CHAPTER 2

Collective Identity, Perceptions of the "Enemy," and Personal Narratives

This chapter discusses major conceptualizations of collective/group identity and perceptions of the other in relation to conflict contexts,[1] in general, and to the Holocaust and the Jewish–Arab/Israeli–Palestinian conflict, in particular. These ideas are also tied into personal narratives connected to these atrocities. We end the chapter with a look at the collective identities of Germans, in relation to the Holocaust, and Jews and Palestinians, in relation to the Israeli–Palestinian context.

Theories of Group/Collective Identity

Central to any psychosocial discussion of identity is social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which posits that social categorization significantly influences one's perception of self and others. According to social identity theory, one's social identity derives from knowledge of being connected to a group. This identity has three components – cognitive (knowledge of group membership), evaluative (evaluation of the group's values), and emotional (positive or negative feelings toward the group). Members differentiate their *in-group* or *reference group* from the *outgroup*(s). The sense of group membership can be very pervasive: When people are deeply committed to the group, they internalize group goals, values, and norms, tend to be guided by group aspirations and beliefs, and derive much of their self-evaluation from such social identities (Ashmore et al., 2004; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Ellemers et al., 2002). It is also important, however, to emphasize that the social-political context highly influences feelings of belonging and evaluation of the in- and outgroups (Ellemers et al., 2002; Ouwerkerk & Ellemers, 2001).

Working from social identity theory principles, Ellemers and colleagues (2002) created a taxonomy of six kinds of perceptual, affective, and

[1] We use the terms *collective identity* and *group identity* interchangeably here.

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behavioral responses to a threat against one's group. Given that this book addresses peacebuilding and peace obstruction in connection to personal narratives of genocide and intractable war, we relate to the category in which members perceive (1) a high level of group-directed threat, (2) a high level of group commitment, and (3) group affirmation. When highly committed members sense a threat from the outside, they tend to feel that their status, morality, and/or group distinctiveness are endangered. As a result, these members often stress their group's homogeneity, differentiation from other groups, and/or engage in self-stereotyping. This often leads to collective behavior to overcome the source of threat. Although threats to value usually negatively impact esteem, in such instances committed group members actually tend to express group loyalty (Branscombe et al., 1999), even when chances are high that they will not improve the group's status. As Ellemers and colleagues (2002) further noted, threats to group value may take different forms, depending on the social structure, and can result in different emotions. For example, when a powerful group's values are threatened, they usually express anger and contempt toward an outgroup, more so than do weak or submissive groups. Highly committed group members in a group with low status may try to redress the situation through collective action. Moreover, when the moral value of a group is threatened, highly committed people are more inclined to become defensive rather than express guilt.

Another fundamental source of threat, noted by Ellemers and colleagues (2002), is the undermining of a group's distinctiveness in relation to outgroups. Given that distinctiveness is the *raison d'être* of the group (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), highly committed members will stress the uniqueness of their group. Emotions connect to this as well: Group members will often react with hatred and disgust that can induce intergroup conflict. In terms of behavior, group members may discriminate against the outgroup in an attempt to sharpen group boundaries (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). Thus, to summarize Ellemers and colleagues' (2002) point, when there is a perceived group-level threat, highly committed members respond with perceptual, affective, and behavioral reactions in order to reassert the group's value and distinctiveness. This may lead to self-stereotyping, strong in-group loyalty, negative emotions, and collective action that can further induce conflict.

In the context of social-political activism for peace (addressed in depth in Chapter 4), Hill and colleagues (2018) and van Zomeren and colleagues (2008) also extended the social identity approach by emphasizing the politicization of group identity that mediates between group identification

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and subsequent collective action. One way that social identities become politicized is through identification with a master narrative that frames collective experiences enmeshed in a political struggle.

A second major classical psychosocial theory is self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985, 1987). This theory focuses on people's tendencies to see similarities between themselves and their own group, and differences between themselves and members of other groups. Like social identity theory, self-categorization theory perceives individuals as motivated to retain a positive social identity. However, self-categorization theory takes differentiation between self and other one step further: In-group differences are minimized and outgroup differences are maximized. Unfortunately, this often leads people to stereotype and discriminate against others, seeing their group as superior to others (Bar-Tal, 2000; McFarland & Pals, 2005).

Another related, yet nuanced approach to social identity is Brewer's (1993, 2007) optimal distinctiveness theory. In her model, a person's sense of self is shaped by opposing needs for *assimilation* and *differentiation* between self and others. "Assimilation is the inclusion of self and others in social categories defined by shared features or common interests, whereas differentiation is the exclusion of others from the definition of self." Social identification is perceived as a compromise between assimilation and differentiation, with the need for inclusion being satisfied within in-groups and the need for distinctiveness being met through intergroup comparisons (Brewer, 1993, pp. 157–158).

Identity theory (Stryker, 1987; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Stryker & Serpe, 1994) approaches identity from the perspective of roles that people adopt. Identity theory emphasizes the importance of social networks, averring that relations in these networks influence motives for identity change. The self is conceptualized as consisting of a collection of role identities that people switch, depending on the social context (McFarland & Pals, 2005). As an individual interacts in different social networks, a hierarchy of salience is created among the various self-identities, influencing the person to either remain with one role or to alter their performance. Therefore, we are dependent upon the social context in order to know when to emphasize or change a role or identity.

Since the 1990s, theorists from different disciplines have deconstructed the understanding of identity as a basically stable structure, perceiving people as crafting their changing identities through *social performances* (e.g., Butler, 1990). This approach contends that collective identity emerges out of social-political struggles. Therefore, in order to

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understand the relationship between identity and conflict, it is important to study how people perform their collective identities and the cultural implications of these performances, often based in gender, race, ethnicity, and/or nationality (Brodwin, 2002; Eriksen, 2001; Holland, 1997).

This approach provides a segue to a major postmodern conceptualization of identity: the intersectional narrative approach (e.g., Carbado et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Ferguson, 2012; Hill et al., 2018; Hill Collins, 2019), which connects to the notion of social selves (e.g., Burkitt, 2008). Here, collective identity is viewed as comprised of multilayered identities that intersect with one another. The intersectional approach is rooted in feminist and critical thought. It perceives identity, especially of people who experience multiple systems of oppression (Curtin et al., 2015; Hill et al., 2018), as a result of intersection and positionality, as it is viewed through the lens of social stratification and marginalization. Therefore, at times, individuals can have privileges, and, at others, suffer injustices and marginalization, depending on the social-political context (Croteau et al., 2002; Curtin et al., 2015). The theory further highlights the ways people across many social categories face multiple kinds of hatred and discrimination.

When we take these conceptualizations of identity together, we can summarize that one important human need is the need to belong *and* to know who is the "we"/"us" and who is the "not us." As Bakhtin (1981) asserted, the self is relative and only exists in relation to an "other." As these understandings of "us–not us" crystallize, we tend to increasingly differentiate ourselves from others, often under the influence of our master narratives. However, given that we all have multiple identities and roles, and that identities are dependent on time, place, context, and positionality, they intersect with one another and add great complexity to our feeling – and reality (!) – of privilege or oppression. These complex feelings of belonging/otherness and privilege/oppression become even more salient in the context of genocide and/or intractable war.

We now turn to personal narratives as vehicles for expression of collective identity or, even as some theorists contend, as identity itself.

Personal Narratives as Construction of Identity

In his book *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, the neurologist Oliver Sacks (1985, pp. 105–106; emphasis in original) wrote:

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> We have, each of us, a life-story, an inner narrative – whose continuity, whose sense, is our lives . . . each of us constructs and lives a "narrative" . . . this narrative *is* us, our identities. To be ourselves, we must *have* ourselves – possess, if need be re-possess, our life-stories. We must "recollect" ourselves, recollect the inner drama, the narrative, of ourselves. A man *needs* such a narrative, a continuous inner narrative, to maintain his identity, his self.

Even though John Paul Eakin, whose research focused on autobiography and life writing, and narrative theory, did not accept Sacks' unequivocal assertion that personal narrative = identity, partially on the basis of this argument, Eakin argued (1999) that the self is a "kind of awareness in process," what he termed *making selves*. He further emphasized that, as a rule, we are not conscious about our identity formation, because it happens "beneath our notice" (p. x).

This connects to ideas noted in the first chapter: Personal narratives of life experiences are often conceived as vehicles for identity construction, indeed as being the moments when the person "becomes," creating their identity in real time (Fischer-Rosenthal, 1995; Rosenthal, 1997). Rosenthal (1997, pp. 2–3), who favored the concept of *biography* over identity, wrote:

> biography makes the concept of identity redundant. Biography is an empirically more productive, logically multirelational . . . and linguistically more narrative . . . concept. Empirical analysis of narrated life stories allows us to reconstruct the lived-through life history of the biographer as well as . . . the biographers construction of his life, i.e., how their past appears to them today – beyond their conscious interest of presentation – and how it makes sense of their present and future.

McAdams (2013; McAdams & Cox, 2010) claimed that from adolescence, people become *authors*, synthesizing their past and present experiences with their vision of the future into a coherent overarching life story. Narration is theorized to be a main mechanism for integrated and coherent identity development through time – a phenomenon termed *narrative identity* (e.g., McAdams, 2001; McLean et al., 2007). This approach further emphasizes that identity construction is undertaken through interaction with personal, family, community, and cultural stories (Breen et al., 2021; Haraldsson & McLean, 2022; McAdams, 1993).

However, as seen from the above conceptualizations, narration and identity are not always stable. Greenspan (1998), Mishler (2004), Camia and Habermas (2020), and Patterson and colleagues (2022) further draw our attention to what happens in *repeated narration* – when, over time, people renarrate their experience(s). Sometimes people remain with the

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same script; sometimes they change their story. Changing stories can be considered "good" or "problematic" for identity: changing one's story about specific events can be healthy (expressing reflection and development) or unhealthy (revealing incoherence or fragmentation).

The narrative identity approach further contends that one's story is not only about the person, but also has a relational aspect (e.g., Eakin, 1999; Galliher et al., 2017) – one very important aspect in conflict contexts. When people share their narratives, they discuss others who have greatly impacted their lives, their relationships with them, and the meaning that these others have for construction of the narrator's identity.

Finally, when people share understandings of their collective identity through their personal narratives in conflict situations, such sharing can influence both the in-group and the "enemy." Ashmore and colleagues (2004) used the term *collective identity story* for "the individual's mentally represented narrative of self as a member of a particular social category" (p. 96). The researchers proposed that collective identity consists of self-attributed characteristics of a group, its ideology, and narratives. The narrative component has two types: (1) "the story of me as a member of my group" – the thoughts, feelings, and images about one's past as a group member and perceived present-day and future consequences of group membership and (2) "the story of my group" – the individuals' ideas, emotions, and mental images about their group past, including its origins, historical highs and lows, and its present–future status.

This brings us to the issue of group identity in contexts of political violence.

Collective Identity and Political Violence

How do notions of collective identity tie into personal and social-political consequences of genocide and war? Given that individuals are highly invested in social groups, their perceptions, emotions, and behaviors are influenced by their sense of collective identity. In violent conflict situations, this can lead to prejudice, discrimination, and to acts of political extremism (van Swol et al., 2022).

In early psychosocial research on intergroup conflict, undertaken by Sherif and colleagues (1961), the researchers arbitrarily divided boy campers, who were strangers, into two groups, creating a competitive setting. Group members quickly adopted a strong sense of collective identity and commitment to their groups, which led to intense intergroup animosity that included razzing, verbal abuse, threats, and the desire to have little or

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nothing to do with the "others." It was only after the researchers gave the boys a *superordinate goal*, in which the two groups needed to work together to succeed, that the animosity began to abate.

Since that early research, study of collective identity and violent intergroup conflict has expanded and deepened. Social psychologists, working in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, have emphasized the importance of group identity when attempting to decrease intergroup hostilities and negative emotions and perceptions. As Rothman (1997) noted, identity-based conflicts are based in people's psychology, culture, basic values, shared history, and beliefs. Therefore, they threaten people's basic needs and survival. Issues connected to identity-based conflicts also tend to be more abstract, ambiguous, and intangible than interest-based conflicts.

Herbert Kelman, who designed and ran many peacebuilding workshops between Palestinians and Israelis, found that Israeli and Palestinian collective identities were joined together in a *negative interdependence* (1999). This made peacebuilding endeavors difficult since each side appeared to *need* the other to stress what it was *not* (i.e., immoral). Louis Kriesberg (1998), whose classic work was on how to turn destructive conflicts into *constructive conflicts*, addressed the importance of finding shared/common identities for this complex process to work. Peter Coleman (2006) – who has had decades of expertise in constructive conflicts and sustainable peace – has also emphasized how polarized group identities can harm the attainment of sustainable peace. Other experts in the field of intergroup violence prevention and peace work, Sean Byrne and Jessica Senehi (who uses storytelling techniques in her peace work), have studied different psychosocial factors that exacerbate extreme violence, including collective identity (e.g., Byrne & Senehi, 2012; Byrne et al., 2021; Senehi, 2008).

Daniel Bar-Tal – a Jewish-Israeli and world expert in the psychosocial aspects of intractable conflict – conceptualized the *Ethos of Conflict*, comprised of eight societal beliefs that keep intractable conflicts fueled (Chapter 3 has details). Each of these beliefs intricately connect to people's group identity (See, for example, Bar-Tal, 1998, 2000, 2013, 2017; Bar-Tal & Ben Amos, 2004; Bar-Tal & Raviv, 2021; Bar-Tal et al., 2012).

As we have noted, strong collective identity often leads to extreme hatred and persecution, due to "othering" (Etaywe, 2022) and "us vs. them" thinking (Waller, 2002), perceptions that are especially prevalent among individuals who closely identify with their reference group. Three outcomes of such thinking are *deindividuation* and *dehumanization* (Staub, 2003; Waller, 2002) and *moral exclusion* (Opotow, 1990). Deindividuation occurs when group members see outgroup members as a homogeneous

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bloc, making it easier to hold negative stereotypes about them. Deindividuation can then lead to intense enemy images, and dehumanization and moral exclusion, in which group members feel justified to act in extremely immoral ways (Waller, 2002) – including persecution, imprisonment, and murder – toward others who are perceived as unworthy of humane behavior. These perceptions, emotions, and behaviors do not easily disappear, as demonstrated, for example, in Fourie and colleagues' (2022) study of dehumanization in post-apartheid South Africa, when they found that White people were still considered to be more "human" than Black people or Coloureds.[2] Therefore, these phenomena are relevant for understanding how intergroup perceptions can lead to genocide and intractable war.

Ideology, or group consciousness, concerning a group's position in society (Ashmore et al., 2004; Gurin & Townsend, 1986; Simon & Klandermans, 2001), has also been found to be connected to collective identity, conflict, and social-political collective action. Simon and Klandermans (2001, p. 323) coined the term *politicized collective identity* in this context. Politicized collective identity:

> [is] a form of collective identity that underlies group members' explicit motivations to engage in such a power struggle . . . group members should intentionally engage, as a mindful and self-conscious collective . . . in such a power struggle knowing that it is the wider, more inclusive societal context in which this struggle takes place and needs to be orchestrated accordingly.

Additional scholars who have addressed collective identity in their explorations of genocide and violent war include Polkinghorn and Boudreau (2006), who used a case of conflict resolution between a Native American tribe and a sheriff's office in New York to demonstrate the researchers' conceptualizations. These scholars viewed group identity as (p. 5):

> a social construction that involves a dynamic process of selective self definition. Because it is constructed it can be manipulated, deconstructed and reconstructed based on historical events, relations with outgroups or by internal discourses . . . The selective self definition of the group's histories and psycho-cultural boundaries includes its history of traumatic experiences . . .

[2] "Coloured" was an official definition employed by the South African apartheid regime (from 1950 to 1991) to denote people of mixed European ("white") and African ("black") or Asian ancestry. This designation, which carried with it social-political discrimination, was abolished when apartheid was dismantled (see Britannica, 2023 for more details).

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The researchers further asserted that perceived threat from the outside tends to consolidate group boundaries, solidify group membership, and heighten the costs of members' defection. Groups who often/always feel threatened develop what appears to outsiders as a hardened, rigid self-image: The group is perceived as lacking diversity in thought or discourse, or variation in perception of the "enemy." This can lead to maladaptive responses to others when engaged in intense intergroup conflict. Polkinghorn and Boudreau claimed that one way to lessen such conflicts is by engaging in a very long-term, multigenerational process in which there is explicit *identity affirmation* by one group of the other group's identity, including recognition of its past pain, defeats, and collective losses. The authors (2006, pp. 6, 9) proposed four needed building blocks for the challenging process:

> if you consistently treat individuals within a previously shunned group with dignity, respect, appreciation and recognition the other group should respond in a more proactive manner . . . (A) Affirmation in inter-group conflict requires (R) Recognition and reciprocity; (I) Initiatives by in-group leadership or citizens, or both; and (A) Acceptance of the hitherto outgroup which consists of (1) validation of the outgroup's past pain and traumas . . . and (2) concrete efforts to insure the transparency of future time between groups.

In short, Polkinghorn and Boudreau proposed that group identity does not have to obstruct peacebuilding efforts. Peacebuilding is possible, even in social-political-historical contexts connected to genocide, if we can make the borders more flexible while simultaneously affirming the worth of the other.

In summary, collective identity has numerous and varied impacts in terms of exacerbating conflict or, at least, retaining the status quo, if not acknowledged and addressed with peacebuilding measures. By exploring the interplay between group identity and its role in extreme political violence, perhaps we will be better able to understand how collective identity can also be used in peacebuilding efforts.

Collective Identity in Relation to the Holocaust and the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

Collective identity plays a major role in Jews' and Germans' perceptions of the Holocaust and its aftermath, and in Jews' and Arabs' and Israelis and Palestinians' perceptions of the social-political conflicts affecting the

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region. We often see these group members adopting an identity rooted in victimhood, while accusing the other of being a perpetrator, or, at the very least, a passive bystander who did/does not try to safeguard the wellbeing and human rights of the victims (e.g., Adwan & Bar-On, 2000; Staub, 2003, 2018).

Collective victim beliefs and their expression are subjective and dynamic (Vollhardt, 2009, 2012). Members of victimized groups often emphasize narratives of their collective victimization when discussing their lives (Bar-Tal, 2000; Hammack, 2009) and often stress that they have been the *sole* victim of the conflict (Telaku et al., 2021). Moreover, groups' representations of history serve as charters that prescribe and legitimize the group's actions (Liu & Hilton, 2005). For victim groups, these charters often provide a sense of moral entitlement to self-defense and the demand for apologies and reparations from the perpetrators.

It is important for us to note here that representations and narratives of history are rooted in *collective memory.* As scholars have noted (e.g., Bikmen, 2013; Choi et al., 2021; Halbwachs, 1992), collective memories – which are the shared, constructed representations and narratives of the past created in a sociocultural context – influence the construction of a group's identity (Liu & Hilton, 2005), including the way a group perceives its outgroup(s) (Bikmen, 2013). Collective memories provide a sense of continuity and can be thought of as a kind of cohesive glue for group members (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). When in-group shared narratives, with their inherent connection to collective memories, emphasize a member's and a group's suffering, this often leads to destructive intergroup relations, even in post-conflict contexts (Telaku et al., 2021). For example, less intergroup trust and forgiveness was found in post-conflict Northern Ireland and Chile (Noor et al., 2008), as was less willingness to acknowledge the harm one's group caused others among Bosnian Serbs (Čehajić & Brown, 2010).

Moreover, research has shown that having a collective history, memory, and narrative of extreme suffering at the hands of another group does not usually lead people to demonstrate empathy for their past/present-day enemy (Chaitin & Steinberg, 2008). However, at times, we find the opposite: victims of gross human rights violations and war become altruistic, claiming that their experiences taught them the utmost importance of helping people in need, *even* "the enemy" (Staub & Vollhardt, 2008; Vollhardt, 2009).

Within the realm of a group identity rooted in victimhood, we can point to the concept of *competitive victimhood*. Collective victimhood is

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a psychological resource over which groups compete (Jeong & Vollhardt, 2021; Noor et al., 2012; Young & Sullivan, 2016) or that in-groups claim is unique to them – a phenomenon termed *exclusive victim beliefs* (Vollhardt, 2009). Competitive victimhood is found in intractable conflict, structural inequality, and intra-minority intergroup inequality (Young & Sullivan, 2016). For example, Kahalon and colleagues (2019), in their study of Jews and Arabs in Israel, found that the need for power predicted the need to engage in competitive victimhood. This topic, therefore, is extremely relevant for contexts of genocide and war: Conflict groups do not only fight about who was/is to blame for injustices and harm, but also tend to attempt to appropriate the identity of victimhood. They are unable/unwilling to acknowledge the suffering of the other group, seeing it as the perpetrator that cannot be granted victim status.

This leads us to the final section of this chapter: a brief presentation of German collective identity after the Holocaust; Jewish-Israeli collective identity that relates both to the Holocaust and to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict; and Palestinian collective identity (including Israeli citizens and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories) – the groups at the center of this book.

German Identity in the Context of the Holocaust Past

> *In 1947, my grandfather Hanns Ludin was executed as a Nazi war criminal in Bratislava. He was Nazi Germany's envoy to Slovakia from 1941 to 1945 and was instrumental in the deportation of the Slovak Jews, most of whom were murdered in the concentration camps. His participation in the Holocaust is a painful fact which some relatives from my mother's family will not fully acknowledge or come to terms with until this very day.*
>
> (Alexandra Senfft, 2019, p. 7)

How does collective memory of the horrific past tie into the ways in which younger Germans perceive their group identity and their perceptions of their past victims, the Jews? One answer can be found in Choi and colleagues' (2021) study, in which they asked German students to list the major events undertaken by their country which most shamed them and which made them the most proud. The most shameful events were the Holocaust, Nazism, World War II, the rise of the far-right movement and political parties, Hitler, construction of the Berlin Wall, racism and discrimination, and treatment of refugees. In other words, young

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Germans appear to be aware of and concerned with their country's genocidal past and its expression in present-day racism and xenophobia. The respondents listed these proud events: the fall of the Berlin Wall, treatment of refugees, national soccer performance, democracy, European Union, economic strides, technological advances, and resistance against Nazis.[3]

Exploration of German collective identity highlights the deep, conflictual aspects connected to postwar Germans' construction of a positive collective identity: love of grandparents/parents, on the one hand, and deep family conflicts, even ruptures, on the other, due to their elders' participation in the genocide (Anton & Pilipp, 2010; Frank, 2021). We further find taboos and silencing about the past (e.g., Bar-On, 1989; Fuchs et al., 2013), mixed with conflict concerning how to remember and deal with shameful collective memories of the past alongside pride in the country's economic, technological, and sports' accomplishments. Moses' words (2007, p. 142) may best summarize the construction of German group identity. It is the "tortuous construction of collective identity."

Overall, the German war generation did not (publicly) express feelings of guilt concerning the murderous actions of the Nazi regime, leaving many children of Nazis to carry the guilt of their parents (Heimannsberg & Schmidt, 1993; Lichtenberg, 2011). As Xue (2021, p. 3) noted:

> many Germans pretended that all the crimes of National Socialism had been committed by Hitler and a very small group of Nazis and that the vast majority of Germans from 1933 to 1945 knew nothing about these crimes or were themselves victims of the Nazis . . . The generations born after World War II were . . . some distance away from Nazi crimes. This also gave them the opportunity to face this history and begin to identify with the victims of war . . . Hitler was . . . an absolutely evil and inhuman figure . . . In short, he is not one of "us."

While most of the perpetrators' children avoided consciously dealing with what their elders had done – or did not stop from happening – and how the perpetration of genocide or passive bystandership affected them, it *did* influence their identity (Moré, 2022a; Moses, 2007). For example, for those who delved into this family and national past, one response has been the obligation to acknowledge this past and engage in actions that directly help Jews and/or help make the world a better place for all, especially minorities (Moré, 2022a). For those who have tried avoiding the topic, there is an increasing trend to see the war generation, and those that came after, as victims (e.g., of the massive Allied bombing on the country during

[3] The events are listed in the descending order of frequency.

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the war and the war's consequences – Jalil, 2015). In this vein, Florian Huber, the author of *Promise Me You Will Shoot Yourself* (2019), wrote about the phenomenon of mass suicide that plagued Germany in the aftermath of the war and that had been silenced, arguing that history has paid little attention to the suffering of ordinary Germans during and after the Nazi regime. By focusing on the Nazi killers and the genocide's victims, non-minority "ordinary" Germans have "not been allowed" to be victims. As Huber stated (cited in Jalil, 2015): "We have to think of ourselves as the bad guys, and it is still a controversial thing to suggest otherwise."

These two poles – Germans as perpetrators and Germans as victims – tie into an important point made by Xue (2021): As Germans develop a new collective and national identity, this calls for having open discussions about Hitler, since his long-term impact on Germany and German identity cannot be denied. In Xue's words (2021, p. 9): "Hitler [is] a lingering scar in the heart of the German nation . . . it still inevitably hurts or begins to itch." Xue connects this emerging identity to the growth of the far-right movement and political parties in German, and their opposition to refugee populations into their country, noting that there is:

> an increasingly disaffected part of the population . . . The time is calling for the construction of a new identity. A nation . . . disoriented and uncertain about its identity may fail to offer a strategy against populism, extremism and fundamentalist forces . . . They are feeling an urge to define their own identity to encompass more than atonement for World War II.

It is very important, however, to remember that Germany paid reparations to its victims (US Department of State, n.d.) and while German political, cultural, historical, and educational institutions have been wrestling with how to deal with this past, since 1992 the German government has required the inclusion of Holocaust education in all secondary schools (C. Smith, 2022; Vitale & Clothey, 2019). As the educational system reflects on how and what to teach the third and fourth generations, it is not surprising to learn that their programs do not always succeed. At times, educational programs are met with criticism for not successfully tying past events to present-day social injustices (Vitale & Clothey, 2019). However, this commitment to keeping the genocide past on the educational agenda is a clear sign that decision-makers understand how the only way to help ensure a positive German collective identity is by addressing the past, as painful as this continues to be.

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Jewish-Israeli Identity

Reflecting Bakhtin's (1981) assertion that an individual's identity is, in no small part, constructed in relation to others, Jewish-Israeli identity, in no small part, relates to how Jewish-Israelis view the German and Palestinian others (Litvak-Hirsch & Chaitin, 2010).

From the *Yishuv* period,[4] up until the 1970s, Jewish-Israeli mainstream identity reflected Zionist thought and centered on the construction of a new ideal identity – the *Sabra* (Almog, 2000). This identity was articulated most powerfully in Jewish-Israelis' desires to dissociate themselves from their religious past of exile (Oved, 2022; Segev, 2001). Jewish-Israelis were influenced by anti-Semitic depictions of European Jews, creating an image of diaspora Jews as uprooted, cowardly, and helpless in the face of persecution, and as being either overly interested in materialistic gains or excessively immersed in religion. The Sabra was a hegemonic identity characterized as young, robust, daring and resourceful, direct and down-to-earth, loyal, ideologically committed, and ready to defend their people to the bitter end. This identity, thus, reflected the cultural and collective background, secular values, and aspirations of the European founders of the state (Almog, 2000; Zerubavel, 2002), serving as *the* desired cultural model for the socialization of Israeli-born youth and new immigrants for about thirty years after statehood (Sagy et al., 2001).

However, this new conception did not completely erase the importance of the Jewish religion. Instead, it imbued old rituals and symbols with new meaning. Early Zionist ceremonies and celebrations expressed this ethos: it created a new culture and produced and reinforced patriotic attitudes, as well as cohesion of the Zionist movement and Jewish society (Oved, 2022).

Bar-On (2008) conceptualized Jewish-Israeli identity as going through three stages. The first stage, the *monolithic stage of identity*, valued the Sabra image to the disdain and exclusion of all others who did not fit this mold (i.e., Mizrahi Jews,[5] ultra-religious Jews, Palestinians, etc.). Thus, this image did not often mesh with the cultural diversity of Israeli immigrant society, which mainly included Holocaust survivors and religiously observant Mizrahim who immigrated to Israel from the end of the 1940s through the mid-1960s (Gigi, 2018). As the Jewish-Israeli population became more diverse over the years due to waves of immigration from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, and due to the growth in the Charedi (ultra-Orthodox) population, the Sabra model began to fade.

[4] Pre-state Israel. [5] Jews who came from Islamic countries.

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The second stage (~ late 1970s–2000), the *disintegration stage*, heralded the breakdown of this dominant identity. Collective identities that emerged during this period included the Black Panthers movement that embraced Mizrahim (Gigi, 2018), and uncovered deep social-political conflicts and inequality between residents of the center and periphery (Tzfadia & Gigi, 2022); religious-nationalistic Jews who joined the right-wing *Gush Emunim* [the Bloc of the Faithful] and pushed for settling in the Occupied West Bank; secular young adults, who protested against the Israeli military and political agenda during the first Lebanon War, the First Intifada, and the occupation of the Palestinian people; and diverse social groups who became more vocal in the public arena, such as the ultra-Orthodox, "bohemians" from Tel Aviv and new immigrants from Russia and Ethiopia (Shapira, 2000).

One prominent collective identity that emerged at that time, and has since become extremely central in Jewish-Israeli social-political life, is the National-Religious Right, which has become more radicalized and widespread (Rabinovich, 2018). People with this collective identity stress the combination of values from the religious world and Jewish legacy, rather than secular–liberal–cosmopolitan world values (The Rise of the Religious Right in Israel, 2017) – perceived as detrimental to the Jewish people and state (Acosta, 2014; Sonnenschein & Lindgren, 2020). The main expression of the national-religious stream has been its push for settlement in all of *Eretz Yisrael* – Greater Israel – and Jewish superiority in internal Israeli life (over the Arab population).

The third stage characterized the years of the Oslo peace accords (1990–2000) – the *multi-voice stage*. In this period, Jewish-Israelis began publicly embracing diverse aspects of the "otherness" within themselves. There was a clear expression of cultural diversity – which included language, customs, dress, the arts, and the expression of religious beliefs and diverse political views – that appeared in the public sphere. Over the years, as could be expected, Israeli schools, media, and cultural institutions also began emphasizing different aspects of this identity, including the centrality of the Holocaust for Jewish-Israeli identity (Kaufman, 2010; Steir-Livny, 2023), as well as Jewish spiritual heritage and religion (Oved, 2022), high-tech, and globalization.

After the breakdown of the peace process, which began in late 2000 with the onset of the Second Intifada, signs of monolithic identity appeared yet again vis-à-vis the Palestinian other and the Jewish-Israeli left wing. This was the *neo-monolithic stage*. Today, we can assert that Jewish-Israeli identity is, on the one hand, characterized by strong neo-monolithic

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aspects, alongside strong neoliberal and global tendencies. Perhaps we can add to Bar-On's theory, terming this stage *the clash of the old and postmodern*.

When we look at the development of Jewish-Israeli identity over the decades, we can see that the hegemonic Sabra image has been replaced by two major collective identities that battle over the desired image of the Jewish-Israeli: the liberal, secular, center-left, cosmopolitan identity versus the traditional, religiously observant, right-wing, nationalistic identity (Bekerman & Silverman, 1999) (with, of course, many versions in between these two poles).

Palestinian Collective Identity

The Arab citizens in Israel – who are approximately 21 percent of the population – define themselves as natives of the land, with the great majority seeing themselves as belonging to the Palestinian people. The Arab leadership in Israel demands official recognition of their collective existence since this population has suffered from a lack of equality in comparison to the Jewish citizens. For example, up until 1966, the Arab localities were run by a military government (Tarabeih et al., 2022), and there has been ongoing discrimination in the allocation of resources – justified by the definition of Israel as a Jewish state, as opposed to a state for all its citizens (Paul-Binyamin & Haj-Yehia, 2019). In recent years, the strongest sign of this inequality was the passing of the Basic-Law: Israel – the Nation State of the Jewish People (Association of Civil Rights in Israel, 2018), which emphasizes the Jewish nature of the state, makes no mention of minority rights, human rights or democracy, and downgrades the status of Arabic from an official language of Israel to a language with "special status." As a result of all of the above, Palestinian citizens of Israel often feel that they are second-class citizens, in a country that does not want them (Abu-Bader & Gottlieb, 2009; Kaplan et al., 2022; Magadlah & Cnaan, 2021; Paul-Binyamin & Haj-Yehia, 2019).

In their books *The Stand-Tall Generation* and *Coffins on Our Shoulders*, Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2002, 2005) shared narratives of Palestinian citizens of Israel and three kinds of collective identity that characterize age cohorts of Palestinians from the 1948 war, their children, and their grandchildren. The researchers termed the first generation, who for the most part were "internal" refugees (Palestinians who remained in Israel, but not in their original homes/towns) and "external" refugees (Palestinians who fled/were exiled over the Green Line – the 1949 armistice borders of Israel

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[Bickerton & Klausner, 2022]) as the *generation of survivors*. For this cohort, life mainly revolved around fulfilling basic needs and strong feelings of helplessness in confronting Israeli institutions about obtaining equal rights. Their children are perceived as the *exhausted/fatigued generation*, a more educated generation that created many Palestinian organizations and institutions, but lacked political power to create real changes in equality. The third generation, born after the 1967 war, is termed the *stand-tall generation* (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2002, p. 13). This cohort has been leading public struggles for equal civil rights and for a democratic country for "all of its citizens," regardless of religion/ethnic belonging. Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker viewed the stand-tall generation as a highly educated group that demands their people's rights and demands a restructuring of social and political power.

While this theory of collective identity is useful for understanding the changes that have characterized identity among Palestinian citizens of Israel, and while it also may capture some of the qualities of collective identity among Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens, it is important to explore specific conceptualizations of identity among Palestinians who are refugees and/or live in the Occupied Territories. This is important since the social-political context of these Palestinians differs greatly from those who are citizens of Israel: An independent Palestinian state has not yet been established, and millions of Palestinians have had years of living under occupation and/or as refugees. There can be no doubt that conceptualization of collective identity for Palestinians outside the Green Line is inherently connected to having been dispossessed, being under control, and lacking an independent state of their own.

One of the classic texts on Palestinian identity was written by Rashid Khalidi (1997/2010), who presented a historical-political analysis of the development of Palestinian identity, beginning from the late Ottoman period. In his book, he addressed issues that are central to Palestinian national identity, including the failure at achieving "national independence in their own homeland . . . they have consistently failed . . . to create for themselves a space where they are in full control or are fully sovereign" (p. 10). This fact impacts other identity aspects as well, such as borders, refugee status, and the importance of Jerusalem in the national identity.

It is not surprising that literature on Palestinian identity focuses on a strong link to the *Nakba* – perceived as being a constitutive element for every Palestinian (e.g., Nusseibeh, 2009; Sadi, 2002). Another related element of the group identity is collectivism (e.g., Chaitin et al., 2009; Fronk et al., 1999; Sagy et al., 2001; Sandouka, 2021), the centrality of

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family and nation (Nassar, 2002), and the growing sense of a strong Islamic identity (Sandouka, 2021).

Furthermore, the literature discusses extremely difficult emotional aspects of being a refugee, which ties into a traumatic collective memory of loss, injustice, dispossession, defeat, dishonor, and humiliation at the hands of the Israelis (El Sarraj, 1996, 2002; Fronk et al., 1999; Morray & Liang, 2005; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003). These researchers noted the emotional repercussions of the conflict, finding that generations of Palestinian refugees often exhibit high levels of hopelessness, despair, shame, or humiliation, not only due to their loss of homeland, but also due to their experiences of violence from Israeli soldiers on a daily basis – an atmosphere that cultivates fear and humiliation. Murad and Gordon (2002) and Sagy and colleagues (2002) also discussed the importance that the First Intifada had for adolescents and young adults. Their political activism during and since the First Intifada has provided them with positive feelings toward their sense of self, both politically and in terms of gender. One expression of this political activism, which is also conceived of as being a central aspect of Palestinian identity, is *sumud* – being steadfast and actively supporting Palestinian rights in the face of ongoing oppression (Sandouka, 2021). This is also often expressed by Palestinians' commitment to *anti-normalization* endeavors (Gawerc, 2021), defined as participation in initiatives that bring together Palestinians and Israelis that do *not* have as their main goal resistance to the occupation and oppression against the Palestinian people.

In summary, then, we can see that Palestinian identity has been tied to a strong sense of collectivism, nationalism, and activism, accompanied by feelings of pain and loss, due to their collective history. This sense of identity has intergenerational aspects, as young adults, who remain refugees, tie their sense of self and collective actions to their people's loss of homeland and to the ongoing conflict.

This brings us to the next piece of the mosaic of our understandings of the connections between personal narratives of genocide and war and peacebuilding or peace obstruction: the ways in which victims and their descendants cope with the traumas of these horrific experiences.

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