Historical trauma has ongoing effects for both victim and perpetrator groups who must contend with the implications of the trauma on their collective identity. For victims, the trauma represents an existential threat that promotes a perpetual sense of group vulnerability (Hirschberger & Pyszczynski, 2010; Kelman, 1992). For historical perpetrators, the trauma constitutes a threat to the moral image of the group (e.g., Branscombe & Doosje, 2004). The current proposal examines the influence of collective trauma on both historical victims and perpetrators, and contends that the memory of trauma continues to feed a cycle of intergroup hostility that spills over to conflicts with third parties that are unrelated to the original trauma.

This research program ties together the extant knowledge on collective trauma and contemporary intergroup conflict, and suggests that it is necessary to unravel and untangle the ongoing effects of historical trauma to provide the psychological space necessary to make compromises for peace.

Specifically, the focus of this research is on how the Holocaust continues to have a lingering effect not only on Jews, but on European nations, especially those in which the persecution and extermination of Jews took place. This dual effect of the Holocaust on Israelis – directly and indirectly through the relationship of Israel with Europe- serves to fuel the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although clearly this conflict is predicated on more than just Europe’s explicit and implicit influence on the Middle-East, in this proposal I argue that Europe has a substantial and mostly unconscious influence on the conflict, and that if we wish to break the stalemate in Israeli-Palestinian relations, the European-Israeli relationship and its vicissitudes need to be closely examined. This proposal offers a comprehensive theoretical framework that illustrates the chain reaction that begins with the horrors of WWII, continues to drive the motivational needs of Europeans and Israelis, and sheds new light on the underlying mechanisms driving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, the proposed model suggests a cyclical effect in which historical trauma influences relations between historical perpetrator and victim groups, this tense relationship feeds into contemporary intergroup conflict with a third party, and turns back to further intensify the relationship between historical victim and perpetrator, leading to a vicious and complex cycle of intergroup hostilities.

נשמח לראותכם!