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## **Social Capital, Citizenship Behavior and Service Learning – as Strengthening Forces for Community Reconstruction**

### **Introduction**

In recent years there has been increasing attention among social theorists as well as heightened public interest regarding the question of our civic well-being. As societies undergo rapid change, community norms and networks are often being redefined and redeveloped. In efforts to revitalize democracy or civic culture, more attention has been paid to community's ability to mobilize and strengthen local resources and develop capacity for its members to act for the greater common good. Indeed there has been a call for us to "strengthen the civic muscles" of our communities (Amsler, 1996). However, in many places torn apart by conflict and war, "civic muscles" have not only been weakened but elements of civic society have been disrupted, if not destroyed.

In writing this paper I relied both on my personal experiences and professional observations in various countries and regions throughout the last decade, as well as on the growing body of literature and research focusing on community and social-process typical to the post cold-war era. While the paper itself is not overloaded with empirical support and meticulous citations, I will try, nevertheless, to illustrate some of my theses by fresh examples from my own work.

Coming to this Conference, in the picturesque town of Cavtat, from my turbulent region in the Middle-East, let me conclude this short introductory section with a personal note: Throughout my numerous trips to troubled regions to communities in extreme distress, I have learned to identify and be attentive to the unique and particular characteristics of each singular conflict, while at the same time drawing general conclusions and seeing common denominators. It is those *common denominators and conclusions* that this paper is all about.

### **The Nature of Wars and Their Aftermath**

There is, in my opinion, congruence between the characteristics of certain wars, and the characteristics of the aftermath and recovery period.

**Total wars**, between two (or more) different states, or between coalitions of state-allies, end in whatever way they end (typically, with a clear victory of one side over its adversaries) and in the sequel period each side licks its wounds and engages in its own post-war reconstruction.

**Civil wars**, on the other hand, or protracted conflicts between neighboring entities, last long, do not end with a clear 'winner' or 'loser', and typically reach their end because of both-sides' exhaustion, a dead-end situation or external intervention (most frequently – by all of the

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above). A civil war often involves countless communities where neighbors suddenly find themselves at war with each other. It is not just a war, but a war between those who were once friends and colleagues. Social norms of civic-minded behavior, which may have existed previously, can be decimated by distrust and conflict. When the fighting stops and efforts are focused on recovery, community rehabilitation is as critical as physical rehabilitation or individual rehabilitation. The period of recuperation and rebuilding of the social fabric and mechanisms for civic engagement may prove to be the most challenging phase. While neighbors may have watched helplessly as their country was torn apart by ethnic or religious conflict, they now must return to learning how to be neighbors, friends and colleagues once again. Communities must again create a sense of joint purpose, where networks of trust are developed and mechanisms exist for citizens to involve in a collaborative process of problem solving.

Furthermore, while a total-war is either a struggle-for survival, or a battle over critical political or economic interests, and is typically controlled from top (the leader) down (the armed forces), a civil-war is usually ethno- (or religious -) centric in its nature and is emotionally-based; Lay-leaders, local-commanders and social-communal forces play a much larger role.

I am a psychologist, not an historian, but let me give you an historical example which, I believe, demonstrates this thesis: In the second World-War, the ultimate control over managing the war was in the hands of the top leaders – Hitler, Stalin, Churchill and F.D. Roosevelt. Centrally organized military corps, fully obedient to a clear hierarchy of authorities, conducted the war itself. And the entire population, across all its communities, felt strong identification with the “collective” homeland. In contrast, in almost all civil wars, the leadership is not clearly distinct, the fighting is frequently conducted by different militia-groups varying in their ideological reasoning, and it is the local and communal identity that many times exceeds the collective identification. Again, the historical illustrations here can be seen right now in my own region (both among Palestinians and Israelis); they were also very apparent among the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, in the civil wars in Nigeria and South Africa and also in the former-Yugoslav states.

The cause of the war, then, determines the nature of the war-conduct which, in turn, is congruent with the war-sequel. It is not only “*la guerre com la guerre*”, but also – “*la post-guerre com la guerre*”...

And so, in the post-war era that follows a civil war, or a protracted ethnic-conflict, the internal processes at the communal, grass roots, civic level are as important as they were during the war – and much more so! Furthermore, it is my claim to you – paradoxically as it might sound – that the more confident each of the adversary groups in a civil war will become in terms of its own self-identity, the more tolerant toward the “other” it will grow, and subsequently, the closer and better will be the solution of the conflict. This was, indeed, the case in Northern Ireland and in South Africa; and this is what will happen inevitably in the Middle East and in this (Southeast Europe) region. In some respects, what happened in the former Yugoslavian countries in the last 2-3 years reflects exactly that (albeit predominantly at the national, rather than the communal level): The election outcomes in Croatia, Serbia and to a certain extent also in Bosnia-Herzegovina showed that the people in these countries are turning away from extreme nationalistic positions and into more tolerant and “internal” politics. Similarly, this trend is reflected in local initiatives to promote regional conflict-resolution activities. One such initiative was made recently by our Conference Chairman,

Prof. Dean Ajdukovic'. The primary aim of Ajdukovic's proposal is "to develop constructive conflict management approaches in communities (my emphasis R.G.), in order to facilitate the social reconstruction and rebuilding of civil society and consequently the recovery from turmoil." (SPA, 2001).

### **Modes of Recovery and Community Reconstruction**

Mental-health professionals have been traditionally alerted to help affected civilians, predominately children, after (or during) mass-disaster situations to recover from the trauma and to prevent a long-term impairment, such as PTSD. Normally this help will comprise mental support, expressions of empathy and providing legitimacy for experiencing post-distress difficulties. In more serious cases, the treatment is aimed towards strengthening idiosyncratic coping mechanisms. Depending on the particular individual, these coping-modes can fall into one (or more) of the following categories:

- Focusing on affect/emotional processing (enabling the abreaction of effect, transforming uncontrollable anxieties into tolerable fears etc'.);
- Focusing on cognitive processing (re-framing the situation, or manipulating the person's cognitive appraisal) ;
- Focusing on the active-behavioral processing (encouraging active behavior, practicing preferred behavioral patterns, etc.).

In areas undergoing prolonged trauma, like in this region during the years 1992-1995 ,and again in Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo during the more recent Kosovo crises, both local and international projects have been initiated to provide training and professional supervision for such psychological help. In 1993 (and onward), I have been involved<sup>2</sup>, together with other colleagues from Israel, in one such project (Gal, 1997; 1998). Subsequently, during the Kosovo crisis, the SPA cadre from Zagreb have become instrumental in providing training to mental-health professionals in Kosovo and neighboring areas (Ajdukovic', 2001). Typically, however, these psychosocial programs focused on traumatized individuals and shattered families. Rarely did they expand beyond the family realm – into the community, larger society or regional domains. But affect-, cognitive-, and active- behavioral processing can – and should! – be applied also to whole communities, not only to individuals; and community-based activities (not only individual-aimed treatment) could have (and had !) healed societies in the aftermath of terrible crises.

Several key-concepts have emerged in the last twenty years, within the social sciences, that reflect this shift of focus from the individual-based to the community-based modes of post-stress recovery. I would like to focus on three – Social Capital, Citizenship Behavior and Service Learning – as a leading sample in this evolving area.

**Social Capital.** Surfacing already in the 80's (and even before), the term Social Capital only became widely used during the last ten years, mostly through the fascinating field research conducted by Robert Putnam (1993) in support of this conceptualization. Social Capital is defined as 'features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can

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<sup>2</sup> This involvement was generously initiated by the United Kingdom Jewish Aid and International Development (UKJAID). See : "Helping the Helpers - The Record of UKJAID's Humanitarian Initiative in the former - Yugoslavia 1992-1997". UKJAID, London (undated) .

improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions' (Putnam, 1993; p.167).<sup>3</sup> James Coleman(1990), describes it in more colloquial words: "The more extensively persons call on one another for aid, the greater will be the quantity of social capital generated ... Social relationships die out if not maintained: expectations and obligations wither over time; and norms depend on regular communication" (p.321). It is Coleman also, who provides *in-vivo* examples that illustrate indeed, how Social Capital can become a powerful, very basic, resource. Let me choose from Coleman's various examples two that are close to my heart:

"A mother of six children, who moved with her husband and children from suburban Detroit to Jerusalem, describes as one reason for doing so the greater freedom her young children have in Jerusalem. She feels it is safe to let her eight-year-old take the six-year-old across town to school on the city bus and to let her children play without supervision in a city park, neither or which did she feel able to allow where she lived before. The reason for this difference can be described as a difference in the social capital available in Jerusalem and in suburban Detroit. In Jerusalem the normative structure ensures that unattended children will be looked after by adults in the vicinity, but no such normative structure exists in most metropolitan areas of the United States. One can say that families in Jerusalem have available to them social capital that does not exist in metropolitan areas of the United States." (p.303).<sup>4</sup>

"In the central market in Cairo, the boundaries between merchants are difficult for an outsider to discover. The owner of a shop which specializes in leather, when queried about where one finds a certain kind of jewelry, will turn out to sell that as well – or what appears to be nearly the same thing, to have a close associate who sells it, to whom he will immediately take the customer. Or a shopkeeper will instantly become a money changer simply by turning to his colleague a few shops down. For some activities, such as bringing a customer to a friend's store, there are commissions; others, such as money changing, merely create obligations. Family relations are important in the market, as is the stability of proprietorship. The whole market is so infused with relations of the sort just described that it can be seen as an organization, no less so than a department store. Alternatively, the market can be seen as consisting of a set of individual merchants, each having an extensive body of social capital on which to draw, based on the relationship within the market." (p.304)

Social Capital, than, is enhanced by social norms, habits and tradition. But it is further developed and facilitated by simple communal activities such as citizens meetings, neighborhood gatherings, social clubs (e.g. folk-dancing, music-listening, card-playing etc' .), voluntary team-work, self-support groups etc'.

One classic way of enhancing Social Capital is by applying voluntary youth service within the community, or within a given society across its diverse communities. Following William James' famous call (of almost hundred years ago!) for a "moral equivalent of war" (James, 1910), today there are numerous frameworks, around the world of youth volunteers, serving within their communities, in civic roles covering health, welfare, education, environment and many more areas (see website : <http://www.acys.utas.edu.au/ncys/nys.htm>) Of particular interest are those frameworks operating in big (and troublesome!) cities, such as: New York's City Volunteer Corps', or Boston's 'City Year' (Goldsmith, 1993).

In many countries, where ethnic or religious minorities are problematic, the volunteer youth organizations, comprised of mixed youth from all demographic categories, become a most effective "melting-pot" mechanism to minimize civil tension and promote common identity (Eberly and Sherraden, 1990). Such is the case, for example, with the Canadian "Katimavik"

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<sup>3</sup> James Coleman deserves primary credit for developing the "Social capital" theoretical framework See: Coleman 1988;1990. Apparently, the first scholar to use the term "social capital" in its current sense was Jane Jacobs, in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, (1961). 138.

<sup>4</sup> This feeling of safety for little children is true in Jerusalem even at these (Summer 2001) turbulent days of another Intifada (civil uprising) in this region. Apparently, social-capital assets are not that easily erased by political turbulence.

organization (where youth of French and English background serve together in different provinces), or the Nigerian Youth Service Corps (NYSC; where students from all different ethnic mix together, for mandatory service of one year, aimed predominantly at national integration). In my own country, only recently young Jews and Arabs have started to serve together, in mixed volunteer groups, towards easing political and religious tension within Israeli society. I will elaborate more on this in the following sections.

But how does Social Capital become a strengthening force for community reconstruction?

At the present there is already a huge body of literature (see for example: Putnam, 1993(a) ; 1993(b); Coleman, 1990) , covering many field research and systematic observations, that provides a good answer to this question. It is clearly evident now that these civic engagements and social connections called Social Capital produce better schools, faster economic development, lower crime and more effective government services. Furthermore, Social Capital was found to be associated with people's health and with the welfare of children (Putnam, 2000). In short, all these findings show that life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of Social Capital, its members share higher mutual trust and collaboration and exhibit, as individuals, higher levels of well-being.

**Citizenship Behavior.** Although not as operationally defined as 'social capital' , Citizenship Behavior is marked, first of all, by one's active participation in public affairs within one's community (Walzer, 1980). This modern notion of the citizenship concept is, indeed, a diversion from the more traditional notion of *republican citizenship*, embedded in the classical republics of Greece and Rome, emphasizing loyalty towards the homeland and the predominance of civic duties as its main principles. In contrast, the *liberal tradition* of Citizenship, originating in the philosophy of Locke and Jefferson, focuses more on the freedoms and rights of the citizen and emphasizes the civic involvement and responsibilities than on civic duties and obligations.

Stemming from this perspective, Citizenship Behavior means, first of all, "being familiar with the basic tenets of [one's] state and respecting them, especially those tenets concerning the effective working as a democracy: the separation of powers, the supremacy of the law, the democratic procedure for electing a government and for legislating, and for reviewing government activities" (Hareven, 1996). Another expression of a liberal version of Citizenship Behavior is civic responsibility and civic initiative. These initiatives can take place in many fields, such as politics, economic enterprise, civil rights, education and culture. Finally, a higher level of Citizenship Behavior may involve caring for other citizens' misery and attending to others' needs. An apparent reflection of such expressions or implications is the growing expansion of non-governmental organizations (NGO's) in many democratic countries. The proliferation of such NGO's, and of citizenship involvement in general, transmit a clear message that "in a civil society not everything depends on government, but citizens can assume a great deal of initiative for change, independently of government, or in cooperation with it" (Hareven, 1996).

Citizenship Behavior also seeks to empower citizens, by focusing on their own responsibility of members of society to seek solutions to communal problems rather than to blame others. Diversity is valued as a source of strength, and emphasis is placed on the need to create opportunities to tap the potential civic contribution of all citizens. Public goods and communal resources are developed through the engagement of people from all different

backgrounds in public affairs and the creation of mechanisms to ensure their productive involvement.

A stronger and wider Citizenship Behavior, however, is not only beneficial at the community and the larger-society level; In the recent years, various forms of Citizenship Behavior have been implemented in a variety of private and public organizations and in working places, in terms of performance and satisfaction. (Shnake, 1991 ; Organ, 1988). Inevitably individuals who exert active involvement in issues broader than their private or close-family affairs, consequently invigorate their own resilience and well being (Smith and Organ, 1983). Citizenship Behavior, thus, results both in a stronger and more effective community, as well as in individuals who feel a sense of empowerment and self-efficacy.

**Service Learning.** “Civil society will not survive without a new generation of engaged citizens. Bringing up youth with more entertainment or possessions has produced neither gratitude nor enlightenment. Regulating and controlling has led to rebellion and destructive acts. Dead-end jobs paying little and teaching less are not the answer ... [only] the wisdom of combining service and schooling ... provides a better path”. (Kielsmeier, 1998 ; p.28). These were the fervent words of Dr. James C. Kielsmeier, one of the world’s present leaders of Service Learning. Service Learning is a form of experiential education that combines structured opportunities for learning academic skills, reflection on the normative dimensions of civic life, and experiential activity that addresses community needs or assists individuals, families, and communities in need (Hunter, 200). At present, both the concept and praxis of Service Learning is widely used (See Service Learning Website: <http://www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu/>)<sup>5</sup> hence I will limit my elaboration on the concept itself. Suffice it to say, however, that Service Learning programs are widespread today at all levels of educational institutions, from kindergartens to universities. Typically, students at all levels rank those programs as one of the most significant part of their overall education (Gray et al., 1999). Furthermore, participating in Service Learning programs resulted in students’ change of their perceptions of democratic governance and the practice of politics, in their willingness to and actual joining voluntary activities and in enhancing their sense of competence and commitment.

To summarize, then, we are facing an impressive phenomenon, where the expanding implementation of Service Learning programs in various educational institutions throughout the world has transformed thousands of students from passive members to active participants, from help-seekers to help-providers, and from victims to leaders (Eberly & Kielsmeier, 1991).

**An Israeli Example.** Israel is a state under the pressure of continuous wars and struggles. While the repeated wars are between Israel and its Arab neighbors, the struggles within are mostly related to Israel’s diverse population and minorities. Twenty percent of the populations of the Jewish state of Israel are Arabs (both Muslims and Christians). Although citizens, these Israeli Arabs are not allowed to serve in the Israeli conscription-based military (Sherraden & Gal, 1990), nor do they enjoy full-equal rights. This abnormal situation has generated repeated tensions throughout the years.

Only in the last 2-3 years, a major effort has been launched (in which our Carmel Institute was actively involved) to include Arab youth (age 18-22) in existing frameworks of voluntary youth service (Gal, 1999). Still in small numbers, most of these Arab volunteers

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<sup>5</sup> Just as an illustration, the number the number of school students, in the U.S.A., engaged in service-learning in the year 1999 was 23.5 million. The growth in this number between 1984 and 1997 was 3663 percent!

(predominantly women) serve within their own communities, among their own people. A small number, however, have preferred to serve in mixed teams, together with Jewish women. Researchers of Carmel Institute<sup>6</sup> were prompt to interview these young volunteers, as it was the first year (2000-2001) of such experimentation. The assessment is still on-going, but I can share with you already some initial results.

All the volunteers who served together attest to the change in their attitudes and stereotypes towards the “others” and the impact that serving together had on viewing their colleagues (of the other ethnic group) as individuals, first.

As one Arab girl who, after initial apprehensiveness of serving in a Jewish school and being the only Arab, summarized : " Everyone is equal, and we must move on with life, move past the political situation and continue with our lives". Several Arab girls reported that serving together "turns your head upside down", that it helps very much to changes stigmas and stereotypes. One Jewish girl said about her close Arab friend serving with her : " before anything, she is an individual."

Arab girls who reported on successful integration into the Jewish setting (school, kindergarten), expressed a sense of connection to the State and a sense of importance of their contribution, as well as a feeling of being accepted by greater society and positive feelings about their contribution to it.

The Arab volunteers speak about their desire to feel as part of the country, an attachment to the country, that they gained through their service. As one girl explained: "The actual 'doing' of the national service gave me a certain connection to the country, a connection which is no longer expressed in words only."

One should keep in mind that these testimonies were made only six months after some terrible clashes occurred between police forces and Arab citizens, in the northern region ('Galil') of Israel. Thirteen Israeli-Arabs were killed in these riots, many were wounded and almost all were traumatized. Yet, mixed community service prevailed, and hopefully will further expand, to create a civil bridgehead towards communal recovery and co-existence.

## Conclusion

The process of post-trauma recovery involves individuals, families, communities and the entire society. Historically, mental-health professionals focused only on the individual and family levels. The broader circles were dealt with mostly by tools and labor – physical capital and human capital. It is here suggested that another important resource, that of Social Capital and its related sprouting, should be strengthened. Parallel to their individualized consideration, care providers are expected to develop and empower local forces (e.g. lay leaders, social networks support-groups, etc') within their communities, in the crisis-aftermath phase. These resources, in turn, should become the leverage for community reconstruction.

**Though the strength of the entire chain is usually determined by the strength of its weakest link, when it comes to recovering communities the opposite is true, no less: The strength and well-being of each and every member of the community may be determined by the health and wealth of the encompassing community.**

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<sup>6</sup> Special thanks and appreciation go to Nancy Shtreichman , who had conducted these interviews.

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