ourselves. It makes very little difference whether these stories are true or false, fiction as well as verifiable history provides us with an identity" (1985, p214).

Bringing this concept closer to the 'narrow moral self' we need to consider the relations between narrative identity and ethics. Ricoeur's contention is that narrative identity highlights the ethical dimension of individual and group life. Put differently, self-narratives have an ethical function. From an ethical perspective, narratives articulate the goals, values and loyalties of the self. As Ricoeur puts it, self-narrative is the platform where conscience plays an essential role. Self-narratives can create a form of interior accountability of the agent and give shape to the individual moral self. The same can be said about group morality. Through self-narratives the group

explores, re-enacts, reproduces and occasionally challenges its values and moral principles.

Ricoeur brightly illustrates this line of reasoning as he takes the Jewish people as a paradigm case. Aiming to discern the constitutive elements of the Jewish collective identity beyond genealogical relations or living together in a common territory, he argues that the Jewish collective identity is constituted by a common tradition in which two forms of remembrance mediated by narrative representations are of prime importance. First there is the memory of the foundation of their community by its relation to God as it is articulated in The Bible. This is the constitutive element of the Jewish people's religious practice. Although the Ten Commandments (the core of the Jewish religion) are given in imperative rather than narrative form, The Bible, Ricoeur argues, transmits the Commandments by telling the story of their revelation on Mount Sinai. The prescriptive and normative element is indissolubly linked to the narration of Moses and the people of Israel. Additionally, the remembrance of the Nazi genocide constitutes an experience which unites the Jewish people as a collective and which in all its unforgettable negativity marks the lives even of those whose self-understanding is not determined by a religious orientation. Here, narrative identity is introduced in a moral, social and political dimension. The common history is represented in manifold attempts at narrative mediation. Actions, decisions and attitudes of the individuals and the groups as such are dependent on the self-concepts shaped by history and narrative tradition (Teichert, 2004).

In this vein, the Israeli collective self is constituted by an assortment of narratives that shape and determine the moral boundaries of Israeli society. It is important to note that the Israeli self is not coherent and stable but rather an arena of contesting moral obligations and loyalties and it is open to re-interpretation and modification insofar as the orientations of the Israeli society are modified and its situation is changed. It includes a multitude of narratives and identities (organised others), the borders of which are never clear-cut as they can overlap as much as they can contradict. It is never final or complete but is continuously constructed through a juxtaposition of competing views and voices. It is a site of multiple communities in a constant struggle over the authorship and exclusivity of the master narrative and the definitions of reality. Nevertheless, it is plausible to assert the existence of an

overarching “group ethos” existing within Israeli society. That is to say, even if different communities and subgroups within Israeli society possess and disseminate disparate narratives, it seems safe to assume that in a society that is constituted by a long-lasting conflict, some form of “collective narrative” is held by the vast majority of the individuals within society.

My contention is that the Israeli common narrative of the conflict, its content and organization, narrows the Israeli self in relation to the Palestinians. It constitutes and determines the ability and propensity of Israeli children to take the perspective of the other. They think, perceive, rationalise and form judgements according to the frame of reference of the Israeli narrative of the conflict. Within the boundaries of that overarching collective narrative are concealed the boundaries of the Israeli children’s ability to take the perspective of the Palestinians or to acknowledge their narrative. Put differently, perspective taking is enabled, shaped and constrained by the ideological comprehensions of the Israeli narrative, hence the title of my thesis- *Behind the Narrative Bars*.

Summary

The theoretical propositions of the current research can be summarised in four points:

- Taking the perspective of the other is a complex notion that is closely linked to specific situations and cannot be understood fully in decontextualised terms. Applying a Meadian perspective to the research problem I started by expanding the concept of the generalised other to argue that it is the immediate or primary group in the form of the internalised ‘*organised other/s*’ that functions to give coherence to perceptions of events, objects and people in the world. The ‘organised other’ provides the perceptual frames and the normative judgement boundaries around situations and events within which thinking, arguing and rationalising take place. The organised other promotes the worldviews of the reference group and thus moral thinking is both generated, and restricted by the symbolic boundaries of the group.

- Taking the perspective of the other means communicating with the other and vice versa. This conception is based on mutual participation of self and other in a shared environment. Hence, it is possible to assert with confidence that regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israeli and Palestinian children participate in almost completely disconnected communication channels and hence live in two different social worlds. These two separated worlds have a boundary created not only by territory or formal membership but also by the limits of effective communication. In this sense the inability to take the perspective of an other who is outside the boundaries of the self's reality is the *norm* whereas the possibility to be able to share understanding, or in Mead's terminology to attach the same meaning to an object, as the other is the *exception*. Furthermore, I argue that the problem then is not how we take or don't take the perspective of the other but rather how the different realities of the conflict are sustained and which power relations and ideologies mediate the reproduction of these opposing realities.

- Stemming from the above postulations, I argue that taking the perspective of the other is mediated or even dictated by the group custom, which can now be defined as the Israeli self. The reality of the conflict as defined and perceived by the Israelis, which in many ways contradicts the reality of the conflict as perceived by the Palestinians, is embedded in the Israeli (collective) self. In Mead's terminology the very context of the conflict narrows the Israeli moral self in relation to the Palestinians. That is to say, historical and socio-ideological processes have shaped an Israeli self that is underdeveloped in its ability and motivation to take the perspective of the Palestinians. My contention is that historical and ideological processes have organised the responses that the Israeli children form in relation to the conflict. These very processes sustain the opposing realities of the conflict and thus hinder Israeli children from taking the perspective of the Palestinians.

- The above postulations can be all conflated under the notion of narrative and narrative identity. Since narrative speaks both to epistemology and ontology, my contention is that the Meadian notion of individuals and groups living in different worlds can be translated to mean that they live not only in different

but also confronting narratives. I argue that, ontologically speaking, Israeli and Palestinians are living in two split and opposing narratives and the inability of Israeli children to take the perspective of the Palestinians means their inability to acknowledge the Palestinian narrative of the conflict. Moreover, collective or national identity is constituted of symbols and symbolic codes, connected through discourse and narratives, which become articulated in public and social action and interaction. These very narratives are the vehicles through which an individual, community or a nation comes to understand and recognise itself as such. These narratives as Ricoeur points out, constitute the ethical frame of reference of a society. They provide the moral foundation and practice by which a group develops a sense, defines the boundaries and constructs and defines the 'other/s'- those outside the community, or nation. In order to provide a sociological account of perspective taking in the context of inter-group conflict, we must carefully examine the relevant narratives that constitute and determine the form and content of moral selves and what their capacities for perspective taking will be.

How Israeli children reconstruct this collective self/narrative, as well as being constructed by the societal and historical narratives within this self, and how this affects both their competence and inclination to take the perspective of the Palestinians is the key problem of this study.

3. METHODOLOGY

We can, and I think must, look upon human life as chiefly a vast interpretative process in which people, singly and collectively, guide themselves by defining the objects, events and situations which they encounter ...any scheme designed to analyse human group life in its general character has to fit this process of interpretation.

(Blumer, 1956, p.686)

Defining the methodological approach

I draw on Bulmer's (1977) distinction between general methodology, research strategy and research techniques for the purpose of articulating the methodological approach of the research.

By *general methodology*, Bulmer has in mind "the systematic and logical study of the general principles guiding sociological investigation, concerned with the broadest sense with questions of how the sociologist establishes social knowledge and how he can convince others that his knowledge is correct"(p.4). This broad definition incorporates the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, that is, the ways in which the researcher conceptualises the social reality and the epistemological principles which underlie those conceptions. These conceptualisations are, in turn, linked to the theoretical standpoint adopted by the researcher and hence theory and general methodology are interrelated. I adopt the dialogical epistemology as my general methodology. Knowledge of the world according to this approach emerges in dialogic interaction, in the dynamic interplay of voices and perspectives. As will be explicated below the dialogical epistemology is vastly compatible with the theoretical propositions of my thesis.

General methodology, in turn, tends to determine *research strategy*. This category denotes the practical approach and research design of a particular empirical

study. It includes the formulation of the specific research questions and decisions regarding sampling, operationalisations and methods of data collection. The research strategy of the current study comprises of data collected from Israeli children from three social milieus- city, kibbutz and settlement.

Finally, *research techniques* are the specific methods of data collection and analyses to be employed in the empirical study. Drawings of the other and narrative compositions were collected and analysed in an inherently interpretative manner.

General methodology: Dialogical epistemology

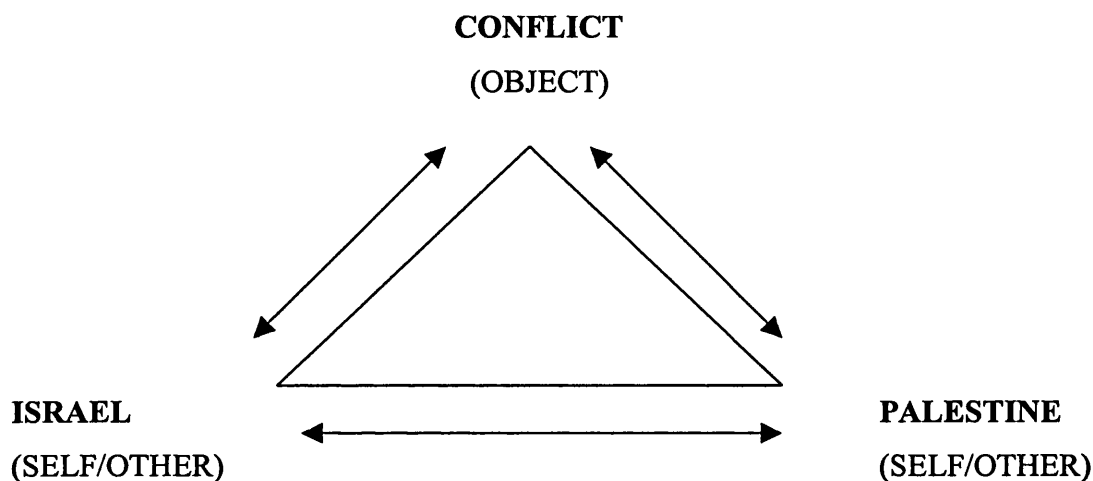
General methodology according to Bulmer comprises the ways in which the researcher conceptualises the social reality and the epistemological tenets forming the foundations for that conception. General methodology is therefore linked to, and reflects the theoretical assumptions underlying the study as well as determines the empirical strategy. In the previous chapter, I explicated in detail how Mead's ideas of socially shared realities and the narrowing of the moral self, elaborated and linked with the notion of narrative, can aid our understanding of difficulties in perspective taking in the context of intergroup conflict. I advocated a 'strong' version of narrative that views narrative as an essential means of human cognition and communication that speaks both to epistemology and ontology. Narrative is the ground on which, the relations through which and the vehicle by which humans develop knowledge of themselves and the world they inhabit.

But how is this knowledge generated? How are these narratives (realities, organised others-interchangeably) generated, reproduced, transformed or sustained? The knowledge of the world arises out of the dialogical relations between individuals and groups in society and their mutual effect on one another; hence knowledge and meaning are largely communicatively constructed in both interpersonal dialogues and socio-historical practices. The dialogical approach denies the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity and overcomes it by fully accepting the dialogical interrelatedness of the knowing subject and the object of his/her knowledge. According to the dialogical epistemology, knowledge is an inescapably social

phenomenon, something that transpires between people and that does not reside exclusively within the confines of an individual mind.

The dialogical epistemology assumes that meaning is constructed within dialogues, whether these are seen as 'external' or as 'internal' to individuals, and that therefore meaning requires more than one 'voice' or perspective. "Human thought", writes Bakhtin "becomes genuine thought...only under conditions of living contact with another and alien thought, a thought embodied in someone else's voice, that is in someone else's consciousness expressed in discourse. At that point of contact between voice consciousnesses the idea is born and lives" (1984, pp. 87-88)

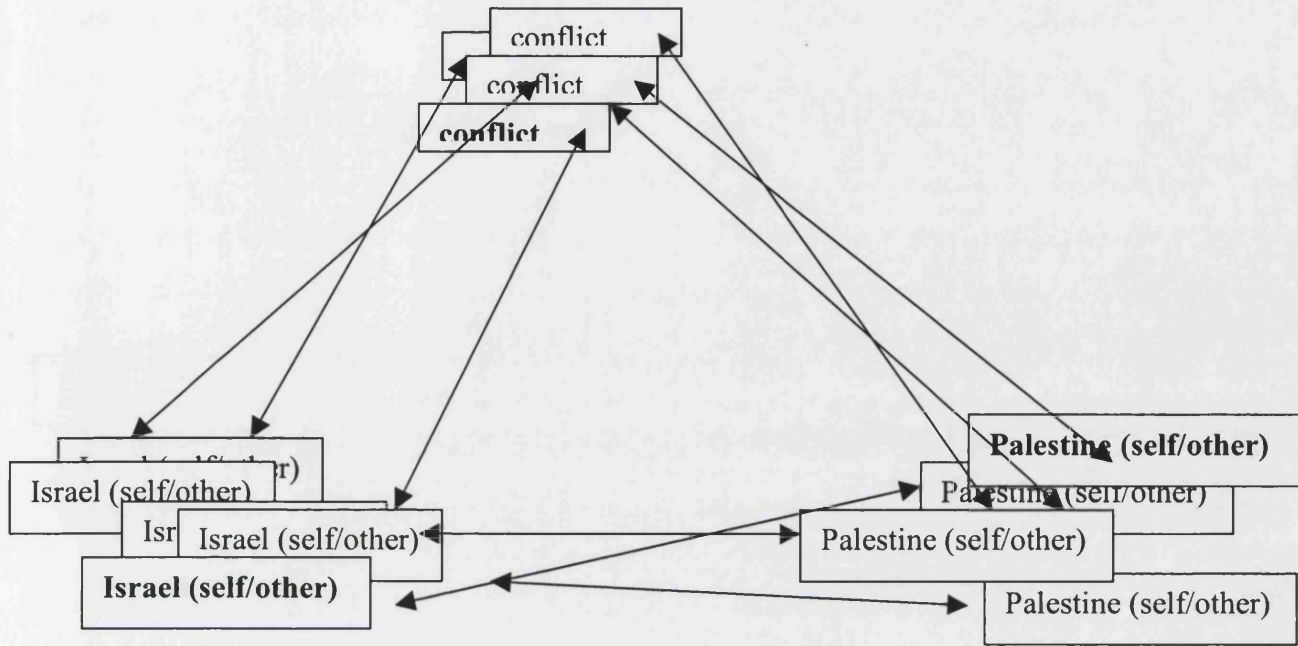
The implication of this approach to social-psychological investigation is to interpret the complex world from the point of view of the communication between social actors- individuals, communities and cultures. That is, we strive to elucidate the process of meaning construction and make clear how meanings, embodied in the dialogical encounters, are historically and culturally situated. We study human consciousness as a subject (whether individually or collectively) of a material world within which it constructs a social intersubjective world by the interweaving of what Bakhtin would call 'texts', that is, all the activities by which human beings are "readable". Our goal as social researchers is to 'read' these texts of human activity through a diversity of disciplines and approaches. Thus, our task is "establishing, transmitting and interpreting the words of others" (Bakhtin 1981, p.351). Looking at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a dialogical perspective we should start with the designation of the overall triad:



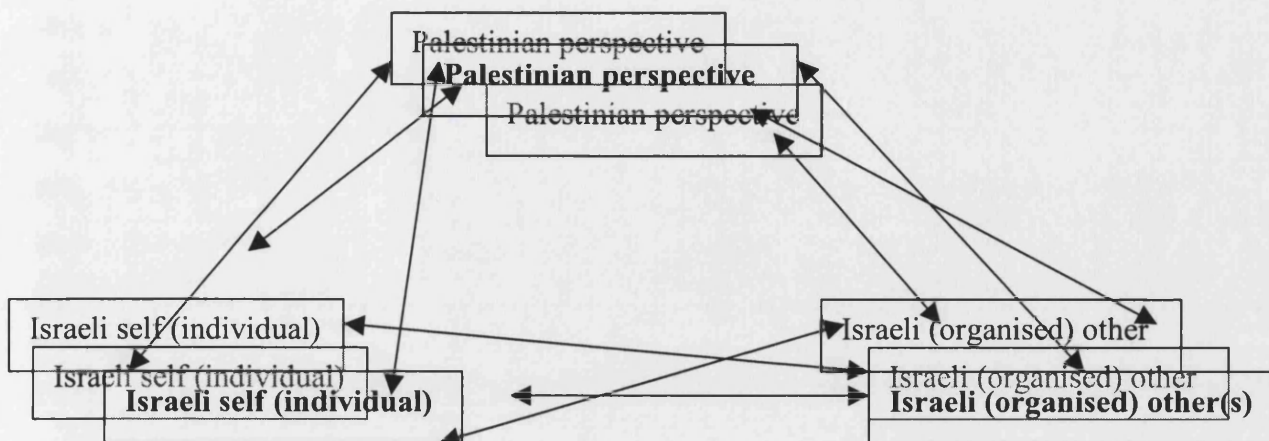
This triad represents the overall dialogical situation within which the Israelis, the Palestinians and the conflict are internally related and mutually constituted. In this model self and other are interchangeable (see Bauer and Gaskell, 1999) and represents the dynamic unit of social knowledge and the relations within that unit are both simultaneously and sequentially dynamic (Markova, 2003). That is to say, opponents in conflict define each other in mutual relations of negative interdependence - there is no enemy-other without defensive-self, there is no occupier without the occupied and there are no victims without perpetrators.

However, this cannot be the case with Mead since the object from a Meadian stance is the object for the self and thus in a situation of conflict the object is different for each of the components. Israelis and Palestinians are living in different realities in relation to the conflict and according to Mead it is logically impossible to put both realities in one triangle. Looking closer at the microgenetic level, we should not be too hasty to equate the theories. A fundamental difference is that Bauer and Gaskell assume that the object is the same for both self and other (i.e., the object is shared) while for Mead the object remains divergent for self and other, but that self and other share that divergence (i.e., the object is constructed in two perspectives and both self and other can take both of these perspectives - this is what is meant by a significant symbol). Thus instead of a shared object Mead has a shared divergence. Whether or not one is able to draw such a shared divergence in a triangle I am not sure.

Bakhtin can aid us in this problem. According to his dialogical epistemology, at every point in cultural-historical development there exists an inescapable plurality of perspectives from which to conceive any given aspect of the world. Rather than searching for a single, unified, timeless and universal truth (or meaning of object), Bakhtin is grounding our ways of perceiving and making sense of the world in the context of particular human communities. He celebrates diversity and plurality by emphasising the inevitable partiality and cultural-ideological specificity of one's beliefs and opinions, indeed of truth itself. Diversity, he argues, is a constitutive and ineradicable feature of the social world. The triad than, has multiple selves, multiple others and hence the object as well is multiple. The triad according to Bakhtin should look like this:



The target of the current research is the difficulties of Israeli children to take the perspective of Palestinians or to acknowledge their narrative. In accordance with the theoretical propositions, Mead and Bakhtin in effect have suggested that in order to understand the ability or disability of Israeli children to take the perspective of the other we have to investigate the dialogical relations *within* the Israeli society. That is to say, we have to ‘zoom in’ on the Israeli component of the above triad and interpret the complex world of the conflict from the point of view of the communication between individuals and groups within the Israeli society and the social processes that sustain the divergent realities of the Israelis and the Palestinians. We have to explore the perspectival nature of self and society by discerning the plurality and diversity of perspectives and worldviews that circulate in the Israeli society in relation to the conflict and the ways in which they mediate the construction of the Palestinian perspective. In order to get a better understanding of the ways in which Israeli children construct and understand the Palestinian perspective we have to explore the epistemological pluralism in relation to the conflict and the ways in which this comes to play in the construction of the other. The target of the current research, that is, the specific dialogical situation can be presented in the following triad:



Research strategy

From ability to activity: operationalising perspective taking

As argued in the introductory chapter, previous research was mostly concerned with perspective taking as a one-dimensional cognitive ability and thus overlooks significant societal and ideological explanations. It was Schwalbe (1988, 1992) who first pointed out that researchers in the field were inclined to ignore the significant distinction between the ability to role take and the willingness or tendency to role take and thus developed a clear distinction between ability and propensity and their relations to the social structure. I wish to take this distinction a step forward and to define the current research target as a perspective taking *activity*.

Rather than treating perspective taking as either/or ability, it is better conceptualised as a communicative practice; a practice of contemplating, negotiating, reproducing, defending and challenging different versions of reality and history. Hence, rather than asking whether Israeli and Palestinian children are able or unable to take the perspective of the Palestinians I am interested in *how* they are doing so, and, when possible, to account for *why* they are doing it in these particular ways.

Approaching the research question from a Meadian perspective entails asking: What social processes are organising the responses that the children form in relation

to the key objects of the conflict? Which power interests and ideologies are mediating the construction of the other and its narrative? What are the systems of ideas or social representations that organise the Israeli children's worlds or responses in relation to themselves, the Palestinians and the conflict and thus confine the ability and motivation to take the perspective of the other, or, in other words, what are the historical and ideological factors that narrow the moral self of the Israelis in relation to the Palestinians?

With that in mind I formulate the research targets as follows:

- To explore the ideological construction of self and other.
- To explore the systems of ideas, images and beliefs that mediate perspective taking as well as the power interests and ideologies that shape these symbolic constructions.

The concept of perspective taking activity is operationalised along two interrelated dimensions: **the construction of self and other** and **perspective negotiating**. The first dimension aims to answer the very basic question that was overlooked in previous research on taking the role of the other, namely, *what other?* Exploring the ways one apprehends the other is highly significant and can reveal a great deal of information regarding his/her ability and propensity to take the perspective of that other and hence, will determine the actual construction of the other's perspective. The second dimension is the actual exercise of perspective taking. It regards the symbolic construction of the perspective of the other. I find it more apposite to conceptualise perspective taking as perspectives negotiating and to pay particular attention to the content and rhetoric of the arguments that are being forged and negotiated.

This point needs further clarification. First, we are dealing here with taking the perspective of an *abstract* rather than *concrete* other. Namely, there is a key difference between face-to-face situational interactions with a concrete other with a distinct perspective on the one hand, and, on the other hand, encountering the other

(whom we do not share the social world with) through indirect communication channels such as the mass media, stories, school curricula and so forth. This approach makes the notion of *accuracy* in perspective taking irrelevant in the context of the current research. There is no single, representative “Palestinian perspective” that can be crystallised and which the Israeli children can supposedly construct in various degrees of assessable accuracy. Certainly, there might be general dispositions regarding the Palestinian point of view in relation to the conflict such as self-determination or the Israeli occupation. Nevertheless the Palestinian (collective) self is as complex and multifaceted as any other collective self and hence, my interest is in the different ways Israeli children construct their representations of the Palestinians and their perspectives of the conflict.

Social groups as organised others

Theoretical and empirical rationale for the selection of the social groups, upon which the current study rests, will now be provided. Perspectives and worldviews are particular subject-subject-object relations tied to social milieu. Social milieus are the carrier systems and the functional reference of representations (Bauer and Gaskell, 1999). Early reference group theories (e.g. Shibutani, 1955; Sherif 1953) advocate the notion that the reference group’s organised perspectives, whose norms are used as anchoring points in structuring the perceptual field of the individuals, constitute the frame of reference of the actors. This is very similar to Mead’s view of the organised/generalised other as discussed in the theoretical chapters. However a very important distinction should be made: from the dialogical epistemology perspective, self and society is an ontological unit; they are dialectical poles of a single process.

The dialogical approach presupposes the interdependence between the individual and society and argues for the co-development of both participants and their mutual effect on one another. All the same, it is an essential postulation of perspectives that norms, images and values are shared, and as such, are properties of social groups. Emler and Ohana (1993) note that “it is important to recognise the kinds of social groups to which children belong, the relation between these groups and others, and the ways in which groups and relations, between them, shape representations”(p. 85).

The participants in the current study are children from three distinct social milieus (Table 1). *Kibbutz*, *settlement* and *city* are consistent with Bauer and Gaskell’s (1999) definition of natural groups as “self referential and characterised by a common project and an awareness of the group’s history, i.e. a collective memory”(p.175). These groups are by no means unadulterated representatives of the diversified Israeli society and one could come up with different choices such as ethnic groups (Sephardim vs. Ashkenazim) or native-born children vs. immigrants, to name but a few alternatives. Nevertheless, my research deals with highly debated political issues and hence, the choice of the groups aims at representing different political environments within Israeli society. I use the results of the last general elections in Israel to further characterise each of the milieus.

Table 1. Study Participants

Social group	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
City	19	22	41
Settlement	19	20	39
Kibbutz	21	22	43
Total	59	64	123

Children from the kibbutz

The kibbutz is a unique communal form of living in Israel, frequently described as a “socialist cell”. The ideal type of kibbutz is an organised society, based on the principles of full cooperation in production and consumption, in work and in life, based on the utmost provision of mutual help and on the mutual responsibility of all members in all spheres of life. This commune strives to realise the principle of the equal value of all people and the equal value of work while providing for the personal independence and spiritual freedom of every individual. From the very beginning of the kibbutzim (plural) in Israel, this movement was utterly identified with the political

left wing and it was always closely associated with the left parties in Israel¹. In analysing interest groups within the Israeli society, Drezon-Tepler (1990) noted that the kibbutz “represents a complete social, economic and political framework”(p. 103). Considering its social interests and values as well as its political and ideological agenda, the kibbutz is indeed a natural milieu. Examination of the results of the two last general elections (2003) illustrates the political orientation of this group: 72% of votes went to Labour party (centre-left) and 15% votes to Meretz (left). The kibbutz children in the present research attend a local elementary school located in the centre of Israel. Its population includes children from the surrounding kibbutzim in the district area. As shown in Table 1, 43 children from the kibbutz participated in the study.

Children from the settlements

The ‘settlements’ is a general name attached to the Jewish settlements established in the occupied territories after the 1967 war. The settlements that are located on lands purchased or confiscated from Palestinians are frequently established on the tops of hills overlooking Palestinian villages or in areas previously farmed by Palestinians. The settlements are at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both parties assert historical possession of the land. Although the settlers are habitually identified as radical right-wingers, motivated by religious and national ideals, the sample of the settlers’ children in the present research does not precisely correspond to the prototypical image of settlers. First, due to technical and methodological considerations, all the children within this group are secular, studying in a state elementary school². Secondly, the school I visited is located in the largest town amongst the settlements, a town that has an industrial zone, shopping mall and even a small university. Thus, although it is formally a settlement, in regard to the social and political atmosphere it should be considered as a ‘soft core’ version of settlement. In that sense its children’s characteristics are similar to those from the city. The school is occupied by children from that town (70%) and children from the smaller settlements in the district area (30%). Examination of the election results here illustrates that 53 %

¹ Left-Right political orientation in Israel, roughly corresponds to those who support the Oslo-based peace process and those who opposed it, respectively.

² The orthodox communities in Israel have a separate education system where boys and girls’ study in separate classrooms, and the education programme includes extra religious classes.

of the votes went to the Likud party (centre-right) and 28% of the votes went to the National Unity (far-right) party. 39 children from the settlement participated in the study.

Children from the city

This group is the least distinctive milieu. Since urban children are the majority in Israel, their self-referential identity is of a weaker form. Whereas the former social milieus by their very existence connote homogeneous political and ideological agendas, the city population is diverse and heterogeneous. This is well illustrated through the election results. The vote's distribution is more diverse than the former milieus yet it shows general orientation towards the centre-right. The city in the present research is located in the centre of Israel, 22 km south of Tel-Aviv. 41 children from the city participated in the study.

Data collection:

Taking the perspective of the other in two modes of communication

Triangulation is now a ubiquitous concept in qualitative research textbooks yet the meaning of triangulation has been transformed since it was introduced by Denzin (1970). Bauer et al, (2000) argue that "adequate coverage of social events requires a multitude of methods and data: methodological pluralism arises as a methodological necessity"(p.4). In the current study triangulation has been employed both for methods of data collection and for data analysis. Drawing upon the complementary model of triangulation, according to which triangulation is a means toward obtaining a larger, more complete picture of the phenomenon under study, the research comprises three empirical studies: ethnography, drawings and narrative compositions. Complementary triangulation serves as a means for in-depth understanding of the complex phenomena under investigation and should be applied "carefully and purposefully with the intention of adding breadth or depth to our analysis but not for the purpose of pursuing 'objective truth'" (Fielding and Fielding, 1986, p.33).

In a very early stage of the research, after reviewing the rather mechanistic experimentations of previous studies, it was clear to me that what is required in the

current study is to get the children involved in the most explicit and straightforward manner in a perspective taking *activity*. A qualitative research approach thus appears to be most appropriate for the study of ideological construction, meaning making and symbolic coping in the context of protracted conflict. In accord with the theoretical consideration that views perspective taking as a communicative activity, I sought to get the children to express their knowledge of the Palestinian perspective in two different modes of communication, namely figurative (drawings) and text (compositions).

Table 2. Methods of data collection

Methods of data collection				
Social milieu	N	<u>Perspective taking I</u>	N	<u>Perspective taking II</u>
		Drawings		Role-play narratives
City	41	<i>Picture of a Palestinian child</i>	39	<i>“The story of the conflict through the eyes of a Palestinian child”</i>
Settlement	39		38	
Kibbutz	43		39	
Total	123		116	

Drawings¹⁷

Drawing is a great means for children to communicate a specific idea or understanding. Through drawings, children can clearly express both their inner and social worlds, as they are free to include and/or place emphasis on ideas that are significant to them or central to their understandings. Pictures drawn by a child can reveal how he or she perceives an object. Therefore, when expressing their knowledge about self and other in drawings, children draw images and symbols which are reconstructions of their (social) knowledge and experience, and can provide a great deal of information about their understandings of the other. This method is intended primarily to explore the **construction of the other** in a figurative mode of communication; nevertheless the drawings are not just simple human figure drawing.

¹⁷ A comprehensive review of the method will be provided in the results chapter.

Rather, almost every picture tells a story of the 'other' through the activities undertaken by the drawn character and by positioning the drawn Palestinian in a specific setting. As such they reveal albeit in an inferred manner the perspective of the other (**perspective negotiating**). Put differently, the perspective of self *on* the other can reveal what self understands to be the perspective *of* the other.

Procedure

The children, in a regular classroom lesson, were asked to draw a Palestinian boy or girl of their age. The task was presented as offering the children some structure in what they draw but at the same time giving them maximum latitude in choosing the kinds of things they wanted to share. They were told: "Please draw a Palestinian boy or girl of your age". There were no restrictions given, and in response to requests for explanation, the children were told that all types of drawings were permitted and two examples mentioned: (a) a drawing of the Palestinian in his or her neighbourhood, and (b) a drawing of the Palestinian in his or her everyday life. It is important to allow children to express their ideas openly and independently. To ensure independent work, the teachers were present in the class during the drawing session. Anonymity was assured by asking the children to indicate only their gender and the name of their school on their drawings.

Narrative compositions: role-playing as perspective taking

In this task, the children were asked to write a short composition entitled "*The story of the conflict through the eyes of a Palestinian child*" (for full transcription of the narratives see appendix 1). I invited them to write a short narrative on the conflict in the first-person as if they were a Palestinian child. This method aimed overtly to explore the notion of **negotiating perspectives** and by so doing there is an inevitable process of **construction of the other**. Children are used to writing activities; they are considered the second most widespread mode of communication after verbal communication.

There are two aspects to be taken into consideration: role playing and narrative. To start with the latter, the choice of narrative compositions clearly reflects the theoretical proposition of the thesis. We both organize and constitute our experience of the world through narratives and children are used to telling/hearing

stories, real or fiction from when they were toddlers, and writing/reading stories since they acquired literacy skills. Narrative accounts are symbolic actions, a means to frame and situate the self and others in common social practices. Children's narrative activity as a vehicle of meaning and perspective is a form of symbolic action linking the construction of reality with the formation of identity (Nicolopoulou, 1997). Secondly, by asking the children to narrate the conflict as if they were Palestinians, I sought to invite the children in the most explicit and straightforward way to get involved with the Palestinian other and to take his/her perspective, that is, to enter the perspective of the other. I thought that this enactment could tell me a good deal about the ways in which Israeli children perceive and construct the Palestinian perspective. Moreover, I thought that playing at a Palestinian would generate among other things a certain amount of reflexivity and engender internal conflict between the children's own story of the conflict and the ways they believed the Palestinian child's story would be. The results of that conflict, as seen in the children narratives, incorporate rich data to explore both the construction of the other and perspective negotiating.

In sum, there are two important attributes of narrative that are closely related to the research endeavour. The first is the relation between narrative and perspectives and the second concerns the social and personal aspects of narrative. Narrative requires the narrator to take a perspective; it cannot be voiceless. It is more than mere reporting; it suggests how the individual makes sense of both the commonplace and the extraordinary and is therefore critical in the meaning making of narrators. Moreover, how narrators accomplish their stories conveys a great deal about the presentation of self and other, since self and other are located at the centre of the narrative as active agents, passive participants, tools of destiny, victims, aggressors and so forth. In the most straightforward manner, narrating is a way of establishing a perspective or point-of-view.

As far as I have been able to ascertain this is a novel method. Although children's narratives have been widely used in various studies, it was mostly from a developmental point of view and focused on children's language use and development of narrative competency. In the current study, I wanted the children to express themselves freely in the form of narrative while posing for them the problematic construction of the other and his/her perspective in the most straightforward manner.

In contrast to the drawings where the children are forced to work with one perspective, that is, to adopt and convey a single image of a Palestinian (i.e. you cannot draw a Palestinian that is both a suicide bomber *and* a victim of collective punishment), the writing task allows them to work in a broader space of symbolic construction. Text is a medium of communication that allows the children to develop multiple ideas at once, whereupon they may contradict themselves, resist or accept the dominant ideologies while establishing the perspective of the other.

Procedure

Following the drawing task¹⁸, I asked the children to write me a short (1-2 pages) composition entitled “The story of the conflict through the eyes of a Palestinian child”. I then added “I want you to think that you are a Palestinian child that is being asked to tell the story of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Please write as if you were a Palestinian child”. There were no restrictions given, and in response to requests for explanation, I told them: “ You can start the composition with the words: Hello, my name is... (I let the children reply with typical Arabic name, such as Ahmed, Fatima etc.), I am 12 years old, I live in...(again, I let the children reply with familiar Palestinian towns, such as Gaza, Jenin etc.) and I want to tell you the story of the conflict”. I emphasized that they can write “whatever they want” and last, I added, “ I want you to try and tell me the story of the conflict as if you were a Palestinians. Try to think how they feel, what they know, what they do in their everyday life, how they see the conflict, what they want etc.”.

Research techniques: outline of analysis

Ethnography: My story of the Israeli “victimised-occupier self”

My initial engagement with the children’s works took place chronologically during the time I crystallised the theoretical propositions and intermingled Mead’s ideas of opposing realities and the narrowing of the moral self with the notion of narrative. During this process, which can, in effect, be regarded as a loose version of

¹⁸ Before the final procedure a pilot study was undertaken in order to determine the importance of the sequence of the tasks, i.e. draw & write or write & draw. 14 children participated in the pilot, 7 in each group. It turned out that the order of the tasks is insignificant and doesn’t affect the content of the children’s works. For practical reasons, such as the greater enthusiasm and cooperation of the children in drawings made it easier to get them involved with the compositions.

grounded theory, I begun to realise that the Israeli children, while taking the perspective of the Palestinians are, to a large extent, reproducing the perspective of the Israelis. I realised that while constructing the Palestinian image and narrative they are, in fact, reconstructing the Israeli narrative of the conflict; while producing a Palestinian self, they are, in effect, reproducing the Israeli self. In other words, Mead's notion of the narrow moral self was screaming from the children's works.

This insight triggered me to add another chapter, or another story to the empirical part of the thesis. Following my contention that the Israeli self both enables and restricts perspective taking and that the difficulties or failings in taking the perspective of the Palestinians are embedded in the Israeli self, I found it necessary to provide an analysis of this self apart from the data gathered from the children. For that reason, I have applied an ethnographic lens to Israeli society, structured around three successive phases while drawing upon historical and contemporary motifs in order to provide a glance into the depths of the Israeli collective psyche with both its homogenous and heterogeneous voices and faces. It is therefore an ethnographic narrative of the Israeli (collective) self in relation to the conflict, a self which I have called the "victimised occupier self" to emphasise two, both complementary and contradictive, characteristics. It is a self that is both the victim and the defeater; a self that comprises conflicting values and ideologies from which the children draw their worldviews, interpret the reality they live in, and reconstruct the perspective of the Palestinians.

After years of debate it is now common to be an ethnographer in one's own culture and the difference between "natives" and "outsiders" in ethnographic study is now well established. A native would be someone born, raised and educated in the culture they study. An outsider would be someone who came from another culture and who possibly had to learn the language of the people he came to study. As a native participant observer there always exists the tension between subjectivity and objectivity, or more generally, between involvement and detachment. Certainly, the native ethnographer is able to gain the perspective and understanding that comes from being an "insider" to the culture. Yet while participating in the activities of the culture, it is also imperative for the ethnographer to maintain a critical and "observational" attitude. He must attempt to experience the culture as both insider and

outsider and to allow his own observations and experiences to also be informed by the other participants in that culture. The native ethnographer experiences a twofold dilemma. On one hand he needs to be close enough to his subject(s) in order to know them and to ‘understand their understandings’. On the other, there needs to be some distance between the two, some space for analytical consideration, some ‘strangeness’ on the part of the subject for the author, so that he can see them more clearly.

The dilemma I faced throughout the analyses, both the ethnographic and while analysing the children’s works, was somewhat different and goes beyond the common problem of how to set up a critical distance between myself and the Israeli society after being a member of that society for the past thirty-one years, namely, how to maintain a critical distance from my subjects. The hardest dilemma for me was rather how to maintain a critical distance from myself and my worldviews regarding the conflict. It is a tangible dilemma that is best described as the tension between estrangement and engagement. Edward Said perhaps best epitomised this dilemma:

“...[S]o ideologically saturated is the question of Palestine, so manifestly present is it to most people who come to deal with it, that even a superficial or cursory apprehension of it involves a position taken, an interest defended, a claim or a right asserted. There is no indifference, no objectivity, no neutrality because there is simply no room for them in a space that is as crowded and over-determined as this one” (1986, p.30).

This dilemma inevitably stirs a short discussion on quality criteria in qualitative research and the researcher’s reflexivity throughout the research process. Gaskell and Bauer (2000) offer the categories of *confidence* and *relevance* as quality criteria for qualitative research. Confidence indicators are measures to insure that the analysis presented is well grounded (rather than being the figment of the researcher’s imagination), transparent, persuasive and open to critique. Relevance measures should be taken in order to ensure the utility and importance of the research project. In the current thesis, I hope to achieve these criteria through various measures. First, triangulation and reflexivity as indicators of confidence are evident in my thesis. I triangulated both methods of data collection (ethnography, drawings, compositions) and methods of analysis (see below). Second, I offer procedural clarity and

transparency throughout my analysis. Lastly, thick description as a measure for both confidence and relevance is practiced throughout, for every claim I make is backed with a range of verbatim.

There has been an extensive and often quite confusing discussion in the qualitative research literature around the importance of researcher reflexivity (e.g. Steier, 1991). It is accepted that the researcher, and the worldviews, motives and reasons that he or she brings to the research task make a significant contribution to the ultimate construction of meaning that is offered to the readers. My emotional and moral responses to the research topic and the children's works are inevitably evident throughout the thesis as (my)self is always present in any observation, writing, and analysis. The point here is that the thesis shows an awareness of its own constructed and contingent nature, that it is able to critically reflect upon itself, and that it understands its own framing as one of many possible interpretations.

It has become a fashionable practice especially in the context of PhD dissertations that the author provides a thorough autobiographical account, a practice I principally reject and therefore will avoid; the focus, I believe, should be the research and not the researcher. I will only add that throughout the process I identified with Mead's pragmatic formulation of the third stage of moral conduct:

“We must not forget this other capacity, that of replying to the community and insisting on the gestures of the community changing. We can reform the order of things; we can insist of making the community standards better standards. We are not simply bound by the community“(1934, p.168).

I regard my thesis as a small contribution towards making my community's standards better ones. The moral criteria I bring to the analysis are based on justice, human rights and international law. I have a pragmatic ideological commitment to a viable and just peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians that is based on mutual respect and recognition, self-determination, justice and equality. As much as I completely reject any sort of warrant regarding the Palestinian suicide bombers, I also completely reject any warrant regarding the Israeli occupation. I believe that the

Palestinians have the moral right and duty to resist the occupation as much as I believe that Israel has the right and duty to defend itself against the extremists' vile terrorism. Yet I strongly believe that Israel, as the undoubtedly stronger side of this asymmetric conflict can and should do a lot more than it has done so far in order to bring this tragedy to an end.

Due to the nature of the topic and in light of Said's words I will not usually have the space to discuss the good, and warm, and compassionate aspects of the Israeli society. Yet I hope that my sympathetic empathy with the Israeli society to which I belong will provide a steady mitigating influence against what may otherwise be viewed as a critical attitude.

Self and society in perspective taking

The primary goal of my thesis is to provide a societal explanation to the concept of perspective taking. Social psychological research has, for long time now, been split by two contrasting traditions (see Farr, 1996 for a thorough review), namely, psychological and sociological forms of social psychology. The argument against the psychological social psychology, that it has limited itself to issues of the mind as it functions *within the individual*, and thus has become strikingly asocial, is a recurring mantra and I restated it in relation to previous research on perspective taking.

Nevertheless, research from the sociological social psychology paradigm, with its preoccupation to escape the 'methodological individualism' or the 'Cartesian's spirits', tends to lose sight of the 'individual subject'. Research from this tradition has a propensity to focus on the dynamics of knowledge production and meaning making as properties of the social domain from trans-individual or group-based perspectives. Indeed, conducting this kind of research has been my initial objective. The cognitive – developmental approaches to perspective taking, which speak to phenomena that can be predicated only of individual minds, incited me to explore the socio-historical factors that mediate perspective taking. Yet while analysing the children's works I realised that by focusing on contents, themes and cultural meanings, this kind of research is inclined to relate these themes with the agents of their reconstruction. I

still believe that the individual subject can hardly be presented as the ultimate source and origin of meaning, however the uniqueness of individual works reminds me that each individual constitutes a specific and irreplaceable centre of awareness.

The dialogical epistemology stresses that self and society are closely related and both function as polyphony of consonant and dissonant voices. Given that, I make an operational rather than ontological distinction between societal and individual levels of analyses¹⁹. My aim is first, on the collective level, to explore the polyphony of the Israeli (collective) self and the multivoiced perspectives on self, other and the conflict as revealed from the children's drawings and compositions. The next step is to bring back the individual into focus and to convey the multivoiced nature of the individual self as well.

Sociolognetic analysis – the polyphony of the Israeli self

At this level of analysis I focus on the social milieus (i.e. city, settlement, kibbutz) in search of the various topics, concerns, themes and images, which comprise the representational field of the Israeli children when facing the task of taking the perspective of the Palestinians. The research approach adopted here is hermeneutic-interpretive in orientation. The theoretical presuppositions supply a horizon of understanding from which the data can begin to be understood. However, the goal is to achieve a "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1975), in which the data is not merely assimilated into a pre-existing interpretive framework, but through which this pre-existing framework is itself changed through authentic engagement with the drawings and text. I simply ask: what themes emerge when Israeli children are taking the perspective of Palestinian children through drawings and narrative compositions? What are the ideological processes underlying these themes? And when possible, where are these ideas, images and representations coming from? Mapping out the content of the drawings and the compositions is done in order to identify the processes by which the social reality of the conflict is reproduced, sustained or challenged. The idea is to explore the traces of the 'victimised occupier' self and its "multi-voicedness" in the children's works. Here, the group (Israeli self) is the empirical

¹⁹ I thank Alex Gillespie for this valuable insight.

entity under investigation and the subgroups are the operationalisation of perspectives, voices and organised others.

Sociogenetic analysis of drawings

I regarded the drawings as little stories, that is, as graphic narratives regarding the other, self and the context in which they were drawn. The analysis was done in two phases. First, drawing eclectically upon techniques from Hummel et al, (1995) and Teichman (2001), I examined the drawn *actor/s*, the attributed *actions* and the *decoration*, namely the assortment of symbols, and other icons within the data for composing the coding frame. A relatively simple coding frame was elaborated with the aim of reducing the complexity of each drawing by breaking it up into its component parts in order to reveal what I called the ideologically driven iconic repertoire. I looked at the drawn character, its gender, his/her activity, and appearance of additional figures in the drawing. Finally, I examined symbols of conflict and peace as well as symbols of a stereotypical Palestinian. For the purpose of quantitative evaluation of the material, I used simple SPSS functions to determine the frequencies with which these appeared between and within the three milieus in order to map out patterns of homogeneity and heterogeneity.

The second phase was more hermeneutic. I looked at the drawings as whole units in trying to capture the exact meaning within the range of ideas and perspectives exhibited in the drawings. I asked: what are the personal, social and political comments conveyed by these drawings and what are their implications for the propensity and practice of taking the perspective of the other? Patterns indeed emerged, leading me to construct five different genres of children's engagements with the 'other' through their drawings.

Sociogenetic analysis of narratives

Using the program Atlas/ti as a workbench, a careful thematic analysis was conducted in order to draw meaningful patterns from the texts. All the narrative compositions were translated from Hebrew to English²⁰ and were imported to the

²⁰ I carefully translated the compositions paying attention to the socio-lingual nuances in order to stick to the original language use and tone of the texts. Following that I sent a sample of 20 translations to a professional translator for proof reading.

Atlas/ti. On that level of analysis I completely lost sight of individual works and treated the compositions as one big data set, with attention to the three milieus. The unit of analysis was a single utterance, or sentence. The analysis was exploratory in nature. I asked: when Israeli children are engaged with taking the perspective of the Palestinians, what is the outcome? And what are the socio-ideological processes that mediate and shape that outcome?

The analyses comprise three stages. First, since they were written in the first-person I regarded the composition at face value as if they were indeed produced by Palestinian children. Since the narratives are predominantly about ‘us’ and ‘them’, I started with a raw coding based on three primary categories:

- Self about self (the Palestinian)
- Self about other (the Israelis)
- Self about the conflict (general)

Following this initial mapping, based on the new data segmentation I continued to delve deeply into a second stage of coding, which can be described as rhetorical coding. Here, I looked at each utterance and asked: what is the communicative goal of this utterance? Why did the Israeli author ‘put’ these words into the Palestinian child’s mouth? What is it doing in the composition? What is the message conveyed in this utterance? From which part of the “victimised occupier” self was this voice taken and what does it aim to reproduce?

Following several painstaking coding ‘rounds’ upon which categories were reduced, abstracted, generalised or eliminated, I realised that all the coded utterances were falling within four pairs of contested rhetoric or ideological dilemmas. Finally, after the last coding round I had all the utterances coded under these eight categories, still divided to social milieus, I conducted the last stage of analysis in order to map out the various symbols, images and representations that are used in the service of each communicative goal. Based on the new segmentation of the data I looked for the prevalent themes for each communicative objective. For example, the discourse on terrorism and suicide bombing was a key notion in both the service of de-legitimising the Palestinians and positing the Israeli sense of victimisation. In that last stage of

analysis I tried to trace the origin of the utterance. I asked: Whose voice is it? Where does it come from? Where possible, I offered an account of the origin of the utterance, for example, the mass media, school curricula or The Bible.

Due to the interrelatedness of various utterances and the rhetorical objectives (for example, the discourse on house demolition could be both in the service of establishing an image of a victim Palestinian and/or to establish guilt and responsibility on behalf of the Israelis) many utterances were coded twice. This rendered statistical manipulation of the data impracticable. Nevertheless where possible, I indicate patterns and frequencies, mainly in relation to the social milieu.

Individual analysis – the polyphony of the personal

Once the dilemmatic nature, or the multi-voicedness of the social has been mapped out, it is time to bring back the individual to the centre of attention. As stems from both Mead and Bakhtin, the dialogical self works as a society with oppositions, conflicts and negotiations between perspectives. As Hermans (2002) noted, the *I* has the possibility to move from one spatial position to another in accordance with changes in situation and time. “The *I* fluctuates among different and even opposed positions and has the capacity imaginatively to endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established” (p.148).

The dual character of the self according to Mead, is that the I-me/s relations are, from a Bakhtinian perspective, to be found in personal ‘texts’ or narratives in the form of multi-voiced utterances that originate from the individual’s reconstruction of past experience of real or imagined dialogues and interactions in the social world. Individual speakers are not simply talking as individuals, but in their utterances the voices of groups and institutions are heard (Wersch, 1990). Individuals, in producing utterances always converse in what Bakhtin called ‘social languages’ which frame or shape the personal speech:

“The expression of an utterance always responds to a greater and lesser degree, that is, it expresses the speaker’s attitude toward others’ utterances

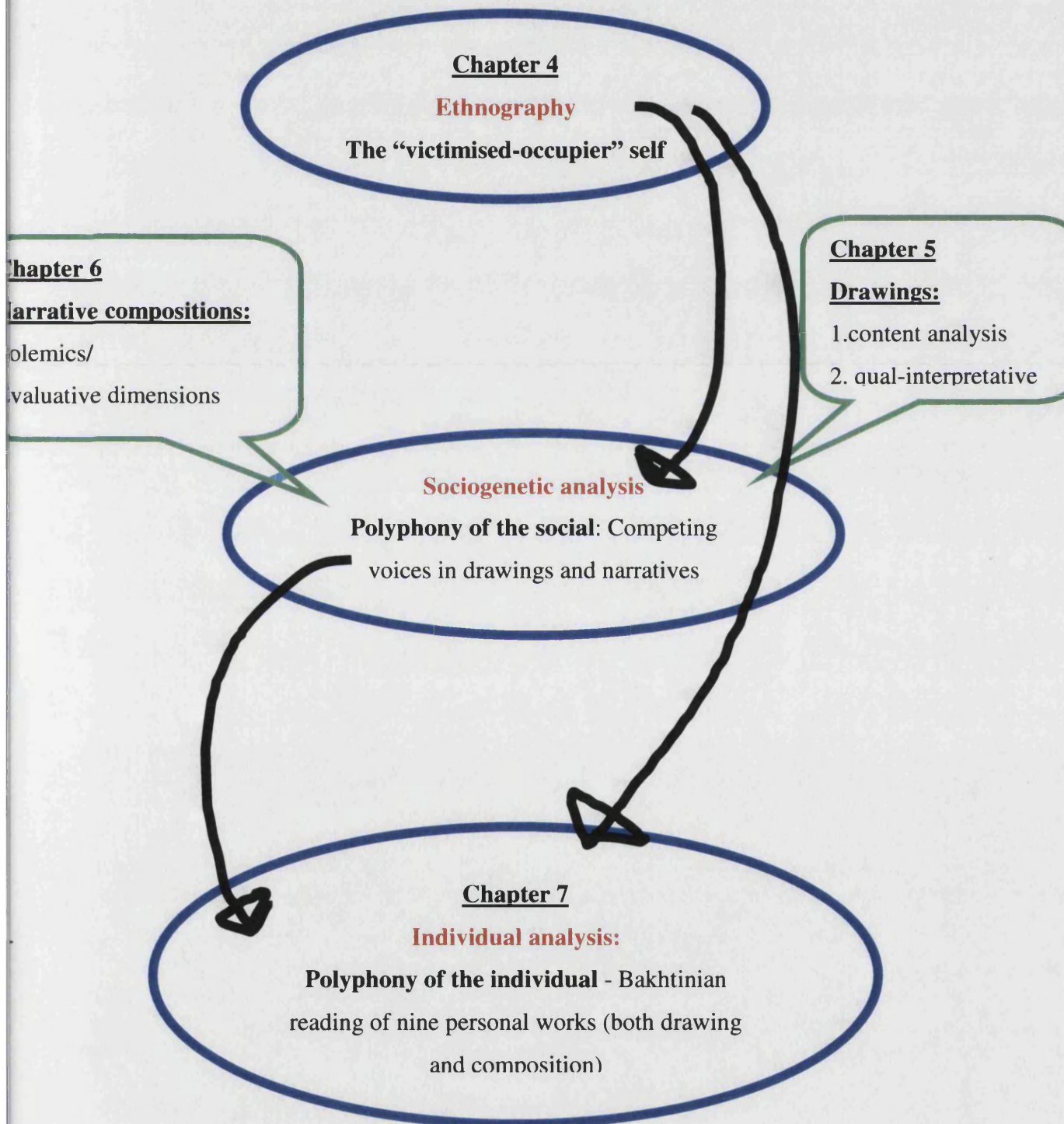
and not just his attitude toward the object of his utterance...the utterance is filled with dialogical overtones and they must be taken into account in order to understand fully the style of the utterance. After all our thought itself is born and shape in the process of interaction and struggle with others' thought, and this cannot be reflected in the forms that verbally express our thought as well." (1986, p.92)

When a child writes the story of the conflict (from his/her or a Palestinian perspective) he or she enters into an arena that reverberates with other voices. The child's words, as Bakhtin would say, are intertwined with polyphony of other's perspectives, nuances, and intentions and it is by orchestrating - not mere repeating, but reconstructing, resisting and transforming - that polyphony, that the author makes meaning heard. And since these words were born and shaped in dialogical encounters through interaction with other voices in the past, the author 'product' is never monologic (apart from its compositional form) but always a multi-voiced amalgamation.

The strategy of this analysis is inherently interpretative and is aimed at exploring the ways in which the "victimised occupier" self is reproduced, or sustained on the individual level. I chose three drawings and compositions from each group and with the knowledge acquired from both the ethnographic and the social level of analysis I discern the distinct voices and their dialogic relationship in the personal works.

Outline of empirical chapters:

Self and society in perspective taking



4. THE “VICTIMISED-OCCUPIER” SELF

“I think the idea that it is possible to continue keeping 3.5 million Palestinians under occupation - yes it is occupation, you might not like the word, but what is happening is occupation - is bad for Israel, and bad for the Palestinians, and bad for the Israeli economy. Controlling 3.5 million Palestinians cannot go on forever. You want to remain in Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah and Bethlehem?”

(Ariel Sharon, Israel’s Prime Minister, May 26, 2003)

Introduction

This chapter addresses the question of what comprises the Israeli self and its constituent narratives in the realm of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Based on my contention that socio-historical and ideological factors narrow the moral selves of Israelis in relation to the Palestinians, my aim is to provide a glance to the depths of the Israeli collective psyche with both its homogenous and heterogeneous voices and faces and to demarcate, in detail, those socio-ideological processes that narrow the moral selves of Israelis in relation to the Palestinians.

While in Chapter Three I established the theoretical relations between self, narratives and morality, the route to determining a particular case of narrow moral self with any certainty seems to be best approached inductively with a sensitivity to specific events and situations constitutive to that self and an understanding of how different voices, symbols, representations and ideologies are formed and transformed, enacted, nurtured, circulated and propagated to shape the realities of the self under question. Uncovering the substantive contents of a group’s multifaceted identity requires the researcher to become immersed in the socio-political and cultural nuances of that group’s life. That is, in order to identify the power interests and ideologies that shape a group’s life one must have substantial knowledge of the group’s shared history, its major actors and the motives that determines their actions. For that, I apply

an ethnographic lens to my society, the Israeli society, structured around three successive phases while drawing upon historical and contemporary motifs as well as popular, journalistic and academic sources, that when viewed together represents a self I am terming a 'victimised-occupier' self²¹.

This self is a product of the historical development of collectively constructed representations of a society that has lived in a protracted conflict ever since its establishment. It is the locus for the assortment of beliefs, ideologies, moral contradictions and prejudices from which the Israeli children derive their interpretations, evaluations and judgements regarding the Palestinian perspective. It is a knowledge structure that determines those aspects of the environment taken into account, how they are interpreted and how they are situated in relation to the shared moral order.

The early years- the homogenous phase

... *"In every generation they rise against us and seek our destruction"...*

This maxim, taken from the Passover Haggadah²² condenses and symbolises one of the most enduring socio-historical convictions instilled in the Israeli-Jewish collective psyche. Constant states of defensiveness and victimhood are fundamental determinants both in the long history of the Jewish people and the short past of the state of Israel. Throughout history, the Jewish people have experienced persecutions, pogroms and expulsions in almost every place they have lived. The Holocaust, the most ferocious of the Jewish persecutions is undoubtedly the most constitutive

²¹ This chapter was written in early 2004 and has gone through some relevant editorial amendments. Due to the pace of events in the Middle East, this chapter, by definition cannot be up-to-date. For example, Israel's decision to build a controversial separation wall, Sharon's 'unilateral disentanglement' plan, Arafat's death and the repercussions of these events are not covered. Nevertheless, the chapter meant to capture both the constitutive socio-historical events of the Israeli self and the events which provide the direct context of this study. In that sense it is meant to depict both essential elements and accurately reflect the atmosphere in Israel during the time of data collection.

²² The text that guides the performance of ritual acts and prayers of the 'Seder' dinner celebrating Passover. It tells the story of the Israelite exodus from Egypt.

episode in the recent history of the Jewish Israeli collective psychic. The Holocaust, which took the lives of about six million Jews, provided tremendous moral and political force to the Zionist claim, leading, eventually, to the establishment of the state of Israel. The motif of the Holocaust continued to play a central role in the conceptions and rhetoric of the mass media and political leaders, markedly in relation to the Israeli – Arab conflict, thus magnifying the significance of the Palestinian threat and keeping the flame of what Bar-Tal and Antebi (1992) described as the ‘siege-mentality’ of the Israeli society, constantly burning. According to its ontological narrative, Israel is fighting a never-ending battle for its survival against irrational forces that seek its total extermination. The themes of destruction, of physical annihilation and of non-existence play a central role in the Israeli national self-image.

Traditional and religious motives drew the Zionist movement to Palestine (Eretz Israel in Hebrew) and the decision was made to establish the Jewish state in this land, the "Promised Land" for Jews, in Palestine. According to the Israeli narrative, the Israelis have rights to the land because of their religious, historical and cultural legacy. It is written in Genesis (15:18):

"... [T]he Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates...'"

The core of the Zionist idea and its attachment to the land appears in the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (14 May 1948), which states that:

"The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom."

In the early days of the Zionist movement the maxim was “*a land without a people for a people without land*”. If there were no indigenous population to displace, the argument goes, then the idea of expropriating the land area of Palestine to help victims of anti-Semitism seemed not only benign but humane as well.

For years, Zionists have based their claim to Palestine partly on the account that it was an empty, barren wasteland that they have peopled, watered and ‘made the desert bloom’. According to this eminent myth, the land was not only empty but had been left untended and unexploited ever since the Jews were evicted two thousand years before. This myth not only reinforced the notion of the untouched land but also the continuity of the Zionist enterprise of “re-establishing” Jewish life in Palestine. The myth of the “land without a people” was not restricted to the political discourse but rather diffused to, and was circulated within popular communication channels as well, thus strengthening the Zionist doctrine of the virgin or empty land.

The following segment is taken from a children’s fiction book written in the early years of the state of Israel:

“Joseph and some of his men thus crossed the land on foot, until they reached the Galilee. They climbed mountains, beautiful but empty mountains, where nobody lived ...Joseph said, ‘we want to establish this kibbutz and conquer this emptiness...the land is empty; its children have deserted it... they are dispersed and no longer tend it. No one protects or tends the land now’”.²³

Palestine however, was not a land without a people. Indigenous Arabs inhabited it for centuries. In 1914 there were 570,000 Palestinian Arabs in Palestine and 80,000 Palestinian Jews, most of whom had entered Palestine after 1860²⁴. According to contemporary discourse in Israel, the ‘land without a people’ axiom

²³ Gurevitz, Y. and Navon ,S, eds. What Story Will I Tell My Children? Tel-Aviv: Amihah 1953 (in Hebrew).

²⁴ C. Smith, Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict, 1988

served to relieving Israeli Jews of guilt feelings for what befell the Arab inhabitants of Palestine: if the land was indeed empty, there was no wrongdoing. A less compromising stance argues that this axiom was not only conceived in ignorance, but also reflected the general arrogance towards the Arab inhabitants of Palestine. From the very beginning, the Zionists approach to the Palestinians inhabitants was ambivalent, and, using psychoanalysis terminology, contained elements of both denial and repression regarding the existence of the Palestinians in Palestine.

In later years, when the 'land without a people' myth lost its strength since it gradually became apparent that the land was not empty as had been claimed, diverse arguments were required to cope with the 'Palestinian problem' evidently created before and during the establishment of the state of Israel.

Taken from a fictional book that was on my compulsory reading list when I was at primary school, the next segment provides a fascinating illustration of the moral dilemma generated with the beginning of the Jewish immigration to Palestine that still persists today. In the following story, Juma is a young Palestinian evicted from his hometown during the clashes between the Arabs and the Jews before the establishment of the state of Israel. A few years later, when Juma tried to return to his home, he was arrested and taken to the police station. He asked the policemen to call Baruch, a Jewish man who lived with his family nearby Juma's home, to attest his innocence. Baruch arrived to the police station and recognised Juma who told him why he had attempted to return to his home and then,

“Juma fell silent. And I couldn't say a thing. He was right and so were we. We did not throw them out, and yet they had been evicted. What could I tell him? Should I tell him of the Holocaust of our Diaspora? Should I tell him of the Jews who would come, shrouded in the darkness of the night, across treacherous seas to this land? Should I tell him of the concentration camps? Of the millions Jewish refugees? ²⁵

²⁵ Halevy, B. Uri and Ra'anana. Tel-Aviv: Yaveh 1971

Whereas in the early days of the Zionist enterprise the existence of the Palestinians was denied or ignored, in later years a rhetorical effort was made towards disregarding the existence of the Palestinians as a collective entity. For most of the first twenty-five years of Israeli history, official rhetoric portrayed Palestinians as Arabs lacking any distinct national identity. As Bar-On (1997) argues, in order to reduce the cognitive dissonance generated by the Jewish aspiration to inherit the land at the expense and detriment of other people living in the territory, the Palestinians were perceived as part of the greater Arab nation, but not as a distinct national group with national aspirations of their own. This attitude is best illustrated by the notorious quotation from an interview given to the Sunday Times in 1969 by the Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir who claimed that:

"There is no such thing as a Palestinian people... It is not as if we came and threw them out and took their country. They didn't exist."

Yet, there are enough records today to show that early leaders of both the Yishuv (the body of Jewish settlements before the establishment of Israel) and of the state of Israel recognised that the Arab resistance was a natural, inevitable reaction of a native people defending their country against foreign invaders. In an oration at the funeral of an Israeli commander killed by a Palestinian in April 1956 Moshe Dayan, then Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) expressed a keen understanding of the hatred of the Arabs towards the Israeli settlers when he stated:

" . . . Let us not today fling' accusation at the murderers. What causes have we to complain about their fierce hatred to us? For eight years now, they sit in their refugee camps in Gaza, and before their eyes we turn into our homestead the land and villages in which they and their forefathers have lived".

Nonetheless, the conclusion he drew from this realistic observation best epitomises the common attitude of these days:

"... Let us make our reckoning today. We are a generation of settlers, and without the steel helmet and gun barrel, we shall not be able to plant a tree or build a house . . . Let us not be afraid to see the hatred

that accompanies and consumes the lives of hundreds of thousands of [Palestinian] Arabs who sit all around us and wait for the moment when their hands will be able to reach our blood.”²⁶

Thus, Israelis experience themselves as being born out of centuries of Diaspora persecutions into the arms of Arab intransigence. The national self image includes all the layers of the past, starting with the ancient Hebrews, through the suffering Jews in the Diaspora, the victims of the Holocaust and the revived modern Jew in the Zionist renaissance, forced to fight for its existence against millions of Arabs bent upon its destruction. The Zionists were convinced that the Arab resistance to the Zionist enterprise, which was intended to save the Jews from the flames of Europe, was simply the consequence of the murderous nature of the Arabs and of Islam. This implies that from its beginnings, the Israeli society cultivated a self, based on existential self-defence and the need for the requisite military capabilities to achieve this.

For Israelis, the founding of Israel symbolizes the grand narrative of 2000 years of exile, characterised by centuries of persecutions, and culminating in a rebirth of Jewish sovereignty replete with military might. Consequently, the Israeli self had (and still has) extensive motifs of both defensiveness (victimhood) and warrior-ness (supremacy) incorporated, reconstructed and maintained within its structure and content.

No alternative & purity of arms

The Israeli exercise of power was, from its early days, consistent with the ethos of “self-defence”, the attitude according to which “military force was used merely in order to protect a threatened community fighting for its survival and liberation” (Shapira, 1992, p.124). Before explicating the military ethos, and its declared attitude towards the use of force, a point worthy of note is the ubiquity of the military in Israeli society and culture. From its early days Israeli society was formed

²⁶ Moshe Dayan-A Brief Biography & Quotes: <http://www.palestineremembered.com>

as what Ben–Eliezer (1998) coined a ‘nation in uniform’. It is a society where boundaries between individual and society, between family and state, between community and nation and between the civic and the militaristic were completely blurred. It is a society saturated with militaristic culture that is diffused to every aspect of its life. From its early years, the army was a glorified institution, perceived as the ‘melting point’ of immigrant society in the process of nation building.

Rather than being a state with an army, Israel is almost an army with a state. Due to compulsory military service, subsequent to high school, almost all teenagers join the army. After three compulsory years most men are required to serve in the military reserved forces approximately four weeks every year until their mid-life. As they retire their service, senior officers are habitually parachuted to occupy central positions in politics and civic society commercial and economical institutions.

Crucial to this militaristic society and culture are two interrelated notions. The first is ‘*no alternative*’ or ‘*no choice*’, namely fighting only inevitable wars - wars in which Israel is defending itself against the threat of annihilation. The Israeli army is designated as the Israeli Defence Force and the wars which Israel has fought have all been defined as defensive wars²⁷. Many Israeli military actions which could have been and are now interpreted as provocations or as clearly offensive operations did not raise undue doubts regarding their justification since Arab leaders and states, by their actions and statements, lent ample support to the threat mentality: Israel faced continuous hostile infiltrations, violent border incidents, a refusal to recognise its existence and rabid statements of intent to obliterate it (cf. Ben –Eleizer 1998; Golani, 2002; Weissbrod, 2002).

The second key notion is the maxim of ‘*purity of arms*’. According to the IDF mission statement, purity of arms refers to the idea that:

“The IDF servicemen and women will use their weapons and force only for the purpose of their mission, only to the necessary extent and will

²⁷ The concept of ‘no alternative’ was the label Israelis gave to every war fought by the Jewish state from its War of Independence in 1948, until the 1982 controversial Lebanon War broke the national consensus.

maintain their humanity even during combat. IDF will not use their weapon or force to harm human beings who are not combatants or prisoners of war, and will do all in their power to avoid causing harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property”²⁸.

In short, the notion of purity of arms means fighting in self-defence and only against belligerents, excluding innocent civilians. It is a commandment of self-control in the use of armed force.

Based on the ethos of self-defence and self-control, the Israeli collective self has the tendency to conceive and justify the uses of violence as a means of coping with external threats to independence and security. The actual effect of force and its consequences for the victims are usually seen as necessary, inevitable results of pursuing these noble goals. My contention is that the defensive ethos enables the Israeli self to attribute unanticipated consequences to external circumstances rather than taking responsibility for them. The common manifestation of the ‘purity of arms’ approach is the widespread mantra that the Israeli army is *‘the most moral army in the world’*. In the eyes of most Israelis, the IDF is pure, stainless and the most restrained military force in the world. The following extract is taken from a web forum- it is a reply by an Israeli to a Palestinian accusations regarding the Israeli military operations in the Gaza strip during the recent cycle of violence:

“Shireen, as an Israeli I feel bad for your people's suffering. What do you expect ?! Hamas, Jihad and PFLP terrorists use you and fellow innocent civilians to launch their terror attacks. So blame the terrorists for Palestinian deaths, not the Israelis. When we entered Rafa and Jenin the overwhelming majority of Palestinian casualties were terrorists. The IDF is the most moral army in the world. We could easily carpet bomb your cities to destroy your terrorist infrastructure (like many other countries do), but instead we sacrifice our own soldiers to save you and your people. You should be thankful that Israel is so moral: Palestinian terrorists attempt to inflict as many casualties as possible on Israeli civilians while the IDF attempts not to

²⁸ The IDF website. www.idf.il/english/doctrine/doctrine.stm

harm you. When you want someone to blame for your peril, you don't need to look far- the extremists in your society are causing you all of your anguish. May we have peace in our times"²⁹.

The Palestinian other

The collective self of groups during times of conflict is always formed and reproduced as an opposition to the enemy-other. A large part of the Israeli national identity has been developed as opposition towards the enemy. Hence, the Israeli self, was always constructed in relation or in contrast to the Arab/Palestinian other, which can be defined as the "savage-warrior"(Sucharov, 1999).

Israelis and Palestinians were born into this conflict, and their identity is formulated, to no small extent, in terms of hostility and fear, survival and death. Sometimes it seems as if Israelis and Palestinians have no clear identities without the conflict, without the "enemy", whose existence is necessary, perhaps vital, to their sense of self and community. As Bar-On (2001 in press) queries: "Who are we if we are not determined through our negation of the other and the hatred of the other towards us?"

The negative portrayal of the Arabs/Palestinians by the Israeli-Jews was scrutinised by several writers in light of Edward Said's concept of *Orientalism* as a cultural outgrowth of the west³⁰. The depictions of "the Arab" as irrational, menacing, untrustworthy, anti-Western and dishonest, are ideas into which Orientalist scholarship has evolved. Said later applied the concept of Orientalism to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to argue that as a colonial movement, Zionism realised the importance of portraying the Arab character in a negative light and of depreciating Arab rights in order to justify Zionist actions in Palestine (1979). Shohat (1991) has applied the same idea when she analysed early Hebrew-Zionist films. She exposes that the Arab is depicted as a brutal and cultureless creature whose objection to Zionism lacks rational grounding.

²⁹ <http://www.israelforum.com/board/archive/index.php/t-2051.html>

³⁰ According to this thesis, an elite group trying to block the advance of an upcoming minority group by dubbing it "oriental", meaning devoid of "real" culture and hence not worthy of equal treatment.

The long-prevailing perception of the Arab-other as being bent on Israel's destruction, validated with the prolonged Arab animosity through wars, terrorism and consistent expression of hatred, led to a strengthening of the victimised self. There is a large bulk of research regarding the presentations of Arabs and Palestinians in Israeli society across various domains and communication channels such as the media, public discourse, school curricula, films and so forth. Because of space restrictions, I will provide two examples taken from studies that explored representations of Arabs in (a) Israeli geography textbooks and (b) commercial Hebrew children's literature. The findings serve as a condensed illustration of the content of the Arab-other as formed and reconstructed by the Israeli self³¹:

“Unenlightened, inferior, fatalistic, unproductive, apathetic, with the need for a strong paternalism. In addition it was said that their customs are different as well as their accommodations, occupations and their ways of life. They are divided, tribal, exotic, people of the backward East, poor, sick, dirty, noisy, and coloured. Arabs are not progressive; they multiply fast, ungrateful, not part of us, non-Jews. They commit arson and murder, they destroy, are easily inflamed and vengeful” (Bar-Gal, 1993, p.189³²).

In a qualitative study analysing commercial Hebrew children's books from the 1960's, El-Asmar (1986) found that the Arab appears “as a criminal who relishes murder for its own sake. Thus one should never ‘turn's ones back’ on an Arab. An Arab also kills for the least reason and appears to have no appreciation for the value of human life. An Arab is a thief; he steals because theft is part of his nature, especially theft from Jews because of his ‘envy’. An Arab is a swindler who would cheat even his own family. He is base, ready to sell himself, his honour, and his people cheaply. An Arab is a vagabond for whom material things have no value. He is a coward who cannot fight and who, therefore is cunning. He is a liar whose word

³¹ It is important to stress that both studies analysed materials from earlier period (60's to 70's) rather than contemporary commercial and textbooks. Since early nineties there was a revision of textbooks and negative stereotyping of the Arabs has significantly declined.

³² Quoted in Bar-Tal & Teichman 2005 – see this book for comprehensive review on the representations of the Arab in Israeli public sphere.

cannot be trusted and whose promises should not be taken seriously. An Arab is dirty in mind as well as body; he does not wash, and the teacher always warns the children not to come too close to an Arab lest they catch some dreadful disease". (1986, p.85)

Following the beginning of the Oslo peace process, a change for the better took place in peace education in Israel. In January 2000 the education minister had given instruction to purge from the textbooks any hint of anti-Arab stereotypes and to initiate a free discussion of less positive events in Israeli history. However, as recently revealed in a thorough study of both Israeli and Palestinian textbooks by Israeli and Palestinian academics, since the outbreak of the recent cycle of violence there is a tendency of retreat to the traditional, nationalist educational values, marginalisation of peace education and lack of attempt to understand the Palestinian perspective of the conflict³³. In the same vein, Bar-Tal (2004, in press) has found that whereas the presentations of Arabs in dehumanising terms, has declined since the 1980s and 1990s, there has been no change in the use of negative stereotypes that present Arabs as 'primitives', 'passive, 'cruel' and 'riffraff'. Additionally, in accord with Firer and Adwan's (2004) findings, he also observes that the dehumanising representations began to seep back into the education system after the outbreak of the Palestinian Intifada. Highly relevant to the current study, the researchers found that both Israeli and Palestinian textbooks do not reveal any tendency to tell the pupils the story of the conflict through from the enemy's point of view, both skip over the details of the human suffering of the other side while giving a reckoning of its victims alone.

The discrepancy phase

Scholars tend to attribute (in retrospect) the Six Days War of 1967 to the nascent split in the relatively homogenous character of the Israeli self. However, it is only after the appalling experience of the Yom Kippur war in 1973, the Lebanon war in 1982 and the Palestinian uprising in 1987 that significant conflicting orientations within the Israeli dominant narrative begun to emerge. To go back to Mead's

³³ Firer and Adwan (2004), in press.

terminology, the Israeli self, which was once restricted to a moderately single ethos, now incorporated a multiplicity of organised others.

The Israeli self's ethics and morality was relied upon to confine fighting to defensive actions against armed forces. Therefore the occupation of densely populated areas, notably the Gaza Strip and the West bank, which had victimised a large number of civilians, generated moral and ethical discrepancies within Israeli society and a growing number of contesting voices. The earlier common voice of the Israeli self-defence narrative slowly turned into a dualistic and ambivalent orientation towards the exercise of its power. The pre Six Days War feeling of insecurity was transformed into euphoria after Israel's 'miraculous' victory. It was so sudden and so dramatic that it was an ideological and psychological earthquake. As Ezrahi brightly observes, following the tremendous victory in the Six Days War,

“...suddenly the narrative of victimhood and the defensive conception of the use of force ceased to make sense...it was at this moment that the Jewish Israeli experience of the tragic aspect of applying lethal military force to one adversaries - the kind of trauma that can be experienced by those who shoot rather than those who are shot at - began to penetrate the Israeli mind.... victory enabled Israeli Jews to revise their perceptions of war and power from fear of a great hostile to the tragedy of the war as such...the knowledge, ambiguities and doubts that came with the actual experience of fighting began to erode a view of force that until then seemed self-evident and compelling”(1997, p.188-189).

The occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, which meant that Israel now held 100% of mandatory Palestine, generated a substantial division in the relatively cohesive Israeli self, a rip that lasts to date. Alongside the hegemonic view of “no alternative” and “purity of arms”, a critical voice surfaced, warning the Israeli society not to take action outside the bounds of absolute necessity, or fighting aggressive wars for the sake of expansionism and domination. The territorial consequences of the Six Days War provoked two narratives; two opposing responses, two distinct approaches to land, power and identity, both have been competing for hegemony ever since.

The one, based on nationalistic, religious and messianic foundations, interpreted the post war reality as a turning point in Jewish history, a new and fateful era, and a validation of the “Holy History” of the undefeatable Jewish people. This voice, which consists mainly (but not solely) of right-wing-orthodox-Jewish-nationalists, favoured the annexation of the occupied territories to a ‘Greater Eretz Israel’ acclaiming the same value reference to every spot on the resurrected Jewish kingdom’s map. The State of Israel, they say, is not like other countries. It is the beginning of the growth of our redemption, a miraculous revelation, in whose birth God himself was involved. A manifold miracle occurred in 1967, when we returned to the cities of our God.

According to this narrative, the ‘chosen people’ have returned to their sacred land whereas the indigenous Palestinians (whether tacitly or outwardly) are inferior, have no privileges in this land and devoid of human and civic rights. It is a narrative according to which Zionism is a permanent revolution, a part of a godly plan to bring about redemption to the Israeli people. This outlook, which doesn’t recognise the problem of occupation, since one cannot illegally, or amorally occupy one’s own land that was given to him by God. Embedded in this story is the perception of the land as the liberated territories rather than the occupied territories.

In its ‘lighter’, more secular version of this narrative, there was “Enlightened Occupation”, a policy introduced by the then Defence Minister Moshe Dayan and became the key message of the Israeli public relations in the 1970s. It meant that the Israeli occupation was “liberal” and that it brought prosperity and modernity to the natives by allowing for open bridges between the West Bank and Jordan, job permits in proper Israel and a considerable degree of self-government on the municipal level. All the same, it justifies discriminations bordering with racism against the Palestinian ‘enemies’ from curfews through road blockage to Jewish-only roads. The occupation and the subsequent settlement enterprise in the occupied territories have created a de-facto reality of apartheid.

The other voice loathed the messianic and redemptive outlook and warned against the moral and political slippery slope they envisaged in the occupation.

Secular and liberal values prevented the proponents of that voice from scaling the emotional and spiritual heights of the return to the ancient heritage. For those, winning the war and protecting the state of Israel is one thing, but holding onto territorial conquests was ethically unjustified. Having relinquished 'Jewishness' on the favour of "Israeliness" the secular-labour Zionists could have no claim to land, which was part of the Jewish heritage, but outside Israel borders (Weissbrod 2002).

The Western oriented humanistic-leftist Zionism viewpoint acknowledged the shortfalls and even the injustices inherent in the Zionist enterprise and its failure to anticipate and justly resolve the conflict with the indigenous Arab population. Ever since the 1967 victory there has always been a minority voice of political activists and humanists that have fiercely protested against the occupation and warned the Israeli society of the moral dangers embodied in the situation of controlling millions of people. Among them, for example, was professor Yeshaayahu Leibowitz, a prominent humanist and philosopher, best known for his vehement opposition to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, which would, he warned, impair the character of the Jewish state and corrupt the moral fibre of its people.

Regrettably, the redemptive narrative, on different levels of awareness and denial had a dominant status in the Israeli society. The Israeli self, to a large extent chose to ignore the problem of controlling other people and denying their rights and liberty. As long as the life in the occupied territories passed off quietly under a military regime combined with self-government on the municipal level, Israeli society appreciably repressed the Palestinian problem. As an ordinary Israeli child, without any distinct political orientation from home, I simply didn't know about the Israeli military occupation until the outbreak of the Intifada when I was at 9th grade. The Palestinians were simply Arabs, living in Arab places like Gaza or Nablus, whom I saw regularly as the 'Arab labourers' in my father's shop, or on the scaffolding of construction sites, building our houses. Even then, at the early stages of the Palestinian uprising, the only thing I can remember is that 'the Arabs had gone wild for some reason, completely distracting law and order and the army was sent to repress the riots'.

It was only due to the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising that the Israeli self has woken up from its moral slumber and a substantial debate concerning the Palestinian problem got underway. As Uri Savir noted, “Perhaps because we were the first occupier in history who felt as if they were the occupied, our self-image as a humane society and as an eternal victim of history, coupled with the Arab antagonism, blinded us to what was happening in the territories”³⁴. Since 1967 the Israeli occupation has been responsible for systematic and deliberate violations of the fundamental rights of the Palestinians as defined by international humanitarian law. These violations have involved the transfers of populations and annexation of land, house demolitions, torture, killing of innocent people, curfews, road blockage and various forms of collective punishment that severely impinges on the livelihood and well being of the majority of ordinary Palestinians.

Slowly but gradually, as a consequence of the 1967, 1973, and 1982 wars, and the 1987 Palestinian uprising, a progressive erosion of social consensus in Israeli society took place. The relatively unified Israeli self turned into an arena of multiple, contested voices struggling with one another to position Israeli-Jews within conflicting frameworks grounded in differing conceptions of community, history, culture and identity.

At one end of the socio-political discourse was a small group of Israeli scholars, known as the ‘new historians’ or ‘post-Zionists’, which during the 1970s and 1980s formulated an alternative perspective to Israeli history and culture which placed Israel’s political and military conduct under an uncompromising lens. Their writings brought to the surface and highlighted questions that had previously been neglected and thus gained a hearing for voices previously muted or excluded from the dominant Israeli discourse³⁵. Although fairly marginal and even seen as outcasts, this group nevertheless managed to undermine what they regarded as the ‘myths’ grounded in the Israeli-Zionist narrative.

³⁴ Israeli chief negotiator in the Oslo process (1998, p.236)

³⁵ For an extended discussion on post-Zionism see Silberstein 1999

For example, one of the most prominent myths along with the previously discussed “land without people” fable is the widespread account of the causes of the 1948 Palestinian refugee problem. When I was at primary school, I was taught that during the incidents of the 1948 war more than 600,000 Palestinians fled their homes and villages, encouraged by the promises of their leaders that they would return as victors. However, Morris (1987), an Israeli historian who carefully and extensively studied the issue, concluded that the policies and decisions of the Israeli political and military leadership and the actions of the Israeli military forces played a decisive role in precipitating the flight. Put differently, the Palestinian population was to a large extent expelled, rather than deciding to flee, thus creating what ever since has been regarded as the Palestinian refugee problem.

Further refuted myths were the pervasive claims that while the Israelis have done everything possible to bring about peace since 1948, the Arabs continually refused all initiatives. This supported the portrayal of the Israeli-Arab conflict as a war between a relatively defenceless and weak (Jewish) David and a relatively strong (Arab) Goliath (Elon, 1971; Segev, 1984; Pappé, 1992).

The first Palestinian Intifada (uprising) in 1987 provoked unprecedented moral, legal, political and ideological debates in Israel. Yet again, the dominant voice, the leading story, was ‘the Arabs are, once more, rising against us’, although the uprising and combat was restricted to the occupied territories, leaving life inside Israel proper, to a large extent, uninterrupted. The Israeli army was called to crush the resistance and soon became an armed police force for dealing with suppression and police actions whose primary purpose is the futile pursuit of children who throw stones.

The Palestinian uprising and the following peace process which was initiated (officially) in 1993 evoked an assortment of contested ideologies in the Israeli public sphere, each voice deriving from diverse symbolic resources, extending further the boundaries and content of the Israeli self. It was a constitutive event in the re-formation of the Israeli self since it dramatised the ambiguities between the role of the Israeli military force as an instrument of defence and as means of domination (Ezrahi, 1997). A substantial dissonance transpired in the Israeli collective psyche since the

Palestinian popular uprising against the Israeli occupation appreciably undermined the Israeli 'siege mentality' and the 'David and Goliath' myth, which maintained the common self-image of the Israelis for long years.

The Palestinian Intifada was a turning point in the Israeli narrative. It forced the Israeli self to a re-examination of its image and re-editing of its past, present and future plot. The spectrum of stories or, the representational field concerning the conflict, its origins, causes and solutions include religious-historical, colonialism, universal human rights, principle of distributive justice, demography, nationalism, security, guilt and responsibility, to name but a few.

For some, it was the beginning of the enterprise of normalizing Zionism - turning Judaism from a religion into a nation, from a group of wanderers into a territorial ingathering, from a network of communities into a political nation. Others have seen this process as a pure ethical retreat. For them, seeing the liberated territories as an occupation, and the decision to withdraw from them represents a moral bankruptcy and limpness worthy of contempt. The compromising and reconciliatory voices of a democratic society that wants a normal life for itself rather than some vague 'redemption', are defined as traitors. Nevertheless, the Israeli self was 'forced' to incorporate, although to a limited extent, the Palestinian narrative of self-determination and liberation that slowly and painfully defused and undermined the dominant Zionist narrative.

Peace & Security

Tied in with the defensive-warrior ethos and its diverse manifestations, is the idea of peace as an absolute value. Underlying the ubiquity of the word "peace" in Israeli culture is the assumption that Israel has always had an arm outstretched with an olive branch, only to be rebuffed by the intransigent Arab states. The Israeli self is exceedingly peace-advocating, at least in its self-image. I cautiously assert that every person in Israel sees peace as the ultimate desire and very few doubt the sincerity of the life long yearning for peace in the Israeli society. Since the establishment of Israel there has been extensive peace rhetoric in every possible communication channel.

People in Israel speak about peace, about yearning for peace and about the aspiration to live peacefully side-by-side our Arab neighbours. Innumerable songs were written about peace, the political rhetoric is engorged with peace related themes, and the mass media is saturated with unremitting barrage regarding the issue of peace. It must be said that beliefs about peace are functional in the sense that they present the members of society as peace lovers and peace seekers both to themselves and to the outside world. Additionally, perceiving oneself as a peace-pursuer enhances positive self-esteem and fulfils the function of providing hope and optimism (Bar-Tal, 1998). Indeed, it seems that peace rhetoric is, for the time being, further reaching than the actual intentions of the Israeli self. So far, although Israeli leaders have stated their willingness for ‘painful concessions’, no serious offer has been made. Put differently, although the peace rhetoric in Israel speaks of the need to end the occupation, of ‘far reaching concessions’, and to live peacefully side-by-side with the Palestinians neighbours, the facts on the ground reveal the opposite - more settlements, more annexation of land and deepening of the occupation.

For example, in a recent survey that gauged trends in Israeli public opinion regarding the notion of peace and the contemporary political processes³⁶, the researchers found that although the widespread view is that the disengagement plan³⁷—which enjoys majority support and is given high chances of being implemented—is not the end of the story. However it is viewed only as a first step toward an extensive evacuation of Jewish settlements in the West Bank in the framework of the permanent agreement with the Palestinians. A clear majority of the Israeli Jewish public currently supports the government’s plan to build 3,500 housing units between Maale Adumim and Jerusalem so as to create territorial continuity between them, even in the knowledge that such building will reduce the chances of reaching a peace settlement with the Palestinians.

The notion of peace in Israeli society is robustly attached to the notion of *security*. Security is one of the most central concepts in the Israeli self and hence it is

³⁶ Israel Peace Index March 2005: The Tami Steinmetz Centre for Peace Research. <http://spirit.tau.ac.il/socant/peace>.

³⁷ Prime Minister Sharon plan to unilaterally evacuate the Israeli settlements in the Gaza strip and the northern West Bank. See footnote 21 page 104.

used by almost everyone, left-wingers and right-wingers, compromisers and expansionists. More than fifty years after the establishment of the state of Israel, the goal of achieving peace and security still remains the main focus of the public agenda, where every party claims to have the exclusive formula to attain this goal. For example, in the last four general elections, the parties slogans (both left and right) expressed a catchy peace and security motto such as 'secured peace', '*this* peace is killing us', 'peace *with* security' and alike.

The memory of the past one hundred years of violent clashes with the Arabs has engendered an existential fear among many Israelis that in delivering justice to the Palestinians they may be signing their own death warrant. Therefore, the content of the concept of security refers to the preservation of the Israeli state in view of the dangers deriving from Arab perceived intentions. Both peace and security, as key themes within the Israeli self have highly contested meaning where political ideologies have an effect on formed contents regarding these concepts. The wide-ranging consent over the militaristic political culture of Israel, in which commitment to the security of the state and its citizens often has supremacy over humanitarian values, has been produced and sustained by the Israeli self ever since its early days. This commitment and its consequences are demonstrated daily in the current military campaign against the Palestinian resistance. In the name of security, Israel's deeds and policies occasionally pulverised the most basic rights of the Palestinians.

The Israeli self, regarding the conflict became ambiguous, ambivalent and included factual discrepancies, manifold contested interpretations of reality and moral contradictions. The nadir of these ideological disagreements resulted in the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by a single right-wing assassin. Rabin's determination to persist with the peace process engendered a wave of fierce objection from the national-right camp finding expression in incensed protests where voices calling Rabin a 'traitor' and 'collaborator with the Arabs' were heard. In one protest prior to his assassination, his picture was shown wearing a Nazi uniform. Nevertheless, the rocky road toward peace continued with talks and negotiations side by side, in the environment of sporadic terrorist attacks on the one hand and the furtherance of occupation practices, and the settlement enterprise in the occupied territories, on the other.

In the summer of 2000, Prime Minister Barak, Chairman Arafat and President Clinton started in Camp David what should have been the final round of negotiations towards a peace agreement. Barak left Israel, leaving behind him a torn coalition and a fierce public voice proclaiming negative responses to the talks with the Palestinians. After two weeks of intensive talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians, the parties failed to reach an agreement, blaming each other for the breakdown of the talks. The collapse of the negotiations initiated a sequence of events which eventually resulted in the outbreak of the second Intifada.

Back to hegemony?

The beginning of the peace process brought a gust of hope and optimism to the majority of the Israeli society. Since the commencement of the Oslo accord and the historical hand shake of Rabin and Arafat at the White House garden in September 1993, albeit enduring difficulties, potholes and the fierce opposition from the right, the peace camp has slowly yet optimistically extended its boundaries. However, the refusal of the Palestinians to accept Barak's ostensible 'generous offers' and the outbreak of the violent uprising, shattered the fantasy of 'peace is around the corner' and generated a deep devastation and sense of disillusionment among the peace camp in Israel. The clashes, which followed the breakdown of the summit in Camp David have generated an overwhelming disappointment and mistrust and caused a deep crisis amongst the Israeli 'peace-block'. There is a broad national consensus behind the assertion regarding the 'most generous offers' that Ehud Barak, the Israeli prime minister is said to have made to Arafat at Camp David, only to be confronted with a flat rejection and a return to violence.

The eruption of violence exposed the fragility of the apparent conciliation between the parties. The Palestinians decided to react to the collapse of the negotiations with violence and terror, while the Israelis decided to control the uprising and terror with massive force and before long the area deteriorated to a shattering cycle of blood.

Following the acts of violence, both peoples aligned themselves with their respective right wings in response to 'the other's' violence, and out of the need to justify their own violence. The war has become the existential situation of the Israelis and the Palestinians. No one is talking about an end to the confrontations, certainly not about resolution of the conflict, only about mutual 'exacting of a price'. As David Grossman, an Israeli eminent novelist observed:

"Since there is no hope, Israelis and Palestinians go back to doing what they know how to do - to shed the blood of the other side. Each day more and more people join the ranks of the dead and wounded, of the haters and the despondent. Each day the appetite for revenge grows. Little by little, Israelis and Palestinians are moving further and further from peace. Without noticing it, Palestinians and Israelis are reverting to the pattern of an ancient tribal war, eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth"³⁸.

The Israelis interpreted the Palestinians rejection of the peace deal and the return to violence as proof of insincerity of the Palestinians to put an end to the conflict. Many perceived the failure of the Camp David talks and the subsequent violent outburst as a sign of the Palestinians insistence on principles that endanger the very existence of the State of Israel. Soon, the catchphrase 'there is no partner for peace' transformed into an undisputed truth and turned to be the official policy of Israel. The Israeli military and ministries asserted that chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority were contaminated with terrorism and cut all diplomat relations.

The political left glided to the right and the cycle of violence was widely depicted as yet another case of fighting a 'no alternative' war. The Palestinian resistance in all its forms, from the extremists' vile terrorism to the popular struggle for liberation, is portrayed as a lurking danger and a threat to the entire Jewish people. As a result, the Israeli self is now reunited around the campfire of war. The Israeli self is now slipping back into the psychological stance of its earlier days- the stance of the victim, of the persecuted Jew where almost every threat to it is perceived as an absolute peril justifying the harshest response. As Yizhak Laor, author and playwright

³⁸ Guardian, May 14, 2001.

states: "Israelis look to punish anyone who undermines our image of ourselves as victims. Nobody is allowed to take this image from us, especially not in the context of the war with the Palestinians, who are waging a war on 'our home' – that is, their 'non-home'"³⁹. We, apparently are allowed everything, for we are "the ultimate victims," even when we are the occupiers and we have the power.

Even Benny Morris, whom I referred to previously as one of the trailblazers of the "new historiography" had surprised many of his colleagues in the academia and the far-left of the political map when he claimed in an interview to 'Yediot Ahronot' (the most popular Israeli daily):

"It is the Palestinian leadership's rejection of the Barak-Clinton peace proposals of July-December 2000, the launching of the Intifada, and the demand ever since that Israel accept the "right of return" that has persuaded me that the Palestinians, at least in this generation, do not intend peace: they do not want, merely, an end to the occupation - that is what was offered back in July-December 2000, and they rejected the deal. They want all of Palestine and as few Jews in it as possible. The right of return is the wedge with which to prise open the Jewish state. Demography - the far higher Arab birth rate - will, over time, do the rest, if Iranian or Iraqi nuclear weapons don't do the trick first"⁴⁰.

The manifold voices of the Israeli self, the various narratives constituting this self, cycled back into a single voice of suspicion, insecurity and victimisation. The long Jewish history of living with persecutions is being deployed again in the daily discourse where the Palestinian violence has been sometimes presented as yet another pogrom and a potential new Holocaust. The results of these symbolic manipulations along with factual wave of brutal attacks (the suicide bombers) on buses, restaurants and shopping malls, which are interpreted according to this logic, have produced a tremendous fear among the Israelis and a demand to react with full-scale force against the threat.

³⁹ Yediot Aharonot, April 22, 2002

⁴⁰ Guardian, February 21, 2002.

It is impossible to overstate the impact of the suicide bombers on Israeli society. The sheer number of suicide attacks has dulled the Israeli self. In the past three years the Israelis have been living in a reality where people are torn apart, and complete families are slaughtered in cafes and buses. The public sphere in Israel today is a fortified sphere with armed guards standing everywhere. Every supermarket, bank, theatre and café now employs private guards whose duty is to search customers as they enter the building. Whenever people enter a restaurant or a bus they think hard about where to sit, whether it is better to be near the entrance or deeper inside. Hence, the central theme of the Israeli self cycled back to become the alert defensive Jew against the savage Arab and a subjective feeling of pain and trauma has become disseminated and strengthened. The view of the Palestinians as part of the surrounding millions of Arabs who all have one intention -to 'drive the Jews into the sea'- has become again hegemonic in Israeli society.

Additional hegemony began to take root in Israel-Jewish society: that the conflict with the Palestinians may be unsolvable. This new hegemony is characterised by a mix of political ethnocentrism and self-deception exacerbated by the sense of existential threat and the conviction that the state is permanently embroiled in a predicament stemming from the perceived insolubility of the conflict with the Palestinians. The following extract, taken from a right-wing columnist in Ha'aretz (Israel quality daily) best epitomises the current outlook:

..."Basically, the signs that the Arabs will never give up the fight have been apparent ever since the start of the modern return to Zion. However, fairly few people, in each generation, were willing to admit it: Our war of existence will not, evidently, ever end, even in the distant future... The objective of the Arabs' wars, from the war rejecting the partition borders in 1947 to the war rejecting the Camp David and Taba talks boundaries, is to prove that no sovereign Jewish presence, in any boundary whatsoever, was, is or will be accepted by the Muslim world, and certainly not by the Arab world... Suicide terrorism is not only battling against Jewish independence, but against the fact of our mere presence here. ... the Jewish people in its

homeland is the only people in the world whose enemies aspire to drive it out of its own country”⁴¹.

Nevertheless, for some time now, alternative voices begin to penetrate the public discourse. After three bleeding years, through the fences of anger, fear, self-victimisation, and massive demonisation of the Palestinians, a complementary picture is slowly permeating parts of the Israeli self. This voice, this counter-narrative, was almost completely muted for a long time but it seems as if it is diffusing again to the Israeli collective consciousness in the form of a minority influence. For example, recently a group of 27 elite military pilots publicly announced that they would refuse to take part in the targeted assassinations of Palestinian militants because of the inevitable result of the killing of innocent civilians. This comes not so long after the launch of ‘The Courage to Refuse’, a civilian social movement comprised of reserve soldiers and officers, who signed a petition declaring they “shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people”⁴².

These announcements stunned the Israeli public and the majority attacked and denounced the seemingly rebellious act. Yet, the Israeli self is hesitantly looking again in the mirror and seeing long years of occupation, house demolitions, curfews, humiliations, checkpoints, violations of human rights, searches, arrests, killings - all of which are part of the daily life of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. Put differently, the Israeli self is gradually opening up again through various communication channels to recognise the counter-narrative of the Palestinians.

The Israeli self today is trapped in an insurmountable moral and ethical dilemma where on the one hand it is forced to fight a war of no choice, a difficult, complex war - a war against terror. On the other hand, and, at the same time, the IDF is still an occupation force that violates the most basic human rights of millions of people. It is a self paralysed by fear, embracing policies of extrajudicial assassination, illegal settlement and in denial about the brutality it commits daily. Existentially

⁴¹ Haaretz: August 2004

⁴² From the ‘Refusniks’ website- www.seruv.org.il/defaulteng.asp.

victimised according to its self-image, the Israeli self, in various degrees of awareness has turned its history of persecutions into a political asset. The memory of the holocaust is used for warding off any international criticism regarding the Israeli immoral policies and actions in the occupied territories.

In retrospect we might recognise that the suicide bombings, the Israeli vision of the military as a defensive force and the extensive rhetoric, which aims to portray the Palestinians as the absolute evil, blinded the Israeli self to its very own injustices and abuses, namely narrowing of the moral self. An Israeli narrow self that exhibits constant failing vis-à-vis the Palestinians is due to its dominant voice's denial of the Palestinian humanity and refusal to acknowledge counter-narratives of occupation and subordination. It is a self that struggles to overcome the unbearable moral contradictions embedded in the tragic story of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Summary

In this chapter I tried to delineate the Israeli collective self in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict of which I called the 'victimised-occupier self'. From its early, more homogeneous days, Israeli society sees itself as being born out of centuries of Diaspora persecutions into the arms of Arab intransigence. The Holocaust, which was the key driving force to the Zionist movement's decision to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, still plays a major role in the Israeli collective psyche. The protracted conflict with its Arab neighbours, that is perceived as yet another episode in the history of the prosecuted Jewish people has generated and sustained substantial feelings of mistrust and suspicions of Arabs, and constant (both psychological and actual) state of defensiveness. Equally, the Israeli self has cultivated a strong sense of heroism and military might. It is perfectly aware of its being a military and economic superpower. Having won all the wars against the Arabs, the Israeli self nurtured a strong sense of supremacy, both military and morally over the Arab enemies.

The 1967 war's tremendous victory and its territorial consequences has been an ideological and psychological tremor for the Israeli self, which marked the

beginning of a protracted rip in its relatively cohesive structure. It was a point in which the hegemony of the 'few against many' ethos has been weakened and the master narrative of the Israeli society has split. According to one version, the consequence of the Six-Days-War was part of a godly plan of liberating the sacred land and settle the 'chosen people' in their resurrecting kingdom.

For others, the redemptive outlook was detested and the occupation of the land and the Palestinian people was experienced as a moral retreat and as excessive, illegal damnifying expansionism. Ever since that day, the Israeli self is constantly in the midst of internal struggle between competing sets of values and representations, indeed between versions of reality. Various events, noticeably the 1973 and 1982 wars, the 1987 first Palestinian popular uprising and the peace process it incited, have extended the cleavage in the Israeli self, which was by then a multifaceted arena of competing voices and ideologies.

Effectively, the expansionist outlook prevails. Israel still holds the occupied territories and is engaged in a massive controversial settlement enterprise. 3.5 million Palestinians have been living for thirty-eight years now under military occupation deprived of fundamental human and civic rights. Nevertheless, the Israeli self is resounding advocate for peace. The fervent desire to live peacefully side by side its Arab neighbours is a key constituent of the Israeli collective psyche and perhaps its sole consensual element. The majority of the Israelis genuinely believe that Israel has always had its arm outstretched with an olive branch only to be rejected time and again by the obstinate Arabs.

This shared belief gained redoubled strength with the collapse of the Camp David talks and the outbreak of the Palestinian armed uprising. The perceived threat generated by the Palestinian suicide bombing campaign has stirred an exceptional unity of mistrust and victimhood. After many years of fierce internal struggle over its identity, the Israeli self was reunited around the campfire of war. Despite the fundamental asymmetry of power relations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, Israelis see themselves as the primary victims. The Israeli self is now constituted of strong feelings of a defenceless victim even when it clashes markedly with Israel's military might. The horrible images in the mass media and the political rhetoric have

amplified the fear and generated a psychological equation between personal and national threat and lack of security. Embodied in pictures of blasted, torn buses is an existential threat to the state of Israel. It generated a complete imperviousness to the suffering of the Palestinians. The Israeli self was eager to respond with full-scale force and the Israeli army launched massive military operations, which inevitably, by the nature of confrontations between an occupying army and civilian population fighting to end the occupation, slides over into acts of abuse, unnecessary shooting, massive demolition of houses, the killing of hundreds of innocent people and the daily intimidation of thousands at checkpoints.

In sum, the Israeli victimised-occupier self is comprised of contradictory elements. It is constitutive of strong sense of victimhood and vulnerability while maintaining an illegal and unscrupulous occupation against the rule of international law. While it explicitly states its willingness to end the occupation it is in effect deepening its hold in the territories and expanding the settlements. It is trapped between an ethos of self-control and restraint while willing to exercise its military might in unrestrained manner. It is both aware of the injustice it inflicts upon the Palestinians and completely disregards their sufferings. And lastly, it yearns for peace but is not really willing to pay the price for achieving this eternal dream, especially when it holds feelings of disdain and contempt, hatred and fear towards the Palestinians with whom peace should be made. In the following chapters, I will try to show the workings of these processes as they come to play and shape the children's responses in relation to the Palestinian perspective.

5. THE IMAGE OF THE OTHER: PERSPECTIVE TAKING IN DRAWINGS

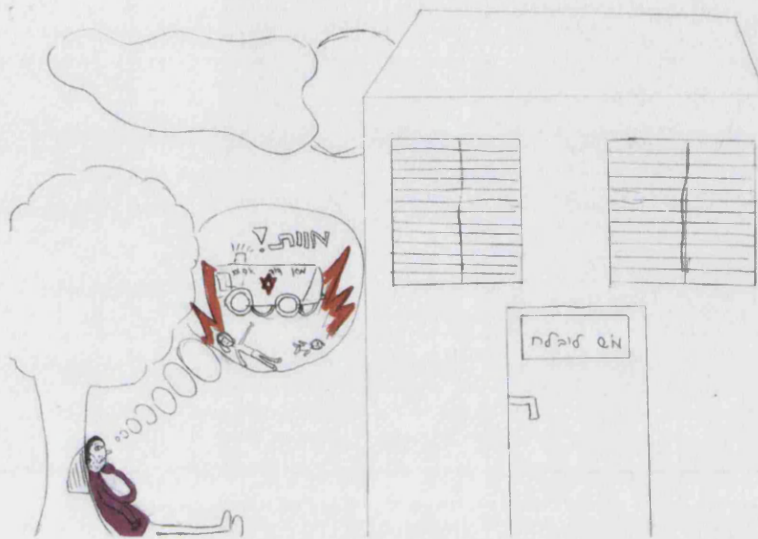


Figure 1 Girl - Settlement

Introduction

For much of human history, images and symbols have preserved and communicated meaning. From the early days to the present, images and symbols have shown the richness and complexity of human life and have always been considered a form of communication and self-expression. According to Burton (1991), the driving force behind image making is “the human need and desire to make sense of the world and the self in the world” (p.6). In visual material one can find a collection of symbols that are representations of objects and expressions of ideas, feelings and emotions. The use of images and symbols is so much a part of human cognition that it allows us to make statements saturated with sociological meaning, which sometimes cannot be made with words. Taken cumulatively, images are signifiers of culture and thus can be used empirically to investigate social organization, cultural meaning and psychological processes.

Drawing is considered a natural mode of expression for children. Much of children's (and adults') thinking involves images and therefore their drawings are artistic expressions by means of symbols. As Gardner (1982) notes "in the period from age two to seven, the child comes to know and begins to master the various symbols in his culture.... In addition to knowing the world directly, he can capture and communicate his knowledge of things and people through any number of symbolic forms"(p.87). Coming from the clinical-projective approach to children's drawings, Burns (1987) claims that images appearing in children's drawings "are but ferries carrying us to the shore of experience beyond verbal thought; a shore where one picture is worth a thousand words"(p.177).

The sociological perspective on children's drawings

Apart from the three dominant approaches to children's drawings, namely, the cognitive-developmental approach, the clinic-projective approach, and the artistic-expressive approach, each with its own underlying assumption and objectives, there is a growing body of research which demonstrates the advantages of children's drawings for sociological inquiry as well. In what follows I will try to show that children's drawings offer both theoretical and empirical advantages in making certain aspects of the social world visible. The following examples reflect the capacity of drawings to examine children's (inter)subjectively held ideas about the larger social world in which they participate.

In his book 'Group Values Through Children's Drawings' (1966), Dennis first introduces the sociological perspective in the study of children's drawings. He examines how differences in cultural patterns and values are reflected in children's visual expressions. Relying on this pioneer work, Vasquez-Nuttall et al (1988), use children's drawings to bring to the fore representations of the family in different cultures. The data collected enables the researchers to note great differences in the way families were represented, and to conclude that the drawings do actually reflect the social and cultural values of different groups. For example, representations of collectivism were expressed by the Chinese children through the tendency to include

the members of the extended family, while in contrast, the American children seemed to express strong feelings of individualism and independence towards the family.

In a similar study, Hummel et al (1995) have used quantitative analysis of children's drawings of grandparents from six different countries. Their research clearly demonstrates great differences in the children's representations of the elders. For example, whereas the Swiss children represented their grandparents as people living alone, on the fringe of society, as if they no longer have any social role apart from self-care activities, the elders in the Indian children's drawings are portrayed as strongly integrated into society yet almost exclusively in the role of caregivers. The researchers conclude that drawings can "well be used as complex, but reliable, instruments in the field of sociological investigation" (p. 169).

Other studies have examined ideas about healthy behaviours (Wetton and McWhirtier 1988), how drawings of the environment (buildings) vary by cultural context (Krampen, 1991), children's representations of the world of drugs (Hadley and Stockdale, 1996) and children's representations and concerns about environmental crisis (King, 1995). De Rosa (1987) describes significant aspects of social representations of mental illness, with the use of children's drawings. She notes that images "are an essential vehicle for the study of social representations, especially when utilized to project externally latent symbolic structures" (p 56).

The image of the 'other' as reflected in Human Figure Drawing

Although initially developed as an intelligence or personality test, the Human Figure Drawing (HFD) can also serve as a highly instructive tool for sociological inquiry. As already noted Dennis (1966) uses the HFD in his research in order to investigate social learning and culture. He claims that preferences and choices, guided by social values, are reflected in children's drawings of other people. Additionally, he demonstrates how different attitudes and values towards in-group and out-group are manifested in the drawings. Following Dennis, Chambers (1983) invented the "Draw-A-Scientist Test". She attempted to study students' perceptions of scientists, especially among students at ages young enough that they might not be

able to express themselves very well through writing. Since Chambers, numerous studies of students' drawings note conspicuous patterns surrounding gender and particular activities undertaken by a variety of different types of social actors. Overwhelmingly, students depict scientists as male (Fort and Varney 1989; Huber and Burton 1995), although this gender bias is not limited to scientists. Other applications find similar types of results among drawings of pilgrims, settlers, and hippies (Fournier and Wineberg 1997), while students almost universally draw teachers as female (Weber and Mitchell 1995). Moreover, drawings depicting male characters also tend to show them engaged in scientific endeavours or other activities, while female characters appear inert (Fournier and Wineberg 1997; Huber and Burton 1995; Weber and Mitchell 1995). These studies show that the HFD can be a valuable tool for exploring not only the products of perceptual exploration and information processing but also as reconstructions of knowledge circulating in the social environment the children live in.

The most advanced attempt to systematise the HFD as a method for the appraisal of stereotypical and attitudinal aspects towards self and other, has been made by Teichman and Bar-Tal (Teichman. 2001; Teichman and Zafrir, 2003; Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005). Drawn upon dominant cognitive-developmental and experimental social-psychological theories regarding children's drawing, stereotypes and prejudice, they developed a multi-parameter analytic tool. They asked Israeli children in different age groups to draw a typical Jewish and/or Arab man. Following each drawing the children were asked to answer an open-ended questionnaire about the person they had just drawn. Their findings are too extensive and complex to be reviewed in full, yet overall the image of the Arab is portrayed as having significantly lower status, more negative feelings and more aggressive behaviour. The children depict the Arab as significantly more aggressive than the Jew, and the attitudes and intentions toward him were significantly more negative.

As suggested earlier, a social-psychological enquiry to the notion of taking the perspective of the other should commence with the question - **what other?** That is to say, in order to get a better grasp on failings or difficulties of individuals and groups to take the perspective of other individuals or groups, one should start by looking at the symbolic construction and understandings of the 'other' in question. In that sense

children's drawings, as figurative expressions of symbolically mediated reality between the child and the social world can convey rich details on the ideological construction of the other in question.

The rationale for studying children's drawings of the 'other' in the current study is essentially three-fold:

- In accordance with my contention that perspective taking is a communicative practice, drawings are a figurative mode of communication and can reflect values, attitude and stereotypes towards self and other. Given the intensity of the political climate in Israel, it is assumed that the situation influences the children's drawings by calling upon their socio-political knowledge and responses. The drawing task thus intended to elicit intersubjective responses and might reveal how these ideas become integrated and communicated graphically. At a theoretical level, drawings may 'make visible' the various representations that mediate perspective taking. The children's involvement and interests as actors in the social world is assumed to underlie the nature of their representational work where the intentions, behaviours and values of the 'other' are explored and incorporated in their drawings. Moreover, children's drawings can give insight into the objectifications of the children. As Moscovici (1984) notes, "to objectify is to discover the iconic quality of an imprecise idea or being, to reproduce a concept in an image" (p. 49).

- When asked to draw a Palestinian, the children must usually draw some form of human depiction. In this sense, drawing is an embedded practice. While this may be a limitation of drawings, it can also be an asset as it delimits certain parameters. Drawing requires children to make their intentions clear through shared denotations and common symbols that stand for recognized ideas. By implicitly asking for an embodied representation, it is assumed that the drawings will prompt the children to make decisions and evaluations about the characteristics of the Palestinian, the kinds of activities they will likely undertake, and the contexts in which they appear. In this regard, the drawings

can be treated as graphic narratives in which the children are required to position the 'other' (and self) as a way to establish perspective.

- And lastly, on a more practical level, I have found that drawings provide a relatively quick and easy way to gather social information from and about children. I found that children are not only willing but also eager to participate in drawing sessions.

Findings

Analysis 1: Content analysis of drawings

In a variety of ways, the analysis of the drawings reveals the operation of ideologically informed iconic repertoire. The drawings are replete with an assortment of political messages of which the most dominant is the violent behaviour attributed to the Palestinian drawn characters. As will be presented, whereas the city and settlement drawings are very similar in their patterns, the content of the drawings of the Kibbutz children differs quite significantly.

Table 3. Subject sample

Social group	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
City	19	22	41
Settlement	19	20	39
Kibbutz	21	22	43
Total	59	64	123

The drawn character and the activity

The results show that the majority of the characters, Palestinian boy or girl, are represented alone (47.2%). The rest drew the Palestinian with an Israeli character

(28.5%), or with peers (17.9%). Very few children drew the Palestinian with family (4.1%) or with various characters, i.e. peers, and/or family with Israeli (2.4%).

As to the activity, there are two dominant patterns. In 44.7% of the drawings the Palestinian was represented as involved in violent actions (i.e. throwing stones, shooting, placing a bomb). In 42.3% of the drawings, the Palestinian is inactive. Some children drew the Palestinian involved in non-violent, but conflict related activities such as raising a flag (9.8%) and being attacked (3.3%).

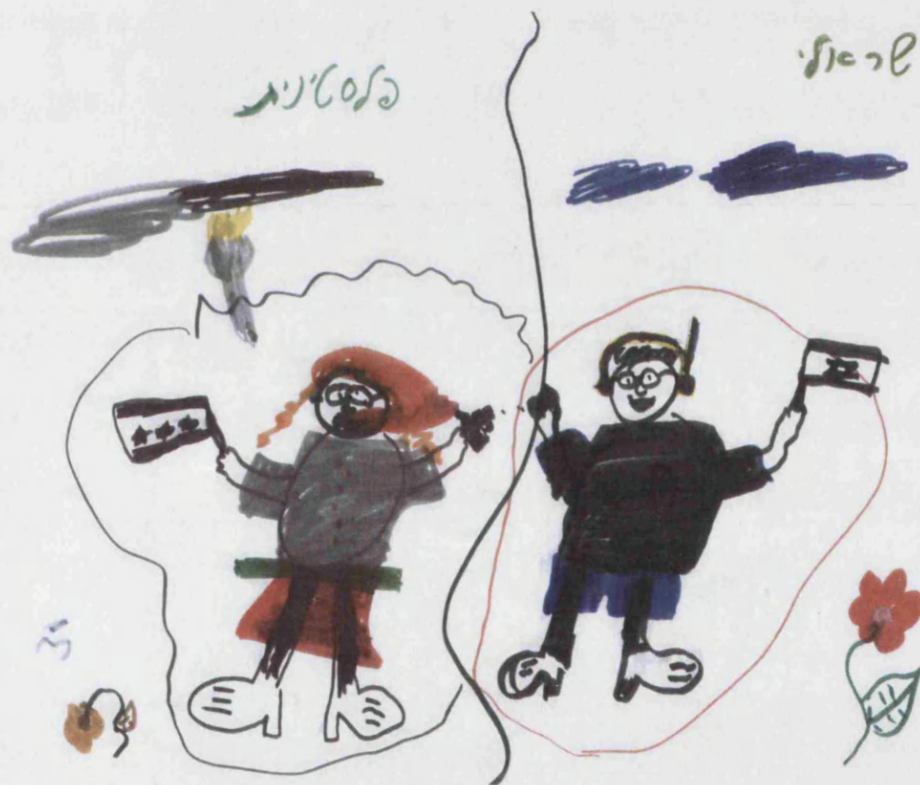
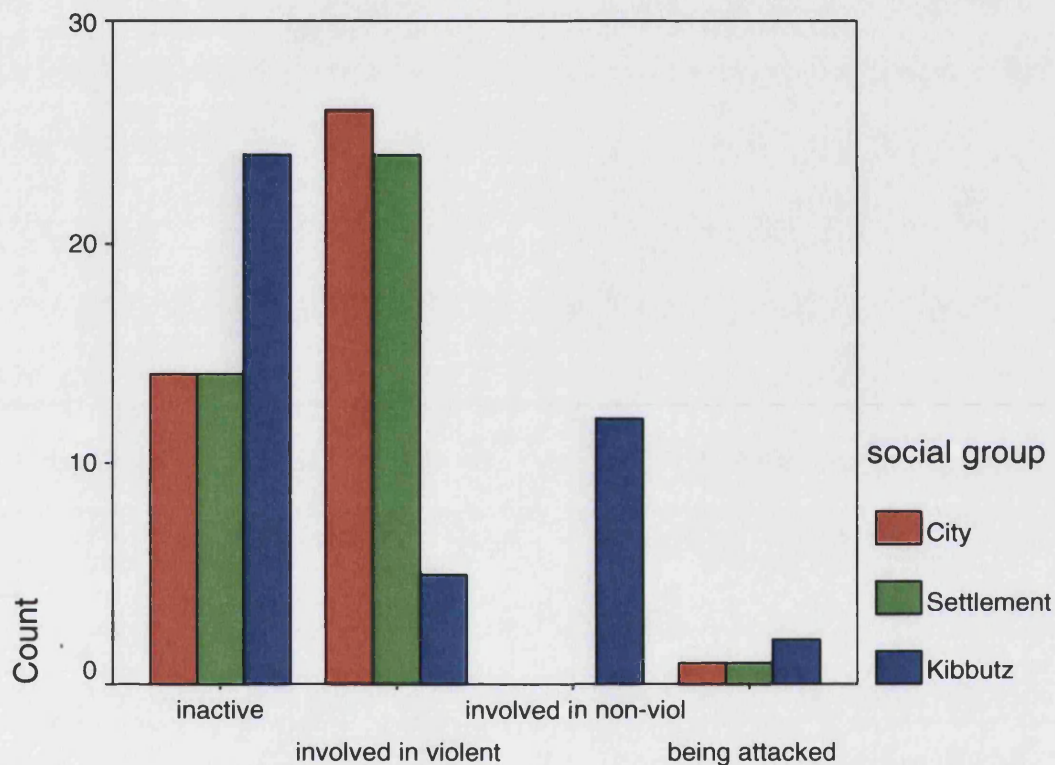


Figure 2 Girl - Kibbutz

Group patterns

In the drawings from the Kibbutz, more than half of the characters are inactive (55.8%). Only 9.1% of the Kibbutz children drew the Palestinian as involved in a violent act, yet Palestinian involved in non-violent conflict related activity is a category exclusive to the Kibbutz drawings and was presented in 27.9% of the groups

drawings. This category was comprised of drawings in which the Palestinian figure is shown to convey a non-violent political message such as raising the Palestinian flag or a peaceful message such as 'let's be friends' or 'we are all the same'. In two drawings, the Palestinian is drawn as being attacked by the Israelis.



The Activity: Behaviour Attributed to the Figure

In the settlers' drawings, the majority of the Palestinians are involved in violent activity (61.5%). The rest are either inactive (35.9%), with one drawing that shows the Palestinian as being attacked yet it was clear from other evidence that 'being attacked' represented what should be done to the Palestinian rather than depicting the Palestinian as a victim.

Regarding these variables, the city children's drawings are very similar to those from the settlement. The Palestinian activity patterns show 47.3% are involved in violent acts, 26.9% inactive and one drawing depicts the Palestinian as being attacked as a desirable treatment rather than expressing empathy.

Symbols of conflict

The violent nature of the conflict is vastly represented in the children's drawings. Stones, guns, knives, ambulances, blood and bombs, (hereinafter-warfare symbols) were widely used. The latter, being the most prominent symbol, was found in 35% of the drawings (see table 2). It is important to note here that since in many of the drawings there was more than one symbol of conflict, this variable was scored as a multiple response in order to gain qualitative data on the features and usage of these symbols as well as quantitative information on the amount of symbols usage among the groups.

Table 4: Symbols of conflict (count).

Symbols of conflict	Social group			Total
	City	Settlement	Kibbutz	
Stone/s	12	12		24
Gun/s	14	8	12	34
Bomb/s	23	20	4	48
Knife/s	6	10	2	18
Tank	3	2	4	9
Ambulance	12	8	3	23
Blood	1	6	2	9
flag	2	9	15	26
Fence			7	7
Map			4	4
Dove with olive branch			3	3

Group patterns

Analysis of the various symbols drawn by the children reveals clear patterns of the groups' segmentation⁴³. As seen in the table, bomb/s were mostly depicted as being worn by the Palestinian individual to symbolise the suicide bombers. They are significantly the most frequent symbol of conflict used in the children's drawings (See

⁴³ I will suggest some interpretations of these symbols and the explanations for their depiction, yet the reading of the quantitative data regarding the frequent usage of this or that symbol within the groups needs always to be considered with caution since the drawing task was undertaken in a setting of a classroom of 35-40 children and some degree of peers' mutual influence is inevitable.

figure 3, 4, 5, 6). The reference to the suicide bomber is made in more than 50% of both the city and the settlement drawings whereas in the kibbutz drawings only four (10%) children made reference to the suicide bombers.



Figure 3 Boy - Settlement



Figure 4 Boy - City

The sign of gun/s (see figures 3, 4, 9) reveals another remarkable difference among the groups. The table shows that this symbol is represented just about evenly across the groups (14, 8, 12 in the city, settlement and kibbutz respectively) a somewhat surprising finding considering the less acute nature of the kibbutz drawings in general and the fact that when looking back at the ‘activity’ of the drawn character in the kibbutz drawings, there are only five children who depicted the Palestinian as being involved in violent activity. A closer look at the data shows that in the remainder of the drawings, which contain the gun/s symbol, there are either Israeli figures that hold a gun against the Palestinian or that the sign of gun/s accompanied by additional representations are meant to indicate and condemn the dismal and violent reality of the conflict.



Figure 5 Boy - City

In addition to the vast appearance of the suicide bombers who represent the terrorist nature of the Palestinian and the conflict, the symbol of stone/s is assumed to represent the more popular nature of the Palestinian uprising. Being *the* symbol of the first Intifada, stones remain a significant symbol of conflict to both the city and the settlement and were found in approximately 30% of their drawings. No such symbols were found in the kibbutz drawings.



Figure 6 Boy - Kibbutz

Figure 7 Girl - Settlement

There were also two different kinds of vehicles depicted in the children's drawings as prominent representations of the conflict. The first, the tank (heavily armoured combat vehicle that is armed with cannons and machine guns and moves on continuous tracks) was found in nine drawings. This symbol is used in reference to two different perspectives. On the one hand, it might represent the Israeli military superiority since the Palestinians have no such vehicle. The children who use the tank in this context depicted a battlefield where the Palestinians use bombs, guns or stones while the Israelis fight back with tanks. An alternative and rare usage, found in the kibbutz, was to convey the idea of a burdensome presence of the Israeli army in the Palestinian neighbourhoods.

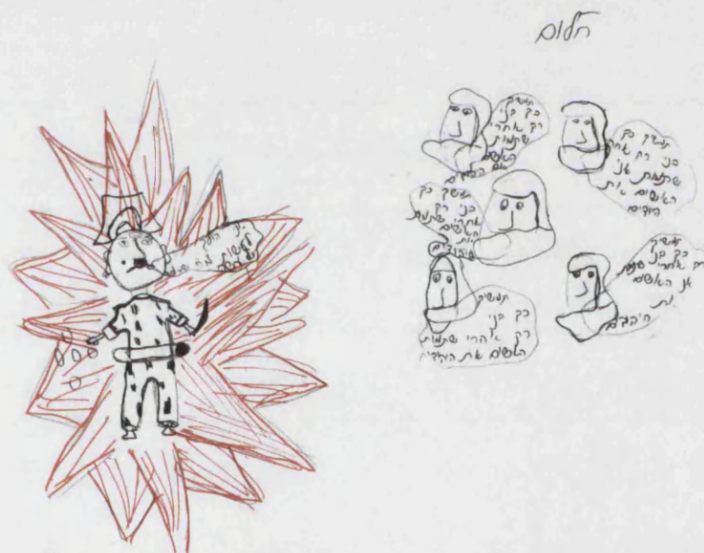


Figure 8 Girl - Settlement

The second vehicle, the ambulance, was depicted in 18.6% of the drawings, mostly in the city (12) and the settlement (8) drawings (see figure 1, 13, 22). The sight (and sound) of an ambulance has become an integral part of the daily lives of both Israelis and Palestinians yet it was drawn in reference to the suicide bombings in Israel.

Another symbol, which significantly distinguishes the groups, is the Palestinian flag. This symbol is very frequent in the kibbutz drawings being found in 36% of the drawings and is occasionally accompanied with the Israeli flag,

supposedly to represent equality and self determination. Additionally, there were two non-violent conflict related symbols, namely a fence and a map. It is difficult to determine the specific meaning of the fence since at the time of the data collection the fence (separation wall) was not yet a key symbol as it is now, yet the children drew a fence to depict different means of separation, such as between us and them or between the present and future. The map of Israel/Palestine was drawn as a signifier of the context of the conflict. It is both the problem since it is a fight over land, and the solution in the form of agreeable partition. These political symbols, in addition to the dove with olive branch, a prominent symbol of peace, were exclusive to the Kibbutz drawings.

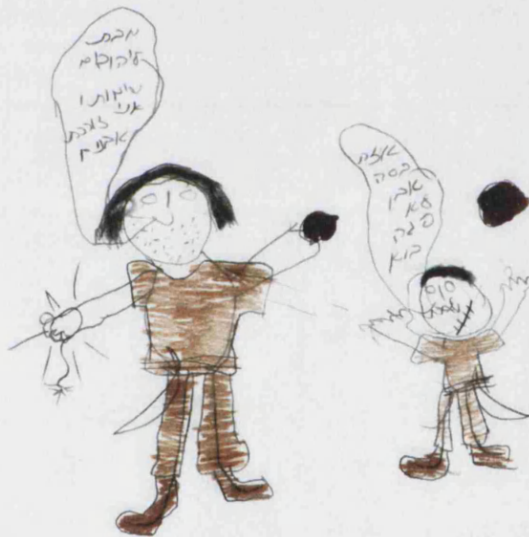


Figure 9 Girl - Settlement

Symbols of the stereotypical Palestinian

A significant variable indicating intergroup divergence is the way children represented the drawn character in terms of stereotypical depiction. The data suggests both qualitative and quantitative differences among the groups. To begin with the quantitative information (see Table 5): whereas in 60.5% of the kibbutz drawings

there is no stereotypical depiction of the Palestinian, in only 22% and 20.5% of the city and settlement (respectively) drawings there are no symbols of stereotypes. Moreover, in the rest of the kibbutz drawings (39.5%) there is one stereotypical depiction, while in 41.4% of the city drawings there are 2 or more stereotypes attached to the Palestinian figure. The settlement drawings were the most stereotypical with 59% drawings with 2 or more stereotypical symbols.



Figure 10 Boy - City

Table 5. Symbols of stereotype quantitative * social group Cross tabulation

			Social group			Total
			City	Settlement	Kibbutz	
Symbols of stereotype quantitative	.00	Count	9	8	26	43
		% within social group	22.0%	20.5%	60.5%	35.0%
	1.00	Count	15	8	17	40
		% within social group	36.6%	20.5%	39.5%	32.5%
	2.00	Count	14	18	0	32
		% within social group	34.1%	46.2%	.0%	26.0%
	3.00	Count	3	5	0	8
		% within social group	7.3%	12.8%	.0%	6.5%
Total		Count	41	39	43	123
		% within social group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The most frequent symbols were the Arab men's 'kafiah' headdress and the Arab women's veil drawn in 36.5% of the drawings (see figures 11, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31). Facial stubble attached to the male character is the second most frequent symbol (this symbol was attached to a few of the female Palestinian figures as well e.g. figure 9). These are fine examples of social typecasting and negative stereotyping, since the explicit task was to draw a Palestinian child at their age. However, children at that age do not wear the kafiah or veil and obviously have no facial hair. It is assumed that the presence of stubble and the kafiah indicate the powerful image of the Palestinian leader, Arafat, placed in the minds of the children (see figure 11, 15, 26, 27). This assumption is strengthened by the supplementary data sources.

In addition to the kafiah and veil, which are traditional-cultural forms of clothing, when depicting the Palestinian figure the representation is that of poverty and unkempt external appearance (see figure 23, 41). Indicators of poverty, such as torn clothes feature in 10% of the drawings. Finally, signs of scars on the Palestinian face are to be found in about 30% of the drawings from the city and settlement (figures 37, 38, 39). In comparison there are no indicators of scars in the kibbutz drawings. This symbol seems to be a complementary sign in the service of representing a scary image of the Palestinian.

Table 6. Symbols of Stereotypes (count)

Stereotypes	Social group		
	City	Settlement	Kibbutz
kafia/veil	15	21	9
Stubble	18	18	4
Scars	13	12	0
Poverty/scruffy	5	5	3
Other	0	0	2

Analysis 2: Interpretative analysis

In addition to the content/quantitative approach, I analysed each of the drawings in a more hermeneutic manner with an attempt to discern perspectives and themes that emerge from the pictures. As seen in the above analysis, in the vast majority of the drawings the children made their intentions visually clear by using straightforward symbols that stand for recognized ideas regarding the kinds of activities Palestinians undertake, and the contexts in which they appear. In the current analysis I look at each of the drawings as a whole unit (rather than looking at separate details within the drawing as was done in the previous analysis) in trying to discern the story being told through the drawing. I asked: what is the single, most important message conveyed in each drawing? What is the impression the Israeli child wished to communicate to the viewer? What is the underlying perspective conveyed? And what are the implications for the propensity and practice of taking the perspective of the other? After several recordings, I found that all of the 123 drawings could be fall into one of the following five perspectives of the 'other' conveyed by the children:

The terrorist /despised Palestinian

This was by far the most frequent category (45% of all drawings), these drawings contain an assortment of warfare symbols, violence and destruction that meant to leave the viewer with tangible sense of alarm and foreboding. These, in collaboration with the negative-stereotypical image of the Palestinian and his or her violent behaviour, represent the Palestinian in an utterly diabolical manner. Alone, or accompanied by peers, Israelis or both, the Palestinian figure is depicted as fully armed and either attacking, or expressing explicit intentions to do so. The drawings vary according to levels of dehumanisation of the Palestinian and the intensity of the represented violence. They range from ordinary figures armed with some sort of weapon to horrifying images of creepy Palestinian figures surrounded by fantastic symbols of death and destruction. Also included in this category are images of fantastic or ridicule Palestinian. In these drawings, the Palestinian boy or girl, even if not armed, is still represented in extremely negative manner.

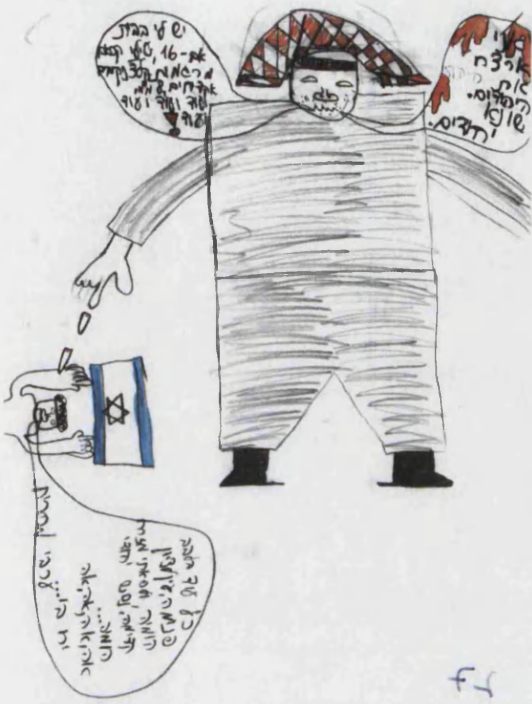


Figure 11 Boy - City



Figure 12 Boy - Settlement

Pictures of the Palestinian as a suicide bomber were a recurrent image. For example in a drawing of a boy from the city (figure 11), a huge, scarred image with a verbal expression attached reading “I will murder the Jews, Jew hater” on one side, and on the other “I have at home M-16, Kasam missiles, guns and bombs and more and more!” The figure is pointing towards a small figure of an Israeli drawn with its hands up and the Israeli flag. Bullet-like symbols are coming out of the Palestinian hand towards the Israeli, who in a verbal expression attached sings the national anthem and cries “Ah, Ah, Ah I was shot.... Stinky Arab”. In another drawing from the settlement (Figure 13), a stubble-face Palestinian with a knife is encircled by red zigzag lines and the word BOOM!! representing an explosion meant to portrait a suicide bomber. Near him, left lying, are four dead bodies and an ambulance.

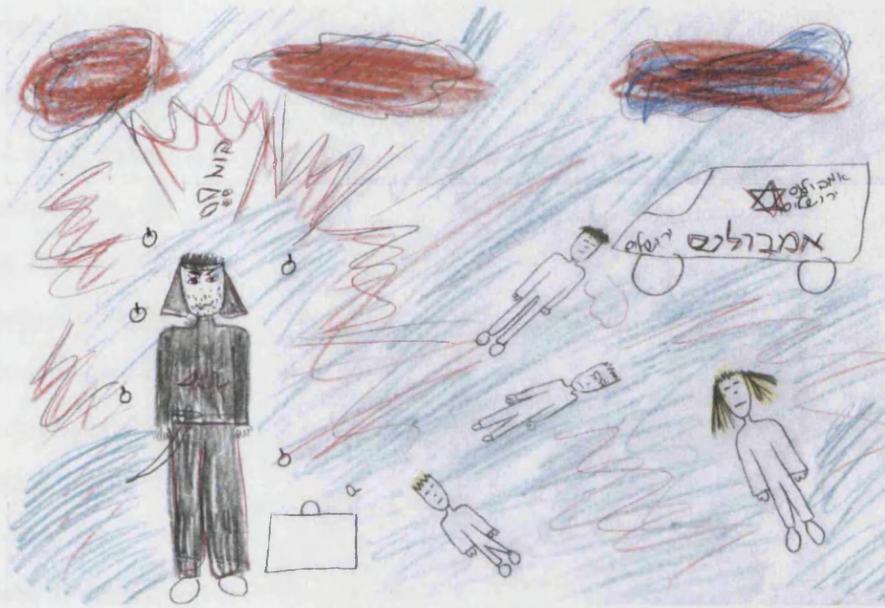


Figure 13 Girl - Settlement

These examples communicate the unambiguous message that the intentions and will of the other are hostile and destructive and suggest that the Palestinian ‘other’ is nothing but a threat to the Israeli ‘self’. They are meant to promote a message of delegitimation of the Palestinian on the one hand, and a strong sense of Israeli victimization on the other. It seems as if the ‘perspective’ of the other in these drawings is completely denied and is replaced with a conclusive view of the other as a sheer threat. Put differently, when the other is perceived as a threat and as inhuman, there is no space for other interpretations or versions of reality. The voice of the other is completely muted and denied.



Figure 14 Boy – City



Figure 15 Boy -Settlement

Equality/peace

These drawings are imbued with an aura of comradeship and reconciliation. The Palestinian child, whether drawn as a stick figure or as a fine human figure is accompanied with an Israeli figure. The figures are usually indicated by names (Arabic or Hebrew names) or by political symbols such as the national flag attached to the figures. Flowers, the sun, a rainbow, green trees and vivid colours conjure up the idealised image of both self and other at peace and harmony. For example, a girl from the kibbutz (Figure 16) drew two happy looking girls who look very much alike, differentiated only by their clothes, which are 'tailored' with the national flags, standing on a bed of flowers and leaves. The heading of the picture says 'lets be friends' and a verbal expression attached to the girls reads 'we're happy together'. Symbols of conflict or warfare are completely absent from these drawings and the deliberately communicated perspective is that of mutual tolerance, fellowship and evenness supported with headings such as 'we are all the same' and 'peace in the world'.



Figure 16 Girl - Kibbutz

These pictures, drawn by 10.5% of the children pose a challenge for interpretation. Can they be seen as some sort of psychological avoidance or fanciful escape from the overwhelming stressful reality? Perhaps, but there are

reasons to doubt such a conclusion. Another reading - going beyond the apparent, yet consistent with the content of the drawings - suggests that these idyllic scenes might represent a challenge to the dominant ideologies and the expected enemy-image and strive to convey an alternative desirable perspective.

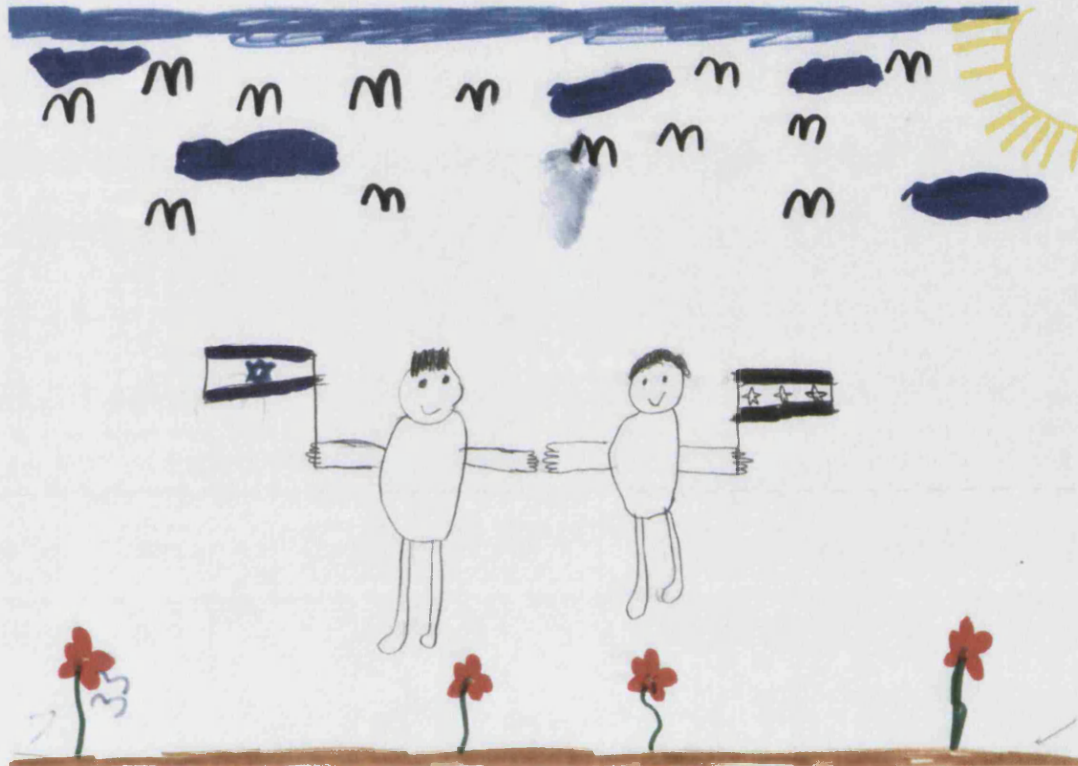


Figure 17 Boy - Kibbutz

They might even raise issues of children's empowerment and political engagement. Indeed these children demonstrate political commitment and concern in their drawings of self and other. But another, more complex quality emerges when drawings in this category are taken as a whole. Revealed in the repetitiveness of content and tone- the rainbows and flowers, the sameness of the slogans- a sense arises that in no lesser degree than the 'terrorist' category, these drawings avoid any reflexive engagement with the perspective of the other but rather, the children who drew these pictures 'project' or reconstruct their own group's ideology, in this case peace ideology, onto the Palestinian other.



Figure 18 Girl- Kibbutz

That is to say, although there is indeed protest against 'reality', there is, to some extent, a trivialisation in the reproduction of counter-rhetoric. Engagement with the perspective of the other in this genre is reduced to reproduction of idealised images of self and other in desired reality.

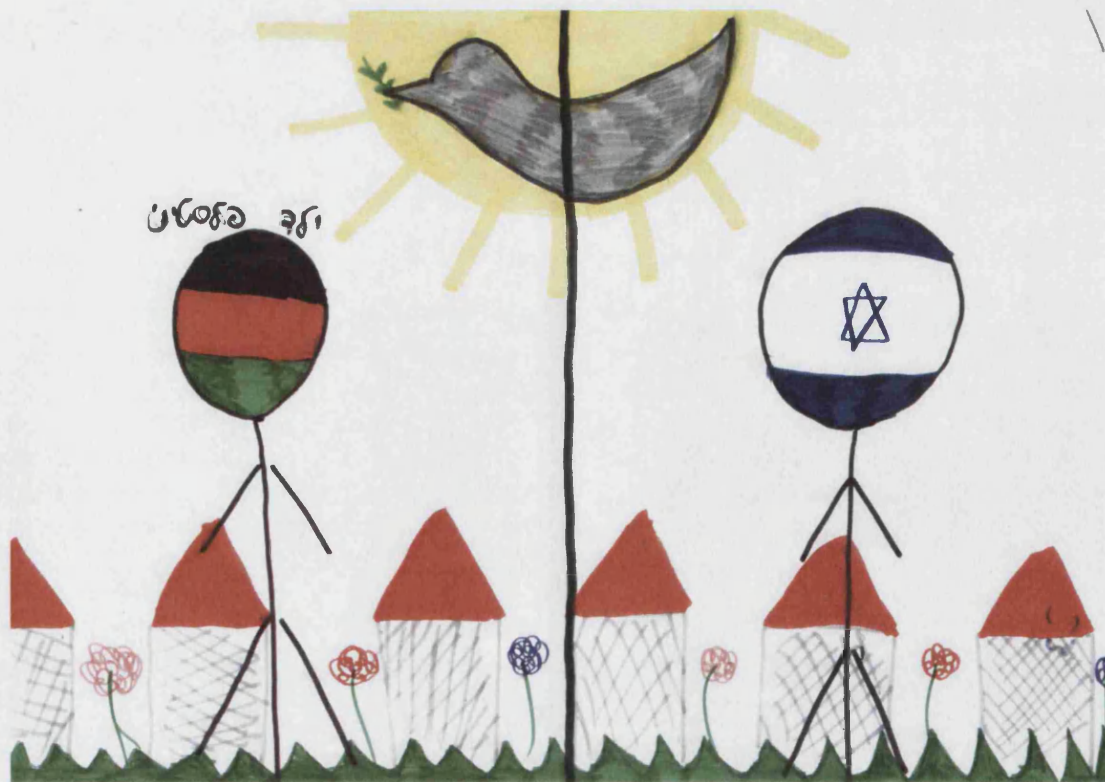


Figure 19 Boy - Kibbutz

Dismal reality

A distinct qualitative shift occurs in the content and mood of these drawings. This category (11.3% of all drawings) comprises of visual and verbal representations of grievous reality. Images of warfare, atrocities and death are present, yet they do not overwhelmingly dominate the drawings and the Palestinian character is depicted as either protesting against or expressing deep despondency towards the gloomy situation. In most of the drawings from this category, the despair refers to both the Palestinians and the Israelis. The happy looking children from the equality/peace category are transformed here to images of dejection.

It is possible to divide these drawings between those who communicate a sense of powerlessness and pessimism with no specific causal factor and those who communicate a message of mutual responsibility and blame. In the former group, most of the drawings emphasise the children as victims of the tragic reality whereas in the latter the children accentuate self and other agency and accountability.



Figure 20 Boy - Kibbutz

For example, in one drawing of a boy from the kibbutz (figure 20), the page is divided into two frames; on one side is the Palestinian figure, on the other the Israeli. Apart from the textual indication of who is who, the figures look much the same. On the Palestinian side there are the words, *blood*, *terrorists*, *Arafat* and *atrocities*. On the Israeli side there are the words, *murder*, *poverty*,

soldiers, blood and Ariel Sharon. Above, in the middle presented, perhaps cynically, the word PEACE.



Figure 21 Girl - Settlement

In a different drawing by a girl from the settlement (figure 21), both the Palestinian and the Israeli girls, who are separated by a fence, are crying with tears. The Palestinian girl says, “My home was demolished” and the Israeli girl says, “My brother died in a terrorist attack”. Drawings from this category may also present the atrocious present against a hopeful future. Another, divides the page into two frames with Israeli and Palestinian figures encircled by symbols of conflict such as bombs and an ambulance with the heading ‘Today’. This is drawn in opposition to encouraging future depicted by images of peace and reconciliation under the title ‘In the future’ (Figure 22).



Figure 22 Girl - Kibbutz

However there are also drawings that intend to focus solely on or emphasise the gloomy and discouraging condition of the Palestinians. These include a rare example of an image of an Israeli soldier mistreating the Palestinian (figure 23). In another drawing from the kibbutz (Figure 24) a portrait of a cheerless Palestinian girl is encircled by dark clouds, images of warfare and black withered flowers, set against a cheerful Israeli girl standing under the sun and surrounded by flowers.

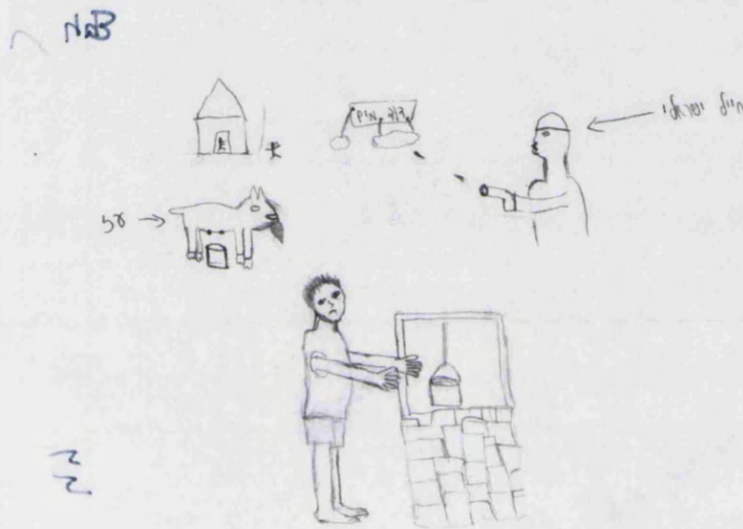


Figure 23 Boy – Kibbutz



Figure 24 Girl - Kibbutz

Generalisations from these drawings need to be carefully qualified, given the small number of drawings and the variation among them. Nevertheless, the drawings in this category present a reflexive engagement with the perspective of the other and the dismal consequences of the conflict for both the Israelis and Palestinians. The Palestinians in these drawings neither pose a threat nor are they located in a pastoral camaraderie. Rather, the pictures communicate acknowledgement of the consequences of the conflict and the sufferings of both self and other.

The stereotypical Palestinian

This category, which comprises 17% of all drawings, posed a difficulty for interpretation. There are no violent symbols or behaviour in these drawings, yet the depiction of the Palestinians within this category is no less stereotypical. The seemingly positive depictions in this category tend to focus on cultural-traditional-tribal representations. The Palestinians, boy, girl or family are depicted wearing their traditional clothing and headdress (Kafia for men and the veil for women) in the context of everyday life such as a family gathering, working the field or playing with peers (Figures 25, 28, 29, 30, 31). For example, a girl from the settlement drew a traditionally dressed Palestinian mother with her five children standing in their apparent living room with no furniture but a colourful rug on the floor (figure 25).



Figure 25 Girl – Settlement

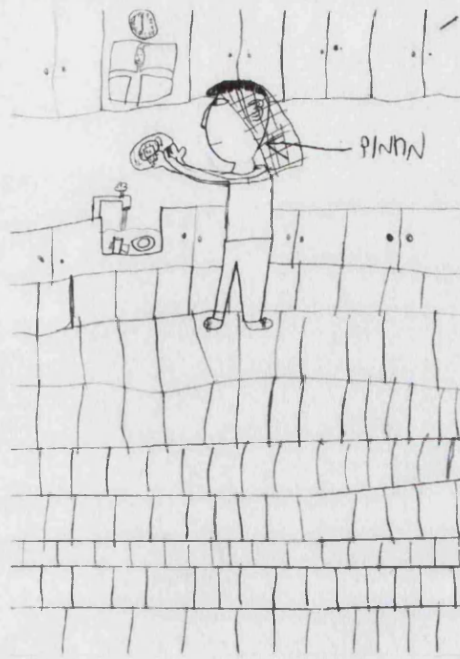


Figure 26 Boy - Kibbutz

Another recurrent theme found in this category is poverty and neglect. The Palestinians in these drawings are depicted with a shabby and unkempt appearance symbolised by torn or dirty clothes. Additionally, there are also images of the Palestinian, which, as I mentioned earlier, are clearly influenced by the image of Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian omnipresent leader. The moustache, stubble and the headdress (figure 27) are recurrent images within these drawings.



Figure 27 Boy – Kibbutz



Figure 28 Girl -City

Thus, apart from the absence of violence themes, the drawings in this genre represent the Palestinian in a highly stereotypical manner. While they don't seem to have a clear intention of delegitimisation these drawings still emphasis otherness. The 'tribal-traditional' drawings, although ostensibly positive in the impression they communicate, (perhaps complement the authentic or the exotic) still embody a perception of backwardness, underdevelopment and inferiority.

Figure 29 Boy -Kibbutz



Figure 30 Girl - Settlement



Figure 31 Girl -City

Unidentified Palestinian

The last category (15.5% of all drawings) comprises of all the drawings in which there is not a single symbol which can specifically refer to or signify the

Palestinian (see figures 32, 33, 35, 36, 42). Depicting neither war nor peace, the drawings look like pictures of ordinary human figures, boys or girls, in various contexts of everyday life. Looking at these, one cannot tell if the children



Figure 32 Boy – City



Figure 33 Girl - Kibbutz

were asked to draw themselves, their friends or just boys or girls, as they all appear positive or at least neutral. It is difficult to determine the intended perspective in some of these drawings. However the verbal expressions attached to the figure or the heading of the drawing reveal the latent representational work. One drawing of a girl (figure 34) that looks most ordinary is complete with the heading: NOT ALL THE ARABS ARE SUICIDE BOMBERS. Additional drawings read: 'We all look the same' or ' I am just like you'. Thus, these children are apparently challenging what they either think is expected from them in the task, or, the content stems from their friends' drawings. They reflexively reject the dominant or prevailing ideologies and stereotypes that present the Palestinians in a negative manner and as a threat to self. They negotiate enhanced representations for the other by highlighting the sameness of self and other. Still, in these drawings similar to the equality/peace category, it is difficult to determine whether these depictions should be regarded as a reproduction of desirable or appropriate ideas or as a real interest or engagement with the perspective of the other.

לא כל הערבים מתאבדו



Figure 34 Girl - Settlement



Figure 35 Girl - Kibbutz

Statistical analysis of the above categories, using SPSS Answer Tree (see page xxx) suggests interesting patterns between and within the groups. The analysis shows that, social group as a variable, is a good predictor to the categories of the drawings ($\text{Chi-square}=47.32$, $\text{df}=4$ $p<0.005$) and indeed is a better predictor than gender. The city and settlement show no significant difference in the frequency of the categories. The majority (63.75%) of the drawings from these groups correspond to the 'terrorist Palestinian' category. The next largest categories in these groups are the 'stereotypical Palestinian' and 'unidentified Palestinian', showing 16.25% and 15% respectively.

There are only 3 drawings of 'dismal reality' in both the groups and one drawing of 'equality/peace'.

These findings, in accord with the previous analysis, suggest that the children from the city and the settlement mainly perceive the perspective of the other as destructive and as threat to self. In contrast to that, the children who did not portray the Palestinians as aggressors chose to bring forward either different stereotypical aspects or to consciously reject a negative portrayal of the Palestinian. Indeed, a closer look at the general impression of the drawn character within these categories- stereotypical and unidentified- reveal that only three drawings from both categories present the Palestinian in a negative manner. In other words, 31% of the children from both the city and the settlement consciously omit the violent aspect of the conflict and conveyed a rather positive picture of the other. However, hardly any child from these groups referred to either dismal or idealised (peace/equality) perspective regarding the Palestinian other.



Figure 36 Girl – City



Figure 37 Boy - Settlement

The kibbutz children show significantly different patterns. Their drawings are much more diverse with 'equality/peace' as the largest category (27.9%). The 'dismal reality' category shows very similar frequency with 25.6%. In contrast to the city and the settlement the 'terrorist' category is the less frequent with only 5 drawings

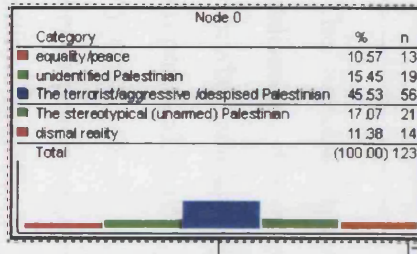
(11.6%). The rest of the drawings are either 'unidentified' (16.3%) or 'stereotypical' (18.6%).

Although social group is a better predictor it is interesting to note the gender differences in relation to the categories between and within the groups. To start with the kibbutz drawings, the 'equality/peace' category dominates the girls' drawings (40.9%) whereas only one girl from that group depicted the Palestinian as a terrorist. (A closer look at that drawing reveals that she drew both male and female figures and it was the male figure that was the aggressor.) Dismal reality was drawn by 27.2% of the girls from the kibbutz and the unidentified category was found in 18.1%. Two girls from the kibbutz have generated the value 'other' in the symbols of stereotypical when they drew the Palestinian girl as a belly dancer.

As seen in the table the kibbutz boys' drawings are divided comparably across the categories. There were malevolent representations of the Palestinian as well as ordinary and positive representations. Comparing the two antithetic categories, i.e. the 'dismal reality' and the 'terrorist' prove similar occurrence with 5 and 4 drawings respectively.

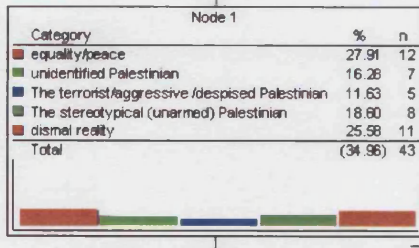
Gender differences are more significant in the settlement and city groups (Chi-square 17.35, $df=4$, $p<0.001$). A boy from these groups is very unlikely to adopt the theme of either equality/peace or dismal reality. On the contrary it is very likely that he will portray the Palestinian as a terrorist, with 86.8% of the boys from both the city and settlement endorsing that perspective. The girls from these groups are more diverse in their responses but still in favour of the terrorist hypothesis (42.8%). On the contrary, there were only 1 and 3 girls whose drawings fell into the equality/peace and dismal reality categories respectively.

Theme of the drawing



social group
Adj. P-value=0.0000, Chi-square=47.3232, df=4

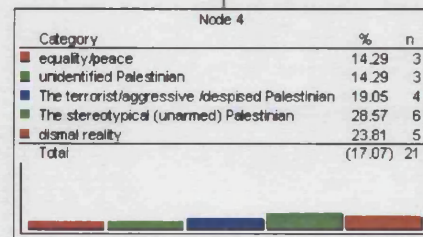
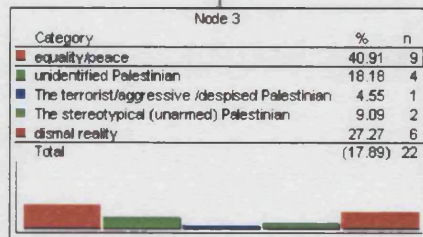
Kibbutz



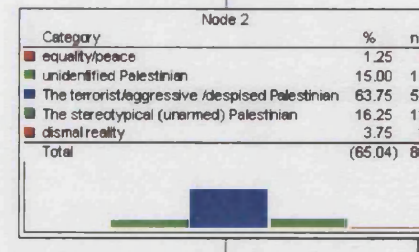
Gender
Adj. P-value=0.1351, Chi-square=7.0143, df=4

female

male



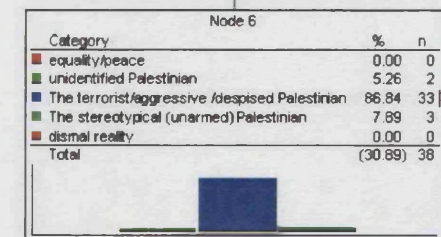
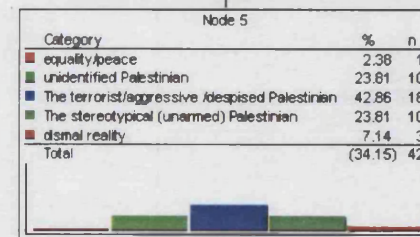
Settlement; City



Gender
Adj. P-value=0.0016, Chi-square=17.3577, df=4

female

male



Summary

Considering the content of the drawings, they proved to be a fascinating and valuable tool for the current investigation. They revealed what I called socio-ideologically driven iconic repertoire, namely, they 'made visible' some of the culturally available symbols and stereotypes circulating in Israeli society in relation to the Palestinians. The vast majority of the drawings thus proved to be a political commentary on the situation in Israel and the children exhibited through their drawings various perspectives regarding self and other and their positions within the depicted reality. These various approaches represent the range of responses embedded in the Israeli self in relation to the Palestinians. These allowed significant differences in the way the Palestinians were represented across the social groups.

The various depictions highlight the power of social stereotyping and negative generalisation. The children were asked to draw a Palestinian boy or a girl of their age in an everyday context. Yet many of the children positioned the Palestinian child in a certain political context and a certain moral order. Very few attempts were made to refer to any aspect of the personal life of the drawn character. Rather, whether as a suicide bomber or peace activist, the Palestinian child is depicted in a specific context that meant to convey a specific perspective regarding self, other and the conflict. Palestinian children at the age of 12 are neither active fighters (or suicide bombers) nor do they wear the traditional headdress or grow moustaches. Nevertheless these contents abound in the drawings and show the function and power of stereotypes in negative generalization about the Palestinians. The most noticeable example is found in many drawings of the Palestinian child as a near version of Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader with his famous headdress and stubble.



Figure 38 Girl- Settlement

The data discussed in this chapter suggests that the construction of the 'other' and the tendency or motivation to engage with his/her perspective is mediated by ideologically informed systems of meaning that vary across the groups. Thomas and Silk (1990) commented that the information presented in children's drawings is determined by three factors: "children's knowledge of the drawing topic itself, their interpretations of what aspects of that information are important to present and their capacity to produce a drawing showing that information" (p. 106). In that sense the most prominent example is the focus on the violent nature of the conflict in general and particularly the phenomena of the suicide bombers. These contents seem to occupy an immense symbolic space

within the children's socio-political worlds and lead to inferences of threat from the Palestinian.

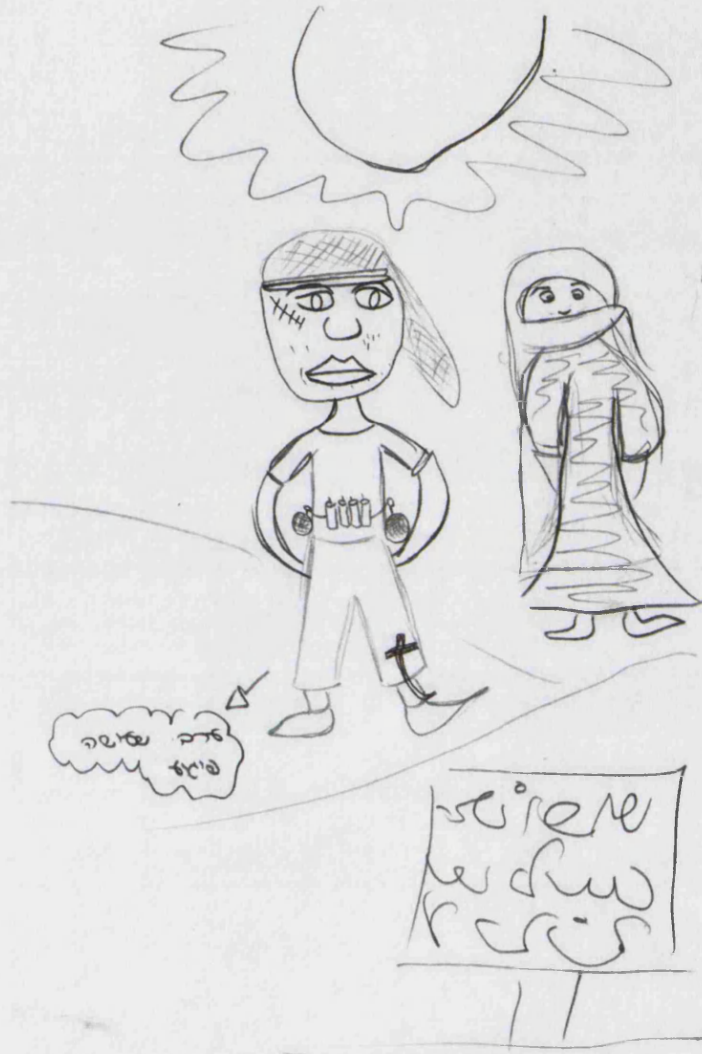
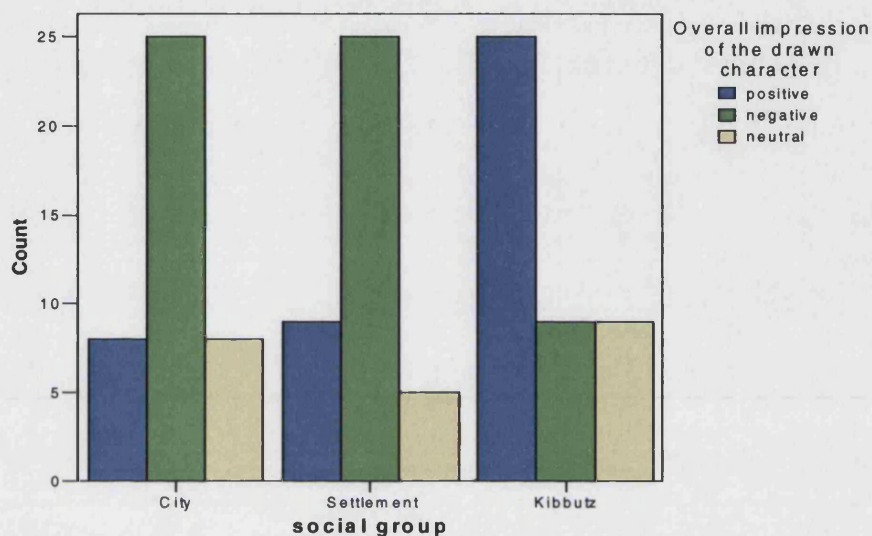


Figure 39 Girl - City

The statistical analysis has indicated the predominant patterns, and facilitated identification of categories and themes amongst the different groups. Almost half of the drawings collected from the children depict the Palestinian other in an unambiguously negative manner. Yet, the children from the city or the settlement are significantly more likely to draw upon these contents than the children from the kibbutz. Looking at the following chart, which cross-tabulates the social group with the overall impression from

the drawings, best epitomises the opposite tendencies of the city/settlement and the kibbutz drawings:



The city/settlements drawings, apart from the much higher frequency of the terrorist category, are also invested with significantly elevated dehumanisation of the Palestinians. Their pictures are replete with fantastic representations of the Palestinians as a sheer threat with an eagerness for destruction. This perception obviously restricts perspective taking. Simply stated, where there is fear and hatred, there is no space for engaging with the other's perspective. Where the humanity of the other is in question the propensity for reflection and empathy is completely hindered.

In contrast, the children from the kibbutz are more likely to depict the Palestinians in a more moderate way in the contexts of peace, equality and friendship, as traditional peasants, or as lamenting their dismal reality. The approach to the Palestinians is much less negative and shows significantly lesser degrees of hatred and fear. The destructive and hostile characteristics, strongly attributed to the Palestinians in the two other groups,

are significantly softened in the Kibbutz drawings where the Palestinian figures tended to be less stereotypical, and even when there are indications of warfare and attribution of violence, these tended to be less acute. Nevertheless, apart from the 'dismal reality' category, rather than engaging the Palestinian perspective, the children, just like in the terrorist category, are simply projecting their group's ideology and knowledge onto the other.

In sum, the analysis above has shown an organised set of responses about the Palestinians underlying the content of the drawings. These responses represent the range of voices, or ideologies reverberating within Israeli society in relation to the Palestinians, which the children actively reconstruct in their works. We can clearly see the dominance of delegitimisation of the other and the tendency to perceive all the Palestinians as suicide bombers and terrorists. Yet, there are also alternative voices. For example, the one that views the Palestinians as partners for peace. This response is, on the one hand, a challenge to the dominant perception as it views the Palestinians as equals and as partners for peace. On the other hand it is merely a reproduction of the peace rhetoric embedded in the Israeli society. Additionally there are representations of the Palestinians as victims of the conflict and as traditional, or simply as ordinary children, all within the range of responses available to the children to reconstruct and represent in their drawings.

Clearly, the Israeli self, as reflected in these drawings is not homogeneous but is comprised of different approaches to the other. Yet the drawings, by the nature of the task as embedded representation, forced the children to work with only one approach, to reconstruct only one response to the Palestinians. As will become clear in the following chapters, the range of responses to self, other and the conflict is vast and the shift from one mode of communication, that is, drawing – to another mode of communication, that is, writing (and role-playing), opens up a enormous space for contradictions, ambiguities and competing ideologies.



Figure 40 Girl – Kibbutz



Figure 41 Boy – Kibbutz



Figure 42 Boy – City

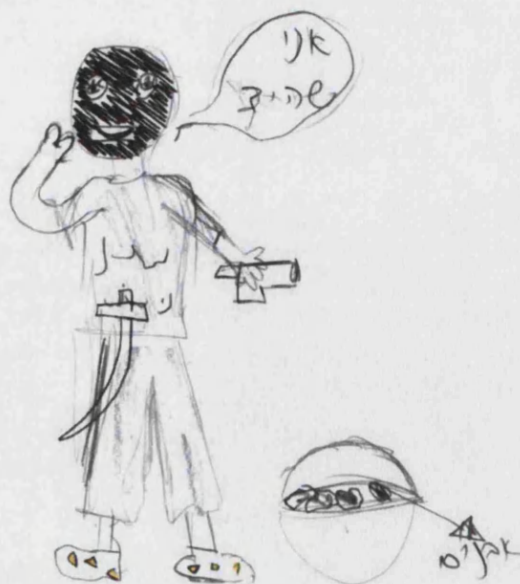


Figure 43 Boy - Settlement

6. NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE OTHER: SOCIOGENESIS ANALYSIS

The analysis presented in this chapter builds upon Billig's insight that the human or cultural predicament presumes ideological dilemma. It adopts the view of ideology as the ways in which a worldview or value and belief system of a particular group of people is reproduced through a particular kind of representational strategy.

According to this thesis "it is because a social group's stock of commonsensical beliefs contains contrary elements that argument and thereby thought, is possible. Here the rhetorical approach is not drawing attention to arguments between cultures, or between ideologies, but the arguments which occur *within* cultures or ideologies" (1991, p.71 *my italics*). Given that, the persistence of dilemma confirms that the stability and integrity of meaning cannot be comprehensively analysed without direct attention to the ways in which it is confronted by alternatives and the possibility of major revision, redefinition or even rejection. Ideological representations are embedded in social and discursive practices. They 'live' in the space of communicative practice. As such they are constructed, naturalised, validated, challenged, transformed and legitimised in and through language.

In the case of the Israeli victimised-occupier self this suggestion is particularly illuminating especially with regards the children's ambivalent encounter with the other and its perspective. In their compositions, the children exhibited an assortment of ideological representations, sometimes contradictory and dissonant. I argue that the existence of these socio-ideological discrepancies not only reflects the ideological ambience of the Israeli self, but also precisely perpetuates the socio-psychological conditions of the conflict.

Analytical procedure

Focusing on the single utterance as the unit of analysis, while paying attention to the social milieu, I completely lost sight of individual works in search of patterns of meanings and rhetorical tendencies within the texts. An utterance is a linguistic unit that is marked off by boundaries designated by the speaker. Unlike conversation between two or more people where the boundaries are habitually marked by conversational turns, in a monologic text, utterance boundaries include a sense of finalization. Finalization in the present case is characterized by the completion of a thought, point of view, or rhetorical strategy on a given topic. Utterance then, is usually comprised of one or two sentences. Using knowledge of the verbal-ideological contexts surrounding the children's textual productions, as was partly portrayed in the chapter on the Israeli victimized-occupier self, I developed an interpretive process that helped me excavate, sort out, and analyze many of the voices speaking through their written texts. I was looking for the ways in which Israeli children construct the Palestinian story, the underlying socio-ideological processes that mediate these constructions and where possible, I tried to detect the origin of the symbols and images being used.

Findings

I present four ideological dilemmas, or polemic evaluative dimensions found in the texts. The first regards the Palestinian character and actions. Here, two distinct voices reverberate. First, there is the dominant voice of delegitimation. The Palestinian actions are portrayed in a completely negative manner and their actions are construed as irrational malevolence driven by pure hatred to the Israelis. The symbol of suicide bombers considerably dominates this voice. In contrast, there is a counter voice that depicts the Palestinians in a different light. According to this voice the Palestinian resistance is rightful and is a means to reclaim their occupied land. Additionally there are representations of the Palestinians as economically deprived and even as victims of the Israeli aggression.

The second polemic arises in the analysis regarding Israeli actions. Here again, I found two competing rhetoric. On the one hand, there is a tendency to construe the Israeli

actions as aggressive and iniquitous. This tendency, which I titled guilt and responsibility, clearly views the Israelis as accountable to the tragic reality of conflict. On the other hand, there is the opposite tendency that rhetorically justifies the Israeli deeds. Here one can see how the notion of 'no alternative' embedded in the Israeli self, is resonant in the children's works. The Israeli actions are presented as inevitable self-defense against the Palestinian aggression.

Thirdly, found in the narrative additional polemic in relations to the Israelis, and is clearly a reflection and reconstruction of two prominent facets of the Israeli victimized-occupier self. On the one hand there is the self-perception as victims. Through their writing as Palestinians, the Israeli children have conveyed a picture of the Israelis as the ultimate victims of the conflict. In contrast, there is a rhetorical tendency that maintains the Israeli supremacy, mainly military but morally and economically as well.

The last dilemma, or opposing rhetoric discussed in this chapter regards the notion of peace. The Israeli self's yearning for peace is evident in the children's works. Peace is represented as the ultimate opposite to the current situation and regarded as a highly desired concept. Simply stated, peace is the greatest wish. Nevertheless, in contrast to the comprehensive peace rhetoric, a counter voice resonates in relation to peace that is both contradictory and complementary that can be described as a strong disbelief in the possibility of peace.

In consequence of the complexity of the compositions and the interpretative procedure, the data resisted quantification and frequency counts. Due to the nature of the data, almost every utterance embodies both the actual content, and the underlying intentions and the presumable effect it intends to elicit in the reader. The narratives reverberate with so much latent meaning that to isolate and describe it in its straight manner is not only almost impossible but can hardly be expected to yield significant results. Nevertheless, where possible, I indicate group patterns, and point out categories that are exclusive to a group or the volume of different categories across the groups.

Palestinian actions: aggression or liberation?

The most prevalent polemic that inferred from the children's narratives regards the meaning and purpose of the Palestinian uprising. The Palestinian violence, accredited in 93% of all narratives generates a variety of responses, which can be explicated in relation to two contradictory representational processes. On the one hand there is a strong tendency towards *de-legitimisation* of the Palestinians. This communicative strategy, or rhetorical interest, aims to portray the Palestinian uprising in the most absolute negative terms, thus condemning the Palestinian actions and demonising their goals and intentions.

On the other hand, there is a contradictory, yet complementary pattern across the narratives that shows sympathy and understanding to the Palestinian struggle, a counter-rhetorical process that generates the opposite tendency of *legitimisation*. This is achieved through the construction of three different images of the Palestinians. The *righteous* Palestinian protests against the expulsion from the land. The *wretched* Palestinian grieves over the deprived living conditions of the Palestinians. And last, the *victim* Palestinian strongly objects to the misconduct and use of force by the Israeli army.

The theme of terrorism might be the most obvious illustration to Mead's contention that in so far as individuals or groups have built up different responses to the world, so they do in fact live in different worlds. First, according to these narratives, terrorism is *the* key object of the conflict. This is surely the case for Israelis but for the Palestinians there are certainly different key objects such as occupation and self determination. Secondly, whether for or against it, whether reflecting on the advantage or disadvantage in such actions, there was no question that terrorism is the main object of the conflict and the narratives vary across explanations, justifications or condemnations to the described atrocities. The children expend considerable depth debating the extent to which the Palestinian terrorism is good or bad, justified or inexcusable, but they never debate neither the existence of this category nor its meaning, certainly not on a lexical level. That is, even those who advocated the Palestinian armed struggle and expressed

appreciative attitudes still referred to the actions as terrorism and to the perpetrators as terrorists rather than freedom fighters or any other more affirmative categories.

Delegitimation – reconstructing the savage other

The concept, *delegitimation*, is a fundamental process of placing a group or groups into extremely negative social categories that are excluded from the realm of acceptable norms and values (Bar-Tal, 1989a). Denial of the opponents' rights, demonisation of intentions, condemnation of actions and emphasis on the threat posed, all undermine the legitimacy of the opponents. According to Bar-Tal, delegitimation has some distinct features: (a) it uses extremely negative, salient and atypical bases for categorisation; (b) it denies the humanity of the delegitimised group; (c) it is accompanied by intense, negative emotions of rejection, such as hatred, anger, contempt, fear, or disgust; (d) it implies that the delegitimised group has the potential to endanger one's own group; and (e) it implies that the delegitimised group does not deserve human treatment and therefore harming it, is justified (1990, p.66).

At the heart of this ideological persuasion is a highly stereotypical characterisation of the other consistent with the image of the Palestinian terrorist from the drawings. Palestinians are represented as fundamentally evil and aggressive. This is manifested in the narratives with an assortment of negative representations, which can be explicated along three interrelated evaluative dimensions.

The first emphasises the Palestinians trait characterisation, where the narrator (the Palestinian and/or his/her group) is depicted as possessing different negative qualities such as murderous, stupid, crazy, bastard, evil etc. The second is delegitimation by stressing the actions and intentions of the narrator or his/her in-group, where the goals and means of the Palestinians are represented as bent upon the obliteration of the Israelis. The third strategy emphasises the unacceptability of the norms and values upon which the Palestinians guide their goals and actions. They are represented as transgressors of such pivotal social norms that they become dehumanised.

All groups demonstrated delegitimisation in their narratives, yet there are significant differences in terms of both volume and content. The city and settlement children invested significantly more effort in their narratives to delegitimise the Palestinians. Their negative characterisation of the Palestinians is, for the most part, graphic and as will be demonstrated below contains vivid depictions of ruthless people with very little in mind apart from the wish to exterminate the Israeli people. The kibbutz children demonstrated much less of a tendency to delegitimise the Palestinians and even when they did, it was, for the most part, rather indirect or implicit delegitimisation.

Terrorism and suicide bombing

The most elaborated symbols and images that relate to the delegitimisation rhetoric are evidently those of *terrorism* and the *suicide bombers*. The Palestinian is frequently represented as a bloodthirsty terrorist with an ultimate objective to destroy the Israeli people.

“We should kill as many Jews as we can. Our goal is to kill as many Jews as we can and the winner is the one who killed the most. When I grow up I will break a record – I will kill more than 20 Jews when I will commit a suicide attack” (Boy – city).

“I will kill as many Jews as I can so they won’t grow up to be stinky Jews like their parents. Good Jewish is a dead Jewish” (Boy-city)

“We should kill them all. My Dad told me that we should join the terrorist organisations to kill all the Jews. Yes. We need to exterminate them one by one” (Boy – settlement)

“We are willing to sacrifice few suicide bombers so many many of you will die because we are Arabs in soul and blood” (Boy – settlement)

“I have a dream. In my dream I enter Israel and kill Jews. I think that this conflict is very good since we don’t have dead people apart from the suicide bombers, which I adore, and they have a lot of dead and wounded” (Boy – settlement)

In these narratives the Palestinian violence is reconstructed according to the logic of *essentialism*, namely, it is organised around natures or qualities, which are regarded as transcendent, unalterable and historical; the Palestinian violence is depicted as context-less carnage for the sake of killing the Jews.

The message from these extracts, which focuses on the actions, intentions and aspirations of the Palestinian people, is clear and unambiguous- they appear as essentially atrocious and irrational people rejoicing in aggression and deadly deeds and are actually only interested in the annihilation of Israel and the Jewish people. This tempestuous rhetoric is exclusive to the city and the settlement groups. While more than half of the delegitimisation contents in these groups were of this nature, there are no such examples in the kibbutz narratives.

A primary explanation to the Palestinian violence is the factor of *hatred*. According to this logic, blind hatred to the Israelis/Jews is a key engine that drives the conflict and the Palestinian actions:

“In short, I just hate the Jews. Hate. Hate. Hate”
(Boy – settlement)

”I hate them in my blood. I loathe them” (Boy – settlement)

“I hate the Israelis so when I grow up I want to be a martyr and to blow myself up on the Israelis” (Boy – city)

Martyrdom and heaven

As indicated in the last extract, a prevalent theme that accounts for the phenomena of the suicide bombings (and goes beyond mere essentialism) is reconstructed upon fundamentalist-religious motives. This image circulates in the mass media, mainly through pre-recorded video films released by the militant groups subsequent to a successful attack, where the suicide bomber (*‘the martyr’*) is shown wrapped with explosive belt and holding the book of Quran, praying and vowing to the destruction of

Israel in the name of Allah. This image of the martyr goes along with the well-known fable of the 72 virgins waiting in heaven for the sacrifice and the financial reward granted to his or her family. The image of the Palestinian martyr seems to assist the children to explain the abominable horrors of the suicide bombings by rationalizing the Palestinian violence according to these fundamentalist religious motives.

“It is worthy to be a suicide bomber cause that way you will go to heaven with 72 virgins and your family gets a lot of money and you’ll be very happy in heaven” (Boy- settlement)

“I want to be a martyr because up there in heaven I will have 72 virgins and I can enjoy every day. My feelings when I become a martyr will be very good. I will kill many many Jews which I hate so much and the state of Israel will be mourning because many Jews will die” (Boy- city)

“My brother is martyr. He committed a brutal suicide bombing and murdered 17 Israelis. For us a martyr is a good thing – a man who killed Israelis is a martyr”(Boy- city)

An additional repeated theme that aims to undermine the humanity of the Palestinians and which also has its origin in the mass media tells the story of a child that is/was driven by his family to become a suicide bomber. This representation originated in an interview held with a father of a suicide bomber who killed 21 youngsters in a Tel-Aviv dance-club. The father has been quoted as saying: “I’m very happy and proud of what my son did and, frankly, am a bit jealous. I wish I had done it. My son has fulfilled the Prophet's (Mohammed's) wishes. He has become a hero! Tell me, what more could a father ask?”⁴⁴

A story of a child sent by his parents to die as a suicide bomber stresses the severe violation of such fundamental norms and values, thus associates the Palestinians with lack of civilisation, cruelty and barbarianism.

⁴⁴ Yediot Ahronot (Israel daily) June 3, 2001.

“My parents sent me to commit a suicide bombing in Israel. They gave me an explosive belt. I don’t know how they expect me to come back home if the explosive belt will blow up on my body. I don’t know how will it help my parents if their son will die. I thought that my life’s important to my parents more than anything in the world” (Boy- city)

Israeli defamation

An interesting theme, which combines the notion of hatred to the Jews and the process of delegitimation, is that of harsh condemnation of the Israelis, peppered with a bleak defamation. At first, this approach seems to be the product of a certain degree of reflexivity and an attempt to authentically reconstruct the Palestinian perspective in that it realizes the wrongdoing of the Israelis and the discernible hatred the Palestinians feel towards the Israelis. Indeed, as will be demonstrated below, some narratives show this reflexivity, however, a closer examination of some of these expressions, such as [“The Jews are really bad and they need to be killed, so go on and die you disgusting and ugly Jews” (Boy-settlement)] or expressions like ‘shit-heads’, ‘motherfuckers’ ‘filthy and dirty race’ attributed to the Israelis, reveals that the underlying rhetorical goal is delegitimation by emphasizing both the irrational, blazing hatred of the Palestinians towards the Israelis and the obscene language that is the property of ‘bad’, uncivilized, bawdy people.

Negative association-the war in Iraq

An additional delegitimation tactic I wish to refer to is one that works on a more latent and subconscious level and can be described as ‘negative association’. This tactic aims to emphasise the transgression or the bad qualities of the other by comparing or associating the Palestinian struggle with a widely recognized bad person, out-group or context.

The data collection for this study took place a few months prior to the war in Iraq. Although Israel was not involved in the war, recalling the appalling experience Israel had in the first gulf war where Saddam Hussein initiated missile attacks on Israeli cities, the build-up for the forthcoming war was at its peak. Gas masks were supplied to every

person in Israel and the people were instructed to prepare for the worst-case scenario, that is, a chemical or biological missile attack. The mass media was replete with warring messages and the general atmosphere was somewhat tense mixed with fear of the unknown. Put differently, Israel has felt and acted yet again as being a nation under threat.

And so, the build up for the forthcoming war in Iraq found its expression in the children's narratives (22% of all narratives had some association with the forthcoming war) in various ways. Some children had chosen Saddam Hussein as the name for the Palestinian they role-played, hence associating the Iraqi tyrant with the Palestinians:

“My name is Saddam Hussein, I am 12 and I hate the Jews. I am a great terrorist in the Palestinian army” (Boy- city)

Others associated the Palestinian violence or intentions with the forthcoming war and the symbolic production of the sense of threat evidently intertwined with the children's attempt to reconstruct the perspective of the Palestinian as appears in the following examples:

“If I had a bomb or grenade I would go and blow up Israel but I have just a toy bomb so every day I go with my friend near chemical factory for bombs and whatever they throw away I take it and make a bomb or something poisoning”. (Boy- city)

“Soon there is an attack and we will send a stinky missile on Israel and they will die from the stench” (Boy- city)

Incitement

The last delegitimation theme I wish to refer to will also lead us to the complementary tendency towards legitimization. In recounting the Palestinian terrorism and suicide bombings, many children applied the notion of *brainwashing* or *incitement*. This topic has been highly debated for many years now in the Israeli political sphere, particularly after the beginning of the Oslo process where Israeli officials occasionally argued that the Palestinian Authority engaged in systematic incitement across various

communication channels and agents of socialisation such as children's textbooks and the local television and radio stations. According to the common argument these communication channels contain motifs of poisoning the mind and rejecting Israel's existence, and reflect a bitter reality in which the PA effectively legitimizes acts of terrorism and murder. The following examples illustrate how the Israeli children reproduce this argument in their narratives:

"My family and teachers very much influence me regarding the Israeli – Palestinian conflict. After hearing various different opinions I start feeling hostility towards the Jews. They tell me that the Jews should be rejected and killed, that they are not-welcome, that's why I develop feelings of hatred towards them – because of the environment I live in" (Girl-settlement)

"We train all of our children and put into their heads that when they grow up they'll become martyrs" (Boy-settlement)

"We have this social pressure to hate the Israelis and burn their flag and I must obey and do the same but this is not leading us to a good solution"(Girl - kibbutz)

"Everybody says that the Israelis are shit and I don't think so. I hate it when Arafat brainwashes everybody that the Israelis are bad and then many people want to go to Israel to commit suicide with explosives and kill Israelis"(Boy-settlement)

The main message conveyed from this representation is that Palestinian society is contaminated with hatred, intolerance, and incitement that gives license to terrorism and brainwashes children and adolescences into becoming suicide bombers. The authoritative figures, those accountable for 'good' education, are constantly praising terror attacks and vilifying all Israelis, encouraging the children to choose violence and cruelty over compromise and reconciliation. Nevertheless, there is also a subsequent, latent intention within this representation- it is open to change. The Palestinian violence in this argument is not a result of their murderous nature as seen in the essentialism representations, but rather is a result of a deteriorated socialisation system. Thus the argument shifts from unalterable essence and is located in exogenous factors ("because of the environment I live in"), which can be changed.

Moreover, some of the children who discussed the subject matter of incitement in their narratives, challenged this system, like the girl from the kibbutz or the boy from the settlement who positioned themselves outside that tainted culture as they denounced the social pressure, arguing “I hate it” or, “it is not leading us to a good solution”.

This approach, which is almost predominantly a kibbutz strategy (in relation to delegitimisation), poses a challenge for interpretation. Whereas the city and settlers, while role-playing Palestinians, clearly identify with and eulogize the violence, the kibbutz children exhibited various strategies for what I regard as indirect or unconscious delegitimisation. In these narratives, terrorism, suicide bombings and hatred are present, (albeit in a much less graphic manner than seen in the city and settlers) but the narrator clearly protests against it.

It can be the narrator’s friends, family or ‘people’ that are either participating or supporting the violence against the Israelis but the narrator him/herself is evidently detached from these actions. Thus, the Palestinians imagined by the kibbutz children, whilst mentioning the terrorism, for the most part protest against it themselves.

“My father asked me to be like my brother when I grow up but I don’t want to. I don’t want to kill the Jews because I know how it feels to have one of your relatives killed – it is painful (Girl-kibbutz).

“My friends think that we should bombard the Israelis but I don’t see the point. What for? So they will bombard us again? I think that we should make peace and everyone will live his life” (Girl-kibbutz).

I have many friends. Most of them disagree with me, they think that the Jews deserve these terrorist attacks but I don’t think they really mean that. We, the Arabs, do want peace. Not all of us support and like the terrorist attacks that kill many people (Boy - kibbutz).

As seen in the above extracts, the narrator has clearly positioned him/herself in opposition to the described atrocities. It must be pointed out that although misidentifying

themselves with that 'culture of hatred', or the terrorist actions, and thus presenting a different image of the Palestinians, by depicting it in an assertion like "Not all of us support and like the terrorist attacks that kill many people", (thus positioning themselves as the 'good' or rational voice against the 'bad' majority), they all the same, reproduce the rhetoric of delegitimisation.

The various positioning strategies will be discussed in more detail in the individual analysis, yet the point to be made here is that while there is an extensive rhetoric towards dehumanisation of the Palestinians, there is also a different image of the Palestinians, much less dehumanised and even as the victim; the image of the Palestinian that fights for a just cause.

Legitimisation –constructing a counter image of the Palestinians

Against the overwhelming process of delegitimisation of the Palestinians by emphasising their murderous nature and actions, contested images, or counter representations were also found in the narratives which aim at depicting the Palestinians in a totally different manner.

I identified three distinct counter-depictions of the Palestinians, all in the service of legitimisation. The first can be described as the *righteous other*. In this portrayal, the notion of the disputed **land** is the key object of the conflict and it serves to justify the Palestinian cause and, to some extent, even to rationalise the described atrocities.

In the second depiction, which I call the *wretched other*, the key symbol is **poverty**. In this discourse the emphasis is on the deprived living conditions of the Palestinians. The communicative goal is to evoke empathy and compassion to the weak and poor, yet it seems like these descriptions are, to a large extent, depicted in a causal vacuum.

The third depiction is, maybe, the most contested to the terrorist image and can be plainly described as the *victim other*. Here, the Palestinian sufferings are brought to the

fore with descriptions of violation of human rights, the burdensome presence and excessive use of power of the Israeli army and the sorrow and despair it causes.

The disputed land – reconstructing the Righteous other

Just as terrorism and the suicide bombers are the key objects in the service of delegitimisation, then, the notion of the *disputed land* is the key symbol in the service of legitimising the Palestinian cause, or, in other words, in reconstructing the righteous other.

Stemming from the narratives is a symbolic division between the long past and the short history of the conflict. The latter regarded descriptions of current affairs in relation to the latest uprising, evidently focusing on terrorism and other *consequences* of the conflict for both the Palestinians and the Israelis. When recounting the *origins*, or the long history of the conflict, the children elaborate on the notions of land and Jerusalem which are represented as a primary reason for the conflict. They are constructed as key religious and political symbols for both the Israelis and the Palestinians. The story of the conflict between the Israeli and the Palestinians, as arises from these compositions, is a story about two parties fighting for a piece of land and therefore it is represented as both the problem and the solution to the dispute. Although the notion of 'land' is depicted as the key object of the conflict, there are very few elaborations beyond the abstract or undifferentiated 'land' and additional words such 'territories', 'state' or 'country' are used interchangeably. In contrast, the children produce richly textured discourse about Jerusalem, represented as a focal and sanctified object in the dispute. In most of the narratives the land is represented simply as an *asset* or *property* and the dispute is predominantly depicted in negative interpersonal interaction terms:

“We want our land back. They say that this is their land and they lived here before we came. But in my opinion it's all lies. They were not here before we arrived- they just came and took it from us. This is our land and we will fight for it” (Girl-kibbutz)

“This land belongs to us and not to them. They took it from us- they took our rights” (Girl-settlement)

“We, the Arabs think that we have the right on half of this land. You the Jews fought us and took our land and you don’t want to give it back. We will keep on demanding what’s ours and even take it by force”(Boy-settlement)

There are three different representations of land manifested in the narratives upon which the children construct the Palestinian’s legitimate claims. The first regards land as *property* and hence it is the *conquered land*. Stemming from this depiction, the claim for the land represents a claim for *historical justice*. The Israeli children evidently recognise that at some point in history, injustice was inflicted upon the Palestinians due to misconduct of the Israelis and this injustice provides the legitimate ground for the Palestinian struggle. Befitting the children’s age this dispute is reconstructed in interpersonal terms as if they are conversing on an ordinary quarrel. Nonetheless, it is a genuine moral discourse about who is wrong and who is right and construal of the conflict goes beyond consequences to be portrayed in terms of justice and (property) rights.

The second manifestation is that of the *sacred land* where the children propagate the notion of the biblical attachment to the land. It draws on historical-religious representations and the arguments revolve around contemporary and past eras. The Bible (Tanach in Hebrew) is a tremendous symbolic resource for Israelis and a significant number of myths and heroic symbols are derived from that book. As noted in the portrayal of the Israeli self, the Zionist movement, although inherently secular, not only has a profound reverence for The Bible but also and more importantly, mustered its convictions from a complete identification with the history of the people of Israel in their land as it is remembered through The Bible. It was the most important tool for political recruitment and national mobilisation. The Bible for Israelis is not just a book of religion or ancient history. Rather, it is an eminent symbolic reference and it has a great influence on the Israeli political culture.

“We think that the Israelis took the land and they think that the land is theirs because in biblical times the land was given to Abraham from God” (Girl-kibbutz)

“I think that Jerusalem belongs to us, the Arabs, cause this is were our fathers and ancestors were born, and we’ll do everything in order to get Jerusalem back”(Boy-kibbutz)

“In my opinion we should take the land from the Jews with force. This is our land since long time ago. It was promised to us in biblical times. We need to have this land not the Jews” (Boy-settlement)

“I read the Quran that Israel and Jerusalem is ours and you occupied it but there is nothing we can do. By your religion and by our religion each side claim the right for the land so we need to share the land evenly” (Girl-settlement)

“I think the Jews are not right. They came to the state of Israel when we were here and just wanted to kick us out. In the holly Quran it said that the land is ours and they came with their Bible and said that by this book the land is theirs” (Girl-settlement)

As described in Chapter Five, the attachment of the Jewish people to the land is well grounded in the Israeli narrative. Therefore, it is no wonder why Israeli children draw their arguments upon ‘biblical times’. The remarkable feature is that while constructing and negotiating the Palestinian claims they occasionally adjust the Palestinian demands according to their own convictions. Note that although there is a strong affinity between Islam to Jerusalem and the Islamic holy sites, the Palestinian claim to the land is not built upon religious grounds, nor is it mentioned in the Quran that the land belongs to the Palestinian people. Moreover, as seen in the above extracts they reconstruct a more religious characteristic to the dispute- both people holding to their respective religious reference to substantiate their demand for the land.

The third representation regarding the notion of land is less frequent and its construal in political terms, is mainly as the right for self determination. It goes beyond the commonplace arguments of ‘biblical times’ or ‘it was mine-give it back’, to tackle

substantial political issues. In its less developed version this depiction is expressed in more abstract terms such as 'place to live' or 'place to be':

"We, the Arabs are in conflict with the Israelis because the Israelis took our country. They caught all the land and now we don't have a place to live"(Girl-settlement)

In its more comprehensive version the argument embarks upon concrete political implications of the conflict for the Palestinian people:

"We don't have a state, we don't have a country, and we don't have land to establish government like any other people. I think that you should understand us. We don't have all these things like normal people, like the Jewish people" (Girl-settlement)

Deprived living conditions- reconstructing the wretched other

An additional theme in the service of legitimisation regards the poor living condition of the Palestinians. Vast descriptions of poverty, hunger, unemployment and beggary are found in the narratives, that evidently result in difficulties and distress.

There is not a single day that is peaceful and good; there is always a black corner. My parents have no job so we don't have money to buy food. My little brother is dying but there is no money to purchase drugs. (Girl-kibbutz)

My parents are poor; they are staying at home every day without food. My sister and me are going to beg for money from other people. (Girl-settlement)

When I grow up I want to be smart and to have normal life. Unlike what we have: its cold, we don't have food, there is no place on the mattress because we are 10 brothers plus Mom. (Boy-settlement)

My family and I are living in great poverty. (Girl-city)

We are very very poor. We are refugees that live in Jennin and we don't have any money. My parents need to support 11 people, which is very hard. (Boy-city)

The Israeli children are clearly conscious of a problem regarding the deprived conditions of the Palestinians, yet the way they seem to have construed this issue is somewhat different from the notion of land. Whereas the discourse of land is a moral discourse embodying blame and responsibility, the discourse regarding the Palestinian's deprived lives and socio-economic conditions is somewhat free of cause and effect construal and therefore largely remains on a descriptive level.

My contention is that the empathy inferred from these depictions and the compassion they meant to evoke, for the most part do not stem from recognition in an Israeli responsibility to the Palestinian hardship. Rather, they are described as a by-product of the broad context of the conflict. The economic and political constraints that could explain the poverty and despair are, to a large extent absent from the narratives. There is very little evidence to a causal relation between the Israeli occupation and the above-described impoverishments. Instead, we have a blame-free depiction that stems, I believe, from egalitarian values that engender compassion for the weak- in this case the Palestinians.

However, just as the discourse of land is aimed at reconstructing the 'righteous' other by providing an explanation to the Palestinian uprising, the poverty discourse occasionally serves a similar goal, that is to provide some rationalisation to the Palestinian violence, especially the phenomena of the suicide bombers. In other words, the discourse of poverty is used to convey two different communicative goals. First, it is a genuine empathetic description of the poor and the weak, one that positioned the Palestinians in the place of the forceless protagonist. Secondly, as seen in the following excerpt, it serves as a rationalization to the Palestinian violence:

"I think that some of the suiciders Arabs are doing this because of despair, because they have got nothing to loose. They are poor they don't have food. Some of them don't have water at all so anyone who is a suicide bomber, his family gets money so they can buy water and food and clothing so they can live with". (Boy-kibbutz)

It is a known practice of Palestinian militant organisations to financially reward the families of the ‘martyr’ following the sacrificial act of suicide bombing. As with almost any key object in the conflict, this practice too has contested interpretations. The possible link between the Palestinian terrorism and their deprived living conditions is a frequent debate in the Israeli public discourse and it was dealt with in the media from two different perspectives. On the one hand, while trying to ‘make sense’ of the rather unexplainable phenomena of the suicide bombings, those who avoid the essentialism account will evidently search for an external explanation such as the deprived living conditions of the Palestinians to argue that poverty and despair propel people to actions or solutions that in a different context would have been unthinkable. On the other hand this subject matter was pointed out many times as part of the overall discussion on the pathology of Palestinian society, their practices of incitement and the contemptibility of recruiting the poor and the despondence for such actions.

House demolition and the excessive use of force by the Israeli army – constructing the victimised other.

The last image of the Palestinian that stems from the narratives is clearly a counter image to the terrorist Palestinian. This depiction is unique not only due to its paucity but also in the sense that it does not aim at legitimising the Palestinian cause by providing an alleged justification to the Palestinian armed struggle. Rather, the focus in this discourse shifts from rationalization of the violence to the Palestinian sufferings as such.

My life is so bad. I have to be scared all the time that the Israeli army will invade our houses or demolish them. There is curfew all the time and you can’t go out and my mother cries all the time because my little brothers drive her crazy. And my father has depression. I wish God had taken us to a better world. (Girl-city)

“Since the beginning of the conflict everything is very bad. Our houses are being demolished, there is curfew and other bad things happen”.
(Boy-kibbutz)

“My name is Mahmud from Gaza. I think that this conflict should end for several reasons:

- Every day soldiers are coming and I am scared and my family is scared as well.
- Every day tanks pass by.
- Every day our houses are being demolished
- Every day our people die” (Boy-settlement)

Just as terrorism and suicide bombers are the key symbols regarding the Palestinian belligerence, the **burdensome presence of the Israeli army and house demolition** are the comparable key symbols representing the Israeli offences (this will be discussed in more details in the ‘guilt & responsibility’ section below). These extracts portray a dismal reality of fear and despair that is generated from what can be described as the ‘practices of occupation’, although the word itself, with one exemption, is absent from the narratives.

“In my street there are a lot of Israeli soldiers all the time and they always scare me. I’m afraid they will take my father and he won’t come back anymore” (Girl-kibbutz).

“The Israeli soldiers are making our life very difficult. My family is very poor. We hardly eat anything and they demolish our houses. I am for peace. The worst thing is that they killed my father” (Girl-kibbutz)

The Israeli actions: oppression or self-defence?

The next ideological or moral dilemma that arises from the narratives, regards the meaning and purpose of the Israeli military/violent activities in the Palestinian territories. In the same manner as the Palestinian violence, the Israeli violent actions (evident in 54% of the narratives) generates a mixture of equivocal responses, which can be explicated in relation to two contentious rhetorical interests, comparable to the delegitimisation-legitimation polls in relation to the Palestinians.

On the one hand there is a tendency to portray the Israeli policies in a negative manner. This intriguing discourse, which I titled *guilt & responsibility*, is in effect the other side of the same process of the Palestinian victim-impression examined in the previous section. Accordingly, the expulsion from the land, the excessive use of force, killings and house demolition, all generate a fragmentary yet clear voice of blame and accountability in relation to both the long past and short history of the conflict.

Conversely, the blame and responsibility voice is hardly unambiguous, and the children convey a complementary viewpoint to the Israeli violence in a tendency towards *justification*. Here, the Israeli violence is legitimised mostly as self-defence against the Palestinian terrorism. Whether implicit or explicit the Israeli aggression is scrutinised through the logic of the right of Israel to defend itself against the Palestinian's atrocities in order to achieve security.

Guilt & responsibility

This discourse, which undoubtedly utters a sense of blame and responsibility, is in effect the corresponding facet of the victim discourse in relation to the Palestinians. Put differently, victimising the Palestinians and denouncing the Israelis are the two polls of the same rhetorical process. Consequently, inasmuch as the symbols of the occupied land or house demolition serve to legitimise the Palestinians, they are used to construct blame and liability on the part of the Israelis.

As described above, the construal of the conflict is organised chronologically and contextually around two phases. In the first, the notion of the occupied land is constructed as the key object and main cause of the conflict. The children recognise that, by some means, the Jewish immigration to Palestine and the establishment of the state of Israel came about at the expense of the inhabitant Palestinians. This event is considered to be the 'original sin' of the Israelis and the root of all troubles to come.

"It all started when the Jews came to this land and wanted to live here so all the conflicts and fighting begun and last to day." (Girl-kibbutz)

"They came and settled in our land, established a state and tried to expel us". (Boy-city)

"I think that the Israelis attacked us first and we didn't do anything. That was few decades ago when the state was ours as well as Jerusalem and other cities. Now we want them to give us back everything they took from us" (Boy-settlement)

The discourse of the occupied land is maybe the least contested object to be found in the narratives (after Palestinian terrorism). I cautiously argue that if the same task (i.e. the role-playing narrative composition) had been given to my generation when I was at these children's age, the notion of the land would have been contentious to a much larger extent ⁴⁵. The fact that from all the narratives, regardless of their author's personal communicative end, (i.e. whether the child who wrote it meant to depict a 'good' or 'bad' Palestinian) stems the unequivocal construal of historical injustice is evidence of the weakening of the myth of "*land without people to a people without land*". Instead, this fraction of the Palestinian narrative, the one that conveys the tragedy of expulsion from the land seems to have been diffused deep into the Israeli collective psyche.

⁴⁵ Moreover, the whole notion of the 'Palestinian problem' was far less debated in the Israeli society before the Palestinian uprising, that is the first Intifada started in 1987.

Formerly marginalised and even considered ‘enemies from within’, the so-called ‘new historians’⁴⁶ and their account of the 1948 events have become, to some extent, consensual. Furthermore, one of the consequences of the Oslo agreement was that it brought some changes to the education system by initiating programmes of peace education in Israel where a more open discussion of less positive events in Israeli history were admitted to in the textbooks.

The subsequent construal of the Israeli blameworthiness regards the short past of the conflict, that is the recent cycle of violence and the Israeli exercise of power in the occupied territories:

“I have to be scared all the time that the Israeli army will invade our houses or demolish them” (Girl-city)

“Their army bombard our houses all the time” (Girl-settlement)

“The Israeli army broke our house and now we don’t have where to live” (Boy-city)

“The Israeli soldiers making our life very difficult (Girl-kibbutz)

House demolition, arrests, harassments and killings dominate these exceptional voices, which appear primarily, but not exclusively in the kibbutz data. This is a genuine portrayal of the Palestinians as victims that locates the Israelis in the place of the aggressors. It is a clear voice (albeit minor) of resentment and self-criticism in contrast to the dominating Palestinians-delegitimising discourse and rhetoric.

However, a noteworthy distinction is evident when comparing the portrayals of the Israeli wrongdoings to that of the Palestinians. Whereas the account to the Palestinian violence, to a large extent focuses on negative essences and qualities, construction of the Israeli misconduct is restricted to portrayal of actions. It is merely the Israeli forceful

⁴⁶ See Chapter Four p.118

actions, for the most part killings and the practice of house demolition, that is evident in the narratives.

“In my opinion if we speak about the Israelis they cause nothing but harm and trouble. They demolished our family house and killed my grandfather. I think they are murderers although they think that we are. I never heard of terrorists but the Israeli army came into our house at 4am in the morning when everybody was sleeping. It was very very scary; I have nightmares since that night”. (Girl-kibbutz)

I have no intention of underestimating the sincerity of these genuine empathic efforts to construct the perspective of the Palestinians and indeed these extracts give the impression of self-criticism and courageous portrayals of the Israeli wrongdoings. However it is important to note that apart from the fact that the Israeli delegitimation is restricted to actions only; no essence, no destructive intentions, no ‘terrorism’ (as this category is exclusive to the Palestinians), when carefully examining these allegations it is possible to conclude that these are all actions that are associated with the Israeli army fighting against Palestinian terrorists. There are three points to make in relation to that.

First, the Israeli aggression is always re-presented as a response to the Palestinian violence. See for example the extract above- purportedly a fine example of denouncing the house demolition and killing of a family relative. Yet by proclaiming “*I never heard of terrorists but the Israeli army came into our house at 4am in the morning when everybody was sleeping....*” the rationalization to this violent activity is latently and unconsciously provided. She may not have heard of terrorists but this is still the only reason for the army to break into her house in the middle of the night. As will be shown in the next section, this tendency towards justification of the Israeli violence is frequently articulated even more explicitly.

Consequently, when examining the selected actions, namely, house demolition, arrests and killings, these are all allegedly military operations described, yet again, in the service of fighting terrorism. Therefore, even when directed at civilian targets they are never so described but at most are represented and criticised as “excessive uses of force”.

When ascribing these actions to the Israeli *army* (which indeed is the executer of these actions) the children unconsciously reproduce the legitimacy of these actions, as after all it is the Israeli Defence Army. There is hardly any questioning as to the army being there in the first place. Moreover, by restricting the blame to the Israeli army's actions they seem to create a symbolic separation between the Israeli army whom they fiercely deplore and the Israeli state or society who are left outside the debate thus reducing the sense of blame and responsibility.

This strengthens my contention that entering the perspective of the Palestinians is restricted by the ideological comprehensions of the conflict as experienced by the Israelis. The ability to construct the Palestinian viewpoint is constrained by the boundaries of the Israeli representational field and discourse. Thus, even if the communicative end is to legitimise or even victimise the Palestinians along with reconstructing blame and responsibility on the part of the Israelis, the Israeli children simply cannot think or imagine the world of the conflict 'through the eyes of the Palestinians' beyond the symbolic field of their group. The more explicit manifestation of this condition will now be presented in the opposite re-presentation of the Israeli violent activities

Justification – reconstructing security and 'no alternative' ethos

Logic of events

There are very few compositions that posit the Palestinians as victims against the Israeli villain without providing a broader context (evidently the suicide bombers) as a backing to the Israeli actions. In other words, although the Israeli abuses are acknowledged, it is barely depicted as plain mistreatment or oppression. Rather, in the vast majority of cases where the narrator describes the wrongdoing of the Israeli army, it will be accompanied with either a hint or a clear explanation to the described offences. As seen in the following examples, the logic and sequence of events is obvious- the Israeli offences are retaliating against Palestinian terrorism:

“Many many Jews are being killed and on our side the army demolishes our houses and kills our people” (Girl-city)

“Since my uncle blew himself in Tel Aviv the army demolished our house” (Boy-city)

“There is a lot of terrorists attacks in Israel so wanted people are being arrested” (Girl-kibbutz)

“The Israeli army came to our village with tanks and went into some houses because of the terrorist attacks that came from my village” (Girl-city)

These voices can be read as a reconstruction of the notion of **security**, which, as seen in Chapter Five, is a constitutive element in the Israeli collective experience. Apart from its communicative goal to delegitimise the Palestinians, the terrorism discourse previously discussed is visibly an indirect reconstruction of the immense security discourse in Israel. Note the choice of words, such as ‘many many Jews are being killed...’ or ‘there is a lot of terrorist attack in Israel...’, which aim at emphasising lack of personal security and victimisation.

This interpretation goes beyond the apparent reading of these extracts, which demonstrate the logic or causality of events; the Israeli army acts in response to the Palestinian suicide bombings, hence these actions are rhetorically (and morally) justified. Underlying this scrutiny are two interrelated ideological convictions. First, viewing the Palestinians through delegitimising lenses reinforces the adherence to the use of force. Consequently, it seems like there is only one aspect of security- one that can be achieved by purely military means. Put differently, the parties communicate solely in the language of force. These two outlooks play an important role in the legitimisation of Israeli military means in the pursuit of security.

Furthermore, security, (or in this case lack of security) when analysed from a Meadian perspective is an object whose meaning is derived from its role in the Israeli conduct and action. Hence, according to the representation of security, suicide bombings against innocent Israeli civilians predated the incursion of Israeli tanks into Palestinian towns and villages and the military operations are means to restore justice and security.

That is to say, according to this logic of events the inferred burdensome presence of the Israeli army in the Palestinian villages and towns is not the direct consequence, or the *essence* of the Israeli military occupation but a result of the Palestinian terrorism⁴⁷.

Self (other) blame- reconstructing 'no alternative'

In some of the narratives there is more than just the portrayal of the sequence of events. Some children, while role-playing Palestinians, explicitly express self-blame in common with understanding to the Israeli actions:

“I don’t like this conflict between us and the Jews even though its our fault because we are committing terrorist attacks and than the Israeli army demolish our houses and kill Arab families of those who commit the attacks”(Girl-city).

“The Israeli army doesn’t want to hurt us. They are only after those who killed their civilians” (Boy-city)

These tendencies to both blame the Palestinians and to advocate the Israeli actions by emphasising that Israel adheres to a strikingly moderate military policy, are the most visible illustrations to my contention that the Israeli children approach the world of the conflict, or in our specific case – they approach and construct the story (perspective) of the Palestinians from the perspective of the Israeli narrative. Namely, they think, perceive, rationalise, form judgments and hence construct the perspective of the Palestinians according to the frames of reference of the Israeli self and are therefore constrained by the ideological definitions of the paramount social reality as based exclusively on the experiences of the Israelis.

This is evident not only in the dehumanising depictions, which are allegedly stemmed from highly negative stereotypes circulating in some environments in Israel, but

⁴⁷ In relation to the recent cycle of violence, it is true that the Israeli army re-occupied Palestinian cities and towns it previously evacuated during the interim stages of the Oslo agreement. Yet, the fact is that the Israeli occupation has been taking place for 38 years.

also, and more interesting to my view, in narratives where the communicative aim of the narrator is to portray the Palestinian in an entirely positive manner.

“I am scared but I’m sure that the Israelis are scared as well.... I am sorry for the Israelis that being scared to go to shopping mall or club or café, since after all it is their home just like it is ours”. (Girl-kibbutz)⁴⁸

“I am not happy about the security problems in Israel” (Girl-kibbutz)

“I have one friend who got hurt badly from the Israeli missiles but I don’t blame them since we started the whole thing”. (Boy-city)

“A couple of weeks ago my cousin got killed in a shooting incident by the Israeli army. But I don’t bear a grudge to the Jews because of that girl who told me a lot about the Jewish culture” (Girl-kibbutz).

These extracts can be interpreted as the reconstruction of the ethos of ‘**no alternative**’ and ‘**purity of arms**’ described in chapter five, according to which the Israeli exercise of power is guided by the imperative of “self-defence”. The underlying conviction that inferred from this rhetorical pattern is that military force is used merely in order to protect a threatened Israeli community from Palestinian terrorists, excluding innocent civilians. Based on the reconstructed ethos of self-defence the Israeli children demonstrate a tendency to conceive and justify the uses of violence as a (no alternative) means of coping with threats to their security.

Furthermore, in the ambivalence appreciation of the Israeli violence and the construal of these actions as ‘no alternative’ one can find a latent communicative end that cuts across the majority of the narratives. The Israeli children, while constructing the perspective of the Palestinians strive to negotiate a better appearance of their real self, i.e. the Israeli self. In many cases, it seems like the task of ‘looking through the eyes of a Palestinian child’ generates a serious psychological discomfort that has to be resolved. By utilizing a variety of symbolic and communicative strategies, the children conciliate the negative image they had just constructed of themselves. For example, after

⁴⁸ See full analysis of this narrative in the next chapter.

denunciating the Israeli offences and expressed hatred to the Israelis (as a Palestinian) one child wrote:

“To be honest the Jews are also a bit good although they are bombarding us because at least they give us some place to live. So although I hate them they are not so bad”(Boy-settlement).

Another child wrote:

“This is what I think, that the Israelis are good even though they bombard us. I know they are doing it for self-defence so the Arabs won’t kill them” (Girl-settlement)

To sum up, the Israeli violence, evident in just about half of the narratives, (or one should perhaps say in only half of the narratives) is a problematic topic for the children to represent and narrate from the perspective of the Palestinians. Several psycho-ideological pressures become noticeable when analysing these voices.

First, there is a conclusive outlook regarding the injustice that came about when the Jewish people arrived to Palestine and established the state of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. Yet, it is a point worthy of note that reading these narratives and the recurrent theme of the disputed land, it is difficult to recognize any distinction between the ‘original’ or initial dispute over land that started with the immigration of the Jews to Palestine and the more recent and actual disputed land that is the ‘occupied territories’ a dismal consequence of the 1967 war when Israel occupied the Gaza strip and the West Bank⁴⁹. This distinction is significant not from a chronological perspective but, rather on a fundamental circumstance level. Regarding the 1967 occupied territories the issue is surely the disputed land. However, the more important issue is the *occupation*-not just the occupation of the *land*, but the occupation of the *people*.

⁴⁹ Territories believed to be the land on which the prospective Palestinian state will eventually established.

Whereas the notion of the occupied land is a very frequent, uncontested theme, the notion of the occupied people is fairly hard to notice. That is to say, the reality of some 3.5 million Palestinians having been under military occupation for 38 years and the systematic and deliberate violations of their fundamental rights as defined by international humanitarian law, with very minor exemptions, is absent from the narratives. There is seemingly an absence of construal regarding the devastating impact on all aspects of life under military occupation and even when some children genuinely attempt to convey an impression of guilt and responsibility in relation to the Israeli deeds, this is limited to specific activities which are all undertaken for the sake of fighting terrorism, such as house demolitions and arrests. In other words, even when there is a genuine attempt to excoriate the Israelis, the Israeli violence is read as a by-product of legitimate reprisal directed at terrorists rather than civilian targets. This interpretation is strengthened when considering the contradictory rhetoric, that of justification to the Israeli violence. This voice explicitly advocates the Israeli deeds as self-defence and has been interpreted as a reconstruction of the 'no-alternative' and 'purity of arms' ethos, a constituent element of the Israeli collective psyche. These two ostensibly contradictory outlooks regarding the Israeli violent actions reflect the boundaries of the common discourse and debate within Israeli society. That is to say, justified or condemned, rationalised or deprecated the Israeli violent activities, even when directed at civilian targets are always represented and understood as responses, or retaliation and at most are criticised as "excessive force". As one girl from the kibbutz wrote:

Maybe the Israeli army is too aggressive but I can understand them a little".
(Girl-kibbutz)

My contention can be dismissed on the ground of the children's age since they have not yet studied in depth the recent history and the wars Israel had fought against the Arabs over the years, or the consequences of the 1967 war. Yet I also believe that this reflects a deeper denial or repression of the Israeli society in relation to the meaning and implications of being an occupier.

Israelis – victimisation or supremacy?

Additional intriguing ideological dilemma found in the narratives has to do with the Israelis as well, and can be described as *victimisation* and deep sense of vulnerability in contrast to a strong conviction in the *Israeli supremacy*. In other words the analysis of the compositions reveals two somewhat contradictive self-perceptions (as Israelis) while role-playing Palestinians. On the one hand the children, through their compositions depicted a conclusive, (albeit mainly in an indirect manner since they had been asked to write as Palestinians) picture of the Israelis as victims. In contrast to the implied victimisation, there is a no less awareness of Israeli superiority over the Palestinians and the ability to overcome. Israeli supremacy, both military and morally is implied in various ways that range from expressions of fear from the Israeli military might, to evaluation of qualities where the Israelis are depicted, for example, as smarter and generous.

Israeli victimisation and deep sense of vulnerability

“My feelings when I become a martyr will be very good. I will kill many many Jews, which I hate so much and the state of Israel will be mourning because many Jews will die.” (Boy-city)

The demonisation of the Palestinians by emphasising their destructive deeds and aspirations serves a double communicative end. As previously discussed these depictions predominantly aim at delegitimising the Palestinians and represent them as bent on Israel’s destruction. All at once, these depictions position the Israelis, being the target of these aggressions and cruelties, in the place of the sufferers, thus reproducing one of the most enduring features of the Israeli collective identity, that is, self-perception as victims. By emphasising the brutal deeds and wickedness of the Palestinians and their aspiration to eradicate the Israelis, and by graphically portraying Israeli casualties, the implied picture is that of a persistent sense of defencelessness and constant threat to individual and collective security and wellbeing.

As seen in the above extract, the image is of a single Palestinian martyr that is going to inflict innumerable casualties and victimise the 'state of Israel' to a state of bereavement. This depiction implies not only personal grief but rather, collective or national. The sense of threat and imminent danger is experienced as a threat both to the life of individuals and to the existence of the state of Israel and the Jewish people.

“We want the Jews to be in pain and they should cry all the time and mourn their dead” (Boy-settlement)

So much for the apparent, the same impression is communicated and reproduced not only through 'celebrating' the Palestinian cruelty but in a less overt approach by uttering (as Palestinians) self-blame and empathy to the Israeli suffering:

“I feel really bad about it because we kill people without consideration to their families and friends that will be miserable because of us” (Girl-city)

In order to express (as Palestinians) empathy to the Israeli sufferings the children must assume the role of the victims (as Israelis) in this conflict and indeed the logic of the Israeli victimisation runs across the data. The children have elaborated a strong sense that the Israelis are powerless victims at the mercy of all-powerful, evil Palestinians.

Israeli supremacy

“It is clear cut that the Israelis will defeat us”. (Boy-city)

In contrast to the recurring self representation as defenceless victims there is a common perception of Israeli superiority and the ability to prevail over Palestinian aggression. The most frequent manifestation of Israeli dominance propagates a sense of trust in the Israeli military superiority. While role playing Palestinians this notion is communicated mainly as an expression of fear from the Israeli army and implicit recognition in the imbalance of power:

“I’m really scared because I know how strong and powerful the Israeli army is” (Girl-city)

“Their army is much bigger than ours because we don’t have any army at all”(Boy-settlement)

“We hate the Israelis but they are scary especially when they bombard us” (Boy-settlement).

“Eventually the Israelis will decide to fight hard and they will blow up houses” (Boy-kibbutz)

These voices contemplate on and reproduce the asymmetry in power relations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. These examples that convey the confidence that Israel will emerge victorious are based on various assumptions. First, the Palestinians have a good reason to be scared because the Israeli army is ‘strong and powerful’. Secondly, this is in comparison to the fact that the Palestinians ‘don’t have any army at all’. Both statements rhetorically stress the inferiority of the Palestinian armed struggle and power against the Israeli military might. Finally, the asymmetry of power is communicated in an additional intriguing manner. Not only the comparison between the ‘strong and powerful army’ in opposition to the lack of military prowess but also, as the third extract implies, the Israelis haven’t yet fully exercised their power and if the Palestinians will continue with their aggression, ‘eventually’ the Israelis will ‘decide to fight hard’. This ‘hold us’ attitude implies that the Palestinians should be very careful not to ‘push it’ too much, that is, the weaker party should carefully, consider and calculate its actions or will have to face the consequences.

Examining these rhetorical contradictions, it appears that despite the fundamental asymmetry of power, the children reconstruct the Israelis as the primary victims in this conflict. It seems clear that memory of Jewish persecutions is embedded in the symbolic reality of these children and influences their reaction and interpretation to contemporary

threats⁵⁰ even when the resulting self-perception as defenceless victims clashes markedly with Israel military might.

This ambivalence or contradiction so entrenched in the Israeli collective psyche where deep sense of vulnerability cohabits with recognition in, and occasionally even arrogance of power can be critically evaluated as the victimisation ideology of the military and economic superpower. Yet one has to bear in mind that the wave of the suicide bombers, considering the nature of this sort of attack, although it never really altered the asymmetry of power between the Israeli and Palestinians, certainly generated a new balance of fear. Put differently, the ultimate Israeli military superiority over the Palestinians was never really undermined. Nevertheless, it was ineffective in preventing the wave of suicide bombers on Israeli civilians which generated an inconceivable sense of threat to individual security. With the aid of politicians' rhetoric and media depictions these threats are interpreted and perceived as an existential threat to the state of Israel.

I suggest that despite the deep sense of vulnerability, the children have little doubt in the ability of Israel to overcome. They discursively contemplate the possibility that Israel may be destroyed, especially in relation to the Palestinian's ultimate objective or aspirations but this seem to have little psychological reality.

While selecting the appropriate extracts from the narratives to illustrate my findings, an intriguing observation caught my attention, which later was examined and proved right. While articulating the voice of victimisation, whether directly or in the form of demonising the Palestinians, the children used the category **Jews/Jewish** in relation to self. Conversely, when discoursing Israeli supremacy, specifically the military superiority they used the category **Israeli/s**.

I suggest that the choice of self-categorisation and the swing between Israeliness and Jewishness is not accidental or arbitrary. Rather, it is compatible with, and reflects

⁵⁰ Few children noticeably draw upon symbolic resources from the Jewish dismal history thus discursively generating the link between the Palestinian aspirations and the German Nazis. See for example analysis p. 233

two different aspects of the Israeli self. The Jews category is saturated with the psychological baggage of a history of victimisation and oppression and is associated with being weak, vulnerable or persecuted.

“The Jews all over the world should be destroyed...” (Boy-city)

Here, the context of the conflict is expanding beyond the evident Israeli-Palestinian disagreements to attain a broader meaning with association of genocide attributed to the Palestinian inspiration. This overtone is a fine reconstruction of core aspect of the Israeli self, one that experiences plain continuity between centuries of Diaspora persecutions and the Arab-Israeli conflict, and therefore represents the Palestinian armed struggle as lurking danger and a threat to the entire Jewish people.

On the other hand, the Israeli category is associated with advancement and military might. It is the modern Israeli category that has the orientation towards power and the ability to control and shape the Jewish destiny. Therefore, when describing the Israeli supremacy the children, for the most part, favour the Israeli classification as in the ‘Israeli army’, ‘Israeli tanks’, ‘Israeli soldiers’ and so forth. The tension and transition between the categories can be seen in the following extract:

“I think that the Jews deserve to get hurt, but on the other hand I am also scared because the Israeli army is very strong” (Girl-settlement)

I am happy that we kill the Jews like that. They deserve it. But sometimes its really sad to hear so many dead people in Israel and it scares me that the Israelis will send bombs and bombard us and we won't have a place to live like my neighbour. (Girl-city)

While discussing the prospect of Palestinians victimising the Israelis, it is the *Jews* category that are being victimised. In contrast, there is a good reason to be scared because of the military might of the *Israeli* army that is very strong and can ‘send bombs’. A simple word count comparison reveals that whereas in the Kibbutz compositions the

Jewish-Israeli categories have the same proportion, the Jewish category is double and triple in frequency in the city and the settlement respectively.

Before I move on to describe the next and final ideological dilemma, there is an additional manifestation to the Israeli supremacy, one that goes beyond the military but nonetheless reconstructs and sustains the asymmetry of power relations between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

“The Israelis are much smarter” (Boy-city)

“I love the Jews and I want to be Jewish”(Boy-city)

“I would like to have a Jewish family because when I grow up I want to be smart and to have normal life. Unlike what we have: its cold, we don't have food, there is no place on the mattress because we are 10 brothers plus Mom”. (Boy-settlement)

These examples convey, in different ways the superiority of the Israelis and sustain the asymmetry in power between the groups. Some children, while role playing Palestinians expressed favouritism towards the Israelis based on their morality, or other qualities and trait characterisation. The extreme cases of this tendency as can be seen in the last two examples in expressions of repugnance to the Palestinians and a clear aspiration to belong to the other group. The girl from the last extract wants to have a Jewish family so she can be smart and have normal life. These qualities, or the absence of these qualities, is directly associated with the groups (Jewish-smart and normal life, Palestinians-deprived living conditions) regardless of the context and conditions that led to these differences. This inclination is related to what I previously described as a negotiation of a better appearance of self where the children through the process of social comparison praise the Israelis and narrate their role played Palestinian as completely dis-identifying with her/his people.

Peace- immensely desired but impossible to achieve

The forth and last ideological dilemma or contradiction considers the meaning and prospect of the concept of peace. Peace is definitely one of the most significant objects to be found in the narratives and the analysis of the peace related voices reveal a psychological 'tie', or dilemma in relation to peace.

On the one hand there is extensive peace-yearning rhetoric, which constructs the notion of peace as the ultimate opposite to the current conflictual reality. Every imaginary Palestinian child that expressed frustration or repugnance regarding the current situation articulated the conception of peace as the cure to the Israeli-Palestine mayhem and the ultimate desired solution. However, as much as peace rhetoric is extensive, it is usually restricted to abstract declarations on the desirability of peace with a few references to better interpersonal relations, official treaties and to the avoidance of violence.

On the other hand, there is underlying robust conviction or disbelief in the possibility of peace. This is implied from the narratives in three different communicative strategies. The first specifically portrays the Palestinians as anti-peace people. Apart from the delegitimising depictions which visibly portray the Palestinians as violent and evil, there are narratives in which the Palestinian child purposely declares his /her disinterest in peace and a wish to persist with the violent means. Additionally, there is a pervasive 'fatalism' attitude that circulates in the narratives, which perceives the conflict as a nature given or impossible to overcome, hence peace, although sought-after is not a viable option. Thirdly, when discussing the subject matter of peace some children elaborated a zero-sum representation of peace that implicitly denotes the impossibility for the two people to live peacefully side-by-side.

Yearning for peace

"Eventually there will be peace. Maybe it won't be me who brought it but it will happen. We need faith in peace." (Girl-kibbutz)

The ubiquitous peace rhetoric, an identifying mark of Israeli society is markedly reflected in the children's works as they approach the perspective of the Palestinians. It is set up as a key object – a utopian state that stands for and symbolises everything that is the opposite of the current relations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Simply stated, if the conflict stands for what is bad, peace stands for what is good. Given that, almost every child that reconstructed and positioned his/her imaginary Palestinian as 'good', built upon this equation and constructed a Palestinian that either firmly objects to the conflict or strongly advocates peace, or both. In that sense, the contemplation on peace is an additional communicative strategy the children applied to legitimise their imaginary Palestinians by portraying them as peace-seekers.

“I truly hope that this conflict will end with peace and both sides will be happy”(Girl-city)

“It is so fun to have peace!”(Girl-kibbutz)

“I want peace to come at last, without the attacks all the time. And everyone will live peacefully and quietly, and everything will be good.”(Girl-kibbutz)

The common manifestation of peace is to a large extent abstract and contains declarations on the positiveness and desirability of peace, which, according to this construal symbolises non-war, the avoidance of violence and hope for a better future for the Israelis and the Palestinians. It is habitually conceptualised by the children in blurred, non-figurative and utopian terms. The children are hardly able to go beyond the wishful or dreamful peace and to give substance to the concept. In that sense, although volumised, the prevalent peace rhetoric is somewhat hollow. Moreover, in many of the peace-related narratives, the concept is both simplified and trivialised. Peace is 'fun' and is derived from or depends solely on good will. Again, I have no intention of undervaluing the sincerity and good intention of these voices, yet my interpretation regards them as more of a projection of Israeli peace ideology or mere reproduction of peace slogans rather than engagement with the Palestinian perspectives on peace.

“Why not make peace? What's so difficult about it? Why fighting and dying? (Boy-kibbutz)

“I wish that there will be no wars in the world but peace all over and everybody will love everybody even just for one day. And than in this one and only special day everybody will realise how good it is to have peace all over the world and it will remain forever” (Girl-kibbutz)

A point worthy of note is that the discourse of peace is one of the most visible group-specific categories with the kibbutz having significantly more ‘peace-yearning’ compositions than the city and settlement together. The opposite tendency can be seen in the delegitimising category of the terrorist-Palestinian, which is considerably lower in the kibbutz in comparison with the other groups.

When trying to cast some content to the essentially hollow category, one common meaning that is attached to the concept of peace is *good interpersonal relations*. Both the means to achieve peace and the consequences of peace: good interpersonal relations and communication, i.e. playing together, meeting, talking, were recurring themes.

“My solution is to meet with them and try and talk with them and play with them so we’ll see that the other side is not so bad and is doing everything for peace” (Girl-kibbutz)

“We need a common school for Jews and Palestinians so we can play together” (Boy-settlement)

An additional aspect of peace was found in a few references to official treaties and agreements that stress the political element in peace building. In this construal, peace is in the hand of the politicians and is dependent on their good will and efforts. According to this logic, it is the leaders that are responsible for the conflict and as such they have the power to change the current reality by meeting and signing the desired treaties.

“When I grow up I want to be the prime minister of both the Israelis and the Palestinians so I could make peace” (Girl-kibbutz)

“If I were prime minister I would have done anything possible for the peace” (Boy-kibbutz)

“I think that there should be peace between Israel and the Palestinians and we can write to Arafat, Sharon and also George W. Bush so they will try to achieve peace” (Boy-settlement)

Peace discourse raises, once again, the notion of land. As seen before, the notion of the occupied land is a fraction from the Palestinian narrative that entered the Israeli collective consciousness. While thinking of peace from the perspective of the Palestinians some children contemplated the re-partition or the liberation of the land. Since land is a key object in the realm of the conflict, it is effectively a key object in the road for peace. ‘*Land for peace*’ is the most common perception, or social representation of peace in the Israeli-Palestinian political sphere. This formula has been fixated in the common perception of peace ever since the commencement of the peace process and it is possible to identify its reconstruction in the narratives.

“In my opinion we should make a simple agreement. Our prime minister will meet the Israeli prime minister to sign an agreement so we’ll have equal parts of land” (Boy-city)

“If you will give us back the territories we will have a peace agreement” (Boy-kibbutz)

“If we fight over land we can live together. For example we can divide Jerusalem so both of us could have it” (Girl-settlement)

Missing from this discourse is the *negotiated* character of peace. That is, the acknowledgment of mutuality and equality of the parties and the need to jointly realise future possibilities is completely absent in the construal of peace rhetoric. I regard this as another illustration to my contention that the Israeli children approach the world of the conflict, and specifically the perspective of the Palestinians, according to the frames of reference of the Israeli shared understanding of reality. Analysis of the peace discourse in the narratives reveals that the notion of peace is for the most part substantiated in relation to the everyday life of the Israelis and is completely thought of in Israeli terms.

Peace, as inferred from these narratives, is predominantly the end of the Palestinian terrorism.

“There are a lot of advantages in peace. If there will be peace there won’t be war and bloodshed and no one will throw stones and no terrorist attacks and no suicide bombings.” (Girl-kibbutz)

“Both sides tried and still trying to reach an agreement to end up this sorrow and bloodshed in Israel” (Girl-kibbutz)

“I prefer that there will be peace. That way nobody will be suicide bomber and nobody get killed.” (Boy-kibbutz)

“We need to find a solution to the conflict and than the suicide bombings will end and so the demolition of our houses”. (Girl-kibbutz)

“I think that we should make peace because there are terrorist attacks all the time, people are dying and houses are being demolished” (Girl-kibbutz)

These examples show that the notion of peace is reconstructed according to the logic and aspirations of the Israelis rather than the Palestinians. The list of ‘consequences of peace’ adheres to the security problems in Israel and comprises the avoidance of terrorism and suicide bombings thus reconstructing peace in Israeli terms. From a Meadian perspective, for the Israelis the key object of the conflict is security and, stems from that, the meaning of peace is the end of violence. For the Palestinians the key object of the conflict is the occupation, hence the meanings of peace are most likely to be liberation and self determination.

The children that attributed ‘peace-longings’ to their role played Palestinians perceive peace, first and foremost as the end of the suicide bombings and this perception is simply projected onto the Palestinians. Since peace is the negation of violence, and since violence is for the most part a Palestinian practice, the simple conclusion is that peace means the avoidance of Palestinian violence (It also means the end of house demolition, but this, according to the logic and sequence of events, comes only after the end of the Palestinian terrorism). Since the Palestinian violence is represented as

aggression rather than an act of liberation, the same logic applied to the notion of peace; it has come to mean simply the absence of violence. Ideas such as the end of the occupation or the establishment of a Palestinian state are completely absent from the data (yet, it is not surprising since, as previously discussed the very essence of the occupation is absent as well). In this regard, the concept of peace ‘through the eyes of the Palestinians’ has been completely divorced from notions of *freedom* and *justice*.

“I would have wanted peace and to tell the other Arab children that the Jews are not bad and to the Parents that there should not be any more bombings”(Girl-settlement)

“I just think that it is better to stop terrorism and make peace.” (Girl-settlement)

“The terrorist attacks and hurting innocent people will not lead anywhere – only by talking and agreements” (Boy-city)

“Why can’t they make peace? I asked my parents. And why don’t you want to end this conflict? I ask the Arab youth that throw stones on the Israelis.” (Girl-kibbutz)

The Palestinian peace-advocates, according to these examples, clearly put the blame and responsibility on Palestinian shoulders. When talking about peace, it seems like the target audience is fellow Palestinians rather than the Israelis. In almost every peace-related composition, the Israeli children positioned their imaginary Palestinian child as a peace-lover against the rest or the majority of the Palestinians who cannot see the benefit of peace or simply don’t want to end the conflict. This is a clear reconstruction of the common perception in Israel, especially ever since the outbreak of the second Intifada, according to which it is the Palestinians who are solely responsible for the collapse of the peace process, and change will come only when they will decide to abandon their annihilative aspirations. The following example best epitomises this contention:

“We the Arabs do want peace. Not all of us like and support the terrorist attacks that killed many people”(Girl-kibbutz)

Disbelief in the possibility of peace

In parallel with the extensive peace rhetoric, found in the narratives was a firm disbelief in the possibility of peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. One common assumption that inferred from the compositions is that the Palestinian people are reluctant to change the current situation. As seen in the concluding extract of the last section, the child argues that unlike most of the Arabs that evidently “*like and support the terrorist attacks that killed many people*” she does want peace. Her communicative goal is to persuade her audience that unlike most of the Palestinians she belongs to a minority of peace-advocates. The same message can be seen in the following extract:

“My family and me we all want peace but we can’t persuade all the Palestinians. Sometime friends are coming over and start arguing about the conflict and I’m getting upset and I want to shout and tell my parents’ friends- no! This is not the solution to say bad things about the Israelis and they don’t even mention the word solution to the conflict” (Girl-kibbutz).

The interpretation of these voices is that, apart from few exceptional individuals, the vast majority of the Palestinians are fundamentally evil, irrational and anti-peace people. This assumption is strengthened in those narratives where the Palestinian child overtly declares his/her opposition to peace:

“It is a good thing that we are not in peace with the Israelis. We don’t want peace with them” (Boy-settlement)

“They want peace and we want to kill them” (Boy-city).

“I hope there won’t be peace- just more and more wars” (Boy-city)

These examples clearly depict the Palestinians as warmongers and propagate the impression that peace is impossible. It is a reconstruction of the recent stubborn conviction in the Israeli narrative, one that was generated with the collapse of the peace talks and the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising, according to which ‘there is no partner for peace’. According to the second extract, it is clear that one party, the Israelis, are peace-lovers and peace seekers by contrast to the Palestinians whose only wish is to kill

the Israelis. The depiction of the Israelis is therefore the diametrical opposite to that of the Palestinians: they embody the right and the good. The Israeli craving for peace is juxtaposed with a diabolical image of the people with whom peace must be made. This rhetoric, whether intentionally or not conveys the message that peace is unattainable.

The second communicative strategy that implies the impossibility of peace is the fatalistic perception and construal of the conflictual reality as unalterable destiny. The two people are forever doomed to remain in this conflict.

“I don’t think that this conflict is justifiable but I start to realise that there are no alternatives” (Girl-settlement)

“I want us to live together, Jewish and Palestinians in one place, to be unite. But I know it will never happen. It is a never-ending war and it will never ends unless there will be a miracle” (Girl-city).

“I think that this conflict will last forever” (Boy-city)

“I want peace but unfortunately it won’t happen” (Girl-kibbutz)

Unlike the previous voices, these are not pointing blame on any of the parties but rather express despair and hopelessness. The mode of conflict is perceived as an ‘everlasting’ order that we have to accept. These voices communicate the belief that they cannot do anything that will change the outcome, because events are determined by something over which they have no control. A sense of anguish and a lack of sense of agency shape this perception and constitute the conclusion that only a ‘miracle’ can alter this fate.

The last manifestation of the disbelief in peace can be described as zero-sum perception in relation to possible outcomes of the conflict: no middle ground can be found. The construal of the goals and aspirations of the Palestinians can be realised only at the expense of the Israelis. This perception is not peace-discourse specific but rather inferred from various aspects in the narratives:

“They don’t understand that we won’t give up. Our goal is one: a Palestinian state on the lands of the state of Israel” (Boy-city)

“I think that maybe we should reach a peace agreement with them but only if they will let us establish a Palestinian state in their state which is originally ours” (Boy-city)

“We are going to take over the state of Israel and than Israel will become Palestine again”(Boy-city)

These children see the conflict as a zero-sum game, a winner-takes-all situation. They see no room for compromise, and construct the Palestinian final aim as the liquidation of the Israeli state. The second extract best illustrates this point. The child considers the possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Israelis seemingly as a positive shift since peace is decidedly a valued category. But then come into sight of the prospect, or the precondition of such an agreement: a Palestinian state that can be realised at the expense of the Israeli state.

To sum up this section, the discourse on peace can be read as the reconstruction of the contradictory elements of the Israeli society’s peace ideology. By attributing to the Palestinians their own yearnings for peace on the one hand, and by conveying the message that peace is impossible to achieve, on the other, the result is a sustained status quo.

While constructing the peace rhetoric ‘through the eyes of the Palestinians’ the Israeli children reproduced the prospect of peace as based strictly on the Israeli experience. That is, the meanings attached to the object of peace are solely derived from the Israeli craving for security and completely disregard what can be considered as the Palestinian vision for peace including issues such as freedom, justice, self determination or the end of the occupation.

Furthermore, in the vast majority of the peace-related data, the overall picture that is revealed is of a small minority of Palestinians who promote peace (in Israeli terms),

and stand impotently against the irrational majority that refuse to comprehend the benefits of peace and are only interested in the annihilation of the state of Israel. This is an apparent reproduction of the well-grounded ideological conviction that the Palestinians are not partners for peace.

It has to be said that despite centuries of craving for peace, the fact of the matter is that the Israeli sincerity and readiness to bare the real cost of peace - a cost which will seriously take into consideration the Palestinians needs and interests, a cost which will compel the Israelis to see the Palestinians as equal partners for negotiations and, a cost which will force the Israelis to direct their gaze towards the mirror and confront their own misconducts - has never been put to a test. Instead we can see an overwhelming peace ideology that has its main function as to maintain the positive and moral self-image of the Israelis against the diabolical image of the Palestinians.

Summary

In this chapter I presented the range of responses the Israeli children produced in their role-playing narratives in relation to themselves, the Palestinians and the key objects of the conflict. The interpretation of the narratives suggests an assortment of competing voices and ideologies. For almost every object in the field there are contested meanings, opposing interpretations and competing outlooks.

The analysis above has augmented and sharpened the ambivalent and polemic approach of the Israeli children towards the Palestinians and their perspective as seen in the drawings. Whereas the drawings produced five distinct perspectives in relation to the Palestinians, the narratives have extended and ramified the categories to show the Israeli self in all its complexities and polemics. It reveals the gamut of contested representations and symbolic resources circulating in Israeli society, of which the children draw upon when constructing the Palestinian perspective. As I was hoping to demonstrate, the contested voices arising out of the children's works reflect and represent the range of responses and competing voices of the Israeli self as was described in chapter five.

For example, it proposes an image of the Palestinians as murderous whose only wish is to harm the Israelis as well as being righteous in their struggle to liberate their occupied land. There is even a voice, albeit minor, that sees the Palestinians as victims of the Israeli burdensome presence in the occupied territories. The reconstruction of the children's (real) self is not less contested. Israelis are depicted in the narratives, to a large extent as the victims of the Palestinian atrocities. They are involved in a war that was forced upon them, and they are inescapably defending themselves against the intentions of the Palestinians to annihilate the state of Israel. In contrast to that, a less compromising perspective was communicated. The Israelis are also the aggressors and the occupiers. One conclusive outlook arising from the analysis regards the Israeli immigration to Palestine as an act that inflicted injustice to the Palestinians. The establishment of the state of Israel, according to this voice, was at the expense of the inhabitant Palestinians. As much as the children have elaborated a strong sense that the Israelis are powerless victims at the mercy of all-powerful, evil Palestinians, they nonetheless reproduced the Israeli supremacy and the asymmetry in power relations. Through the eyes of the Palestinians they saw the Israelis as the ones who fall prey as well being a significantly superior.

Similarly to the drawings, here too social milieu is a strong predictor as to the content and tone of the children's approach to the other. The children from the kibbutz have shown a lesser tendency to intentionally and directly delegitimise the Palestinians. Accordingly, self-criticism and peace related attitudes were significantly higher in this group. In contrast, dehumanisation of the Palestinians and the tendency to perceive the Palestinian violence through essentialising lenses are predominantly city and settlement strategies. Nevertheless, as I argue throughout the chapter, the content boundaries of the narrative compositions, from the harsh to the empathic, are reflections of the boundaries of the Israeli self, of which the children through their construction of the Palestinian stance strived to protect.

For instance, even when authorising a victimised Palestinian voice that condemns the Israelis for their violence, this violence is almost always reconstructed around the

logic of self-defence and no alternative. Additionally through their works the children have reproduced the Israeli peace rhetoric while emphasising the Israeli desire for reconciliation in contrast to the Palestinian rejection of peace. Even when constructing a 'good' image of the Palestinian, one that opposes violence and yearns for peace, the notion of peace is reconstructed exclusively according to the frame of reference of the Israeli experience. Peace, for the (imaginary) Palestinians is first and foremost the absence of the Palestinian terrorism.

By emphasising the multifaceted and contested character of the children's works, I hope to have begun to make clear the problems in treating perspective taking as either/or cognitive ability. This will become even clearer in the final analysis where I look at individual works of perspective taking.

7. TAKING THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE OTHER: INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS

“Indeed any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist – or, on the contrary by the “light” of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgment and accents. The word, directed towards its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile”. (Bakhtin, 1981, p.276)

It is now time to return to individual works to try to discern the interrelated forces of the competing ideologies embedded in the Israeli narrative (the victimized occupier self), and how their particular trajectories and strengths mediate the motivation and ability to take the perspective of the other.

The question I ask in this chapter is: how are the competing voices discerned both in the ethnographic and sociological analysis, being actively orchestrated as the children construct an objectified and finalised perspective of the Palestinians? Specifically, I aim to address the complexity of individual’s texts (both drawing and narrative), that is, the layers of voices and ideologies embedded within the composed Palestinian perspective, to identify how particular rhetorical connections are forged and, more importantly to understand the investment that have been made in them. I will examine how different, sometimes contradictory perspectives and ideologies are being negotiated, challenged,

resisted, or accepted in the work of single individuals and how they mediate the construction of the other's perspective.

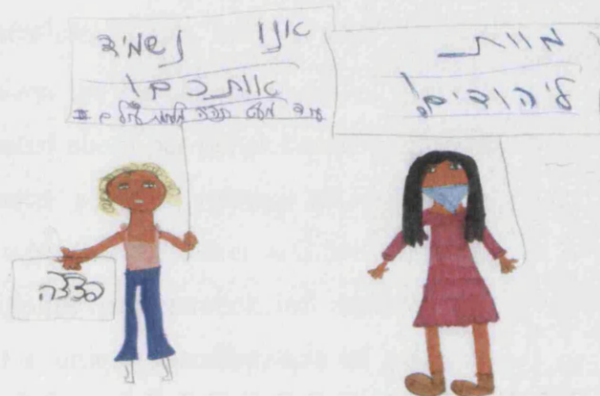
My aim is to show that these narratives, while monologic in their compositional form, reflect the polyphony of the social and bear the traces of multiple voices and ideologies. These voices are reproduced, anticipated, polemicised with, or simply taken into account in a way that has a profound influence on the content and style of a given drawing and composition. Discerning these voices and the nature of their interrelationships, that is, making visible the multiple, contradictory and partially constrained perspectives and the ways they come to play in individual constructions of the other are the primary goals of this chapter.

In the previous analysis I lost sight of individual works and focused on single utterances drawn deliberately from the narratives in order to discern the content and organisation of the representational-rhetorical field, and to expose the ideological dilemmas and power interests that mediate the Israeli children's responses to the Palestinians, to themselves, and the conflict. Using the knowledge of the verbal-ideological contexts surrounding the children's figural and textual productions, acquired from both the ethnographic and sociogenesis analysis, an in-depth interpretative process was developed that is aimed at sorting out and analysing the voices speaking through individual works. Here too, the basic unit of analysis is the utterance. The first questions were similar to the previous analysis, i.e. from a rhetorical-pragmatic point of view, what is the meaning of that utterance? What is this utterance doing in the narrator's story? Why has the author composed this voice in the name of the Palestinian child? Secondly and more importantly, looking at the whole narrative, I asked: what are the dominant voices that resonate from the text and what is the nature of the relationships between these voices? How have these voices been uniquely configured and what is the outcome of that configuration? I tried to infer how particular types of voice orchestration functioned for Israeli children to establish various kinds of Palestinian perspectives. Additionally, I paid careful attention to specific relations between the subjectivity of the Israeli *author* and the subjectivity of the imagined Palestinian *narrator*. In other words, I

was interested in the various subject positions the Israeli authors, deliberately or unconsciously, have placed the imaginary Palestinian in relation to the core objects of the conflict and the competing ideologies that mediate and constitute the realm of the conflict.

Selection of the works to be analysed in this chapter was a difficult task indeed. Mead's assertion that each individual reflects the social whole from a particular and unique standpoint, with no individual mirroring the community in the same way, reverberated while I had to choose the works presented in this analysis. Due to spatial constraints only nine individual analyses were included, three from each group. The rationale for the selection was to provide the broadest illustration of unique configurations of voices and positions that mediate and constitute the Israeli children's construction of the Palestinian perspective. In that sense, every composition and drawing populated with a matchless orchestration of subject positions and voices, with various degrees of harmony and discord, functioned to establish a unique Palestinian subjectivity. Each work shed different light on the ideological constraints the Israeli children faced when trying to make sense of the enemy and his or her actions, goals and aspirations.

1. Girl - Settlement.



My name is Mahmmuda. I have a bigger brother and my father is a suicide bomber.

Tonight he and his friend are planning to attack. I am very proud of him.

I think that Jews deserve to get hurt, but on the other hand I am also scared because the IDF is very strong and our leaders are planning a war against the US and then two powerful states can hurt us and I am still young and I am afraid to be killed.

When I grow up I want to make peace between the Arabs and the Jews, if I would live.

I know a few Jewish children because we used to live in Jerusalem and I have been in a Jewish nursery school.

My brother thinks that we should kill all the Jews but I know that deep in his heart he is scared and does not want to kill them because before the Intifada started, he had many Jewish good friends.

I don't think that they deserve to die because sometime they help us and feel sorry for us unlike my cruel people.

I would like to have a Jewish family because when I grow up I want to be smart and to have a normal life. Unlike what we have: its cold, we don't have food, there is no place on the mattress because we are 10 brothers plus mom. If I were a Jewish girl I would have explained to my friends that the Arabs are harmless and most of them want peace, like myself and all of my friends. But we don't show it because we are afraid of our parent's anger.

I think that the adults must think before they hurt our future because they should give us a good example - not a bad one.

I truly hope that my father will not commit the terror attack today and that the war would not start.

Analysis

The narrator introduces us to her older brother and father whom she describes as a (would be) suicide bomber. Since the image of the suicide bomber bears no meaning other than death and destruction, it is a key negative-representation aim at de-legitimation. This impression is strengthened with the approval of, and pride she takes in the father's intentions (*I am very proud of him*). The author, thus, establishes identification between the Palestinian child and the vicious Palestinians. The idea of a child that is contented about her father committing such a brutal deed, such an extreme sacrificial act, denotes a grave violation of civilized values. However, the narrative is concluded with a wish that the father will not carry out the planned attack. In between, there is an intriguing orchestration of various perspectives and voices, internal contradictions and a unique manifestation of the polemics described in the previous chapters.

In a rather calm, non-tempestuous tone (that is maintained throughout the narrative) the narrator clarifies her approval of the father's aggressive intentions, asserting that the *Jews deserve to get hurt*. No account or elaboration is provided as to why the Jews ought to be harmed, therefore making it difficult to determine whether it is an underdeveloped utterance of guilt and responsibility or just an additional element in the logic of de-legitimation. Instead, we find a qualification that marks the first alteration in the Palestinian girl's subjectivity. Although the Jews merit harm, the Palestinian child is afraid *because the IDF is very strong*. This, as seen in the previous chapter is an utterance in the service of reaffirming the Israeli supremacy. The author depicts the Palestinian child as bent on attacking Israel as well as realistically acknowledging the asymmetry in power relations.

The following utterance is a unique blend of the author's personal anxiety from the coming war in Iraq into the context of the Palestinian narrative. The narrator tells of the Palestinian leaders' war plans against the US: *our leaders are planning a war*

against the US and then two powerful states can hurt us. This attribution is not a complete nonentity. Rather, it is a reproduction of the prevalent images in the Israeli media at the time these compositions were written. The consistent perceived threat from the Palestinians coalesce with the fear of uncertainty from the coming war, brought about by the assimilation of the American and Iraqi exchange of blustering rhetoric before the war onto the fictional Palestinian child's expression of feelings and thoughts. Note the choice of words *two powerful states*, reconstructing once more the trust in Israeli superiority by stressing the notion of the Israelis and Americans as allies against the weak Palestinians. The Palestinian child admits fear and apprehension of the forthcoming situation. This gives a more humane impression of a Palestinian child that is *still young and afraid to be killed*. I found it difficult to construe these two instances in the narrative where the narrator expresses her anxiety and fear of dying young. On the one hand it can be read as an intended depiction based on the awareness of the startling number of Palestinian children who died in the recent cycle of violence. Alternatively, this may be a projection of the author's very own anxieties as an Israeli child living in a dismal reality of suicide bombings, intermingled with the consequences of the Israeli emotional build-up to the forthcoming war in Iraq.

The voice of threat is the strongest voice that resonates from the drawing as well. Interestingly, the negative image of the Palestinian is uttered not through the drawn image, as the drawing shows two seemingly ordinary girls. One of them is wearing a face scarf but the overall impression is fairly ordinary and positive. The threat is uttered through the content of the display board attached to the girls. The one in the right reads *Death to the Jews!* The second reads *We will exterminate you! Soon there will be a third world war* (the girl on the left holds a package that reads Bomb). Unlike many drawings there is no graphic negative portrayal embedded in the Palestinian figure. There are neither weapons nor twisted images of the drawn Palestinian. Nevertheless the unambiguous content of the drawing communicates threat and discloses the ruthless intentions of the Palestinians. The reference to a third world war in the drawing befits the reference to the war in Iraq in the narrative and can show the logic of fear and victimhood

that induces the ideological-cognitive process of likening the Palestinians with past and future threats to the Jewish people.

The narrative continues with a change in direction and the narrator now utters the voice of peace: *When I grow up I want to make peace between the Arabs and the Jews*. The meaning of peace is apparently embedded in the word itself. Since no additional explanation, or backing is provided, the author assumes that the actual or imaginary reader knows what peace means and why the narrator wishes to realise the vision of peace between the two peoples; *Peace* is the ultimate negation of *the conflict*. (The qualification – *if I would live*- is the sequel of the fear of the unknown and the coming war)

The polar reconstruction of the symbolic world of peace in contrast to the world of conflict is reified in this composition as the author draws on an imaginary dialogue, or reported speech, between two different voices: the narrator turned out to be a ‘good’ Palestinian whereas her older brother, previously introduced to the reader is positioned as a ‘bad’ Palestinian. Following the peace declaration, the narrator tells of her acquaintance with Jewish children she used to go to nursery school with, yet no further evaluation is provided regarding these children. The threatening rhetoric is now ascribed to the older brother who *thinks that we should kill all the Jews*.

However the narrator questions the sincerity, or the seriousness of this reported attitude by allegedly revealing her brother’s ‘real’ feelings: *I know that deep in his heart he is scared and does not want to kill them because before the Intifada started, he had many Jewish good friends*. She reflects on the era prior to the outbreak of the second Intifada, stressing that both herself and her brother used to know Jewish children and to have Jewish friends. She composes a clash between two value stances. On the one hand there is the Palestinian hatred towards the Jews and the motivation to hurt them. On the other hand, the author draws on a common-sensical representation of a moral code or order, according to which you do not wish to kill

someone you know or, moreover, someone who used to be your friend. The notions of acquaintance and friendship are key symbols comprising the construal of peace as good interpersonal relations. From this point onwards, the narrator positions herself in complete disidentification with her in-group Palestinians, represented now by her brother, parents and adults. Reading the previously mentioned declaration for peace, it appears that the rhetorical shift towards peace signalled a positional shift towards the Israeli outlook.

Contradicting her previous stance, the narrator, still in a reported dialogue with her brother, replies to the assertion regarding the Jews merit of harm: *I don't think that they deserve to die because sometime they help us and feel sorry for us unlike my cruel people.* In what seems to be a deepening of the split between *us* and *them* and an apparent 'them-praise', the author is evidently negotiating a better self on behalf of the Israelis. She progressively composes a pro-Israeli, Palestinian child. She draws on an alleged Israeli compassion and occasional aid to the Palestinians, a story, I assume, she heard about in the news, probably an Israeli NGO that assisted the Palestinians in coping with the Israeli wrongdoings. This utterance accomplishes the ideological construction of the Israelis as good and compassionate in opposition to the *cruel* Palestinians.

The difficulty of the Israeli child to enter the perspective of a Palestinian child is reflected in the extreme when the narrator utters: *I would like to have a Jewish family because when I grow up I want to be smart and to have normal life.* Looking at the conflict through the eyes of a Palestinian child drives the author to a conclusion that the ultimate wish of the Palestinian child is to become Israeli. Namely, the dismal reality and the deprived living conditions (*Unlike what we have: its cold, we don't have food, there is no place on the mattress because we are 10 brothers plus mom*) is an embedded quality, or a destiny of being Palestinian. The author clearly acknowledges and empathises with the disgraceful living conditions of the Palestinians, yet she makes no connection between the realm of the conflict (e.g. the

occupation, the shattered economy) and its consequences on the daily life of the Palestinians. The compassion-arousing portrait of the Palestinian wretchedness is blame-free and devoid of any intimation to an Israeli responsibility. Instead, she plainly refers to these conditions as an integral element of the Palestinian identity. The solution then, is to have, or to be part of a Jewish family. That is the only opportunity for the Palestinian to *be smart and to have normal life*. One simply cannot achieve these qualities if one is Palestinian. Rather, one has to become Jewish or to have a Jewish family. This is, again, a reproduction of the Israeli supremacy against the Palestinian inferiority, now realised not on military ground but in terms of quality of life as well as trait characterisations.

In a somewhat self-reflective loop, the narrator moves on to depict an altered portrait of the Palestinians that contradicts her previous portrayal of *my cruel people*. She asserts: *If I were a Jewish girl I would have explained to my friends that the Arabs are harmless and most of them want peace, like myself and all of my friends*. This is a very common 'symbolic resolution' of the Israeli children when constructing the image of the Palestinians. When the children are conscious about not making negative generalisations, the solution is to make both generalisations and particularisation and/or qualifications. According to this resolution there are *good* Palestinians that oppose terrorism and are pro-peace, (*like myself and all of my friends*, admitted by the narrator). Conversely, as represented in this narrative by the narrator's brother, there are the *bad* Palestinians who *think that we should kill all the Jews*.

The Palestinian child is *harmless* and is pro-peace but she and her friends are prevented from uttering their reconciliatory opinions because they are afraid of their parents' anger. This can be read as an additional example of unique reconstruction of the notion of incitement. The peace loving children cannot promote their views due to social or parental pressure to oppose any reconciliation outlook with the Israelis.

The narrative continues with a somewhat preaching utterance that draws upon a values system, which is not directly related to the symbolic realm of the conflict: *I think that the adults must think before they hurt our future because they should give us a good example - not a bad one.* Drawing upon the division between adults and children, the narrator now blames responsibility on the adults' shoulders and invites them to re-consider their actions. Deliberately, to my view, she doesn't indicate whether they are Israeli or Palestinian adults, thus creating the impression that the adults on both sides hold responsibility for the conflictual reality. They are now categorised as a problematic group that deserve denunciation for their amoral deeds.

Befitting this reconciliatory voice the child has appropriated as the composition develops, the narrative is concluded in rhetorical contrast to its opening. Whereas in the beginning the child was pleased with her father's suicide plans she brings her story to a close with the hope that the father will not execute his plans to commit a suicide bombing and that the war would not start (*I truly hope that my father will not commit the terror attack today and that the war would not start*). This concluding utterance represents the transformation in the Palestinian child's subjectivity from one that supports terrorism and suicide bombing to that of peace advocator that hopes for a better future.

2. Boy - Settlement



My name is Muhammad; I live in Gaza.

I think that this conflict is good for us because finally we will have a state of our own and we won't need to live with these Jews.

The Jews only harm us.

This conflict with the Jews sometimes does good to us since that way we can hurt them and kill them but on the other hand our people are getting hurt and die as well so it is not so good.

In order to kill them we need to give up on some important things for us, but we're doing it so we could have a state and not for any other reason.

My Mother wants me to hate the Jews but I don't need her for that since I hate them anyway. Sometime it happens that a few of our people are being asked to go to Jewish city-centres to blow themselves up but I think that it's not so helpful because sometimes the Jew's stupid army kills them.

So I say to myself we are totally crazy to kill ourselves for the sake of killing Jews- its a totally moron thing to do because we are losing our people.

This conflict is going on for 2 years now and so far we managed to kill a lot of Jews.

Although this conflict is progress for so long and many Jews are dying these Jews are not surrendering. This Sharon thinks that we will surrender but no! Not so easy. We won't sit quiet until we will kill him.

I hate the Jews and want a state like all the Palestinians.

Analysis

This drawing and composition, produced by a boy from the settlement, encompass a unique articulation of competing voices in relation to both the Israelis and the Palestinians. The strongest voice that resonates within this work expresses delegitimisation rhetoric. The Palestinian is predominantly presented in a negative manner as bent on killing the Jews. Yet occasionally one can find utterances embodying the alternative voice that acknowledges the Palestinian right for self determination and independence.

Unlike the composition that contains articulation of different perceptions, the depiction in the drawing is completely unambiguous. Two interrelated voices resonate within this drawing, the voice of the Jewish victim and the voice of the brutal Palestinian. To start with the latter, in the Palestinian part of the sheet, that is titled *Arabs (terrorists)* there are two figures, boy and girl standing next to three bombs. A dialogue between the two figures is articulated through verbal expressions attached to them that read (from right to left): *hey, there's a Jewish boy lets beat him* (3); *so many terrorist attacks its fun many Jews died* (1); *True. Many Jews died. Its fun* (2) and *wow its fun to beat a Jewish* (4). Underneath the titles read: *death to the Jews* and *we don't want Jews in the country*. The other side of the sheet portrays the complementary picture of the victim Jew. A weeping child is standing near the puddle of his tears. The verbal expressions attached read: *grandpa, why did they kill you* (5); *you are a human being too* (6); and, *I wish I could do something. I hate the Arabs but they live with us* (7). At the bottom there is a replica of a controversial sticker distributed in Israel in reaction to the wave of suicide attacks. It reads: *No Arabs - No terrorism; Arabs = terrorism*.

The narrative commences with an evaluative statement regarding the current situation between the Israelis and Palestinians. Assuming that the reader knows or understands what “*this conflict*” means, the child asserts: *this conflict is good for us*,

This contention, as in most of the narrative is uttered from the perspective of the group, or even in the name of the group by applying the language of first-person plural. By using that plural voice the narrator positions himself as a representative of the Palestinians. He speaks in the name of the collective and generates affinity and identification between his voice and the rest of the Palestinians.

The evaluative comment regarding 'this conflict' is reiterated, only now with some ambivalence: *This conflict with the Jews sometime does good to us since that way we can hurt them and kill them.* The rationalization to the advantageous conflict has now been shifted to a different account. The meaning and purpose of the conflict is transformed from the legitimate account of self-determination and independence to the de-legitimising explanation of 'hurting and killing the Jews'. Yet, the conflict is also 'bad': *but on the other hand our people are getting hurt and die as well.* According to this ethnocentric, or in-group favouritism morality, in a situation of conflict it is good to kill your enemy but it is bad to lose your own people.

In the next utterance the legitimising and de-legitimising voices are getting almost completely integrated to construct a unique logic or morality. Maintaining the plural voice, the narrator contends: *In order to kill them we need to give up on some important things for us, but we're doing it so we could have a state and not for any other reason.* With the purpose of killing the Jews, which now seem to be a key purpose of the conflict the Palestinians have to make some sacrifices. Yet the narrator immediately overturns the explanation to assert that killing the Jews is only a means to achieve independence and *not for any other reason.* Hence, the voices of the righteous Palestinian who desires autonomy is interwoven with the voice of the murderous Palestinian whose only wish is to kill the Jews. This configuration represents the most prevalent ideological dilemma the children seem to face when trying to make sense of the Palestinians perspective.

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The narrative continues with the themes of incitement and hatred to inform the reader about the Palestinian child's mother that would like her son to hate the Jews. However, the narrator proclaims that his mother's encouragement to hate the Jews is redundant, *since I hate them anyway*. This reported speech serves as a damning proof to the perniciousness of the Palestinians and the ways in which they educate their children to favour abhorrence and not peace.

The subject of terrorism and suicide bombing is articulated in this narrative in an intriguing manner. First the narrator, once more, insinuating incitement and obedience in the Palestinian society (*Sometime it happens that a few of our people are being asked to go to Jewish city-centres to blow themselves up*) thus simultaneously reconstructs the lack of security in Israel and the delegitimising discourse regarding the Palestinian deadly deeds. However he criticises these actions as a failed strategy, since *sometimes the Jews' stupid army kills them*. Here we can see an implicit tribute to the Israeli army (thus sustaining the Israeli superiority) who manages to prevent some of the Palestinians intended violent actions against civilian targets. The condemnation of these actions continues explicitly in ridicule tone and in-group (Palestinians) derision: *So I say to myself we are totally crazy to kill ourselves for the sake of killing Jews- its a totally moron thing to do because we are losing our people*. This assertion is in contrast to both previous contentions that these actions and the human sacrifice are beneficial for the Palestinians either for the sake of killing the Jews or as an inevitable consequence in the fight for independence.

The narrator relates only to the short past of the conflict, that is the recent cycle of violence. The de-legitimising rhetoric persists with the measurement of the conflict's success according to the Israeli death toll (*This conflict is going on for 2 years now and so far we managed to kill a lot of Jews*). However, the child, in what seems to be an affirmation of the Israeli supremacy and the ability to stand firm and prevail against the Palestinian atrocities, states that even though the confrontations between the Israeli

and Palestinians have persisted for more than two years and the Jews have suffered many casualties *these Jews are not surrendering*.

Yet he seems to advocate the Palestinian withstand as well. In a direct reference to the Israeli Prime Minister Sharon who represents the Israeli hard-line approach to the Palestinian uprising the narrator states: *This Sharon thinks that we will surrender but no! Not so easy. We won't sit quiet until we will kill him*. I read this utterance as a co-articulation of the two different approaches to the Palestinians. On the one hand there is an inferred admiration to the Palestinian spirit and determination. The narrator emphasises the Palestinian ability to stand firm despite the overwhelming asymmetry of power. On the other hand there is the everlasting perceived threat that is reflected in the de-legitimisation rhetoric and the destructive intentions attributed to the Palestinians.

The narrative is concluded with a statement: *I hate the Jews and want a state like all the Palestinians*. Once more the ambivalent perception of the other is realised in a single utterance. It contains two fundamental elements perceived as engraved in the Palestinian identity, the blinding hatred to the Jews and the wish for self determination.

3. Boy - City



I have a dream. In my dream I enter Israel and kill Jews.

I think that this conflict is very good since we don't have dead people apart from the suicide bombers, which I adore, and they have a lot of dead and wounded.

The conflict began when Israel took our land and half of Jerusalem so we got really angry and started the bombings.

The Hezbollah directed and instructed us on bombs and weapons.

I think that all the Arabs who committed suicide bombings from Jenin or any other Arab village or town are idols and I adore them very much.

I am also a big fan of Hitler who did evil to the Jews in the holocaust.

We have a secret shield basement in case that the IDF will attack us. In that place we hide a lot of weapons, all kind of weapons.

Now I don't have the time because I'm going to learn how to murder the Jews.

Analysis

I have selected this work of a child from the city, as an example of extreme de-legitimisation of the Palestinians. It is a fine illustration of the interdependence of two major processes; the victimisation of self and the de-legitimisation of the other. In this relatively univocal narrative I found a unique orchestration of various symbolic resources, all in the service of composing a dehumanised Palestinian subjectivity while simultaneously maintaining the victimised elements of the Israeli self. However, as will be shown below, through the cloak of such a negative depiction of the Palestinian and the victimised depiction of the Israelis, one can still find the voice of the righteous other as well as unconscious affirmation of Israeli supremacy sprouting in symbolic protestation.

The narrative commences with a distressing declaration: *I have a dream. In my dream I enter Israel and kill Jews.* This utterance is a manifestation of the lack of personal security in Israel in light of the suicide bombers campaign, intertwined with the Palestinian child's aspirations. The Israeli security nightmare, in other words, has become the Palestinian child's desire. In all probability, the author didn't have Martin Luther in mind when he composed this chilling preamble, yet the common comprehension is that dreams have a certain meanings attached to them, such as pleasant imagining or constructive visions. The choice to compose the ruthless vision into the Palestinian child's 'dream' meant to emphasis the inherent evilness of the Palestinian. No explanation or reason is provided for that callous wish and the reader is left with the impression of essentialised craving for killing the Jews.

The narrator proceeds by contemplating the benefits of the conflict to the Palestinians: *I think that this conflict is very good since we don't have dead people apart from the suicide bombers, which I adore, and they have a lot of dead and wounded.* This utterance is a fine example of the incapability of the Israeli self to step outside of its own sense of victimhood. It illustrates how in a situation of such violent inter-group conflict, one is so occupied with its own casualties and suffering that

one is blinded to the casualties and suffering he inflicts on the enemy. Regarding the dry facts, in the course of four years of mutual bleeding, the number of the Palestinian casualties is more than three times higher than that of the Israelis. Yet, according to the logic of victimisation, the conflict is for the benefit of the Palestinians, since their casualties are restricted to the sacrificial bombers whereas the Israelis continue to count their dead.

The Palestinian child in this narrative is merely celebrating the Jews suffering. Befitting the communicative practice of de-legitimisation the narrator stresses his worship of suicide bombers. This message is reiterated soon after, when the narrator states: *I think that all the Arabs who committed suicide bombings from Jenin or any other Arab village or town are idols and I adore them very much.* The Israeli author is borrowing the concept of children's glorification and idolisation of heroes who commit courageous deeds, to determine the relations between the child and the suicide bombers, by that stressing even more the pathology of the Palestinians.

The nadir point of this impression is revealed when the narrator utters: *I am also a big fan of Hitler who did evil to the Jews in the holocaust.* As if worshipping the suicide bombers, the current symbol of absolute evil and threat, is not enough to establish a complete negative Palestinian subjectivity, the Palestinian child is now likened to the ultimate symbol of evil. This, as discussed in Chapter Four is the definitive de-legitimisation. It attributes devilish characteristics to the Palestinians by associating their actions with the Nazis and the past threat to the entire Jewish people in its most demonised form. Put differently, the violent conflict with the Palestinians is yet another event in the course of the history of the persecuted Jewish people. This kind of depiction serves also to completely blur the context of the conflict and the power relations between the rival parties.

As part of the common tendency of negative likening the narrator also tells us that *The Hezbollah directed and instructed us on bombs and weapons.* The

Hezbollah is a Lebanese guerrilla organisation, (said to be sponsored and supported by Iran and Syria) which caused severe casualties to the Israeli army during the times Israel occupied a 'security zone' in southern Lebanon. Intelligence reports of alleged attempts of the Hezbollah to penetrate the occupied territories as well, and to assist the Palestinian guerrilla/terror organisations are recurrent in the Israeli news. This utterance should be understood as part of the overall tendency to amplify the perceived threat from the Arabs. It is a product of the siege mentality of Israeli society that perceived itself as surrounded by millions of Arabs awaiting the opportunity to annihilate the Jewish state.

The most interesting element I found in this composition is the sole evidence of a different voice that goes beyond the reverberated voice of the evil Palestinian whose actions and aspirations are simply a matter of inflicting harm to the Jewish people. Accounting for the foundations of the conflict the narrator tells us: *The conflict begun when Israel took our land and half of Jerusalem so we got really angry and started the bombings.* This utterance goes beyond the mere essentialisation of the Palestinian actions to provide a context to the conflict. Despite the extreme delegitimisation throughout the narrative and the successful effort to dehumanise the Palestinian child, the author provides an account, which might shed a different light on the Palestinians motives. Put differently, the voice of the righteous Palestinian, the one that carries the message of historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinians find its way to resonate even through the heavy cloak of dehumanisation. It is worth noting that this utterance is the only occasion the narrator uses the term *Israel* in relation to the Israelis. In all other utterances where the communicative objective is to stress the victimisation of the Israelis, the category that used is the *Jews*. This, as I argued in the previous chapter, is not accidental. The Jewish category is habitually used for eliciting a sense of weakness and victimisation whereas the category Israeli is habitually used in the context of Israeli superiority.

An additional supremacy category is the IDF (the Israeli army). The narrator informs us that: *We have a secret shield basement in case that the IDF will*

attack us. Two communicative objectives are accomplished in this utterance. First, as part of the de-legitimation objective, we are provided with details of Palestinian subversive activities and another glimpse to their scheming. The perceived threat is reiterated and amplified: *In that place we hide a lot of weapons, all kind of weapons*. At the same time, an additional communicative goal is unconsciously achieved here as we learn that the Palestinians need to go underground and shield themselves in light of the Israeli attacks. This is the voice of the Israeli supremacy and the ability to overcome, protruded into the narrative in contrast to the strong sense of vulnerability and victimisation that dominates the narrative. The asymmetry in power relations communicated previously (*we don't have dead people apart from the suicide bombers, which I adore, and they have a lot of dead and wounded*) has altered in this utterance and it is the Palestinian that need to hide due to the IDF threat.

The narrative is concluded with the narrator dismissing the reader (or himself) due to important obligations: *Now I don't have the time because I'm going to learn how to murder the Jews*. Reversing back to the voice of threat the Palestinian subjectivity is concluded with the final essentialisation and the reader is left with the same impression he received in the beginning of the narrative, the impression of a Palestinian whose only wish and intention is to impose harm and danger on the Jews.

The sheer aggression and cruelty that was attributed to the Palestinian child, is manifested in the drawing as well, only with a unique twist. The extreme violence ascribed to the Palestinians in the narrative is inflicted *on* the Palestinian in the drawing. The drawing shows a frightening human head vertically skewered on a sword. The attached title is one of the most racist and vicious slogans ever composed in Israeli society: *Good Arab=Dead Arab*. The Israeli child, thus depicted the Palestinian child in a wishful portrayal that reveals in the most haunting way the psychological consequences of the lifelong violent conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinian.

4. Girl - Kibbutz



My family and I don't want to have the war between us.

Yes, yes, I am for the peace.

We dislike wars and I am really scared of the war so why don't we simply make up?

Eventually the Israelis will decide to fight hard and they will blow up houses.

I don't want my home to be blown up.

Once we almost made a peace agreement but somebody killed their Prime Minister.

When I first saw the peace agreement I was very happy but everything collapsed because their prime minister was assassinated.

Now they are trying to tell us to stop with the fighting but our people don't want to.

Why are we fighting them anyway, just because the territories are ours?

They already have a very small country, why can't we be satisfied with what we have? It is so fun to have peace!

There are even Arab children who live in Israel and they have Jewish friends and I think it's great fun to have friend from another country.

Analysis

This work has been selected as an additional example for my contention that the Israeli children, while establishing the Palestinian subjectivity are in effect sustaining the Israeli narrative. The underlying story that is crystallised from this work holds the Palestinians responsible for the continuation of the conflict due to their pettiness and inability to realise the benefits of peace. Like many of the works that come from the Kibbutz, the de-legitimisation of the Palestinians is channelled through the dis-identification of the imaginary Palestinian subject and the rest of the Palestinian people. The author composed a positive Palestinian subjectivity, which is positioned in contrast to the rest of the Palestinians.

This construal is revealed from the drawing as well. The Palestinian girl is standing on the right side of the drawing, her hands interlaced. Her overall appearance seems somewhat pensive and gloomy. To her left stands a significantly bigger male figure with an unfriendly gaze, throwing stones in the direction of an Israeli flag which seems alight. The story of a Palestinian girl as a bystander that refuses to take part in the Palestinian aggression is the one that is told in the narrative as well.

The narrative begins with the narrator declaring her attitude toward the conflict: *My family and I don't want to have the war between us*. This attitude evidently presents the Palestinian child in a positive manner. The author, apparently assuming that this attitude will surprise the reader, made the narrator reiterate and emphasise her stance: *Yes, yes, I am for the peace*. The fact that the narrator had to re-accentuate her attitude illustrates that the author, while taking the decision to compose her Palestinian child as a peace advocate, 'knows' that it is rather unnatural for a Palestinian to have this attitude. The underlying message is that the Palestinians are not peace seekers, but I, unlike what you expected, or unlike my people, am for peace. She then provides further elaboration by stating: *We dislike wars and I am really scared of the war so why don't we simply make up?* It is not clear at this point to whom the query refers to –

Israelis or Palestinians? Reading further, it becomes clear that the narrator poses this question to her fellow Palestinians. This utterance is also the first in a chain of utterances that exposes what I call the unbearable lightness of the Israeli peace rhetoric. The underlying assumption behind *why don't we simply make up?* is that peace is only a matter of good will, and hence, the absence of peace is predominantly due to the unwillingness of the Palestinians.

Later in the narrative this assumption is strengthened as the narrator states: *Now they [the Israelis] are trying to tell us to stop with the fighting but our people don't want to.* The picture is now clear; the Israelis want peace but the Palestinians refuse; they want to continue with the fighting. This is one of the most persuasive convictions prevailing in the Israeli society: Peace is a matter of good will; we [the Israelis] are craving for peace. Now, if we want peace that much and yet peace is hindered, it must be due to the Palestinian reluctance.

The reproval continues: *Why are we fighting them anyway, just because the territories are ours?* It becomes clear now that the Israeli child does not really engage with the Palestinian perspective but actually utilizes the voice of the imaginary Palestinian girl to present the Palestinians with her remonstrance as an Israeli child. Put differently, through the voice of the Palestinian girl, she, in effect, reconstructs and sustains the Israeli perspective. She finds it hard to comprehend the Palestinians' pettiness and their insistence on fighting for their rights. The values' system inferred from her approach is that peace and compromise are supreme values. She expects the Palestinians to show good will and abandon their demands. Note that she by no means questions the Palestinian proprietary of the land, yet, she expects *them* to make concessions. I argue that uttering such a demand is only possible with a specific, predisposed perception of reality and the balance of power between the Israeli and the Palestinians. Additionally, it reveals a hollow representation of peace that is filled with abstract, ideal contents at the expense of substantial issues such as justice and reciprocity.

This predisposition is farther disclosed when the narrator adds: *They already have a very small country- why can't we be satisfied with what we have? It is so fun to have peace!* These utterances echo the prevailing perception of Israel as a tiny country surrounded by a sea of Arabs. It also bears the traces of a more recent myth, the one that evolved following the collapse of the Camp David talks, according to which the Palestinians rejected (were not satisfied with) the very generous offers the Israelis made. Yet, the main reason for the Palestinian to overcome their pettiness and make these concessions is that, in her words, *It is so fun to have peace!*

It is noteworthy that despite the absence of direct negative stereotyping or any manifestation of perceived threat one can still find underlying assumptions that constitute such a worldview. The self-perception as the weak (*They already have a very small country*) is combined with other-perception as the not-weak (*why can't we be satisfied with what we have?*). This self-other configuration is blended with reproduction of positive values (be satisfied with little), and above all, the reproduction of the Israeli peace rhetoric: *It is so fun to have peace!*

As part of the peace rhetoric that dominates this narrative, the author appropriates the traumatic event of the assassination of Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister to reflect on alleged peace opportunity that was missed: *Once we almost made a peace agreement but somebody killed their Prime Minister. When I first saw the peace agreement I was very happy but everything collapsed because their Prime Minister was assassinated.* Accounting for the accuracy (or inaccuracy) of the suggested political interpretation is beyond the scope of the current analysis. What is important here is the excessive preoccupation with, and the abstractness of, the notion of peace that is projected onto the Palestinian child, (*When I first saw the peace agreement I was very happy*) with no reference whatsoever to the consequences of peace to the Palestinian child or society. Moreover, the narrator leaves the identity of the assassin (right-wing religious Jew) completely blurred (*somebody*). I do not suggest

that it was intentionally excluded; yet it might be the cause of unconscious selectivity in order to maintain the rhetorical coherence of the narrative that holds the Palestinians responsible for the absence of peace.

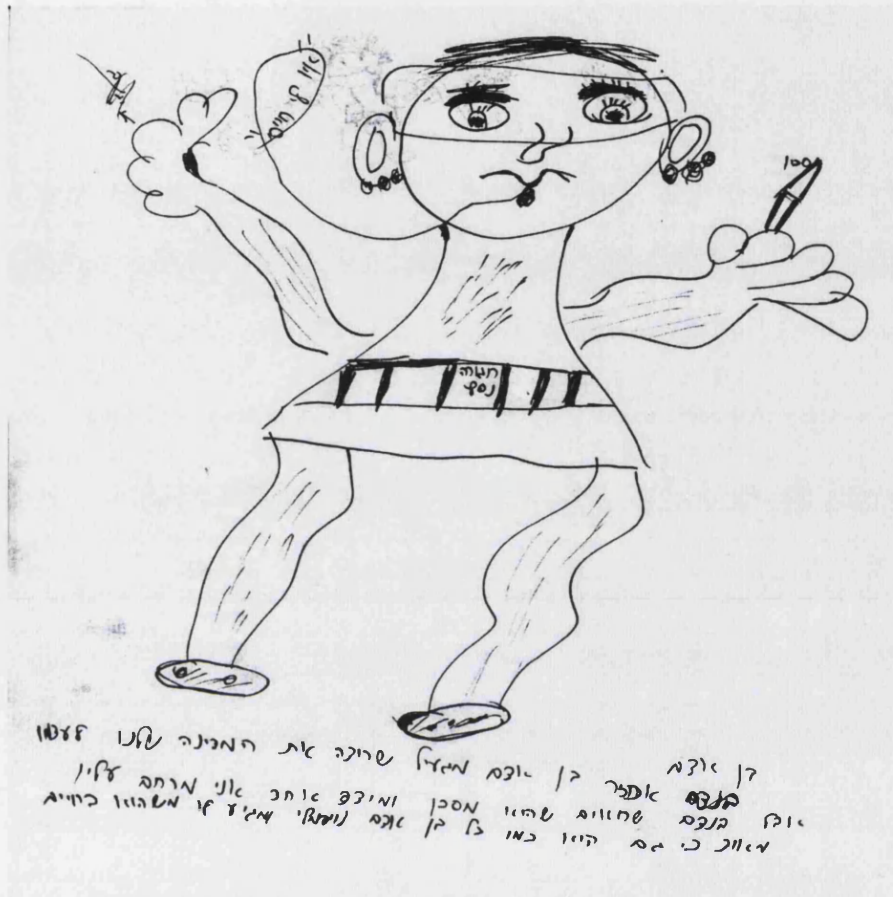
Despite the author's inferred self-perception as weak, the narrator previously warned her fellow Palestinians: *Eventually the Israelis will decide to fight hard and they will blow up houses. I don't want my home to be blown up.* This utterance, in relation to the previous one, warns the Palestinians of the consequences of their refusal to see the benefits of peace and continue the conflict. That is to say, so far the Israelis haven't been 'fighting hard', they have been restrained with their exercise of power, but if the Palestinians persist with their behaviour the Israelis will be 'forced' to use their power. In contrast to the somewhat blurred construal of the balance of power between the Israeli and the Palestinians this utterance clearly implies the asymmetry in power relations and reassurance of the Israeli superiority.

Accentuating the pleasurable nature of peace, the narrator, in her concluding remarks, provides evidence of the possibility of better relations: *There are even Arab children who live in Israel and they have Jewish friends and I think its great fun to have friend from another country.* Peace, as we know by now, is better interpersonal relations. It is perhaps the only concrete representation of the consequences of peace (beyond simply the negation of violence). Hence, in accord with the ubiquity of the peace rhetoric, the narrator provides substantiation to her previous proclamation (*It is so fun to have peace!*).

In sum, in the above analysis I tried to show how the subjectivity of the Israeli author intertwined with the subjectivity of the imaginary Palestinian girl and to a large extent, the latter being completely subdued by the former. Rather than involvement with the perspective of the other as different from self, or as opposed to self, we find here projection of self onto the other. The overall picture that is implied from the narrative describes the Palestinian as peace dissenters in contrast to the Israeli peace seekers. The

Israeli girl composed a Palestinian girl that finds it extremely difficult to convince her fellow Palestinians to abandon the violent means and to realise the gratification of peace. The Palestinian girl surpasses herself by demanding her people to omit their demands and to make concessions for the sake of peace. What we have here, in fact, is a Palestinian storyteller, telling the Israeli story of the conflict.

5. Boy - City



The truth is that I don't know much about this conflict.
All I know is that the Jews are shit and should be destroyed.
They sit in a land that should be ours.
They just refuse to give us back the land, which is ours, and they just don't get it.
The Jews all over the world should be destroyed and to be kicked out of Israel which is ours.
You know what? We can compromise- we should ask only for Jerusalem. It is very sacred for them but it is more sacred for us.
I also think that they should give back the Arabs all the land and territories they have occupied. These are our territories.
But it is their problem – until they give us the state of Israel we will continue our suicide bombings and we will continue to kill more and more people. They don't understand that we won't give up. Our goal is one: a Palestinian state on the lands of the state of Israel.
I think that maybe we should reach a peace agreement with them but only if they will let us establish a Palestinian state in their state which is originally ours.
They have a problem – we want this place and until they will compromise with us we will never give up.

Analysis

I chose this composition for its absorbing amalgamation of seemingly contradictory voices that illuminate the complications in making sense of one's enemy. Both the narrative and the drawing comprise a continuous tension between the voices of the savage Palestinian to that of the righteous Palestinian; between the one who utters just and legitimate claims to the one that conveys harsh and instigating messages. Almost every sentence in this composition, uttering the voice of the Palestinian, is fraught with the words of others and repeatedly contradicts the previous or the subsequent. It is a fine demonstration of the voices of de-legitimation entwined with those of legitimisation and conciliation.

The ambivalent construal of the Palestinians is luminously demonstrated in the drawing. It shows a somewhat ridiculous image of the Palestinian as a hairy suicide bomber wearing an explosive belt. He also wears three earrings (in each ear) and waves with a knife he holds in his left hand. This is unmistakably a negative portrayal, yet the first hint of ambivalence is perceived when reading the words the Palestinian figure utters: *I don't have a life*, denoting anguish and despair. This sense is fortified when we read the spontaneous elucidation written in the bottom of the drawing: "*Cruel and ugly man that wants our country to himself but also poor man and on the other hand I feel sorry for him cause just like any other ordinary human being he deserves something in his life*". This work vividly captures the most prevalent ideological dilemma of the Israeli self in relation to the Palestinians. The palpable hostility and fear that lifetime brutal conflict has engraved on the Israeli psyche is interwoven with egalitarian values and compassion, which are not less ascribed to the Israeli mentality. So the Palestinian is an imminent threat at the same time that he is an object that deserves our compassion. He wishes to cause destruction and take our country and he is also a deprived human being with rights. As I will try to demonstrate below, the reconstructed Palestinian perspective is filled with this tension between the voice of the righteous and the voice of the pernicious.

Throughout the narrative the narrator is in complete identification with his in-group Palestinians. The frequent use of indiscriminate plural form and of intergroup language (we, us, they, them etc.) indicates an effective identification between the individual and the group. Additionally, as seen in many narrative compositions, it reveals a difficulty in considering the individuality of the Palestinians and to engage with their perspective simply as children rather than indiscriminate enemies.

The narrator commences with a qualification. He admits to have a limited or lack of knowledge regarding the conflict, and claims that *All I know is that the Jews are shit and should be destroyed*. The choice of words (e.g. *should be destroyed*), discloses a connotation to a dreary time in Jewish history, the voice of the Jewish victim, a suggestion that only strengthens as the narrative develops. The backing, or explanation provided for that harsh assertion is uttered from a slightly different outlook: *They sit in a land that should be ours*. This, as seen in the previous chapter is the most common contention in the service of legitimising the Palestinian cause. The narrator elaborates: *They just refuse to give us back the land, which is ours, and they just don't get it*. He emphasises twice the Palestinian rights over the disputed land. No evidence is provided to support the claim so the narrator must assume that his accusation is axiomatic. It is argued according to the fundamental logic of property rights and historical justice. It is a noteworthy that in other compositions that uttered such harsh words, there has usually been essentialisation of the Palestinian hatred. That is, the Palestinian detestation and urge to harm the Jews is embedded in their subjectivity and is thus transcendent and fixed. This narrative, on the contrary is filled with tension between the demonisation of the Palestinian on the one hand and the legitimacy of his claims on the other.

The likening of the Palestinian uprising with the persecuted history of the Jews reaches a new height when the narrator claims: *The Jews all over the world should be destroyed and to be kicked out of Israel which is ours*. This utterance is

going far beyond the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the disputed territories, to ask for the extermination of the Jews. The voice of suspicion, insecurity and victimisation stirs a clear association between the Palestinian demands and the long history of Jewish torments. The utterance then shifts back to the context of the conflict and the disputed land where the narrator reiterates the Palestinian demand to have their land returned to them. Note the beginning of the zero-sum, all-or-nothing approach the narrator adopts; he is not arguing over the occupied territories but rather over Israel, *which is ours*. Namely, the Palestinians want the state of Israel.

The narrator then engages in a dialogue with an unspecified interlocutor, perhaps the reader, to communicate a completely different voice, the voice of negotiations and finding the middle ground: *You know what? We can compromise- we should ask only for Jerusalem*. His initial demand to expel the Jews from the state of Israel is now abridged and he seems to be satisfied only with the most disputed object. This suggestion seems to stem from the representation of Jerusalem as a key religious and political symbol for both the Israelis and the Palestinians, or as he puts it: *It is very sacred for them but it is more sacred for us*.

The territorial demands gain another interesting change in direction: *I also think that they should give back the Arabs all the land and territories they have occupied. These are our territories*. Once more we read about purportedly legitimate demands, which now refer to a broader context. By using the words *the Arabs* rather than *us* (the literal translation was *to all the Arabs, all the territories*), the narrator points not only to the occupied territories but wish to include additional disputed territories, perhaps the Golan Heights⁵¹. This utterance appropriates the voice of the far-left in Israel that calls to withdraw from all the occupied territories of the 1967 war and to

⁵¹ An area in the north of Israel, occupied from the Syrians in the 1967 war.

revert to 1967 borders. This stylisation of leftist ideology gives evidence to the author's knowledge of the broader territorial controversies in the Middle East.

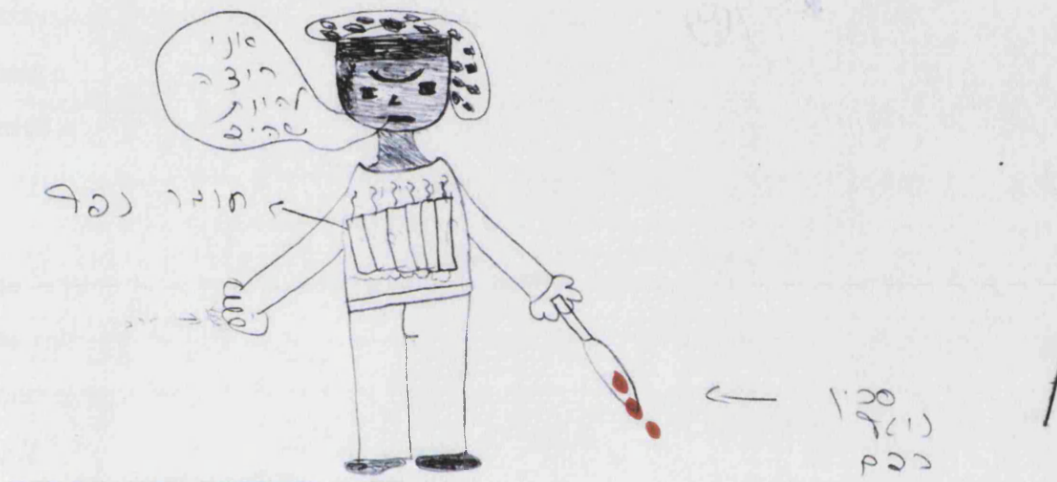
Subsequently, a clear threat is uttered: *until they give us the state of Israel we will continue our suicide bombings and we will continue to kill more and more people*. Once more, the author reproduces the voice of the savage Palestinian that is willing to proceed by any means to achieve its goals. Following the calling to the obliteration of the Jews wherever they are, the proposal to settle for Jerusalem and after demanding in the name of all the Arabs the liberation of all occupied lands, the narrator once more reformulates the Palestinian demand- they want the state of Israel. *They don't understand that we won't give up. Our goal is one: a Palestinian state on the lands of the state of Israel*. Here we can see the zero-sum representation in practice. The Palestinians want to take over the state of Israel in order to establish a Palestinian state. No compromise, no partition, no negotiation, and they won't give up until they realise their goals. Put differently, the Palestinians can acquire their independence and self determination only at the expense of the Israeli's national rights; either we have a state or they have it.

The last paragraph luminously illustrates the working of competing representations and the contradictory elements in the Israeli discernment of the Palestinians perspective. The narrator concludes with a call for compromise and contemplating the notion of peace agreement with the Israelis. Once more the meaning of peace is obscure, without concrete elucidation. Instead, we have the Palestinian precondition: *only if they will let us establish a Palestinian state in their state, which is originally ours. They have a problem – we want this place and until they will compromise with us we will never give up*. Again we find the legitimised demands (Palestinian independence and self determination) rhetorically intertwined with perceptions of threat and suspicion. According to this logic the Palestinians can only realise their national and political aspirations at the expense of the Israelis; one party gain is the other's loss. Although the narrator linguistically utters a

conciliatory approach as he ponders about peace and compromise, the prospect he offers in the name of the Palestinians completely contradicts the meaning of reconciliation.

The multiple and contradictory voices within this narrative are responsible both for its rhetorical power and its rhetorical incoherence and luminously capture the Israeli inherent ambivalence in relation to the Palestinians. The unambiguous acknowledgment in the Palestinian's national rights coincides both with the perception of sheer threat embedded in these rights and a deep rooted negative perception of the Palestinian as bent on Israel's destruction. It shows the constraints and bewilderment the Israeli narrative compels on the Israeli children in their construal of the Palestinian narrative. It reveals how strong the self-serving ideological convictions are embedded in the Israeli narrative and the difficulties they generate for the children to make sense of the enemy and his goals.

6. Boy –Settlement



The Jews are bad. They are killing us and they don't let us live. They shoot missiles on us.

They are really evil and they need to be killed (No No No). May they go to hell! (God forbid!)

We don't need them! We have to kill them.

I am a child and I am going to commit a suicide bombing.

My life is miserable because of those Jews.

I am a Muslim, and I want all the Jews, every one of them to become Muslim.

And then, there will be no wars.

But meanwhile we need to murder the Jews.

So go on and die! You disgusting and ugly Jews!

Analysis

The three opening utterances embody a palpable discernment of the Israeli wrongdoing and clearly posit the Palestinians as victims in relation to the violent Israelis. This prologue unequivocally adopts a Palestinian perspective that perceives the Israeli as essentially immoral [*The Jews are bad*] that victimises the Palestinians with their brutal conduct [*They are killing us and they don't let us live. They shoot missiles on us*]. Unlike many other narratives, there is no backing or justification (neither explicit nor implicit) to the described Israeli deeds. Rather, there is a clear, unidirectional accusation of the Israeli transgressions.

However, the narrative proceeds with an absorbing rhetorical shift. The voice of the victim Palestinian has shifted to the fiery voice of the savage Palestinian. Reiterating the wickedness of the Israelis, the seemingly frustrated voice altered to reach a grim conclusion: *They are really evil and they need to be killed. May they go to hell! We don't need them! We have to kill them.* It is difficult to determine the logical process behind these boisterous utterances. On the one hand it can correspond to the logic of frustration-aggression. That is, the Palestinian is beaten and desperate, hence the tempestuous utterances. On the other hand, reading along the narrative convinced me that in addition to the internal coherence of the logic of frustration – aggression, what we have here is indeed a shift of voice, a shift in subjectivity, if you will, from the victim Palestinian to the irrational, menacing Palestinian, a shift that occurs more than once in this narrative.

This voice of the fiery Palestinian uttering death wishes to the Jews (*May they go to hell!*) seems to arouse a sense of embarrassment in the author who wrote them. He seems to feel fairly anxious with the meaning of his own words, perhaps sensing that the power of the words somewhat blurred the boundaries between self and other. Feeling discomfort in this role playing that made him utter such a harsh wishes onto his 'real' in-group, he therefore adds the qualification, or refutation of these words in brackets after

the harsh utterance: (*No No No*) and (*God forbid!*). Note that it was not the objectification of the Jews as 'bad' and the Palestinian as victims that arouse this unease. Rather it was the objectification of the Palestinian antagonistic imperatives (*they need to be killed, may they go to hell!*) that generated the fascinating internal 'rebuff-dialogue' between the imagined incensed Palestinian and the Israeli author.

The next utterance sustains the ambiguity of the Palestinian child's subjectivity. He declares: *I am a child and I am going to commit a suicide bombing*. Reading it in relation to the previous utterance (*We have to kill them*) preserve the voice of the savage Palestinian in the service of de-legitimisation. The accentuation of being a child terrorist (suicide bomber) emphasises the breakdown of moral values. As seen in the previous chapter, it stresses the pathology of the Palestinians since children are not supposed to take active part of the ugly realm of fighting. For the most, they should be throwing stones on the Israeli army.

The image of the martyr-child is communicated through the drawing as well. The Palestinian figure shows a boy with a furious facial expression wearing an explosive belt (a recurring depiction symbolising the suicide bomber). He holds a bleeding knife in one hand and a stone in the other. A verbal expression is attached to the figure reading: *I want to be a martyr*.

Back to the narrative, if we consider this depiction of the martyr-child in relation to the following utterance, there is a space for an alternative reading. Subsequent to the militant declaration of being a suicide bomber child, there is retrieval to the voice of the victim: *My life is miserable because of those Jews*. This utterance, just as are the initial remarks, is unambiguous. It is a voice of anguish and despair and the responsibility is plainly laid on the Jews. Now, reading again the previous utterance, (*I am a child and I am going to commit a suicide bombing*) it might have been uttered as part of the same logic. That is to say, rather than the logic of pathology, it is the logic of despair.

A child who wishes to become a suicide bomber must be so hopeless and desperate to be able to perpetrate such an irrational, inconceivable act.

The narrative obtains an interesting change in direction as the child declares: *I am a Muslim, and I want all the Jews, every one of them to become Muslim.* This is a slight change in context or an added dimension to the conflict, the religious one, and the narrator aspires to convert the Jews (*every one of them*) to Islam. The rationale for that wish is provided in the following utterance: *And than, there will be no wars.* He thus seems to find the cure, or rather to pinpoint the cause of the conflict. The conflict for this child is not about land or any other dispute over scarce resources. Rather, the essence of the conflict is embedded in the differences, ethnic or religious between the two peoples. If only we were all the same (Muslims in this case) there would have been no wars. Diversity causes harm and troubles and eradication of the differences is the remedy.

It is important to note that the underlying conviction is that war is a bad thing. The idea of eradicating the religious differences is based on the moral axiom that conflict and wars are a bad thing but soon after comes the qualification utterance: *But meanwhile we need to murder the Jews.* Namely, if you cannot convert them, kill them. The Palestinian voice, or subjectivity is shifting back to the frantic, bloodthirsty Palestinian. Following a short contemplation on the ways to put an end to the conflict the author perhaps realised the impracticality of his proposal, which lead him back to the language of violence and force.

The narrative is concluded with inflamed utterances: *So go on and die! You disgusting and ugly Jews!* This 'coda' leaves the reader with a negative impression of the Palestinian child. It stresses the irrational, blazing hatred of the Palestinian to the Israelis and leaves no space for alternatives, relations or resolution.

This narrative stresses, once more, the difficulty the Israeli children face when entering the perspective of the other. It reveals the internal conflict between the awareness of the Palestinians as victims whose sufferings are attributable to the Israelis to the ever more tangible awareness to the Palestinians as threat and evil. They are poor and miserable and at the same time they are hateful and barbarians and their aim is to disseminate death and destruction.

7. Girl-City

✓



I think that this conflict is pointless.

I don't think that violence and killing people on both sides will contribute.

They just need to sit and talk.

But our leader Arafat thinks he knows what the people want.

He is lying when he tells our people that only by killing the Jews we will get our state.

Maybe we could share the state with the Israelis or we could find another state some place else. There are so many Arab countries that can accept us, what is there problem?

It is hard for me to buy nice clothes and go outside to play because we are under threat.

The Israeli army doesn't want to hurt us.

They are only after those who killed their civilians.

I truly hope that this conflict will end with peace and both sides will be happy.

Maybe we could find a country that will be willing to accept us and we could leave the country to the Jews. They don't have their own state and the Arabs have many countries.

I want us to stop the suicide bombings against the Israelis and stop fighting.

Analysis

Looking at the drawing, the first thing that comes to mind is the absence of any negative stereotypes. It comprises two ordinary looking figures, a girl and a boy, standing, surrounded by pleasant scenery of flowered hills, a house and shining animated sun. The overall impression is undoubtedly buoyant. The sense of ambivalence is disclosed only through the verbal expressions attached to the figures. The girl says: *I'm Mary and this is my village. We want peace and our houses but there are also bad people among us.* The boy says: *I'm David and I'm willing to die in order to win the conflict.* The communicated content is therefore twofold. Judging by the graphic depiction alone, one cannot find perceived threat or any form of intended de-legitimisation. Even the names selected for the drawn characters are not typical Arab names. The girl, at the outset, admits that she wants peace. It is only in the girl's implicit warning or qualification (*but there are also bad people among us*) that the pastoral feeling is diluted with concern. This feeling is intensified with the boy's sacrificial declaration (*I'm willing to die in order to win the conflict*). That kind of construction, which can be labelled 'good Palestinians-bad Palestinians', is a recurrent coping strategy inferred from the children's works. It is a direct manifestation of the deep ambivalence they feel toward the Palestinians. That is, the experience of the Palestinian terrorism and hatred that inevitably generates fear and suspicion cohabit with the awareness of differing facets of the Palestinians. Interestingly, all children who appropriated this strategy always positioned themselves as the good Palestinians and indicated in various ways the existence of the bad ones. In the present work, the girl in the drawing is 'good'. She admits to favour peace (the most prevalent characterisation of a good Palestinian) yet she qualifies with the insinuation of the bad Palestinians. This positioning is maintained throughout the narrative.

Taking a rather distant positioning, the narrator opens her narrative with an evaluative observation. The conflict, she argues, is futile. By now, her disapproval is not

directed to either side but to both: *I don't think that violence and killing people on both sides will contribute. They just need to sit and talk.* From this prologue we learn that the author chose to portray her Palestinian girl in an affirmative, appeasing manner. This impression is maintained throughout the narrative, yet underneath the empathic, conciliatory style, found in this narrative are some of the most powerful ideological representations in Israeli society.

Following the reproach that was aimed at both Israeli and Palestinian, and the suggested resolution (*They just need to sit and talk*) the narrator progresses to expound the barriers preventing the rivals to bring to a halt the cycle of violence: *But our leader Arafat thinks he know what the people want. He is lying when he tells our people that only by killing the Jews we will get our state.* This utterance is an appropriation of the strong Anti-Arafat conviction embedded in the Israeli narrative, in relation to both past and present of the conflict. Ever since his refusal to accept the so called 'generous offers' of Prime Minister Barak in the Camp David summit and the outbreak of the second Intifada, the Israelis have instigated an intensive campaign of Arafat demonisation, calling him "the obstacle to peace" and the 'master of terror'. According to this rhetoric, Arafat is the head of a terrorist network of suicide bombers, runs a uniquely corrupt regime, and is incapable of being Israel's negotiating partner. So effective has this de-legitimisation been that it is now commonplace for ordinary observers to reiterate the same allegations. The children, as seen in the present composition, also produce detailed allegations in relation to the Palestinian leader. He is portrayed as a near-omnipotent, but untrustworthy and ill-intended leader. Much of the conflict is attributed to his lack of personal and political will to reach a peaceful settlement. Hence the utterance appropriates this conviction of Arafat as the obstacle to peace as well as establishing the rationale for the Palestinian uprising. Asserting that *He is lying when he tells our people that only by killing the Jews we will get our state*, the narrator accomplishes two interrelated communicative goals, which together forge a unified moral stance in relation to the conflict. On the one hand she introduces and legitimises the Palestinian purpose, that is, the founding of a Palestinian state. On the

other hand she clearly negates the means to realise that (killing the Jews). By that she appropriates a core ambivalence construal of the Palestinians in the Israeli society: supporting their cause; opposing their means.

Following the portrayal of the obstacles, the narrator proceeds to suggest practical steps towards reconciliations: *Maybe we could share the state with the Israelis or we could find another state some place else.* This single utterance naively accommodates two completely contradictory ideological perspectives. The narrator contemplates on two optional solutions. The first promotes the notions of compromise, coexistence and partitioning of the land. The second is a reproduction of one of the most immovable representations in Israeli society, once legitimate and prevalent, today completely outside the boundaries of political correctness, namely, the inability or refusal to acknowledge the Palestinians as a people and as a nation. This process is seemingly more moderate than the negative stereotyping and dehumanisation described in the previous chapter but nonetheless in denies the Palestinians as a people and their right for self determination and nationhood. Three main factors seem to underpin this process and to give credence to the representations which it produces: (a) the fact that the Palestinian state has not yet been established; (b) the fact that Israel is surrounded by Arab countries; and (c) the demographic circumstances of the occupation which has located the Palestinians within the borders of the state of Israel. These factors, in addition to a socialisation, which to a large extent ignores or denies the Palestinian narrative generates the difficulties in perceiving the Palestinians as a separate national category and not just part of an indiscriminate Arab community. The perspective, according to which the Palestinians are not a distinct national group, is today solely the property of the extreme right in Israel and is immediately condemned whenever it is uttered. Yet the fact that after more than ten years of the peace process and negotiations, it outspokenly found its place in this and other compositions evinces the stubbornness of this conviction and hence the puzzled utterance: *There are so many Arab countries that can accept us, what is there problem?* This voice is reiterated towards the end of the narrative: *Maybe we could find a country that will be willing to accept us and we could leave*

the country to the Jews. The fact that the author of the composition meant to portray her Palestinian girl in an entirely positive light only strengthens the contention that when striving to appropriate the Palestinian narrative, the Israeli children are constrained by the ideological definitions of the social reality as based exclusively on the Israeli narrative. The elements of victimisation and the 'few against many' embedded in the Israeli narrative produce a unique logic according to which the Jews *don't have their own state and the Arabs have many countries*, making it thus a common sense conclusion for the Palestinians to act on good will and abandon their national aspirations.

In a more personal comment the narrator tells of her difficulties in maintaining an ordinary life under the circumstances of the conflict: *It is hard for me to buy nice clothes and go outside to play because we are under threat*. The author acknowledges the abnormality of the Palestinians' living conditions and the restrictions on their freedom of movement, yet the explanation as to why, or what is the cause of that threat remains obscured. Although she pinpoints the Israeli army as responsible for the described hardship she hurries to advocate the presence of the army in the Palestinian territories and justify its actions: *The Israeli army doesn't want to hurt us. They are only after those who killed their civilians*. This, as seen in previous chapters is the stylisation of the voices of 'no-alternative' and 'purity of arms'. The deep conviction is that the Israeli exercise of power is consistent with the ethos of "self-defence". According to this military force is used merely in order to protect a threatened society fighting in self-defence for its survival and only against Palestinian saboteurs, excluding innocent civilians.

Consistent with the overall positive impression the narrator leaves on the reader, the Palestinian girl is a peace advocator: *I truly hope that this conflict will end with peace and both sides will be happy*. Here, again, the concept of peace is abstract, underdeveloped and is placed as an ultimate desire representing the negation of the conflict. All we learn is that it will bring about happiness to both Palestinians and Israelis. Since peace is perceived mostly as the avoidance of violence, and since violence is

perceived as predominately Palestinian, the conditions for peace or the necessary means to realise this desired state is articulated by the narrator in her concluding remark: *I want us to stop the suicide bombings against the Israelis and stop fighting.*

In sum, this composition is a fine example of an empathic approach to the other, exclusive of negative stereotypes, essentialism or other methods of overt delegitimisation. Due to the unique, appeasing tone of this composition, the orchestration and integration of multiple, sometimes radical voices into the other's narrative do not affect its rhetorical coherence. Nevertheless, a close examination reveals that a 'good' Palestinian is in fact a Palestinian that adopts every aspect of the Israeli narrative. It is a Palestinian that is willing to abandon her national aspirations for the sake of peace. It is a Palestinian that, despite violations of her human rights, not only does she condone but also advocates the Israeli army for its actions. It is precisely the lack of negative portrayal of the Palestinian girl and the appeasing rhetoric that allow us to fully understand the meaning of being behind the narrative bars.

8. Girl - Kibbutz



I think that the Israeli Palestinian conflict is pointless.
People from both sides are getting hurt and gain nothing from it.
The Israeli soldiers are making our life very difficult.
My family is very poor. We hardly eat anything and they demolish our houses.
I am for peace.
The worst thing is that they killed my father. And now they want peace?
When one Palestinian commits a suicide attack they destroy our life.
I have six brothers and my mother is in pain. I want peace already. My brother is three months old. He is very skinny and he is dying.
I don't want to live in fear all my life. I want to live in a house, to have a proper job and to live peacefully. We don't have anywhere to go to and we can't go anywhere.
I live in fear and sorrow.
I would like to know how is it that the Israelis have good life and do they really want peace?

Analysis

This narrative is a rare example of composing a victimised Palestinian subject without reservations, a subjectivity that is maintained throughout. As I will try to demonstrate, very few traces of the Israeli master narrative are evident in this work. Surely the voices uttered in this narrative, voices that encompass guilt and responsibility on behalf of the Israelis and posit the Palestinians as victims, are all part of the Israeli narrative or, put differently, of the Israeli self. Yet these voices are rare and occasionally muted, particularly considering the time these compositions were written.

The narrative begins with an evaluative utterance regarding the conflict: *I think that the Israeli Palestinian conflict is pointless. People from both sides are getting hurt and gain nothing from it.* Taking a critical position, the narrator disapproves the conflict as futile. She adopts a humanistic stance in criticising both parties for failing to see the mutual casualties and ineffectiveness of the current affairs. Sacrifices, in other words, are useless⁵².

The Israeli soldiers are making our life very difficult. This, as seen in the previous chapter is the voice of awareness to the Israeli faults and misdeeds. That is, the burdensome presence of the Israeli army in the Palestinian territories affects the life of ordinary Palestinians. The narrator goes on to tell us that: *My family is very poor. We hardly eat anything and they demolish our houses.* Two counter-images of the Palestinian are explicitly uttered and interwoven here. First we have the deprived Palestinian that suffers hunger and poverty. Then, the voice of blame is strengthened as the child emphasises the insensitiveness and even cruelty of the Israeli army that demolishes the homes of the wretched Palestinians. What's rare in this narrative is neither the construction of a victimised Palestinian's subjectivity nor the acknowledgment in the Israeli misdeeds. Rather, it is the absence of either covert or overt justification to these

⁵² See individual analysis 4. Both narratives begin with a very similar utterance but develop in different directions.

deeds that differentiate it from other compositions. Put differently, unlike other compositions, the author, once posits the Israelis in the place of the aggressors, doesn't find it necessary to rationalise or defend this aggression in order to create a better appearance for the Israelis.

The narrator then tells us: *I am for peace*. Here, as in many other compositions the notion of peace is left in the abstract and is uttered as yearning for an alternative reality that contradicts the current situation. The notion of peace has this magical quality in that it stands in contrast to everything that is bad. In the current narrative, the narrator emphasises twice her wish for peace and this is uttered in relation to the deprived living conditions of her family and herself creating the impression that peace is the remedy to all the described problems. This is strengthened when she emphasises her eagerness for peace in between two associated utterances. When she reiterates the description of unbearable living conditions, and this time with more details (*I have six brothers and my mother is in pain. I want peace already. My brother is three months old. He is very skinny and he is dying*) note that the location of the peace utterance somewhat breaks the flow of her descriptions and it communicates a sense of exigency and the belief that when peace comes, this misery will fade away.

The notion of peace has a distinctive presence in this narrative. The two 'peace' utterances previously discussed can be read as both a means to compose legitimacy to the Palestinian subjectivity and as stemming from the Israeli obsession with peace projected onto the Palestinian girl in accord with the logic of 'opposing the conflict - yearning for peace'. Yet, the notion of peace gains a distinctive slant that seems to challenge this Israeli peace ideology exactly. Corresponding to the Israeli blame communicated all through the narrative, following the description of house demolition, the narrator tells us of the most terrible thing that can happen: *The worst thing is that they killed my father*. Once more, no qualifications or justification are presented. (In all narratives of that kind there would usually be direct or inferred explanation regarding the Israeli fighting against the Palestinian terrorism.) Instead, we have a challenge to the Israeli

peace rhetoric. The narrator asks: *And now they want peace?* The first impression seems to be on a personal level where the child perhaps asks: you killed my father and you expect me to forgive? Yet at the same time she seems to question the sincerity or seriousness of the Israelis peace aspirations. Your actions, she says (i.e. killing and house demolitions) are in contrast to your peace rhetoric. This construal is reinforced by an additional utterance towards the end of the narrative.

An additional atypical element found in this narrative can be seen in the following utterance: *When one Palestinian commits a suicide attack they destroy our life.* It is the sole indication of Palestinian violence but rather than a means to excuse the Israeli actions, it serves the exact opposite communicative purpose. It is the sole narrative that critically reflects upon the Israeli actions and challenges the 'no-alternative' and 'self-defence' ethos. The narrator, in fact, expresses disapproval of the policy of collective punishment as part of the Israeli war on Palestinian terrorism, and the transgressions that take place in the name of that war.

This narrative is distinctive in its personal tone throughout and the unconditional empathy in it is intended to arouse in the reader. *I don't want to live in fear all my life. I want to live in a house, to have a proper job and to live peacefully.* The girl protests against the dismal reality she lives in, a reality of dread and anguish and she goes on revealing her aspirations. She is neither revengeful, nor is she embittered. If anything she is fearful and despairing (she later also uttered: *I live in fear and sorrow*). The Israeli author composed a Palestinian child that is utterly humane and her aspirations are neither national nor political. Rather, the depiction of the Palestinian girl's dreams and aspirations are private and modest and seem to be taken from a more universal symbolic world. All she wants is to live a normal, peaceful life, with a house and a decent job. In a rather realistic and pragmatic voice that is relevant and applied to both sides she contends: *We don't have anywhere to go to and we can't go anywhere*, aiming perhaps to dismiss the dream of the other's disappearance.

The narrative is concluded with an intriguing query: *I would like to know how is it that the Israelis have good life and do they really want peace?* In contrast to the majority of the compositions, the author reflects on the substantial asymmetries not as a means to sustain the Israeli supremacy. On the contrary, she questions this sharp asymmetry in power relations that is embedded in the living conditions and once more questions the sincerity of the Israeli longing for peace. The awareness and acknowledgment of the sharp inequality between the Israelis and the Palestinians is the story told from the drawing as well. The page is divided by a black winding barrier, a divider between Israel and Palestine. In Israel there is happy looking girl, standing under the sun on a vivid bed of flowers and greens. In Palestine the depiction is the complete opposite. In a greyish background, a sad looking boy is standing in the rain, surrounded with guns, bombs and withered black flowers befitting the gloomy mood of the Palestinian girl's life.

Most of the narratives and drawings chosen for this phase of analysis highlight the symbolic constraints the Israeli children experience in their construction of the Palestinian perspective. Moreover, they were selected to best illustrate the orchestration of different voices circulating in and constitutive of the Israeli self. This drawing and narrative stand solitary in their fairly univocal stance, uttering the voice of a poor Palestinian child whose reality comprises of hunger, poverty, loss of a dear one, and violation of her basic needs by the Israeli army. Nevertheless, she doesn't seek vengeance. She is fearful and distressed and simply asks to end the conflict and live a quite ordinary life.

9. Girl - kibbutz



I am scared but I'm sure that the Israelis are scared as well.

If I were the prime minister I would have done anything possible for the peace.

I would have given up on land and territories because with so many people getting killed we won't need territories...

I am afraid that something might happen to someone I know or one of my friends or relatives.

These Israelis, they probably hate us when they see the suicide bombings and the killings that the Palestinians did. But not all of us are bad and heartless.

I wish we were in peace with them.

When I grow up I want to be the prime minister of both the Israelis and the Palestinians so I could make peace.

With all the killings and the terrorist attacks I am still on my people's side.

I do not support the suicide bombers at all but I support the Palestinian pride.

I wish I had an Israeli friend who will defend me from the Israelis and I will keep him from the Palestinians. I wish all this will end soon.

The Israeli people look at us as if we were monsters or alike.

I feel different from everybody although I have the same body and face.

I am sorry for the Israelis that are scared to go to shopping mall or club or café, since after all it is their home just like it is ours.

Even if eventually there will be peace and the wars and bombings will end, it won't be a real peace since there always be hatred between us the Palestinians and the Israelis.

We have this social pressure to hate the Israelis and burn their flag and I must obey and do the same but this is not leading us to a good solution.

I can imagine myself as a grandmother telling my grandchildren the story of the conflict.

I will try to tell them about the conflict in a way that won't make them hate the Israelis but to preserve the Palestinian pride.

After all we are all human.

Analysis

From the very first utterance we can learn about the conflict this girl from the kibbutz faced, while trying to cast meaning to the Palestinian perspective and to compose a meaningful and positive Palestinian girl's subjectivity. It is a conflict embedded in the contradictory elements of the Israeli self, especially within its leftist or pro-peace milieu. It regards the difficulties to maintain a humanistic, reconciliatory attitude toward the Palestinians in light of the Palestinian terror campaign. The result is an intriguing struggle as the girl produced a narrative that appropriately confines these contradictions.

Through the task of taking the perspective of the other (Palestinians) the Israeli girl composed a Palestinian girl with a highly developed ability to take the perspective of the other (Israelis). Put differently, she composed a Palestinian girl with a copious awareness and concern to the Israelis: *I am scared but I'm sure that the Israelis are scared as well*. The tendency to 'understand' or empathised with the Israelis reiterates throughout the narrative: *I am sorry for the Israelis that are scared to go to shopping mall or club or café, since after all it is their home just like its ours*. As seen on different occasions, a 'good' Palestinian is one that is for peace, strictly against terrorism and suicide bombings and, if possible, empathises with the Israeli sufferings. The girl in the current narrative, by all parameters, qualifies as a good Palestinian.

The Israeli girl seems to be confronted with the task of recognising her own set of multiple and contradictory subject positions and to draw upon these positions in various ways and to varying degrees when she construct the Palestinian girl's perspective. The subjectivity of the author and that of the narrator are occasionally completely merged: *These Israelis, they probably hate us when they see the suicide bombings and the killings that the Palestinians did*. In an alleged moment of reflection the author in fact reflects upon her own feelings towards the Palestinians. Through the

Palestinian girl's eyes she admits to the fear and hatred of the Israelis towards the Palestinians in light of the Palestinian terrorism. But, (role)playing a Palestinian girl, she is also eager to defend the Palestinians or to correct this inevitable negative impression by immediately proclaiming: *But not all of us are bad and heartless*. This qualification as seen on different occasions, stems from the 'good Palestinians-bad Palestinians' construction, a compromised, accessible representation that allows the children (and adults) to maintain a certain amount of empathy to the Palestinians despite the devastation of Palestinian terrorism.

The Palestinian girl's propensity to take the perspective of the Israelis reaches a captivating height when she utters: *The Israeli people look at us as if we were monsters or alike*. I suggest reading this utterance as rare evidence of the internal struggle of being outwardly committed to values of equality and respect to the Palestinians but nonetheless experiencing an unmediated affect, with bodily symptoms of anxiety and aversion in the presence (real or imagined) of the Palestinians. This girl is coming from an immediate environment of certain political and ideological norms and attitudes in relation to the Palestinians. She unintentionally offers the reader a glimpse of patterns of habitualised dislike, which are a consequence of decades of hostile relationships. It is the emotional, or visceral qualities, if you will, of the Israelis experience in relation to the Palestinians. She 'knows' that the Palestinians are human and that all human beings are equal, yet she admits to a feeling which is located at a level much deeper than that of discursive judgment, hence the utterance: *I feel different from everybody although I have the same body and face*. In this particular moment, the visceral overpowered the discursive and the Palestinian girl is coerced to admit to be different although she has 'the same body and face'.

An additional dominant voice that resonates within this narrative is the voice of peace and reconciliation. Utterances directly embodying the voice of peace include: *If I were the prime minister I would have done anything possible for the peace; When I grow up I want to be the prime minister of both the Israelis and the*

Palestinians so I could make peace; and I wish we were in peace with them.

In vein with the previous discussion I regard these utterances as a reproduction of the Israeli peace ideology projected onto the Palestinian girl's subjectivity as part of the effort to present her in a positive manner. The prospect of peace, according to this social representation of peace, lies in the hand of political leaders. It is a matter of their good will and effort that peace can be achieved. Toying with the idea of being a Prime Minister and working towards peace, the girl, in a rather cynical remark says: *I would have given up on land and territories because with so many people getting killed we won't need territories...* the territorial compromise thus, has to come from the Palestinians.

Furthermore, the ideological dilemma of yearning for peace on the one hand, cohabit with a strong disbelief in the possibility of peace (usually because the other is not willing to compromise, or is unalterable) on the other hand, is realised here in the whole when the narrator utters: *Even if eventually there will be peace and the wars and bombings will end, it won't be a real peace since there always be hatred between us the Palestinians and the Israelis.* Whereas previously we learnt about the Israeli hatred to the Palestinians being the result of the Palestinian terror campaign (*These Israelis, they probably hate us when they see the suicide bombings and the killings that the Palestinians did*) we later learnt that the Palestinian hatred to the Israelis is a consequence of the Palestinian incitement and 'hate' education: *We have this social pressure to hate the Israelis and burn their flag and I must obey and do the same but this is not leading us to a good solution.* According to this account, the Palestinian hatred to the Israelis is not a result of the Israeli wrongdoings but rather the outcome of a Palestinian vituperation and institutionalised propagation of hatred.

The narrative is concluded with a self-reflection through a glance to the future: *I can imagine myself as a grandmother telling my grandchildren the story of*

the conflict. I will try to tell them about the conflict in a way that won't make them hate the Israelis but to preserve the Palestinian pride. At first reading I interpreted this utterance in the following manner: The author unconsciously reflects upon her own dilemma as she strived to construct the Palestinian perspective. Throughout the narrative she made every effort to understand and defend her 'real' self. She achieved it by showing empathy to the Israeli sufferings, by repeatedly condemning the Palestinian terrorism, and, looking at the notion of absence, she achieved it also by not referring to any Israeli offences or contraventions. In other words, throughout the narrative the narrator's subjectivity was mostly conscript to sustain and defend the author's subjectivity. Still, twice in her story she refers to the notion of the Palestinian pride. Previously she wrote: *With all the killings and the terrorist attacks I am still on my people's side. I do not support the suicide bombers at all but I support the Palestinian pride.* I believe that the term Palestinian pride embodies her recognition and sympathy to the Palestinian struggle for independence and self determination. So at first I thought that the author identified a potential dilemma- telling the story of the conflict while maintaining the Palestinian national aspirations and struggle, embodies the account of the Israeli wrongdoings, thus presents the Israelis in a negative manner, a consequence she wishes to avoid. Yet reading this narrative as a whole, and looking at the utterance (*I will try to tell them about the conflict in a way that won't make them hate the Israelis but to preserve the Palestinian pride*) in relation to the preceding one (*We have this social pressure to hate the Israelis and burn their flag...*) I realised that the author actually meant that she wishes to find the formula to avoid the incitement and education to hatred she herself experiences while narrating the story of the Palestinian liberation, by emphasising again both her sympathy to the Palestinian struggle for liberation and condemning the Palestinian incitement.

After all, we are all human. The concluding utterance is also the title of her drawing. The sheet is divided in two; in each part there is a faceless girl, presumably one

Palestinian and one Israeli. To make that point stronger, that is, to emphasize the message of equality, there is no indication as to who is the Palestinian and who is the Israeli.

To sum up, this is yet more evidence of an Israeli child being behind the narrative bars when attempting to enter the perspective of the Palestinians. Writing the story of the conflict through the eyes of a Palestinian girl, the Israeli child composed a story that is, in fact, a reconstruction of the Israeli narrative. The main objects of her story are the Palestinian terrorism and peace. The Palestinian girl not only objected to the Palestinian violence and is yearning for peace, but she also has a profound ability to identify with the Israelis in their justified fear from the Palestinians.

8. DISCUSSION: BEHIND THE NARRATIVE BARS

“The word in language is half someone else’s...It exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions: it is from there that one must take the words, and make it one’s own” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp293-294).

The aim of this thesis was twofold. First, to elaborate a more societal explanation to the concept of perspective taking. Secondly, to investigate the difficulties of Israeli children in taking the perspective of the Palestinians. In this concluding chapter, I first wish to strengthen my contention that taking the perspective of the other is not merely a one-dimensional cognitive ability but rather a symbolically mediated social-communicative practice. Secondly, while integrating the empirical evidence with the theoretical propositions, I aim to farther elucidate the limited power of Israeli children in comprehending the Palestinian perspective or narrative.

Meadian role taking

From a Meadian perspective, role taking is the underpinning for the emergence of the self and indeed all of human social life. It is the spine of all communication practices between individuals and groups and the mechanism that enables the existence of the human social fabric. As a cornerstone concept, Meadian ‘role taking’, if articulated and applied properly, is a potent idea that has the power to explain *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal* and *intergroup* relations and interactions.

(i) The emergence of mind and the social self

To understand perspective taking as a social phenomenon, we must first appreciate the fundamentally social nature of human cognition. That is, the study of individual selves should be approached in terms of relations rather than dichotomies. Drawing upon Mead, this thesis espoused an ontology of the social as opposed to the

atomistic subject, asserting that there can be no self prior to relations with others. It emphasises the social-communicative foundations of human cognition - thought, mind and indeed role taking- and defends the view that mindedness and selfhood are predicated on symbolic exchange in interaction. Self-conscious individuals can emerge only through ongoing interactions with other people and in response to other selves in a symbolic world of intersubjective relations. In short, human individuality is grounded in human sociality

Symbolic exchange, when it occurs intrapsychologically, generates thought or inner speech. I hear and respond to myself just as another would hear and reply to me, and this is precisely what allows me to become an object to myself and indeed to be a self. In order to be an object to myself, I must adopt the perspective of the other towards myself. I must have internalised the social-communicative process. In short, individual self, as a coherent pattern of reflective behaviour is generated, sustained and transformed by the mechanism of role taking.

(ii) Human social relations and the social process

On a different level of assessment, taking the perspective of the other enables individuals to participate effectively in the social process. Our self-awareness and the ability to function as self-regulating members of a community are both grounded in the process of role taking. Without the ability to role take, individuals would not be able to coordinate their actions in the real or imaginary presence of others who might be affected by their actions.

Society, as a whole organism, is, according to Mead, a cooperative enterprise that is dependent on mutual role taking. In his words, “the very organisation of the self conscious community is dependant upon individuals taking the attitudes of the other individuals”(Mead 1934, p.256). The social aim of interactive communication is cooperative activity of some shared social end. Shared meanings are the enabling foundation of cooperative, socially beneficial activity, and for the coordination of community’s goals.

Common experience is the bedrock upon which meaning and perspectives are predicated, and it is within the social-communicative act that meaning arises. For Mead, dialogue is premised on the shared perspective horizon of self and other. The intersubjectivity achieved through sharing a common outlook is both the result of, and the enabling ground for perspective taking.

This system of common meaning is embodied in the generalised other, an abstract formulation of the community's ethos reconstructed by individuals, by abstracting the attitudes and responses common to the group. The generalised other, in other words, functions as the internalised perspective of the community. It represents the organised attitudes or responses of all members of the group to which the individual belongs. By taking the attitude of the generalised other, the reality and ethos of the group or the community is internalised in the individual consciousness. Therefore, by taking the role of the generalised other there emerges the affinity of the individuals to the community's venture and, sequentially, the responsibility and commitment they sense towards the community's goals. Hence, the organisation of subjective life reflects the organisation of the sociocultural world one inhabits.

(iii) Role taking in conflict

From the above formulation that views perspective taking as the constitutive of shared meanings and dialogue, we realise that taking the perspective of the other is, by and large, an unconscious, effortless and inevitable consequence of living in a shared social world. To take the role of the other is to experience the world as the other experiences it. 'Seeing' things as the other 'sees' them means sharing a perceptual symbolic field and the values that are attached to objects in that symbolic field. This means that the objects in that perceptual symbolic field evoke, or call forth the same responses for both self and other.

This implies that in a situation of conflict, the parties, whether individuals or groups, occupy different interpretive horizons - they have developed different responses

in relation to objects of high importance to their lives. Conflicts must imply important consequences for the individual or for the group. Whether intrapersonal, interpersonal or intergroup, conflicts involve competing tendencies of opposing values that by the very nature of social life are arising within and between individuals and groups.

Groups in conflict have built up different responses to the world, and in effect, they live in different, even opposing, socially constructed worlds. Both interpersonal and intergroup conflicts are problems of adjustment and adaptation between opposing interests and conducts of social actors. Put differently, conflicts are disruptions in dialogue and communication; hence, they are disruptions in what we have called unconscious or effortless perspective taking. The very context of conflict directly implies divergence of perspectives, discrepancy of outlooks and different horizons of meanings. As long as the social process progresses with no disruptions, there is no need for reconsideration (reflexivity) since action is based on what Mead has described as 'habits'. It is only when habits are insufficient for the completion of the act that we are required to reflect and assess various optional amendments and courses of action.

Solving moral problems therefore requires *active-reflexive* role taking. It requires consideration of significantly different perspective than one's own. This, as has stemmed from the previous postulations, is a matter of *communication*. Namely, the problem of appreciating all of the diverse perspectives involved in a moral situation is not a mere cognitive one but rather, it is a problem of communication. Whether interpersonal, intercultural or intergroup encounters, solving moral problems requires negotiation, struggle and active understanding of the other. In short, it requires communication about social realities. Pursuing this line of analysis makes it possible to go beyond narrow cognitivist views of perspective taking and to show how 'taking the perspective of the other' is both enabled and constrained by particular forms and organisation of social relations.

Due to the conciliatory ethos of Mead's writings, and the harmonious flair of his approach to society, it seems that he overlooks serious inter-individual and inter-group

differences and misunderstandings. His emphasis on solidarity, cohesion and inclusiveness fails to adequately acknowledge diversity and tangible ideological struggles. When he writes that “we are indefinitely different from each other but our difference makes interaction possible. Society is unity in diversity” (1934 p. 359), he by and large downplays irreducible conflicts that are an organic part of human social life.

Conflict and contradiction in perspectives seem to be everywhere. It is an ineradicable part of human affairs. I have shown how taking the perspective of the generalised other, or, as we called it organised other, can be also the very source of perpetuating conflicts, as the group’s generalised other embodies the group’s outlook, marks the boundaries of its moral principles and demarcating members and non members. Every self is always a reflection of specific social relations and is consequently restricted to the social group whose role of the generalised or organised other it assumes. In the context of intergroup conflict perception of self and other is habitually ethnocentric and oriented towards group custom since every self is a moral self determined by the organised set of values and norms of the immediate group to which it belongs.

It is only when self is able to decentre from, and thereby to question, one’s own long-learned and established values and relationships, that self can therefore reflect upon and change those values. This is what Mead meant by ‘self-enlargement’. Each act in which moral reconstruction occurs is composed of co-growth and co-enlargement of self and society. On the one hand there is an expansion and modification of the moral self in each participant individual. On the other hand, there is an expansion and modification of the symbolised and institutionalised values of the community (Broyer, 1973). Since self and society are dialectical poles of a single process, change in one pole results in change in the other.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, my contention is that Israeli and Palestinian children live in completely different worlds in relation to the conflict, or as I articulated in Chapter Three, they are living in opposing and contradictory *narratives*. For the Palestinians, the conflict is about historical injustice, expulsion from the land and

the devastating life under military occupation. For the Israelis, the conflict is about enduring hostility from its Arab neighbours and national and personal lack of security that is experienced as a threat to its existence.

Israelis and Palestinians are trapped in hostile and violent communication patterns. They commonly participate in disconnected communication channels and hence live in two different social worlds reflected in their narratives. Each world has a boundary created not only by territory or formal membership but also by the limits of effective communication. From a Meadian perspective, the problem then is not how Israelis or Palestinians take or don't take the perspective of the other, but rather how these opposing realities of the conflict are sustained? What social processes reproduce and therefore maintain these colliding narratives?

In the current analysis I hope I was able to answer these questions but before I discuss the findings I wish first to reinforce the departure from the narrow cognitivist view of perspective taking as the property of an autonomous, rational entity based on purely mental structures, and to further elaborate theoretical accounts of perspective taking as an internally diversified, socially and linguistically constituted, communicative process.

Towards a dialogical understanding of perspective taking

Perspective taking is predicated on social experience

While not disputing the relevance of emergent cognitive skills to the child's ability to role take, the view put forward in this thesis proposes that taking the perspective of the other is something whose nature is social and whose origin lies, in some good measure, in the interpersonal and social-ideological matrix of which the child is a part. Since taking the perspective of the other means realising the meanings that are attached to objects in the other's world, understanding people's capacity (both children and adults) to

role take requires an understanding of the social sources of the people's knowledge about themselves, others and the world.

As we take the concept of perspective taking out of the psychology laboratory and start looking at social actors not in isolation from the socio-historical contexts in which they live, we appreciate that role taking competence and performance are anchored in social relations and social experiences. This is so because the process of constructing the worldview of an other in a real life context, especially when that other is a lifelong enemy, cannot be merely cognitive or intrapsychological, but rather social, ideological and historical in nature. Perspective taking is mediated by social representations, power interests and ideologies, by minds shaped by particular socio-historical circumstances, to either reproduce or challenge, sustain or resist the diverse realities of the conflict. In short, it is social experience that determines the form and content of moral selves and what their capacities for perspective taking will be.

Unlike the traditional structural-developmental approach, the current approach strongly recognises the role played by children's enculturation into particular cultural-ideological communities in their emergent self and other understandings. In this thesis I have shown the constitutive significance of the different 'voices' that the children have heard, internalised, reconstructed and transformed in the course of their communicative encounters with others – their family, teachers, friends, the mass media and through school curricula to name a few. While constructing the Palestinian perspective, the children have cast their stories (whether verbal or figurative) within particular socioculturally specific representational and rhetorical genres that offer particular ways of perceiving the Palestinians, the Israelis and the conflict. The analysis has shown that social milieu is a strong predictor of the content (form and style) of the children's approach to, and understanding of the other. For example, dehumanisation of the Palestinians and tendency to perceive the Palestinian violence through essentialising lenses are predominantly city and settlement strategies. In contrast, the children from the kibbutz have shown a lesser tendency to intentionally and directly delegitimise the

Palestinians. Accordingly, self-criticism and peace related attitudes were significantly higher in this group.

This is perhaps the time to be specific about what is *the social*. By asserting that perspective taking is predicated on social experience my intention was not to show how and in what ways the social influences the individual. As I hope I was able to demonstrate, from a Meadian perspective this is a somewhat inappropriate and misleading formulation. Although the analysis of the drawings and compositions have shown that social milieu can be a strong predictor to the form and content of a child's work, the conclusion is not a one-way 'social exerting pressure on the individual' as if the social is an independent variable or something external to the individuals. From a dialogical perspective, I argued that in order to better understand Israeli children's 'abilities' to take the perspective of the Palestinians, we have to look at the dialectical relations, or communicative patterns *within* Israeli society, and how history and culture shape different styles of thinking and knowing about self, other and the key objects of the conflict. The social provides the perceptual frames and the normative judgement boundaries around situations and events within which thinking, arguing and rationalising take place. The *social* therefore both enables and constrains understanding of the other. It sets the boundaries, yet at the same time, the social provides the space for breaking or expanding these boundaries.

Both the Meadian and the dialogical epistemology approaches put forward in the present study deny the dichotomy of self and society and see an ontological and epistemological continuity and mutual interdependence between the individual and the social. This formulation is reflected in the research design and the analysis of the data. A strategic and operational, rather than ontological distinction was made between the collective (Israeli victimised-occupier self), the sub-collective (city, kibbutz and settlement) and the individuals. And indeed the analyses reveal the mutual interdependence between these levels, or categories, as co-authors of the social reality. I have shown the different and contesting voices comprising the Israeli (collective) self in relation to the conflict and the children's affiliations - both as individuals and as

community members - with different perceptual, representational and rhetorical patterns embedded in these voices. Put differently, I have shown how these particular affiliations generate particular ways of seeing and evaluating the conflict and the Palestinian perspective, and how these both enable and restrict, enhance or undermine the children's comprehension of the Palestinian narrative.

My contention is that the origin of both the group's and individual's variations in taking the perspective of the Palestinians lies in the experiences associated with the children's location in the large-scale patterns of social knowledge and behaviour in relation to the Palestinians and the conflict in Israeli society. As will be discussed below, all children from all three groups are to a large extent 'behind the narrative bars' when it comes to the construction of the Palestinian perspective. Yet, keeping with this metaphor, I hope I was able to show that first, these bars are not cognitive but rather symbolic and as such, they are communicative. Secondly, they are social, ideological and historical in nature and therefore are predicated on the children's social experience and different socialisation genres in relation to the Palestinians and the conflict. In that sense, different experiences generate different symbolic bars.

Grounding our ways of perceiving the world and making sense of self and other in the context of particular human communities is a fundamental step in the direction of showing how perspective taking is an inherently knowledge-based, social-communicative phenomena. As I hope I was able to show, the children's works reverberate with cultural and ideological overtones (Bakhtin 1986). The Meadian approach recognises that whatever individuals express in language contains at least two voices: the voice of the narrator and the voice of society since words and meaning are always socially charged. As Skinner et al (2001) note "[T]he author's words arise out of dialogue that has gone on before in situations that have left residues of meanings in the words, but her words are not entirely relics of the past....she injects the words she chooses – words that come from her social environment – with her own intentions, her own perspective from a particular social position..." (Paragraph 10). Under such use, individual utterances simultaneously reflect their own antecedent social, cultural, and political histories, as well as the

superimposed intentions of the individuals who appropriate, transform, challenge, reproduce or resist them.

This idea brings us closer to the second interrelated contention put forward in this thesis, that rather than looking at perspective taking as a cognitive ability we should understand it to be a socio-communicative activity.

From cognitive ability to socio-communicative activity

The idea that perspective taking is predicated on social experience gains redoubled force when we conceptualise perspective taking beyond cognitive *ability*, and shift the attention to social-communicative *activity*. As we accommodate a shift from cognitive structures to actual contents (or, from ability to performance), we are bound to look at notions like culture, discourse, knowledge, ideology and power relations. Perspective taking simply cannot be based solely on intra-cognition developmental stages, or information processed internally by individual minds. Rather, it is a communicative action that involves knowledge and affection. When Israeli children construct the perspective of the Palestinians they are not isolated, private, centric subjects activating internal structures. They are active-reflexive agents who embody repertoires of social, cultural and ideological meanings and practices, which they take up, reconstruct, and transform for particular goals and purposes.

Moreover, to take the perspective of the other does not mean to enter the other's head, to 'decode' the other and make inferences about his subjective state as previous formulations had suggested. Rather, it means communicating and negotiating with the other about truths and versions of social realities. It cannot simply be a cognitive ability since it involves human beings who know and believe and feel; human beings who have different motives and goals, who wish to maintain and defend their identities.

By shifting the attention from cognitive ability to communicative activity, I have located the problem at the communicative interdependency between self and community within Israeli society. The focus was on the 'voices' that exist within Israeli society in

the form of social representations, ideologies and myths embedded in the Israeli narrative(s), and on how these narratives play out both on the collective and on the individual levels. These narratives, these voices, I argue, live in social and cultural communicative practices, thus bridging, or mediating between the inner (individual, private) and the outer (social-ideological, public).

Moving from cognitive ability to communicative activity, it is perhaps the time to re-introduce Bakhtin to this concluding discussion; I find his ideas particularly compatible with Mead's and his approach is of great aid to distilling my arguments. Bakhtin shifts the attention to the *speech act*, i.e. to individuals producing utterances in dialogue. For him, there is no consciousness, or no awareness outside language. Language plays a constitutive role in the delineation of human cognition and experience and therefore, by implication, in the demarcation and constitution of self and other. He asserts that "no distinct or clear consciousness of the world is possible outside the word" (Bakhtin and Medvedev, 1978, p.133). For Bakhtin, in parallel with Mead, there is simply no raw, direct experience of the world, no meaningful thought about the world that precedes its embodiment in some discursive material, or representational form. Rather, it is the symbolic field we live in, articulated and expressed in language that both enables and constrains the way we understand, and thereby experience, the world. Language thus underlies all relations between self and other and constitutes the means through which human beings understand the world they live in.

In light of the constitutive and generative value that Bakhtin attaches to language and dialogue, the individual subject can hardly be presented as the ultimate source and origin of meaning, since meaning only exists in the space of communicative practice. When people go about making sense of themselves, of others and indeed of the world, or, specific to the current study, when Israeli children make sense or construct the perspective of the Palestinians, they actively appropriate concrete 'voices' which they encounter in the course of their lives. Perspective taking as a communicative practice is therefore a socially and linguistically constituted process, subject to sociocultural and historical influence. It is knowledge-based activity, and the knowledge of the world is for

Bakhtin something “born between people collectively searching for the truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction” (1984, p.110).

When a child (or adult for that matter) tells the story of the conflict, whether his own, or through a Palestinian eyes, he enters into an arena that reverberates with ‘voices’, perspectives, opinions and ideologies. The child’s words, as Bakhtin would say, are intertwined with polyphony of other’s perspectives, nuances, contexts and intentions and it is by reconstructing, appropriating, challenging, transforming or orchestrating these voices that the child makes sense of the Palestinian perspective. In other words, when an Israeli child is striving to make sense of the Palestinian perspective, and he or she are trying to construct the Palestinian narrative of the conflict, they enter a polemic symbolic field already fraught with contesting voices and ideologies. This arena of constant debates was described as the multifaceted nature of the Israeli victimised-occupier self. These voices, these social representations *of* and *in* the conflict circulate in Israeli society; they both mediate the construction of the Palestinian’s narrative and set the boundaries of that construction. Following Bakhtin we can view perspective taking as a process of ‘juggling’ with both personal and public voices and of orchestrating these voices that speak both within and outside our own contexts - the orchestration of and struggle among diverse and contradictory voices.

Perspective taking as a communicative practice is a process in which the individual constructions in the form of utterances, dialogically implicate the words and voices of others. As Bakhtin argues “any utterance is a link in a very complexly organised chain of other utterances” (1986, p.69). The children’s works, both drawings and narrative compositions, are thus inhabited and interlaced by the voices of others, concrete, or generalised, who have spoken or written about the conflict, sometimes in the past. Our speech always takes place in what Bakhtin calls a “tension filled environment” comprised of other’s words and value judgments. It is in this highly agitated arena that the children have to make sense of the Palestinian narrative of the conflict.

This leads us to the third and last interrelated contention that perspective taking is not either-or, one-dimensional ability and accuracy cannot be its single acknowledged dimension.

Perspective taking is not either-or, all-or-nothing ability.

Perhaps the major problem of thinking of perspective taking as a one-dimensional cognitive ability, is the derived evaluation of perspective taking as either-or, all-or-nothing ability with accuracy as its only acknowledged variable. The very term - perspective *taking* is in itself misleading, as it implies either-or, or achievement-failure outcome, which is why I offered to think about perspective *negotiating* instead; negotiating social realities. In this thesis I hope I was able to show how thinking and communication, and hence perspective taking is multivoiced, multifaceted and polyphasic.

The social world is a fragmented ensemble of diverse elements. Conflicts are multifaceted, multivoiced and complex – hence, for Israeli children, to imaginarily construct the Palestinian narrative of the conflict cannot be but multivoiced and complex. Unlike previous theorising and research that limited itself to narrow, face-to-face situational dilemmas comprising a single object, thus expecting the individual to achieve the constancy and accuracy of a single perspective of the other, the approach put forward in the current study aimed at exploring the social-communicative processes that mediate the perpetuation of the two opposing realities of the conflict. As I hope I was able to demonstrate, there simply is no single, coherent and unified ‘Palestinian perspective’ of which the children can or cannot ‘take’. On both the collective and the individual levels, there are multiple objects, responses, voices, interpretations, opinions, perspectives and stories that comprise the Israeli and Palestinian conflictual realities. Accordingly, this presented the children with almost infinite possibilities of ‘entering’ the Palestinian world of the conflict, and to illuminate various components of the Palestinian narrative from multiple points of view. And since these stories and meanings are born in dialogue and shaped through interaction with other voices, the child construction is never a single

voice but various, of which he attempts to manoeuvre towards accomplishing his communicative goals.

This multiplicity, as we have seen, makes the notion of accuracy and the all-or-nothing formulation inadequate for the present study and indeed for any other enquiry of perspective taking and communication in real life encounters. This inadequacy was immediately reflected in the data: How can one determine whether a Palestinian child truly wishes to join a terrorist organisation and become a suicide bomber or whether he is a peace advocate that actually wishes to become a prime minister and to do everything possible for peace? Is a child from the kibbutz who constructs a 'good' Palestinian who wishes to be friend with the Israelis more accurate than a child from the city who constructed a fiery Palestinian filled with hatred to the Israelis and wishes to blow himself up in a Jewish city centre? And what about a child that cast his Palestinian as both potential suicide bomber and as eager for peace? Or perhaps the girl who empathically wrote about being prevented from going to shopping and buying new clothes is a 'better role taker' than the previous two?

The analysis suggests that perspective taking or intersubjectivity significantly vary according to content and context. For example, the vast majority of the children seemed to acknowledge the significance of the occupied land in the Palestinian narrative. On the other hand very few children have discussed the notion of the occupied people or the Palestinian request for self-determination. The variations in the 'ability' to take the perspective of the Palestinians according to content and context strengthen my contention that that there is no cognitive magic in perspective taking. Rather, the explanation is that regarding the notion of the occupied land, this fraction of the Palestinian narrative has penetrated or diffused into the Israeli narrative (or self) and we can say that in relation to land, there is an overlap in perspectives. The explanation from a Meadian perspective is that regarding the notion of land, Israeli and Palestinian children have a shared interpretative horizon, namely, to some extent, they share the meaning of the notion of land. In contrast, the meaning of leaving under military occupation is something which, to a large extent lies outside the boundaries of the Israeli children's world.

The shift from cognitive ability to socio-communicative activity has led to a different formulation altogether. Rather than trying to determine whether Israeli children can or cannot take the perspective of the Palestinians this thesis was looking at the socio-rhetorical processes, power interests and ideologies that mediate the reconstruction and reproduction of the different and contesting realities of the conflict. Rather than treating perspective taking as either-or ability, this thesis espoused a view that perspective taking is a communicative practice of refuting, affirming, challenging, negotiating, defending or reproducing particular ways of knowing the world, or versions of reality. From the children's point of view it means reconstructing, appropriating, challenging, transforming and indeed 'juggling' between these versions (voices) in order to make sense of their own and the Palestinian perspectives. The complexity and plurality of voices and meanings that comprise the social reality of the conflict undermines the prospect of a unified all-or-nothing construction of the Palestinian perspective. Instead, as the children's works demonstrate we have a constant interplay between differing, often conflicting perspectives and responses.

The analysis has clearly shown how difficult and ambivalent the construction of the Palestinian narrative is for Israeli children, for almost every object in the field there are contested meanings and competing outlooks. From the ethnographic data, through the sociogenesis analysis of the children's works to the individual analysis of a single drawing and composition, the revealed picture is of an assortment of both consensual and contesting systems of ideas and meanings that organise the Israeli children's construction of the Palestinian perspective. For example, the Palestinians are mostly villains but also victims. They are murderers whose only wish is to harm the Israelis as well as being righteous in their struggle to liberate their occupied land. Therefore, instead of looking at levels of accuracy in the children's works, or to rate the children's performance as either-or, this study emphasises the multiple and multifaceted nature of the Israeli representational field that mediates the construction of the Palestinian perspective in the minds of the Israeli children and how these constructions maintain or challenge the contested narratives of the conflict.

The different versions of reality that circulate within Israeli society in relation to the conflict, or as Mead would have it, the multiplicity of generalised (organised) others, generates the moral contradictions of the Israeli self, contradictions that have been reflected in all phases of the analysis. The Israeli self is characterised by an intense struggle among coexisting voices and the corresponding views of the conflict. In the remains of this chapter I will discuss these contradictions in trying to account for the difficulties of Israeli children to comprehend the Palestinian perspective of the conflict.

The limited power of comprehension: behind the narrative bars

The other aspect of my thesis was concerned with the difficulties of Israeli children to take the perspective of the Palestinians or, better phrased, to construct and acknowledge the Palestinian narrative. To understand that these are social-communicative difficulties rather than mere cognitive difficulties was one side of the question; the other interrelated problem was to explore and understand these socio-ideological-communicative restrictions Israeli children face when they attempt to make sense of their neighbours-enemies, their motives, intentions and aspirations. Put differently, whereas the first aspect of the thesis was to establish a theory of perspective taking as a socio-communicative practice mediated by social and ideological representations, the other side was to explore and unravel these 'mediational means' in order to better understand the dynamics of knowledge and affect, and by doing so, perhaps to find ways to facilitate better understanding and therefore influence these concepts toward more inclusive and peaceful orientations.

This study has shown that 'entering' the perspective of the Palestinians is impeded by the ideological comprehensions of the conflict as experienced by the Israelis. That is to say, the ability to construct the Palestinian viewpoint is constrained by the boundaries of the Israeli representational field and discourse in relation to the conflict, and the dynamics of knowledge, affect and practices that maintain them. These socio-

historical-ideological factors generate a socially shared imperceptiveness, namely, narrowing the moral self of the Israelis in relation to the Palestinians.

It is possible to divide these obstacles into three *interrelated* clusters: **perversive**, **reflective** and **communicative**. The first regards the *perception of the other* and the working of extremely negative stereotypes of the other, which lead to the devaluation, and even dehumanisation of the Palestinians. The second relates to the *perception of self*, the problem of missing self-reflection, suppression of divergent thinking and dissent, and diminished sense of responsibility for the effects of one's actions on others. The third cluster regards the (lack of) *interaction* between self and other. It reflects the institutionally rooted segregation and the lack of opportunities for encountering with the other and his national and historical narrative. These three clusters are obviously interconnected. They mingle and coalesce, therefore feeding and maintaining each other in a negative feedback to perpetuate the different realities of the conflict.

Perversive obstacles: “they understand only force”

The most apparent obstacle identified in this thesis is the delegitimisation of the Palestinians. Simply and straightforwardly stated, racist and dehumanised perceptions that ignore the humanity of the other or present it as inferior, savage and dangerous, hinder the ability and motivation to take the perspective of the other. It simply leaves no space for considering alternative outlooks. In other words, when the other is perceived as the embodiment of evil or when the humanity of the other is denied, the voice of the other is neglected, muted and denied.

This tendency, I argue, is historically rooted. From the early days to the present the Palestinians were perceived as either a threat that needed to be overcome or as inferiors that do not deserve human treatment. From the massive expulsion of 1948, through the occupation and settlements enterprises of 1967, through the massive use of force against the Palestinian uprisings of 1987 and 2000, to the current unilateral, dictated initiatives - the Israeli self was never ready to respond to the Palestinians as equal partners in communication, but rather, as either objects whose resistance must be

overcome or as subordinates that can be subjugated to a dictated order. Recent examples of this tendency can be seen in the construction of a system of separation walls that fragment the Palestinian territories and cut off the Palestinian people from their cultivated lands. Another example is the common mantra of the Israelis regarding the recent cycle of violence, as was coined by the current chief of staff, that the Palestinian consciousness needs to be 'burned' (i.e. to be re-written), by means of force, so they forever understand that terror does not pay.

Representations of Arabs and Palestinians in Israeli society are to a large extent utterly negative. They are commonly depicted as brutal, primitive and uncivilised people that 'only understand the language of force'. For decades, and not without the help of the Arab aggression and antagonism, the Israeli self has created a unidimensional negative image of the Palestinians. From the early days of the Jewish immigration to Palestine to the current uprising, the Arab resistance has been perceived as the consequence of their murderous nature and blind hatred of the Jews. The Palestinian resistance in all its forms, from the extremists' vile terrorism to the popular struggle for liberation, has been portrayed as a lurking danger and as a threat to the entire Jewish people. These dynamics of moral exclusion, and particularly in light of the wave of the Palestinian suicide attacks, devalue the Palestinians to the extent that they become less than human and thus make extreme violence against them acceptable.

This attitude is strongly reflected in the children's works. Indeed the words and images in the children's works reveal a deep abyss of hostility, hatred, alienation and despair. For the majority of the children, the Palestinians are cruel people who think about only one thing - slaughtering Israelis. The Palestinian violence is seen as a basic and immutable characteristic; they are cruel, irrational and violent people, impelled by a blind hatred of Israel. The Palestinians, as depicted by the Israeli children are predominantly live ticking bombs. Whether the fantastic, beast-like drawings of a Palestinian child, or the essentialising descriptions found in the narrative compositions of which a Palestinian child's ultimate wish is to become a suicide bomber, the revealed picture is that of intense feelings of fear, contempt and disgust.

In the public atmosphere generated in Israel as a consequence of the wave of suicide attacks, Palestinian terrorism was perceived as a strategic and existential threat. The fear of individuals is obvious and understandable. The fact that this fear was fuelled and nourished from ignorance, deliberate estrangement and repression of the violence of the Israeli occupation, does not undermine its genuineness and tangibility. From an Israeli perspective, it takes immense mental strength in order to resist the extreme negative feelings that arise in oneself in the face of such desperate, barbaric actions. Moreover, it requires extraordinary humanistic resources to contemplate that the Palestinians consign themselves to Allah and blow themselves up in the centres of Israeli places of recreation because their own lives are torture.

Within this reality the Palestinians are by and large seen as deserving no attention and understanding because they present an existential threat to the Israeli state and society. Instead of a war to end the military occupation the children see it as simply an outburst of hatred and the frenetic, murderous nature of the Palestinians and Islam. The Palestinians therefore, are not seen as subjects whose thoughts and feelings are of equal value to the Israelis. As I previously argued, this attitude was not generated during the recent cycle of violence or particularly in reaction to Palestinian terrorism. Rather it is the product of historically persistent and widespread profound animosity towards the Palestinians that has only strengthened and reached alarming heights in the recent cycle of violence.

While analysing the children's works, it became clear to me that the Israeli children's response to the Palestinians cannot be grasped simply as negative symbolic formation. Recall the individual analysis of the girl from the kibbutz where one could find an example of the tension between the mediated values of equality and the unmediated aversion in the presence (real or imagined) of a Palestinian (see page 266). Moreover, the range of responses I witnessed during the fieldwork when I asked the children to role play Palestinians occasionally comprised of revolt, embarrassment, disgust and revulsion. These responses convinced me that we deal here with a

phenomenon that has another dimension, which is beyond the 'socially constructed'. The negative representation of the Palestinians is *affective* as it is discursive; it is *visceral* as it is ideological. I found possible direction for understanding my observation in recent psychoanalytical approaches to racism, all of which share the view that we cannot explain prejudice and bigotry as merely sets of representational content. Hook (2004) perhaps best epitomises the gap: "I have in mind here a form of racism not primarily representational or institutional in form, that is often less than conscious or intentional in nature; a racism of immediate response, of raw aggressivity and apparently unmediated affect. This is a racism that need not take verbal form that is realised in impulses, played out in aversions and reactions of the body; a racism, in short, that appears to remain as of yet unconditioned by discourse" (p.679).

This thesis has convinced me that the negative perception (of whatever kind - cruel, inferior, ugly, or stupid) of the Palestinians is perhaps not even a social representation in the Moscovician sense but rather a collective representation in the Durkheimian sense. It is so deeply and stubbornly grounded in the Israeli collective psyche that it is as much the property of individuals who outwardly despise the Palestinians, as it is the property of individuals who are consciously and outwardly committed to change. The word 'Arab' in the Israeli discourse carries such a deeply rooted and commonly manifested negative meaning, that it comes to represent everything that is bad, tasteless, substandard or simply *not us*. It is the consequence of one hundred years of conflict and since it is fundamentally related to the historical and socioeconomic contexts in which it is rooted, it will take a long time and enormous change to the material and structural conditions of Israeli society for this collective representation to be uprooted.

In sum, mistrust and fear coupled with a highly negative perception of the other, and that denies the humanity of the other, impedes any possible engagement with the other as equal. When the other is an existential threat whose leader was coined 'Hitler's successor' and whose actions are presented as yet another pogrom and potential new Holocaust, there is simply no room for the perspective of the other. Fear, hate,

repugnance and contempt simply cannot cohabit with empathy or mutual understanding- this is the dreary reality of protracted intergroup conflict.

Reflective obstacles: "forever victims, forever moral"

In addition to the vastly negative perception of the Palestinians there is a whole set of ideas that organises the Israeli children's responses to *self* that hinders the possibility of engagement with, and acknowledgment of the Palestinian perspective. This thesis has shown that the Israeli victimised-occupier self is neurotically dependent for its survival on gratuitous levels of self-victimisation that cohabit with a strong sense of moral and military supremacy. What I have tried to show is how living in a victimised-occupier society undermines individual selves ability and motivation to take the perspective of the Palestinians. In such a society, the children are socialised to assume the role of the victims in the conflict, to see the Palestinian pain and suffering as less important than their own, to deny responsibility for it, and to refuse to see it as demanding for its alleviation any radical change on the part of the Israelis. Too occupied with their own, in past and present, Israelis have grown accustomed to ignoring the Palestinian suffering.

I have shown how the Israeli society has developed a collective mentality in which constant states of defensiveness and self-victimisation are fundamental determinants. The long-lasting conflict with its neighbours constituted an experience which unites the Israelis around the campfire of self-victimisation. Israelis experience themselves as being born out of long history of anti-Semitism, pogroms and persecutions, only to begin a never-ending battle for survival against irrational Arab forces bent on Israel's annihilation. The analysis has shown how, while role playing Palestinians many children have conversed about the Israeli sufferings and bereavement. These depictions emphasise personal and collective grief and defencelessness.

The state of self-victimisation is so powerful that it impedes any serious effort and propensity for self-reflection. It generates a collective suspension of critical thinking and

very little tolerance for self-criticism and alternative views that undermine the dominant victimised outlook. Alternative, critical and uncompromising voices are trampled and the people or groups that utter these 'submissive' outlooks are labelled traitors, somnambulists and 'self-hating Jews'. Simply stated, when one thinks of oneself as a victim, and that the conflict was imposed by a savage adversary whose only wish is to inflict pain and sorrow upon oneself, there is hardly any possibility for one to engage in self-reflection, self-criticism and an alternative perspective of the other or to connect with socially outcast narratives.

Indeed, one of the most difficult challenges for a person or a group is the ability to admit the wrongdoing and injustices they commit. The recognition and acknowledgment that you hurt someone is a very difficult psychological burden to handle. In order to reduce moral difficulties and dilemma, humans have the tendency to repress or deny the unpleasant facts. More often than not, this is done unconsciously. My contention is that the unreflexive efforts to sustain the Israeli narrative, or the Israeli definitions of the reality of the conflict hinder the engagement with, and openness to, the Palestinian narrative. The Israeli self is so fixated in its self-victimisation that it has grown accustomed to being indifferent to the consequences of its actions and the pain it inflicts upon the Palestinians. It has great difficulties in considering different versions of reality that do not maintain the Israeli victimisation and moral supremacy.

Moreover, the analysis has shown that the Israeli children are to a large extent unable to consider moral and just reasoning that undermines their moral supremacy. The strong sense of victimisation and vulnerability maintains an illusion of a just war of self-defence. Their works show that they have nourished a defensive outlook, which conceives and justifies the use of extreme violence against the Palestinians as a 'no alternative' means to defend their existence against the Palestinian terrorism. Put differently, the self-image of a humane society coupled with eternal self-victimisation, unreflexive with an excessive preoccupation with security, and with dehumanised perception of the other, justifies the harshest military means against the other. As Bar-On (2001 in press) eloquently observes, "though we are convinced, and also others tell us

that we are military and economic superpower compared to all the Arab states together, we feel ourselves at the same time as vulnerable minority that soon will be attacked and may even be annihilated. This ambivalence also accounts for the fact that when we cause pain to our neighbours we do not feel it. We only feel what they do to us, and no rational reasoning seems to help in this respect". Over time, the Israeli self has anesthetised itself to the Palestinian suffering. It simply repressed and internalised the contradictions between its self-image and moral values and its actual behaviour and actions.

Based on the ethos of self-defence and supreme morality, the Israeli children have the tendency to conceive and justify the uses of violence as a means of coping with existential threats to their independence and security. The actual effect of force and its consequences for the victims are usually seen as necessary, inevitable results of pursuing these survival goals. In short, unreflexive victimised stagnation, diminished sense of responsibility for the effect of one's actions on others, no openness to different versions or perspectives, underdeveloped ability and motivation to engage in self-critical thought – these are the characteristics of what Mead calls a *narrow moral self*.

Communicative obstacles: "Behind the narrative bars"

Whereas the two former clusters could be regarded as obstacles to considering the other as human and partner in dialogue and the propensity to get engaged with the perspective of the other, those I call communicative obstacles are beyond motivation, and reflect the consequences of lack of communication, interaction and encounters between the Israeli and the Palestinian narratives and realities. I argued that Israeli and Palestinian children live in different, dissociate realities in relation to the conflict, they do not participate in shared communication channels, they have developed different responses to the world, and hence are principally restricted from taking the perspective of each other. The analysis has shown that it takes more than an empathic approach to the other in order to apprehend the other's perspective. It has shown that even if you have the motivation, even if you are not crippled by hatred, fear and aversion, even if you empathise with the

other, you are still behind the narrative bars, because the realities of the conflict for Israelis and Palestinians are so immensely different and disconnected.

This thesis has shown how the Israeli children approach the world of the conflict in general, and the perspective of the Palestinians in particular, from the perspective of the Israeli self, or Israeli narrative. While thinking about the Palestinian perspective, and while role playing Palestinians they think, perceive, rationalise and form judgements according to the frame of reference of the Israeli self, an object endowed with meanings that the children as actors in this conflict strive to protect. Thus, entering the perspective of the Palestinians is restricted (but also enabled) by the ideological comprehensions of the conflict as experienced by the Israelis. As seen in this thesis, the perspective of the Palestinians is both opposed to, and excluded from, the experience, shared understanding and definitions of the conflict of Israeli society. The key objects of the conflict, to the Israeli children are the Palestinian terrorism and peace, and these objects brought to the fore and appropriated in the construction of the Palestinian story of the conflict. Furthermore, the reality of which some 3.5 million Palestinians are under military occupation for 38 years and the systematic and deliberate violations of their fundamental rights is to a large extent outside the boundaries of the Israeli representational field. More accurately, it might be inside these boundaries but for years, it has been muted, repressed and marginalised.

By stating that Israelis and Palestinians are living in different realities in relation to the conflict I mean that the average Israeli, adult and child, does not know about the darkness of the occupation and the settlements. No one bothers to tell him and he is not especially keen to hear about it. He has no idea what the separation fence looks like and what it is inflicting on the Palestinians. The average Israeli hardly ever hears that the settlements enterprise plundered and exploited land, or that the settlers abused their neighbours. He is not aware of the fact that apartheid roads are paved for Jews only and that the Palestinians are imprisoned in their communities for the sake of securing the lives of the settlers and the Israeli soldiers. Furthermore, the average Israeli does not know how Israeli soldiers treat innocent Palestinian people. He does not know about the cruel

acts being perpetrated in his name - actions that have long ceased to be exceptions - and why and how much they destroy. I cautiously argue that in recent years, all television viewers in Europe have seen more about what is happening in the occupied territories than their Israeli counterparts. The Israelis are largely unaware to the sheer devastation of the occupation because the reality of the conflict has shaped a unique collaboration between broadcasters who did not wish to show, an audience who did not wish to see, and the government and Israel Defense Forces, who did not want them to see. This has resulted in moral and psychological numbing and as seen in the analysis, has a profound impact on the Israeli children's 'ability' to construct the Palestinian perspective. Simply asked, how can they construct the Palestinian narrative if this is excluded from almost every communication channel available to them? If they do not learn it in school (how can you teach the occupation?), if their parents do not tell them about it, and if the news on TV skip over the details of the human suffering on the other side while giving a reckoning of its victims alone, if all they see on TV is a raging Palestinian mob that swears to eliminate the Israelis, how can they know about the reality of the Palestinians?

Therefore, when Israeli children face the task of constructing the Palestinian subjectivity and narrative, they are left to work with the range of meanings embedded in the Israeli narrative. Now, since there are very few, if any opportunities for encounter with the Palestinian national and historical narrative, the children have no choice but to *project* their own meanings and understandings onto the Palestinians. I have in mind here a notion of projection which is slightly different from the original Freudian one. While constructing the Palestinian story, the children have used the symbolic and ideological resources available to them from their immediate surroundings as Israeli children in general, and as belonging to a certain milieu (i.e. kibbutz, city or settlement), and cast them onto the Palestinian subjects they have drawn and authored. Indeed, two very different types of projections were found in the analysis which represent two very different approaches to self, other and the conflict. The first as seen mainly in the city and settlements works, is a negative or antagonistic projection. The children seem to have thrown all possible negative beliefs and stereotypes they have about the other onto the other's subjectivity. Consequently the Palestinian was presented as fundamentally evil

rejoicing in aggression and deadly deeds. As uncle Freud would have said, it is often the children's own hatred, frustration, anger, fear and hostility that are projected onto the Palestinians.

The second type of projection which was seen predominantly in the kibbutz works can be described as positive or empathic projection. Here, the children have projected their hopes for a better future and yearnings for peace onto the Palestinian. They have projected their own group's reconciliatory ideology onto the Palestinian child they drew and authored. Consequently, the Palestinian child was depicted as peace advocator, willing for compromises and completely rejecting the prospect of violence. Yet, this empathic approach was typically restricted to the Palestinian subject who was positioned in opposition to the rest of the Palestinians. As I argued throughout the analysis, these depictions vividly illustrate the limited power of comprehension or the meaning of being behind the narrative bars. Both types of projections are unconscious strategies for psychological avoidance and filling some gap of knowledge about the other due to very limited access to the world of the other. Now, since the children have no access to the life of Palestinian children and very little, if any, encounters with them, they are left with the knowledge of the other they have acquired and reconstructed within the boundaries of their own world. In short, rather than reflexively engaging with the perspective of the other the kibbutz children they depicted the Palestinian as their best friends and the city and settlement as their worst enemy.

Since the children in Israel are inhibited from learning about, encountering with, truly listening, questioning and understanding the Palestinian narrative of the conflict, they are left with the stock of images and conventions embedded in the Israeli narrative. For that reason as seen in many of the children's works, through the voice and subjectivity of the Palestinian child, they in effect, reconstructed the Israeli narrative. This tendency was particularly evident when the children discussed the Israeli exercise of power (from the perspective of the Palestinians) and the notion of peace. In the vast majority of cases where the narrator was positioned as a victim of the wrongdoing of the Israeli army these actions were always put in the context of the security problem in Israel

and the war against terrorism. The Israeli violence, even when condemned is always depicted as retaliation to the Palestinian deeds. Peace as well was perceived and discussed through an Israeli prism. This is seen both in the occasional fatalistic perceptions (according to which the conflict is the Israeli and Palestinian destiny and peace is unachievable) that were, once again, projected onto the Palestinians, and in the whole construction of peace and the vision for peace, which was - from the perspective of the Palestinian child - substantiated in relation to the everyday lives of the Israelis. Peace for the imaginary Palestinians was for the most part the end of Palestinian violence. When making the effort to reconstruct a viable solution from the perspective of the Palestinians, the outcome is usually a zero-sum outlook. That is, the goals and aspirations of the Palestinian can be realised only at the expense of the Israelis.

The meaning of being behind the narrative bars is unfolded exactly here. The Israeli children are kept from wholly abandoning the ideologies and social practices of the communities into which they were born. Even if they come to recognise certain ideologies as wrong or oppressive and therefore reject them, it may be extremely difficult to transform the selves that were shaped by their inception by those ideologies and practices.

Points of convergence

So far in this discussion I have focused predominantly on the restrictions and difficulties of Israeli children to apprehend the Palestinian narrative. These restrictions, I argued, are embedded in the Israeli collective self or, interchangeably, in the Israeli narrative. Yet, it must be acknowledged that apprehension of the Palestinian narrative is both restricted and *enabled* by the boundaries of the Israeli narrative, and, as I have shown in this thesis, within these boundaries points of convergence are also found with the Palestinian narrative. Both the ethnographic data and the analysis of the children's works have shown that the worlds of Israeli and Palestinians are not totally disconnected and some alternative images and voices of the Palestinians, albeit minor, are evident.

The most evident example for that is the notion of land. The decisive and unanimous discourse of land demonstrates that above and beyond the cloak of fear, hostility and mistrust the Palestinian demand for land has deeply penetrated the Israeli self. The Palestinian rightful claim for land is the single most prevalent legitimising voice found in the children's works. Evidently, the fraction of the Palestinian narrative regarding the expulsion from the land and the historical injustices inflicted on the Palestinians is now an integral fraction in the Israeli narrative. This penetration should be seen in historical perspective. The incorporation of the Palestinian legitimate demand for land is a relatively recent development. It was only after the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising in 1987 that the Israeli self was forced to reconsider the Palestinian claims and to re-examine its self-image and narrative. The acknowledgment that the Israeli state was established and flourished at the expense of the Palestinians, or that the Israelis have a share in the historical injustice imposed upon the Palestinians, and that any viable solution will have to take these into consideration are now fairly consensual in Israeli society. The Israeli self has gradually acknowledged that the Jewish historical revival was the Palestinian historical calamity. The early myths of 'land without people to a people without land' and the 'few against many' are slowly transforming. The history that was naturally written by the victor is in a slow process of revision. Heroic memories and the glorification of war (which can be understood to be the ways of the victors to cope with the traumatic experience of war), are being revised and replaced, not without immense resistance, with less epic appeal and more realistic, mature descriptions. This change was indeed reflected in the children's works.

Less consensual voices (but nevertheless evident in the analysis) that demonstrate some level of overlap in the narratives regard the disgraceful living conditions of the Palestinians and a complementary view on the Israeli exercise of power, which positioned the Palestinians as victims. That is to say, in contrast to the dominant hostile, delegitimised depiction of the Palestinians and victimised perception of self, a clear, albeit minor, image of the poor and hungry and victim Palestinian was evident in the analysis. It is interesting to note, for example, the prevalence of the notion of *house demolition* in the children's works. This was the single most widespread symbol

regarding the Palestinians being victimised by the Israelis, uttered in the service of legitimising the Palestinians and assigning blame and responsibility to the Israeli actions. The fact that this was uttered not only in inclusive or empathic narratives but also in the more dehumanising works, demonstrate that this notion has, to some extent, diffused into the Israeli psyche as a problematic aggressive practice.

Thus, as seen both in the ethnographic data and the children's works, within the boundaries of the Israeli self there exist alternatives, less compromising and more self-criticised voices. From a Meadian perspective it is possible to assume that the Palestinian and Israeli worlds have points of convergence, that is, the same objects elicit the same response for both Israelis and Palestinians. Although less inclusive than the object of land, the Palestinian claims of Israeli aggression and abuse converge with alternative voices within the Israeli narrative that resent the Israeli occupation, expansionism and domination. I believe that the range of voices comprising the Israeli self in relation to the conflict were comparatively represented in the children's works, in terms of both content and volume. The hegemony of the hostile approach to the other and the victimised perception of self against the minor and marginalised voices of self-criticism and guilt and responsibility as found in the children's works, properly reflects the relations between these voices in the Israeli society.

In sum, although this thesis has mainly focused on the restrictions and difficulties of Israeli children to take the perspective of the Palestinians, restrictions embedded within the Israeli narrative, it must also be acknowledged that the very same representational field creates the opportunities to critically and reflexively engage with the Palestinian narrative. Everything the children wrote or drew, from the harshest depictions to the most empathic, these together represent the range of responses and voices that are available to the children to appropriate, reconstruct and configure when they face the task of constructing the Palestinian perspective.

Ambivalence

Indeed, the most interesting findings of this thesis, to my view, are the ambivalent responses of the Israeli children towards themselves, the Palestinians and the conflict (this ambivalence as previously argued hinders the formulation of perspective taking as either-or ability). Just as the Israeli victimised-occupier self comprises of contradictory elements, the children's works are imbued with internal contradictions and ideological dilemmas. The analysis has produced configural maps, if you will, of the interrelated forces of social representations and ideologies, each with their own trajectories and strengths, which determine their ability to constitute prevailing themes within new articulations of discourse, or specifically to our case, within the constructed Palestinian perspective. These analyses result in descriptions of how discursive and social practices (and their effects) are woven together, where their borders lie, and where their fault lines are located. From the ethnographic analysis through the sociogenesis to the individual analysis of single works, from the collective to the last individual, the revealed picture is that of a bipolar approach and contradictions regarding the key objects of the conflict, that although seem irreconcilable, are nonetheless intertwined to represent the ambivalence, bewilderment and moral contradictions Israeli society is trapped in regarding the conflict.

So the Palestinians are an imminent threat at the same time that they deserve our compassion. They have the right for land and self-determination, but they want to kill us all. They are victims under an occupation regime but also brutal terrorists disregarding their own lives. They are both savage and righteous and we are both victims and brutal occupiers. We are both aware of the pain we inflict on them at the same time that we are blinded by the suffering they inflict on us. We know that all people are equal but still strongly feel that we are the 'chosen people' and they are inferiors. We are morally and militarily superior at the same time that we are weak and vulnerable. We hate the Palestinians but we also pity them. These apprehensions are hard to match and therefore lead to a very complex mixture of feelings that form an overall ambivalence in the children's minds. This ambivalence is perhaps best epitomised in the words of the child who wrote under his drawing of a creepy Palestinian: *Cruel and ugly man that wants*

our country to himself but also poor man and on the other hand I feel sorry for him because just like any other ordinary human being he deserves to have something in his life....

Within this ambivalence I find hope. The conclusion that we must draw from these ambiguous, bewildered and ambivalent depictions of self, other and the conflict, is that we have to find creative ideas for interventions in order to weaken the voices of negation, fear and dehumanisation, and strengthen and reinforce self-reflection and the voices of mutual respect and recognition. The Israeli moral self is not completely narrow in relation to the Palestinians. In fact, although fairly marginalised, especially in days of intense violence, it nonetheless has a substantial alternative voice. This voice is embodied predominantly in NGO's, but also in the mass media, academia and the parliament. Against the dominant voices of mistrust, hostility and self-victimisation, these parts of the Israeli self strongly propagate the end of the occupation, equality, mutual respect and the striving for maximum cooperation.

The analysis has shown that even in the harshest depictions one can still find the ambivalence and a faint affirmative voice- a hint of empathy, a sense of acknowledgment of the other's rights and even a hint of admiration to the Palestinian tenacious struggle for liberation. The voice of the righteous Palestinian, the one that holds the message of historical injustice and the struggle for self-determination resonated even through the heaviest cloak of dehumanisation. These voices should be identified and strengthened. They are already there, in the social environment and in individual minds. They should be harboured and fortified in order to turn them into major, dominant voices. At the same time, as discussed above, even in the most empathic portrayals, one could still find the traces of some immovable representations such as the hope (or fantasy), that the Palestinians will disappear and leave the place to the Jews. These also should be identified and uprooted. Finally, beyond the abyss of hostility, hatred, alienation and despair there is still a colossal yearning for peace and reconciliation. We must find the ways to increase the opportunities for encountering with the other, and to help the children to see the human face of the other. It is only through increased communication

that the two different, confronting and seemingly irreconcilable realities of the Israelis and the Palestinians can draw nearer.

Prospect for further research

In the meantime we have no other choice but to continue our effort to change. The challenge of changing negative stereotypes and prejudice has been on the agenda of social psychology for many years and I will not review these efforts in full⁵³. The most renown is Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, according to which the best way to reduce tension and hostility between groups is to bring them into systematic contact with each other in various ways. However as many years of research has proved, contact in itself, and for itself is not a sufficient condition. There has to be social and institutional endorsement and support, frequent systematic meetings to facilitate the acquisition of new information about the other, opportunities for cooperation and joint ventures (Sherif et al, 1966), and lastly, equal status of all participants.

It is the last one I wish to refer to now as I find it the most problematic. It has a significant impact on the notion of taking the perspective of the other as it brings to the fore a highly important issue that has been neglected in previous research on perspective taking and indeed was dealt with only implicitly in the current thesis. What I have in mind is the relation between perspective taking and power relations. I previously argued that perspective taking is predicated on social experience and relations. This cuts across contents and contexts. Gender relations, inter-generation relations, ethnic relations, class relations, work relations, parent-children relations, peer relations, international relations, intimate relations - taking the perspective of the other is always embedded in social experience and power relations. As we have made the leap forward from cognitive ability to communicative activity we realise that not only have different individuals have different 'abilities', i.e. not all children and adults are equally competent role takers, but

⁵³ For a thorough review on peace education and research see Bar-Tal and Teichman, 2005

also, the same individual can 'perform' differently across different contexts and in relation to different others.

This implies a strong contextual approach and special attention to the notion of power relations. Whether interpersonal or intergroup, if we are serious about getting a better grasp on people's ability to take the perspective of the other in real life contexts of high importance, we first have to ask- what other? And, which context? As this thesis has shown, perspective taking is mediated by social representations and ideologies, by minds shaped by particular socio-historical circumstances, to either reproduce or challenge, sustain or resist different versions of reality and history. What the children have expressed in their works is already the outcome of the battle of voices and symbols within the Israeli self, which implicates the larger struggle embedded in the 100 years long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The ambivalence and contradictions in the children's role-playing narratives reflect the battle for dominance of one or other version of reality. The Meadian formulation has a tendency towards the inclusive and reconciliatory and thus downplays asymmetrical relations of power. It is insufficient to simply note that Israeli and Palestinian children are living in different worlds. We have to bear in mind that the stronger always has better access and opportunities to write history and to define reality than the weaker. The questions that arise are manifold: does power weaken the ability and propensity to take the perspective of the other, or is it merely the context of conflict? Does it diminish understanding of, and feeling for the reality of the weak and oppressed? Who has more access to the other's world – the powerful or the powerless? The minority or the majority? Men or women? Still, what if the powerful, actually and genuinely feel weak and vulnerable? These questions need to be addressed in further theorising and research. The natural and most called for sequel to this thesis is, to my view, a complementary study conducted with Palestinian children.

Second, and related to the above, although it could not be accounted for in this thesis, is that I have found very interesting gender differences that are generally consistent with findings from feminist moral and justice reasoning theories and research. Indeed the stronger predictor to the content of children's works was the social milieu.

The analysis has shown that while the kibbutz children had a tendency to empathise with the other and present the Palestinians in a more positive, humane manner, the children from the city and settlement had a much stronger tendency to delegitimise the Palestinians. Nevertheless, the opposite tendencies *within* the groups reveal that the minority of delegitimising works from the kibbutz were produced predominantly by boys and the minority of affirmative, empathic works from the city and settlement produced by girls. Moreover, looking at the children as a whole it is possible to identify significant gender-based approaches to the other where the boys are much more inclined to appropriate the voice of belligerence, violence and dehumanisation and the girls are more inclined to appropriate the voice of reconciliation and despair. Due to the research objectives, its character and scope, gender was not considered a factor in analysis pertaining to measures or dependent variables. Nevertheless, these differences cannot be ignored. They somewhat undermine previous suggestions that gender differences in intergroup perception and attitudes are overshadowed in the context of an intractable conflict (Bar-Tal and Teichman, 2005). A whole line of research can be taken in this direction. My intuitive observations are compatible with Gilligan's (1982) and Nodding's (1985) notion of feminine and masculine 'moral voices'. They proposed that women and girls engage in moral judgments according to a different set of imperatives—a "different voice"—from that which men and boys follow. Their theories suggest that whereas the male moral voice comprised of justice and rights, application of rules impartially to everyone, and responsibility towards abstract codes of conduct, female's moral voice comprised of care, responsibility, caring about everyone's suffering, and reserve emotional connectedness and responsibility towards real individuals. This "care" theme focuses morality on skills of relationship—on supporting, nurturing, and being helpful, not on demanding, defending, requiring and compelling. I believe that further research in this direction in relation to perspective taking in the context of intergroup conflict has promising potential.

And finally, this thesis was aimed at exploring the socio-ideological-historical factors that both enable and restrict Israeli children to take the perspective of the Palestinians. I hope I was able to demonstrate how perspective taking and the

achievement of mutual understanding depends not only on the cognitive developments of individuals but also on the political structure of the context or the situation. To conclude and suggest further direction for research, I draw on (1988) the highly relevant formulation of Raviv et al regarding the acquisition of beliefs about war, conflict and peace. They suggested considering beliefs about war, conflict and peace as part of a larger body of social knowledge. Within this, they elaborated a very useful theoretical framework for the analysis of factors which have a determinative influence on the formation of social knowledge, that is, *developmental*, *cultural* and *situational* factors. My strategy is to reframe their argument in terms of perspective taking.

Developmental factors deal with growth and improvement in cognitive capacities, which among other things afford individuals an understanding of the social world. These principles of cognitive development also apply to children's ability to take the perspective of the other. As mentioned in the introduction, mainstream cognitive-developmental research has focused on these principles (for example, Feffer, 19xx, Selman, 1980).

Cultural factors, the main focus of my thesis are the shared concepts, values and beliefs, in a given community that mediate perspective taking. Members of a particular community tend to shape their views of the world on the basis of their society's culture and history. Subject to history, social conditions and experiences, they form a unique way to apprehend the social reality. The social knowledge of a community encompasses a wide scope of concepts and beliefs about self, other and the conflict and, as I hope I was able to demonstrate, have a profound impact on the ability and propensity to take the perspective of the other.

Situational factors refer to particular situations or events that directly influence the ability and propensity to take the perspective of the other. The most obvious example for such a situational factor in the context of the current thesis is the fluctuating frequency and intensity of violent relations. The concrete situational experiences of war or violence on the one hand and peace treaties and successful negotiations on the other,

must have an effect on those who experienced it and hence on perspective taking. For example, Spielmann (1986) investigated the effect of the historic visit of Egyptian president Sadat to Jerusalem in 1977. She asked Jewish-Israeli and Israeli-Arab children and adolescents to write an essay titled "Thoughts about Peace" immediately prior to, and following the historic visit. The results clearly showed the effect of this dramatic event on the children's views. Whereas their responses prior to the visit were utopian and optimistic, and peace was conceptualised in terms of justice and brotherhood, following the visit, the essays contain more realistic expressions such as 'high price' and the children tended to question the value of peace. I am certain that situational factors have an influence on the ability and motivation to take the perspective of the other. The prominence of the image of a Palestinian child who wishes to be a suicide bomber is the most obvious evidence to the influence of the recent cycle of violence, and the wave of suicide attacks on the children's works. The dismay and despair uttered by the children is a direct consequence of the intense violence in the region in the time of the fieldwork. Additionally, the resonance of the build-up to the Iraq war in the children's works also strengthens the proposition that situational factors affect perspective taking performance. The fact that many children have cast their their anxieties from the coming war in Iraq to their images and words and hence to the Palestinian subjectivity strongly support the influence of situational factors. I am certain that in more calm and peaceful times, the content of the children's works will be less negative and more inclusive. I suspect that if a similar study had been conducted immediately after signing of a peace treaty between the Israelis and the Palestinians, the content of the children's works would be significantly different mainly in their approach to the other. Further research in this direction should look at this thesis as a baseline for comparison.

Final words

As this thesis reaches its end, on a more personal note, I would add that unfortunately, there is no cognitive magic in taking the perspective of the other. I believe that a fundamental and structural change has to occur to the Israeli self for that to happen. It has to get rid of the dormant racist and ethnocentric attitudes held by the vast majority

of Jews, which have been nurtured over the years by Israel's political educational and cultural systems in a wounded society that has lived in a conflictual and confrontational reality since the day it was established. The Israeli self will have to first acknowledge, then reconcile with, the crimes committed from the massive expulsion of 1948 to the evils of the occupation, looting the land, uprooting, demolishing, killing and expelling. The Israeli self will have to, sooner rather than later, break the mirror that reflects a face of eternal victim, foppish self-righteousness and superior moral body. It will have to realise that it cannot pride itself as the only democracy in the Middle East while keeping under its boot millions of Palestinians deprived of basic human rights. It will have to acknowledge that occupation and terrorism are like twin brothers. Both are illegitimate, barbaric, murderous and pervasive. Maybe in the future, when the Israelis and Palestinians will establish their own Committee of Truth and Reconciliation, they will be able to revise their narratives and perhaps create a united version of the two historical narratives, an inclusive version of history and a reality free from historical deceptions and competition of sufferings.

Regrettably, we live in a conservative, despairing and languished era. The Israeli Palestinian conflict cries for solution and reconciliation, and that solution is bloody obvious in the double sense of the word. The Israelis and Palestinians have never been so close to a solution yet they have never been so far away. A just, fair, practical and viable solution exists, but it seems like both sides are held captive by fear and suspicion, impotent leaders and the power of old stubborn convictions. Perhaps the two peoples are not yet tired enough of bleeding each other. Peace will happen in a year or two, or ten or a hundred. But it will happen only when the two people realise that the price of non-peace is higher than the price of peace. When they will, I hope they will find out that there is still an opportunity to create two independent entities with maximum cooperation that will bring prosperity and success for both people.

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APPENDIX I

Ethical procedure of data collection:

Prior to data collection I obtained consent for conducting research from head-teachers and teachers. Additionally, I submitted my research proposal to the Research Ethics Committee of the Israeli department of education. It was approved conditioned to obtaining written consent each participating child's parents.

Once through these formal procedures, approached the children in the classroom about a week before data collection, explained my research objectives and asked for their participation. Each child took home a letter explaining in detail the planned research and asking for their consent. Only those children who had the written consent (82% of all children I approached) participated in the drawing and writing activities.