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CHANGES IN NARRATIVE AND ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

BY STUDENTS DISCUSSING 'HOT' HISTORICAL ISSUES

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Abstract

Growing attention is given to students' encounter with multiple historical perspectives, especially in the context of socially and emotionally loaded historical issues such as inter-ethnic relations. However, little empirical research has been devoted to actual exploration of its effects on students. 64 Israeli 12th grade students participated in an experiment in which we explored the effects of argumentative study of multiple sources and of social identity on narrative and argumentative characteristics of students' writing (plot, stand and argumentative writing level). Students wrote short texts about the impact of a "Melting Pot" policy on immigrants and on the state, prior to and after evaluation of sources and discussion. Findings reveal significant effects for social identity and argumentative design. Students of "Western" and "Oriental" origin tended to change their stand and narrative in opposite directions, apparently bolstering in-group image. In the argumentative design group, students holding more determined and confident views tended to change their views in an opposite direction contrary to persuasion theory assumptions. Students' narratives helped repositioning within a dominant (counter) narrative.

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The encounter with multiple historical perspectives and interpretations is currently a central goal of history education in democratic societies (National Curriculum Online, 2004; National Center for History in Schools, 2004). This goal is a recent outcome of educational research and political struggles, but raises some unanswered questions. On the one hand the teaching of alternative perspectives on national history comes under attack, due to a fear of undermining students' national identity and their loyalty to the State. Conservative critics consider it subversive or even immoral to expose students to revisionist accounts, or to encourage them to be critical of their own views (Linenthal & Engelhardt, 1996). On the other hand, even among supporters of multiple perspectives learning, doubts have been raised as to the feasibility of such an endeavor.

Wertsch (2000) stresses that while students can acquire historical knowledge comparatively easily, they may still resist or evade new meaningful concepts, values, and attitudes related to that knowledge. As various studies show, the encounter with history textbooks does not change students' deeply held narratives or views of historical issues (Porat, 2004;). In those studies, even active involvement in evidence and primary source interpretation hardly altered adolescents' perceptions of well known historical events or of source reliability (Wineburg, 1991). Students found it hard to use historical documents critically in their writing and returned to the themes and schemes they were used to (McCarthy-Young & Leinhardt, 1998). The history that is inside the head of "everyman", is assumed to be quite more influential then professional historical texts or diverse contrary evidence (Becker, 1966). It seems that this immunity to change of some historical preconceptions stems from the special

psychological status of narratives as forms of historical knowledge (Brunner, 1996; Mink, 1978; White, 1980). We shall further elaborate the significance of narrative in historical knowledge. Following which, we shall go on to investigatesome general issues of persuasion and changing attitudes influencing students struggle with historical issues..

Narratives and historical knowledge

Narratives constitute central components of historical knowledge. They are considered natural ways of thinking about the past, among the earliest forms of understanding and meaning making (Bruner, 1996) . Events of the past are structured in culturally bound plot schemes, usually centered on tensions and their resolution. Through such schemes, historical events are turned into meaningful temporal and causal sequences of intentional action attributed to agents (Levstik, 1995; Toolan, 1988). Narrative accounts are value and goal oriented – aimed at driving a point, reaching a conclusion, accounting for a state of things, or explicating its significance (Antaki, 1994). Within social groups, narratives structure collective memory in ways that enhance the groups' self-esteem and legitimacy and ensure a sense of continuity and destiny (;; Zerubavel, 1995).

As Hayden White (1980) implies the persuasive strength of narratives seems to stem from their inner coherence, their reliance on comprehensible cultural schemes. Such schemes maintain a dramatic logic within which individuals are able to identify and situate themselves (Bamberg, 1997). It seems that this coherence and logic render both private and public narratives stable, capable of transmitting and maintaining attitudes and values (Levstik, 1995). It is this quality that makes adolescents almost incapable of criticizing coherent historical narratives as Shemilt (2000) asserts .The implicit persuasiveness and authority narratives tend to convey, make them relatively

immune to criticism, counter-argument or counter-evidence. It seems that individuals value their narratives to a degree that any challenge to them may be felt as derogatory and disempowering (Cobb, 1993).

The stability of historical narratives may also have something to do with their composite nature: They interweave factual details, cultural schemes, individual positioning, attitudes towards reality, and causal or moral claims together (Gwyn, 2001). Encounter with multiple historical sources is in fact an encounter with diverse narratives, which sometimes vary not in the facts but in their narrative representation (Penuel & Wertsch, 1998). Thus, if we aim at identifying effects of multiple source learning in history, we should look not just for accumulation of facts, but for changes in narrative.

Narrative changes may include complex interrelated components such as plot scheme, agency, authorship, certainty, and glossa (lesson to be taught or attitude toward an issue). For example, the same set of events may be emplotted differently, as a melodrama or a tragedy, by attributing the negative status of a "problem" to the first or the last event. A simple change of nouns from active to passive may change the role of agents from active participants to victims (Penuel & Wertsch, 1998). A glossa may change the valence of a set of events and their assumed relation to the present (Toolan, 1988). It is this complexity that makes the study of changes in historical narrative an especially interesting case of conceptual and attitudinal change.

Change in beliefs, concepts and attitudes, in the light of identity

Conceptual and attitudinal change is of longstanding interest in educational, cognitive, and social psychology. Cognitive research shows that individuals are slow to change their theories and narrative accounts, even when confronted with challenging evidence. Counter evidence and counter arguments are often ignored, or considered

non-contradictory or even supportive of one's preconceived opinions and accounts. This tendency to assert and strengthen initial theories is referred to as "confirmation bias" (Nickerson, 1998). Even a clear visual and textual cue contradicting prior held views may be inversed when a strong collective memory narrative governs its perception (Wineburg, Mosborg & Porat, 2001).

Research shows initial theories and "story models" or narratives govern the thinking of participants of juror tasks

(parallel in many ways to historical meaning making). Story models influence the explanation of evidence to a degree that makes the weighing of alternative narratives seem redundant to many of the respondents (Kuhn, Weinstock, & Flaton, 1994; Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979). To this we may add Kuhn's (2001) findings that a many adolescents tend to hold what she termed an absolutist epistemological stance, perceiving knowledge to be closed and static. It seems that the strength of prior beliefs and attitudes and the degree of confidence or certainty in one's thoughts strongly influence the ways people cope with challenging evidence. The prior causal narratives which people maintain may set a "cognitive threshold" which challenging evidence cannot pass if it is too weak or complex. In fact, findings show that in the case of strongly held theories or attitudes, counter evidence leads to increased confidence in one's prior standpoint. This may explain why people who adopt an absolutist epistemological stance view counter evidence as either completely true or completely false. Since students view historical narratives as trustworthy, challenging evidence in history may not lead to changes in the narratives they hold on to (Levstik, 1995; McKenzie, Lee, & Chen, 2002; Kuhn, 2001; Petty, Briñol, & Tormala, 2002).

The determination with which people adhere to their theories and opinions as embedded and embodied in narratives, may stem from the relations between

standpoints, identity, and self esteem. Since "my story" is felt as part of "my self", negative or contradictory evidence is felt as a threat to identity. In many social situations modifying an opinion is taken as surrendering a battle, with the accompanying loss of face and threat to self esteem. This may be all the more true regarding historical narratives, which are thought of as "texts of identity". It has been shown that accounts of the history of the social group to which an individual belongs, evoke shame or pride even when the respondents cannot be held in any way accountable for recounted events (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Sherman & Cohen, 2002).

The relevance of social identity to the way students deal with contradictory evidence is clear in the case of conflicting historical narratives. The origins of conflicting historical accounts can usually be traced to the differing perspectives of diverse and competing social groups (ethnic, political, economic, gendered or denominational, etc.). According to social identity and inter-group relations theories, an individual's depiction of her social group - the in-group - fulfills social identity needs. On the whole, members tend to present their in-group as better than a comparable out-group (Reynolds, Turner, & Haslam, 2000). This also seems to result in unconscious attribution of biases and various forms of categorization. Thus members attribute their in-group's negative historical actions to external factors or to a few black sheep in an heterogeneous population. The out-group's negative actions, on the other hand, are described as stemming from intentional wrongdoing of the entire group whose members are basically all the same (Doosje, & Branscombe, 2003; Hewstone, 1990; Pettigrew, 1998). Such biases may result in conflicting narratives of out-group and in-group history and difficulty in coming to terms with disconfirming evidence.

Conflicting historical narratives of this sort abound especially in Western countries, which with growing immigration, have become multiethnic and multicultural societies. Ethnic or national origin seems to be a fundamental constituent of social identity. Ethnic studies, minority histories and family stories construct many conflicting narratives of national history, frequently challenging the dominant groups' or the state's official narratives (Gutierrez, 1994; Linenthal & Engelhardt, 1996).

Presumably, the most divergent and contradictory historical narratives would be those describing inter-group contact from the different perspectives of dominant and minority or dominated groups. Such accounts are for example those depicting interethnic relations, as in immigration and cultural encounter stories, colonization and decolonization, or slavery and liberation narratives. These issues encourage polarized self defending narratives, both because of the moral implications such narratives carry and because they usually refer to events formative of the social groups' identities (Doosje et al., 2003; Epstein, 1998; Swim & Miller, 1999).

It could be assumed, then, that confronted with narratives arising from an out-group perspective, students would be least prone to accept information or to change their views. Intergroup contact theory holds that the in the short run, intergroup contact and dialogue heighten in-group identity awareness and commitment (Pettigrew, 1998). This should be especially so regarding accounts depicting the in-group or its role in inter-group relations in unflattering terms. However, coming to terms with disturbing historical events, assessing one's own narrative critically, and acknowledging differing perspectives are some of the most important goals of teaching history in democratic countries. What then, might help students to overcome the unconscious biasing tendencies which obstruct open minded historical learning

and narrative change? It could be that a recent pedagogical approach to History teaching and learning which is dedicated to argumentation may be an excellent test-bed for triggering and studying narrative change.

Argumentation and attitude change

Argumentation can be defined in multiple ways, depending on what the goals of the practice of argumentation are perceived to be. For some, its function is primarily one of social interaction aimed at conflict expression, possible resolution, and building a consensus (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1959). For others the goal is orientated towards emphasis on rationality and is aimed at justification and rebuttal of controversial positions (Toulmin, 1958). This multiplicity of definitions has generated a rich body of scholarship, bridging the disciplines of philosophy, communication, literature, and psychology (Voss & van Dyke, 2001).

A definition of argumentation which suits educational goals concerns both an intrapersonal process of dialectic reasoning and an interpersonal rhetoric of negotiation and persuasion (van Eemeren, et al., 1996). Through argumentation, an individual is assumed to arrive at sound and valid conclusions explaining phenomena or supporting standpoints. To this end, one must formulate clear claims and support them with reliable evidence. At the basis of argumentation is the awareness of alternative opinions or accounts which should be acknowledged and of a disagreement to be resolved. In order to reach a reasoned resolution of controversy or in order to refute the other's standpoint, those alternative claims and evidence should be scrutinized (van Eemeren, et al, 1996). Although consensus seeking is not the utmost goal of this type of argumentation, but rather a common understanding of the

issue at stake, discussants attempt to accommodate divergent views through suitable argumentative moves.

The popularity that argumentation has gained in education does not only originates from the general list of functions argumentation theorists claim to be enacted in this activity, but also because it is an inherent part of the scientist's trade: Lakatos (1958) showed that mathematics develops by a process of conjecture, followed by attempts to 'prove' the conjecture (i.e. to reduce it to other conjectures) followed by criticism via attempts to produce counter-examples both to the conjectured theorem and to the various steps in the proof. Similarly, in Science, practices such as assessing alternatives, weighing evidence, interpreting texts, and evaluating the potential viability of scientific claims are all seen as essential components in constructing scientific arguments (Latour & Woolgar, 1986). In making scientific claims, theories are open to challenge and progress is made through dispute, conflict, and paradigm change. Science is now viewed as a social process of knowledge construction that involves conjecture, rhetoric, and argument (Taylor, 1996). This perspective recognizes that observations are theory-laden (Hanson, 1958; Kuhn, 1962) and that, therefore, it is not possible to ground claims for truth in observation alone. This central role of argumentation for professional mathematicians and scientists has led several educationalists to a pedagogical agenda in which argumentation is central in school activity (see for example, Driver, Newman & Osborne, 2000 in Science Education).

Similarly to mathematicians and scientists, historians have been recognized as intensively practicing argumentative activities: The historian's trade traditionally includes the dialectical evaluation of sources concerning their relevance and reliability (Perfetti, Britt, Rouet, Georgi, & Mason, 1994, Collingwood, 1946). Tackling

controversies is also central to historical thinking (Marwick, 1970). Therefore, in History like in Mathematics and Science, argumentative activities are models for reasoning, before they are tools for learning in these domains.

However, does argumentation really promote learning in classrooms? Of course, educationalists claim that involvement in argumentative activity promotes a reasoned and less biased approach to counter evidence and awareness of alternative views and narratives. Argumentation is thought to turn accounts and facts into interpretations and standpoints, personalizing them and motivating criticism and reasoned defense. Such a relation to knowledge and evidence is a necessary condition for historical understanding (Lee, 2005). But we should be careful to discern between the intentions of educationalists and what really happens in classes. Generally, argumentation refers to a design hypothesized to lead to argumentative activity, or what Andriessen and Schwarz (2009) call "argumentative design". In other words, argumentation is generally not considered an independent variable but as a setting in which argumentation is hypothesized to happen. For example, dyadic discussions have been shown to help revising opinions and explanations and express more reasoned and disciplined accounts (Kuhn, Shaw, & Felton, 1997; Miller, 1987). Also, cognitive tools such as argumentative maps and pro and con lists which are used to present the beneficial and damaging outcomes of actions, have been shown to similar benefits (Schwarz, Neuman, Gil, & Ilya, 2003). In the domain of History, McCarthy-Young and Leinhardt (1998) have shown that use of multiple documents in an argumentative writing assignment produces various beneficial argumentative outcomes, ranging from the development of an argumentative structure for writing to the adoption of a more disciplined approach towards the documents. In other studies in History, acknowledging and evaluating conflicting historical evidence and narratives led to

positive effects (Britt & Aglinskas, 2002; Perfetti et al., 1994; Rouet, Britt, Mason, Robert, & Perfetti, 1996).

Studies in which argumentation is not only considered as a design but in which processes are analyzed in fine-grained analyses, are rare (Baker, 2003; Pontecorvo & Girardet, 1993; Schwarz, Neuman, & Biezuner, 2000). They suggest that only when the argumentation design "does works" (i.e., when actual interactions show rich argumentative moves), discussants may undergo substantial changes thereafter.

In summary, it appears that although argumentative activities are prone to subjective and emotional biasing effects (disputants may become angry, a single reasoner may fall into solipsism), they allow students a more reasoned and critical approach to historical issues. Still, research on historical argumentation has been carried out mostly on comparatively non emotive issues (which might explain the more objective or critical approach achieved). Students reasoned and argued over comparatively distant economic and territorial issues. Neither Amianus' depiction of the Huns (Pontecorvo and Girardet) nor Panama's independence (Rouet et al.) necessarily provoke heated emotional reactions. Neither are most of these problems connected to inter-group contact in a way which might threaten or arouse social identity. It remains to be seen whether argumentative design would enable students to assess alternative narratives and revise their own narratives in the context of emotive historical issues. Our hypothesis is that a suitable argumentative design may lead to activities in which participants overcome the shortcomings that persuasion theory predicts should occur when strongly held views and issues that may threaten social identity are at stake.

Description of the research

   Goals of the study.

The goals of this study were to compare "normal" history learning to argumentative disciplinary learning of a socially charged historical issue. Based on the assumption that historical issues are organized as narratives in collective and personal memory we conceptualize historical learning as narrative change. Therefore we seek to compare the influence of these two learning settings in terms of narrative characteristics and narrative change. Assuming a socially charged historical issue would arouse relevant social identities we look for social identity influences on narrative change. We sought to explore whether and how social identity and disciplinary practice interact (or counteract) in bringing about narrative change. Historical learning is not just a matter of narrative construction but also of reasoning and judgment. We therefore chose to compare the two settings' learning outcomes on the basis of argumentative level. We hypothesized that:

1. Historical argumentative learning activity will foster more changes in narrative and in the argumentative level of texts than regular textbook learning.

2. Narratives written following historical argumentative learning activity will be less influenced by prior narratives, standpoints, and firmly held views than narratives written following regular textbook learning.

3. Social identity (here, in an historical issue involving interethnic relations we refer to ethnic identity) will be aroused during argumentation and influence narrative change patterns. Group

differences in students' narrative will reflect social identity

needs, depicting authors' in-group more favorably.

Our three hypotheses are reflected in the kind of argumentative design we adopted. As it will be shown further on, we chose a school context that encouraged ethnic dialogue, and the argumentative design fostered accommodation of divergent views in a reasoned way.

Participants

64 twelfth grade students (38 males, 26 females) in an urban, non-selective, academically oriented high school participated in the study. 31 participants were *Mizrahi* – descendants of Jewish immigrants from North African and Middle Eastern Moslem countries. 33 students were *Ashkenazi* – descendants of (or themselves) Jewish immigrants from Christian countries[i]. Most of the participants were ranked by their teachers as average to high achievers in history. The average score in the history baccalaureate exam at the Golan School corresponds to an American B+, this being about 10% above the country's average. Due to restrictions by the Ministry of Education on research, participation was voluntary, a starting point which made random sampling impossible. Participants knew one of the researchers, a history teacher in the school who had not taught them before. They were invited to participate in an "interesting research project about Israeli history". As an additional incentive, a small sum of money was donated towards their end of year party, per each participant who completed the historical learning task.

The Golan School is situated in a working class neighborhood of a large Israeli city, populated mainly by *Mizrahi* inhabitants. The neighborhood was one of the more intensive loci of social-ethnic *Mizrahi* protest in the 70's and 80's and the tradition of protest has persisted into the new millennium. Such protest is directed against the

Ashkenazi institutional elites, and especially towards the Israeli Labor Party (the governing party during the first three decades of the State of Israel, led by figures such as David Ben Gurion — the first Israeli prime minister — and more recently by the late Yitzhak Rabin). Thus, most of the students enlisted from within the neighborhood are from low socio-economic status *Mizrahi* families with. Their religious identity tends towards conservative-traditional and their political affiliation right wing , hostile to the Israeli left as represented by the Labor Party.

At the same time the school manages to attract students of higher socio-economic and educational background from other diverse neighborhoods in the city. These students register in this school due to its comparatively high academic standards and its declared identification with Socialist-Zionist values. Students coming from outside the neighborhood are mostly from middle-class professional or academic *Ashkenazi* families politically affiliated with the Israeli left. The effort to maintain ethnic and socio-economic integration is based upon the school's declared vision of equality of opportunity.

As a result of the above characteristics, the student population in the school is quite diverse and sometimes highly polarized politically, culturally and socially. It is not uncommon to find students whose parents are professors or government officials (usually *Ashkenazi* and secular liberals) studying together with students from families in which both parents are unemployed (most of which are *Mizrahi*, and traditionalist). Such diversity is quite scarce in the Israeli educational scene, which tends towards stratification and differentiation. Still, it is this very diversity which makes the school a representative test case of an encounter resulting in the construction and crystallization of group identities and narratives.

Most, if not all of the *Mizrahi* students in the school are descendants of immigrants of the *Aliya Ha'gdola* (large wave of immigration from North Africa and the Middle East in the 1950's), whose parents studied in an educational system influenced by a melting pot policy of integration. Many of the *Ashkenazi* students are descendants of Israeli pioneers who created the cultural values of that policy. Most of the *Mizrahi* students are aware of the protest that raged in the neighborhood during the 70's against Israeli institutional elites and *Ashkenazi* dominance. Many of the *Ashkenazi* students coming from outside the neighborhood have direct relations to the same institutional elites, and are affiliated with Israel's founding Labor Party. Thus the school may be seen to some extent as embodying the drama of mass immigration through the descendants of its participants.

Procedure

Within this social cultural context, the teaching of the Melting pot policy issue should not be regarded as a detached empirical set up. Once such an issue is introduced as an historical problem it inevitably works also as an educational practice. Historical problem solving in the framework discussed below involves argumentative practices of historical writing, of collective reading of multiple texts, of expression of personal opinions, and of discussion in which you try to elicit the reaching of a consensus. We deemed these practices contributive to the goals of the study, which were to analyze changes within social groups and individual narratives. Open discussion and critical reading of texts is assumed to promote what can be termed "Actively Open-Minded Thinking" (Stanovich & West, 1997) which may enable attitudinal and narrative changes. We expected that the school's tradition of social awareness and debate, and the norms of integration and interaction, would function as a facilitating milieu for these educational practices.

In order to achieve the goals of study, we analyzed and compared the narrative and argumentative characteristics of the students' historical writing before and after coping with a multiple-source historical thinking task and a group discussion. Though narratives are frequently recorded orally, we chose to concentrate on written work. This choice reflects the fundamental place of written narrative in history and in learning history (Harris, 2001; McCarthy-Young & Leinhardt, 1998; Voss & Wiley, 1997). The use of multiple texts from various sources is considered essential both for the development of historical thinking and for argumentative development (Hynd, 1999; Schwarz, 2003). Group discussion after the multiple-sources task was added both as a way to promote argumentation and to motivate students to use the information from the sources to back a standpoint (see Kuhn, Shaw, & Felton, 1997; Schwarz, 2003). The task centered upon the controversial issue of the melting pot policy of immigration absorption during the great immigration to Israel in the 1950's. We hypothesized the great immigration period to be central and vital in Israeli collective memory in general, and for the two main Israeli Jewish ethnic groups, *Ashkenazi* and *Mizrahi* in particular. Thus students could be counted upon to express an opinion about the issue, even before formally studying it. The fact that *Mizrahi* and *Ashkenazi* collective memories of the great immigration and its absorption tend to differ, made this an apt sphere for the exploration of differing social group narratives' influence on historical thinking (Kimmerling, 2001; Shenhav, 2002; Zameret, 2002). The use of multiple texts from varying sources on the melting pot policy demonstrates disciplinary practice and opens the scene for contesting interpretations. A classroom incorporating different social groups affected differentially by the policy has then the potential to offer differing narratives and adopt different evidence. The combination of differing sources and differing views should promote discussion and

lead to a meaningful learning experience, which as mentioned above we expect to result in changes of narrative.

Research design

First composition: all participants were asked to individually write[ii] a short composition in response to 3 questions regarding the "melting pot"— the cultural absorption policy implemented by Israeli authorities during *Ha'aliyah Ha'gdolah*- the great wave of Jewish immigration of the 1950's

Question 1: "What do you know about the "melting pot" policy and the "standard education" institutions during the absorption of the great immigration of the 1950's?"

Question 2: Did the immigrants progress and adapt with the help of the "melting pot" policy and the "standard education" institutions, or were they damaged and discriminated against because of them?

Question 3: "Were the "melting pot" policy and the "standard education" institutions an essential step which contributed to the construction of the State of Israel, or were they a destructive compulsive action?"

. The first question probed general knowledge on the issue. The second and third questions concerned the attitude of the participants towards the impact of the policy on immigrants and on the State respectively.

Textbook learning – the control group

Following the completion of the first composition, researchers read aloud to 34 of the students a summary sheet about the Melting Pot issue (see Appendix b). The summary sheet contained the same information about the Melting Pot issue as the sources leaflet (see below) including a pro-con table about the policy's consequences. Students were asked to write their answers to the 3

questions regarding the Melting Pot policy <u>again</u>, this time with the summary sheet at their disposal. This writing task we termed final narrative which was to be compared to the experimental group final narrative. This served to distinguish between the effects of "normal history learning" a structured encounter with authoritative information (similar to textbook reading) and the effect of the historical argumentative learning task. The short intervention imitated the comparative span of time students would invest in the subject in normal learning situation.

argumentative activity- the experimental group

29 students were invited to participate in the historian's trade: to explore the issue critically, by comparing and evaluating multiple perspectives. They completed the following phases:

A. **The historical sources task**: A researcher read aloud a series of conflicting historical sources accompanied by questions (see Appendices c and d). Each participant was taught how to evaluate the reliability of historical sources (see Appendix e). The participant then reread the sources and answered questions requesting him to rate and evaluate sources' reliability and to explain what they learned from them. The rating of the source is a claim as to its reliability, while the explanation is a reason, a backing usually involving a warrant, the basic elements of argumentation. Thus this activity provokes a dialectical argumentative evaluation.

B. **Group discussion**: All the students participated in a discussion about the Melting Pot cultural absorption policy in groups of two or three on

the basis of the question sheet and sources. They were explicitly asked

to use the sources they had evaluated.

C. **Final Narrative**: All participants were asked to write a short

composition in response to the original 3 questions regarding the

"melting pot" cultural absorption policy. This time they were explicitly

asked to use the sources they had evaluated.

These three phases are obviously of an argumentative nature. We view these

phases as part of on integrative intervention, modeled upon the disciplinary

community of practice. Just as in the history discipline work based on sources

is brought to the criticism of peers and open controversy, so do the students.

[Table 1 about here]

Analysis of the data

For the purposes of this study, data from the first, second, and final

compositions (phases 1, 2 and 5) were analyzed. We chose different measures of the

texts students wrote to check our three hypotheses. The *stand* and the *plot scheme*

measures expressed in the compositions served to identify changes in message and

and form of narratives. The *certainty* measure refers to the second hypothesis as to the

influence of strongly held views and hints as to the presence of collective memory. In

addition to these narrative measures, we used the *argumentative level of texts* as a

measure of learning in the experimental group. Two independent coders coded texts

according to the categories listed below. Inter-rater correlation was above 0.85, and

disagreements were resolved in discussions.

Narrative characteristics

Stand, or the attitude towards the melting pot policy, was analyzed as a way of identifying a goal the narrative is directed at achieving – convincing a reader of the author's standpoint (Toolan, 1988). We view this standpoint as a measure of attitude and not just an opinion, as it is directed towards an issue that still commands commitment and action in contemporary Israeli society. The standpoint was analyzed according to two separate sub-variables based on the answers to the two different questions on attitudes about the issue (questions 2 and 3). The results of these analyses were then combined to provide a coding of the general attitude towards the melting pot policy. This was done in order to facilitate the representation of attitudes that were sometimes complex or ambivalent. All attitude variables were discrete and hierarchically sequenced in direct relation to the official narrative.

The first standpoint sub-variable, impact on immigrants, was coded as (1) con, (2) mixed or (3) pro, for the answer to question 2 (Did the immigrants progress and adapt thanks to the melting pot policy and the standard education institutions, or were they harmed and discriminated against by it?). A claim such as "the immigrants were discriminated against by the policy" was coded as (1) (con). "The policy helped the immigrants enter into Israeli culture but it destroyed their identity" was coded as (2) (mixed). "It helped them learn the language and get jobs" was coded as (3) (pro). Texts evading the question were coded as a missing value for this variable.

The second stand sub-variable, *Impact on the State of Israel*, was coded as con, mixed or pro, according to the answer to question 3 (Were the melting pot policy and standard education institutions essential steps that contributed to the construction of the State of Israel or a destructive compulsive action?). Claims were coded pro, mixed or con in a similar fashion to the coding of opinions about the impact on immigrants.

Stand towards the melting pot policy combined the two sub-variables, and integrated a general impression from the students' texts. If on both sub-variables the text was coded as con the general attitude was coded as strictly critical (1) (e.g., "the policy harmed the immigrants and was a destructive political takeover creating a rift in the State"). If on one of the variables the text was coded as con and on the other as mixed, it was coded as moderate critical (2) (e.g., "the policy discriminated against immigrants, but also gave them a chance for self-advancement; however it made the State less stable"). If on one of the variables the text was coded as pro and on the other as mixed it was coded as moderate favorable (3) (e.g., "the policy discriminated immigrants, but also gave them a chance for self-advancement, however it was the only way to unify the nation). If on both the variables the text was coded as pro it was coded as strictly favorable (4) (e.g., "the policy gave immigrants the basics with which to enter into Israeli society, and also made the State more unified"). In cases in which both variables were mixed or opposed, additional textual hints (such as pejorative descriptors) were used to categorize the responses.

Plot scheme. Three plot schemes detected in a former study (Goldberg, Porat, & Schwarz, 2006) were used for the coding: "senseless sacrifice" (1), "tragedy of errors" (2), and "birth pangs of redemption" (3). The first plot scheme focuses on the suffering and mishaps of the immigrants without mentioning the expected or achieved positive outcomes, or the intentions of the veteran absorbing society. The second plot scheme maintains a narrative somewhat more empathetic towards the absorbing institutions and the veteran Israelis. In this scheme the absorbers' good intentions are opposed to the negative outcomes of their efforts. The third plot scheme depicts the policy as essential and its outcomes as beneficial although involving some unavoidable sacrifices.

The plot schemes were ordered according to their degree of similarity to the official narrative of Israeli history textbooks (see Goldberg et al, 2006). The higher number the more similar.

Certainty. Certainty can be related both to attitude and to narration. It can represent both the strength and determination of an attitude and the type of narrator (omniscient/ unsure). In the first respect it expresses strength of attitude and confidence of thought, which is also usually associated with the hold of "self evident" collective memory. In the second respect certainty may have some implications for argumentation. The omniscient or unsure narrator in a text may represent an absolutist or relativist stance respectively, towards knowledge in general. Such an approach to knowledge is considered by researchers as a key factor in argumentation skills (Kuhn, 2001).

In this study certainty was not measured by Lickert scales but according to linguistic style. Thus expressions of doubt or of lack of knowledge (e.g. "I don't know, it's hard to tell") resulted in coding a text as low certainty (0). A neutral narration of events with the use of qualifiers (quite, most, some, a bit), and a qualification of opinion such as "it seems, in my opinion" was coded as moderate certainty (1). Superlatives, adjectives implying certainty, or emphases of certainty (e.g. terrible, greatest, surely, of course) were considered indicators of high certainty (2).

Argumentative characteristics: the argumentative level of texts

As products, texts can be analyzed to assess the argumentative level of writing. This assessment should not be confused with the general argumentative skills of the students that write them. We did not expect a change in students' argumentative *skills* during one historical problem solving task, but rather a change in argumentative level

of texts: we expected the texts to reflect the exposure to diverse perspectives and critical debate through an increase in the number of perspectives, the information brought to support them and to decide between them. Coding was based on a scale for evaluating the argumentative level of texts (Mani, 2000), elaborating on Kuhn's epistemological predispositions (1991). This tool records both the acknowledgement of alternative perspectives and the extent to which the arguer's standpoint is supported by evidence based reasoning. Separate coding was performed for the answers to each of the questions 2 (impact on immigrants) and 3 (impact on the State) based on the following criteria (all examples taken from students' compositions):

Level 1- Unwarranted: unsupported claim/s. ("the policy damaged immigrants")

Level 2- One sided: an argument containing claims and reasons for only one point of view. ("This education was discriminatory because some cultures dominated the melting pot while others were considered negative")

Level 3- Multiplist: an argument containing claims and reasons for opposing points of view or stand, without deciding between them. ("The immigrants benefited from the policy since it enabled them to get better jobs but on the other hand the policy hurt the immigrants since it demanded the abandoning of original cultures.")

Level 4- Decided: an argument containing claims and reasons for opposing points of view, and a declared but arbitrary choice between them: ("Education contributed a lot to the immigrants and united the people but also hurt and discriminated against immigrants. The Government gave them rights and still they felt discriminated against. But on the whole the melting pot policy helped the immigrants no matter how each side takes it.")

Level 5- Evaluativist: an argument containing claims and reasons for opposing points of view, and a choice between them, based on evaluation and confutation of the stand

not taken.("it is an expression of discrimination, because they treated oriental cultures as inferior (according to Hakak and Zameret)…the policy could have served equality under existing conditions (because it gave them a starting point) but the point I have to make is that equality must be achieved without erasing certain cultures like they did").

While the coding scheme rests on argumentative theory, it should be noted that the higher levels of argumentative writing coincide with what are considered to be higher levels of historical explanation, namely the identification of interrelated multiple causes.

Results

Influence of social identity and activity type on narrative characteristics

For plot, which is a non parametric variable, we tested change in the frequency of plot schemes between first and final compositions through cross tabulation using a $\_^2$ McNemar's exact test[iii]. To explore the interaction of time, ethnicity and activity over plot we split the sample by activity type and ethnicity. This revealed a significant result (McNemar's exact p= .022) in the argumentative activity group among Ashkenazi students' narratives. 14 of 17 (76.5%) of these final narratives feature a different plot than the first narrative. No such frequency of change appeared in another group[iv]. A significant effect was also detected for ethnicity as McNemar's test proved significant (p<0.01) for the whole Ashkenazi sample. Here 62.5% of narratives feature a change of plot scheme. The frequency of plot scheme changes in the argumentative group was higher than in the control group (18 of 28 (64%) compared with 12 of 32 (37.5%)). The result of a $\_^2$ test using the control group's final plot scheme frequency as expected frequency for the experimental group was

x^2=13.94, p=.001, meaning the two groups significantly differ in the pattern of change.

As we have seen, a significant narrative change has taken place among Ashkenazi students' narratives in the argumentative activity group. It is worth noting its pattern. As shown in table 3, Ashkenazi students' narratives feature in general a change in a direction more positive towards the melting pot policy. 11 of 17 (64.7%) Ashkenazi students' final narratives are more positive than their first narratives while only 2 (11.8%) changed in the opposite direction. In Mizrahi students' narratives the pattern is scattered with slightly more changes in a direction negative or critical towards the melting pot policy (27% negative change, 18% positive change)

[Table 3 about here]

total	pain of redemption	tragedy of errors	senseless sacrifice	Final \ First			
10 58.8%	**3** **17.6%**	**7** **41.2%**		senseless sacrifice		Ashkenazi students' plot schemes	
6 35.6%	**1** **5.9%**	3 17.6%	**2** **11.8%**	tragedy of errors			
1 5.9%	1 5.9%			pain of redemption			
17	5 29.4%	10 58.8%	2 11.8%	total			
6 54.5%		**2** **18.2%**	4 36.4%	useless sacrifice		Mizrahi students' plot schemes	
3 27.3%		2 18.2%	**1** **9.1%**	tragedy of errors			
2 18.2%		**1** **9.1%**	**1** **9.1%**	pain of redemption			
11		5 45.5%	6 54.5%				

Table 3 : cross tabulation of first and final plot schemes of students in the argumentative activity group, according to ethnic identity.(change frequencies in bold)

A more positive plot scheme depicts the (Ashkenazi) Israeli veterans, initiators of the Melting pot policy, more positively. Such a change may be seen as beneficial for the

group image of the Ashkenazi students. These results seem to confirm hypothesis 1, that more narrative changes will occur in the argumentative activity group and 3, namely that social identity will influence narrative changes in a direction beneficial to in-group image.

Influence of social identity and activity type on argumentative level

A 2*2*2 mixed method repeated measures ANOVA test was performed for argumentative level with activity type and ethnicity as between-subjects factors, and time (first and final compositions) as within-subjects factor revealing significant main effects of activity group and time over argumentative level of writing. (F[59]=7.55, p= .008, $\_^2$= .11 and F[59]=6.57, p= .013, Wilk's $\_$=0.90 respectively). There was no significant difference between the groups in the primary argumentative level of writing. In the final task the argumentative activity group presented a significantly higher[v] argumentative level of writing than the control group. The whole sample's argumentative level of writing improved. However, only in the argumentative activity group the rise in argumentative level of writing was significant[vi]. Here argumentative level rose from a multiplist mean level (M=3.48, SD = 1.21) in the initial narratives to a decided mean level (M=4.14, SD = 1.22) in the second narratives. This result confirms hypotheses 1, namely that change will be more pronounced in the argumentative activity group. We checked whether primary argumentative writing level predicted final argumentative writing level using linear regression.

No significant effect was revealed for ethnicity.

Change, prior narrative and argumentative activity

Our second hypothesis was that Narratives written following argumentative activity will be less influenced by prior stands and narratives than in the control group. To check it we used $\_^2$ Sommer's d test (checking whether row categories predict column

categories in a table) in the crosstabulation of first and final plot schemes. Splitting the sample by activity type, results show that in the control group prior plot schemes significantly predict final plot schemes (Sommer's d=.58 approximate p<0.001) while in the argumentative activity no such relation exists. The result supports hypothesis 2 that in the argumentative activity group final narratives will be less influenced by prior stand and narrative characteristics.

To appreciate this change we should note the group's starting and end points which served as the general consensual context within which it takes place. The whole sample[vii] started out with quite a strong bias which appeared quite strongly in the argumentative activity group. Most of the primary narratives in the argumentative activity group (59%) were coded as "senseless sacrifice"-the plot scheme depicting Melting Pot policy most negatively. Another 31% were coded as the negative empathetic "tragedy of errors" and only 10% in the more positive "pains of redemption". Such pattern is quite divergent from a normal distribution as $\_^2$ test results show($\_^2$=10.21, p=.006).

It is worth noting also the patterns and changes in certainty. The whole sample started out with a comparatively high degree of certainty ($\_^2$=23.47, p<.001) as 55% of narratives were coded as highly certain. Such a result also appeared in the argumentative activity group ($\_^2$=14.60, p=.001), where 66% (17 of 29) of narratives were coded as highly certain. Most of these highly certain narratives were coded as the negative "senseless sacrifice" and negative empathetic "tragedy of errors" (41% and 21% of the group respectively).

The final results show a different picture, though not an even dispersion of plot schemes ($\_^2$=6.69, p=.035). As a result of the greater frequency of changes in the argumentative activity group a more normal "Gauss" bell pattern appeared.

Consensus now centered on the negative empathetic "tragedy of errors" (55% of the narratives). Apparently, even the degree of certainty itself changed more in the argumentative activity group. Cross tabulation shows that in the argumentative activity group over half of final narratives show a different level of certainty than in the first narratives. Half of the certain narratives decreased in certainty while 63% of the low and uncertain narratives increased. In the control group only 35% of the final narratives feature change in certainty, and only 25% of the certain narratives decrease certainty. We view these results as supporting hypotheses 2, that final narratives in the experimental group would be less influenced by prior narrative. Findings emphasize change in the argumentative activity group occurred inspite of starting point which should have inhibited it.

Similar and stronger results appeared for the relation of prior stand to final narrative plot schemes. Stand in the first narrative predicted significantly final plot scheme in the control group (adjusted R2=0.45, p<0.001) but not in the argumentative activity group. This is worth noting since prior stand was highly and significantly related with prior plot scheme (stand predicting but not predicted by plot[viii]). In the argumentative activity group stand was also significantly inversely related with certainty (r=-.42, p=.02), the negative stand significantly more certain[ix]. The certain and negative prior stand was frequently held in the argumentative activity group (the combination comprising 47% of the cases).

 According to persuasion theory assumptions about confirmation bias this starting point should have limited changes in narratives. A strongly held stand should have led to entrenchment and rejection or evasion of information and opinions contradicting it. Thus an expected outcome would be a stability or enhancement of stand and the narrative characteristics related to it. In such case prior stand should have a strong

hold on final narrative characteristics resulting in a significant correlation and predictive power. The fact that no such correlation appeared in the group goes against the expectation for confirmation bias. Indeed, most of the certain negative prior stand holders (7 of 13, 54%) present positive change of plot in their final narratives. The result supports hypothesis 2 that in the argumentative activity group final narratives will be less influenced by prior stand and narrative characteristics.

Qualitative interpretation of narrative examples

Some examples may help to illustrate the changes that students underwent. We present excerpts from the initial and final compositions. Yoav, son of veteran *Ashkenazi* professionals, started out with a fairly representative account:

> The aim was to unify the people around the Zionist ideal… it was an accelerated, artificial process which, along with solidarity of goals, created many difficulties for the immigrants (for example outlawing Jewish Diaspora languages)…but did not prevent the expected rift between the ethnic groups…it was supposed to create equality, but actually the veterans gained an advantage over the immigrants…the whole idea was implemented because it served the political ambitions of the Labor Party.

His final composition is quite different:

> The results: a unified society capable of defending itself and serving the Jewish people. In my opinion the immigrants were damaged a bit (in the long run) but advanced a lot. It was a positive process, in my view, and more than that –- an essential one. In the long run it was a painful but fruitful process. In my opinion the political takeover was inevitable. Facing the waves of mass immigrations the leaders of the State had no choice but to create the basis for a developed strong State by instituting a comparatively European *Ashkenazi* mentality (which proved to fit this [goal])

This transformation is in striking contrast with the change that Aya, a daughter of a working class *Mizrahi* family underwent. She started with:

> In my opinion the "melting pot" was helpful for the immigrants because they integrated into the State…in my opinion this education was not discriminatory because it sought to shape everyone as a *Sabra* [Israeli born Jew] to create unity and equality…In my opinion education in the spirit of the melting pot could only contribute to the State by creating unity among everyone.

 Aya sums up in her final composition:

> Education in the spirit of the melting pot has been helpful and damaging at the same time for immigrants, but mostly caused prejudice…parents were made to register their children in this educational system but it had positive outcomes: Israeli values of language, culture and military service. The part that hurt them was the creation of conflicting views between parents and children and the demand to forget about the immigrants' origins and past. In my opinion, based on Ben-Gurion's words, education in the spirit of the "melting pot" was implemented to promote his government and its interests, still, it can be seen that some efforts were made for the welfare of the State. The destructive part is …that all this can raise feelings of anger, bitterness and a wish to take revenge on the State or destroy its government.

We can see that Yoav started out with a clear stance against the melting pot policy, assessing its impact as negative both for the state and for the immigrants. He developed a plot scheme focusing on the difficulties and the demands for senseless sacrifice which the policy imposed on immigrants. For him the sacrifice was senseless because it did not lead to unity, and because it mainly served the goals of the ruling party. In contrast, his last composition stresses the positive outcomes of the policy, though not ignoring its toll, and uncovers a "birth pangs of redemption" plot scheme, in which the veterans and their political interests remain in the background.

Aya, on the other hand, starts with a redemption scheme, a naïve depiction of an idealized integration process, in which even difficulties are omitted. Her standpoint, based on her appreciation of the policy's impact on the State and the immigrants, is clearly positive. She ends however, in quite a different manner. Her poised and reasoned second account presents both positive and negative aims and outcomes, but develops a heavily critical stand towards the policy. The interests of the veteran political leaders are brought to the fore based on historical sources. She rejects a "tragedy of errors" plot scheme, while not completely abandoning the "birth pangs of redemption" acknowledgement of the necessity of the policy.

It is worthwhile noting that in Yoav's writing, the change of plot scheme from "senseless sacrifice" to "birth pangs of redemption" seems to be accompanied by a

rise in historical understanding. His first narrative centered on action and outcome, with a generalized decontextualized political motive. In his final composition he situates the policy's motivation within the context of mass immigration and nation building, building its apologetics but not ignoring its Realpolitik side. Aya's final composition also shows a similar transition; her first composition features generalized aims, undistinguished from action or outcome. She proceeds to create a complex of conflicting consequences and a contextualized, document-based intentionality.

It is also interesting to note the changes in degree of certainty. Yoav's first composition is written in an almost authoritative style, without a single qualifier, stressing what "actually" happened. His final composition includes expressions such as "in my opinion" and "a bit", which demonstrate more reserve. Aya's first composition, on the other hand, started each sentence with "in my opinion". Her final composition features only one such qualifier and even here the opinion is clearly based on evidence, while the impact on immigrants is described in certain, factual terms. Regardless of the differences in opinion, we may detect here the inverse patterns of change in certainty presented in the results; certain narratives decreased in certainty while low and uncertain narratives increased. This pattern higlights from another direction results showing final narrative was less influenced by prior characteristics (hypothesis 2). It seems argumentative activity served to undermine the more assured students' certainty in their preconceptions, thus allowing for change.

How does such a narrative and argumentative change take place? A full analysis and discussion of the evidence evaluation and the group discussion protocols is still in preparation. However, we believe the following excerpts may give a good impression of the processes of argumentation and joint construction of knowledge and their relation to change in a student's writing.

Tara is an Ashkenazi student from a middle class family, a member of a Zionist Socialist youth movement (characteristics quite similar to those of the Melting Pot policy initiators). Referring to the melting pot policy in her initial composition she writes:

> It is a destructive action since it culturally and economically oppresses a stratum of immigrants – a thing which will influence in a destructive way the construction of Israel (to this very day) and will create a feeling of deprivation and further rift. (It is not just that cultural gaps existed in immigration itself, the melting pot further emphasized these gaps by saying one culture is better than the other)

As we see, this composition features a strictly negative stand and quite a one sided argument. No benevolent intentions are ascribed to the initiators, and the sacrifice and oppression of the immigrant is left aimless, illuminating a plot of "senseless sacrifice".

In the historical source evaluation task Tara seems to evaluate source reliability quite critically. She is significantly more critical than her peers towards sources both supporting and denunciating the Melting pot policy[1]. She works according to the disciplinary norms demonstrated in the short historical "drill" she was given and quite independently of her prior stand. For example, she rates low (2 on a scale of 5) a parliamentary speech critical towards the Melting Pot policy close to her opinion. The reasoning behind the rating is based both on identification of manipulative inflammatory rhetoric, and on context of creation, both emphasized in the "historical evaluation drill". She also attempts a construction of motives. "Politicians usually

---

[1] Her mean source ratings (3.44) compared to the full sample (M=3.66 SD=0.34) in a one-sample t-test produced significant effect; T[63]=5.02, p<0.001. The difference in her rating of critical and supportive sources was the same as the mean difference of her peers (M=0.35 SD=0.67, in favor of the critical sources) , producing no significant effect.

have an interest they try to forward by polarization, that's why there's an exaggeration of facts… (The speech was in a public debate)". However, when looking closely at what she notes as worth learning from each source, an influence of her prior stand may be detected.

In four cases Tara refers to what could be learned from sources using the assertion "indeed" (the word in Hebrew may also mean "as I have said"). In all these cases the information she prefers to collect is negative towards the Melting pot policy. "Indeed there was a compulsion…indeed there was a takeover by the Labor party…indeed there was a cutting away of children from their parents because of the education…indeed there was certain approach of teachers towards the students-causing them to feel inferiority". She chose to note as worth learning only two pieces of information positive towards the policy, of these one she qualified "advancement and unity (but the question remains- at what price)". Thus it seems Tara processed the sources in a way which may have enhanced her prior opinion.

Tara brings this enhanced initial negative stand into her line of argument in the group discussion. There however, she seems to somewhat change it through encounter with other perspectives. Tara discusses the effects and motives of the Melting pot policy with Naan and Gadi[x], two boys from her class, in preparation for their final writing task. As mentioned in the procedure section, the group was instructed to argue on the basis of the historical sources they learnt. In order to promote argumentation, they were asked to try and convince each other and to reach an agreed conclusion. A bit more versed in history subject, Naan undertook the facilitator role. Following his introduction Tara opens the conversation with emotion:

> T: I think, like, the Melting Policy's intention was really important. I
> really understand where it came from- after all people came her with no

a bit of connection, that's why the idea of "let's do something uniform,

for everyone" is a terribly good idea when you want to found a

state…the practical problem was that there was no equality of

cultures…like, they took only one culture.

N: which culture?

T: Ashkenazi [European Jewish] culture!

N: they tried do give them the culture of the veterans. The culture that

was here before the great immigration began.

T: OK, but once you got new people coming in, like…people from new

cultures- you should adapt yourself to the new people too. You can't

expect new immigrants to adapt themselves all the time to the culture

that exists in the country…

T: the problem is with how you define the state. That's your problem,

that your values really were only western values.

N: because back then there were no pluralist values. It means they only

tried to do what they knew, the culture they had here in the country.

T: right, that's what I say… it's terrible, in the end- it's implications

weren't for the better. Look, it gave rise to two terribly deep rifts in

Israeli society…which, I don't know, they may bring an end to us

…

In this excerpt from the first part of the conversation Tara clearly states the opinion

she brought forth in her initial composition. Both the idea of cultural oppression and

the link to present day rifts feature strongly here. Through Naan's response she

encounters the idea of context. Naan points to the anachronism of expecting

pluralistic values in the era discussed. However, Tara seems to avoid or

misunderstand it. In fact, she takes his proposition that "back then there were no pluralist values" as a sign of agreement with her criticism of the early Israeli society. But this assured position will gradually change through the discussion.

In the next phase of the conversation it is Tara who brings up the issue of context, through her distinction between short and long term consequences. This comes up as the students discuss the impact of education on immigrant children.

> G: but the kids weren't educated yet, that's why I don't think it bothered them.
>
> N: what do you mean "the kids"?
>
> G: the kids, at six. They – they didn't have all that tradition yet.
>
> N: but they got education at home too.
>
> T: that's why it cut off the kids from their [parents]
>
> G: right…that's why I say, that the adults-it may have hurt them and they felt their culture was destructed, but the kids- it could be it did integrate them…
>
> T: look, it wasn't bad at the time, but there's someone here. Don't remember his name – I don't have the energy to run through the pages- that forsaw in three generation there would be a great frustration. And that's really what you've got now…

It is well worth noting that Tara makes two refinements of her argumentation, both in response to the challenge by Gadi. The first is the distinction between impact "at the time" and "what you've got now". This idea of context and perspective is quite essential to elaborated historical thinking. It legitimates the historian's authority to ascribe meaning and evaluate outcomes. On the other hand, this distinction also acknowledges the historical protagonists' view. The

second refinement is the reference to evidence. Though this is done with emphasized laziness (perhaps in order to maintain a "cool" image) it should not be mistaken. The phrase is quite an accurate citation from source 7, an historian criticizing the melting pot, himself citing the prophecy of a Mizrahi author from source 6.

Now, while this elaboration of her thinking seems to serve Tara to confute her peer's argument, it also opens her to Naan's repeated criticism.

> N: just a minute then, Tara- what you say is they should have done it …like standard education should have talked more also about?---
>
> T: Pluralism
>
> N: pluralism?
>
> T: yeah
>
> N: this seems to me out of touch, because the time, in the world at large, it ain't a time of pluralism. There's no such thing as pluralism. It's not like today. Like, today, you look at it from a completely different perspective, of integration
>
> T: right, right, but I can say these things because I'm from a point in time of the future and not from---
>
> N: the question is whether standard education in the immigrant camps contributed to equality and benefited the immigrants or damaged and discriminated them back then! Not like from ah [your?] perspective. From their perspective!
>
> T: I know, I don't know. It's a terribly thin ice. I can't tell you exactly if it more contributed or more hurt. Because it contributed very much to

state unity, but hurt very much, since it's a fact this public feels
oppressed.

While Tara tries to present both her pluralism and her "future" perspective as advantages, Naan points to these as a weakness. He refers both to the "methodological" fault of using an anachronistic perspective and concept, and to the deviance from the assigned task. It is not clear yet from the discussion whether Tara actually changes her stand, but it is quite clear she is less decided. She acknowledges Naan's criticism, and her awareness of the problematic character of historical judgment comes to the fore. The adjective "terrible" formerly referred to the Melting Pot policy and its implications. However, now it describes the "thin ice" of trying to evaluate it –of telling whether "it more contributed or more hurt".

As we see later- Tara goes on to criticize her own former concept of pluralism.

> G: that's what I said from the beginning` the idea was good but it turned
> out crap.
>
> T: but look, on the other hand, I don't know how could they do it
> differently…to all these people who say it was possible to do a
> pluralistic education at that era- it was impossible to do a pluralistic
> education at that era.

This somewhat self ironic statement also seems to be a move toward consensus aiding arrival at the designated end of the assignment- the joint statement.

> T: so, what's the conclusion?---
>
> N: about the question---

T: it both created equality on the one hand, and it hurt and created discrimination on the other hand….it's a very essential conclusion [ironically?].

Tara's declaration of the two sided group conclusion is repeated her final writing task. Furthermore, the distinction between "a point in time of the future" and the "present" of historical action seems to echo in Tara's final composition:

The melting pot policy was an expression of discrimination since one culture was considered better than the other, in the long run there was discrimination and immigrants were harmed. However…the standard education was essential because from the present point they couldn't think of another way to integrate the immigrants in the country- a pluralistic education wouldn't have created unity.

What is the meaning of Tara's use of "present point"? We tended to interpret it not as reference to her present but as reference to the time of the decision. If so, then here, at the end of the full argumentative process, she shows empathy towards the actions of historical agents. While holding on to her initial opinion, she also legitimizes their perspectives. This stance incorporates Naan's insight about anachronistic perspective and judgmental hindsight.

 Tara's final composition presents a more elaborated historical thinking. She uses the notion of long and short run consequences. Further more, she employs empathy and the idea of perspective to make sense of the actions of historical figures. The composition also features an interesting development in the level of argumentative writing, from one-sided "supported" level of Tara's first

composition to a Multiplist two sided level. This is done through repeating the initial criticism of the policy and adding a reasoned argument in favor of its organ- the Standard Education institutions. In fact, Tara even adds the criticism of the line of argumentation she held to in the discussion- rejecting her notion of pluralistic education. This again seems to us to express the influence of encounter with her peers, especially Naan's forthright attack against the use of the term.

Discussion

Though the size of our sample and the complexity of procedure may avoid decisive conclusions, findings shed some light on our research questions.

The historical argumentative activity of source evaluation and group discussion seems to have facilitated changes in narrative and a rise in argumentative level of writing. These changes appeared significantly more than in the control group. This is notably the result of the design and not just the content of the task, since the summary sheet did also contain contradictory evidence. Evidence presented in a form which could support both different narratives and elaborated arguments.

As exemplified in the qualitative interpretation students seem to have used information gathered in the source evaluation to argue in the group discussion. Students also elaborated their arguments and historical understanding during discussion, challenging and acknowledging peers' ideas. Ideas put forward in the discussion and source evaluation resonate in the final narrative. Thus our first hypotheses, that more narrative changes and argumentative improvement will occur in the argumentative group seems supported by the results. Now, it is worth noting not just the frequency of change, but also its relation the starting point of learning, to prior narrative characteristics.

Narrative changes occurred within the context of comparatively strongly held preconceptions, and in directions unpredicted by prior narrative. We see the results from the first writing task as attesting to a strong preconceived narrative, bolstered by group consensus. A high degree of certainty and consensus may show a historical narrative conforms to a dominant collective memory, usually taken as self evident. Elsewhere we have analyzed the dominant "senseless sacrifice" collective memory narrative, quite frequent in Israeli media and public sphere (Goldberg et al, 2006).

This narrative, depicting negatively the great immigration absorption and especially the Melting Pot policy and the Ashkenazi Israeli veterans was also dominant among students. Ashkenazi students held to such negative primary narrative plot (contradicting group esteem needs) in the same proportion as Mizrahi students. This attests to its strength as dominant memory narrative and to its perceived self-evidence. As one of the participants writing a negative narrative noted "everyone knows that's how it happened". Such grand coherent historical Narratives" are quite hard to criticize or change (Shemilt, 2000). In this context the occurrence of narrative change can be interpreted as a loosening of he hold of dominant collective memory. We see the critical encounter with diverse historical sources and opinions as facilitating factor in undermining this hold.

According to persuasion theory, prior stands held with high certainty tend to lead to entrenchment and confirmation bias (Nickerson, 1998; Petty, Briñol & Tormala, 2002). Such a starting point should have served then to stabilize prior narratives and limit change. This makes the occurrence of narrative change all the more notable. Many of the changes occurred in a direction positive towards the melting pot policy, contrary to the dominant negative prior narrative.Many of these positive changes occurring following a highly certain negative plot scheme. As we have shown

certainty decrease in the final narrative of many of the highly certain primary narratives. . We may assume that change in certainty of the more assured resulted from the encounter with conflicting sources and opinions and facilitated change. These phenomena go along with results showing prior narrative did not predict final narrative in the argumentative group while it did in the control group. These results support our second hypotheses that narratives written following historical argumentative learning activity will be less influenced by prior narratives and firmly held views.

We take prior narrative and dominant collective memory to be a main biasing influence and a source of prior beliefs. Thus, we may view students as "reasoning independently of prior belief" and presenting what Stanovich and West (1997) termed "Actively Open-Minded Thinking". As we have seen in the qualitative analysis of a students' argumentative process, during source evaluation students' criticized also sources close to their prior narrative. In group discussion, they started out challenging each other, but ended criticizing also their own preconceptions. We see these phenomena as attesting to the effects of argumentative activity. However, as we shall try to show, there was also another force at work, driving forward narrative change, motivating the use of new information and animating discussion.

Social identity influences and narrative change

As our findings show- narrative change was in the argumentative activity group was also influenced by social identity. Ashkenazi students changed their narratives more often than Mizrahi students. What was the reason this group was more prone to "shake off" dominant collective memory narrative?

We believe the readiness to change dominant narrative had to do with its implications for group and self image. In the prior narratives consensus centered on the "senseless

sacrifice" plot, depicting the (Ashkenazi) Israeli veterans as initiators of a harmful and unjustified policy. Ashkenazi students held to such negative primary narrative plot(contradicting group esteem needs) in the same proportion as Mizrahi students. This attests to its strength as dominant memory narrative and to its perceived self-evidence. According to Doosje et al. (2003), a negative image of their in-group's past is perceived as negative self image for the Ashkenazi students in the present. Thus, these students had more to gain from a change of narrative. Indeed. this change was mainly towards a more positive and empathetic depiction of the Melting Pot policy and the Ashkenazi "founding fathers", apparently bolstering a more positive self image for the Ashkenazi students in the present.

Now, it was in the argumentative activity group that this social motivation was more realized. This seems to be because the encounter with differing versions and sources heightened the ability to criticize and choose information independently. Later, as intergroup contact theory assumes (Pettigrew, 1998); group discussion aroused social identity awareness. This awareness motivated the change of narrative and was facilitated by peer challenge, calling for more elaborate argumentation in using the information.

Change was less frequent among Mizrahi students, occurring, when it did, more often in the opposite- negative direction. This may be because they had less to lose and even something to gain from a negative depiction of the Melting Pot policy which down graded a competing out-group (However, even among Mizrahi students change frequency was still 50% higher in the argumentative activity group[iv]). Thus we may conclude that using argumentation for narrative change, or "the actively open minded" challenge of dominant prior narratives demand a strong motive. Such a motive must

come from beyond the neutral rational goal of thinking critically. In this case, it seems that motive was the protection of group and self esteem.

Educational implications

As we have shown historical argumentative design may foster both argumentative writing and "open-minded" critical thinking, goals sought in many history curricula in democratic countries. It should be noted that such effects are not disconnected from social identity. Educators must always keep in mind that social identity plays a major role in learning. This is reflected both in the preconceptions students bring to class and in the appropriation of knowledge and changes of narrative. Indeed, students apparently used some of the "freedom" from dominant collective memory's hold (facilitated by history learning) to attune to social identity needs. A careful probing of students' initial narratives of an historical issue about to be taught would then prove quite useful. It would serve both to assess expected reaction and appropriation of information, and to prime students' motivation to use information in the construction of their knowledge. Probing of students' initial narratives risks to lead to the contrary, though, if argumentative design is not set to discuss thoroughly issues at stake, to be informed about different narratives and to be trained to evaluate texts supporting them.

We can now return to the issue of "teaching beliefs as well as knowledge" in history. Doubts have been raised as to whether the teaching of beliefs is legitimate and moral, doubts rising from an apprehension that encounters with diverse historical perspectives and critical analysis might have an unsettling effect, eroding students' values and identity. We saw in the present study that students who experience such an encounter preserve their social identity intact, and perhaps even strengthen it. The

fulfillment of social identity needs is achieved through the negotiation of meanings of historical narratives, resulting in a growing complexity of stances and arguments. Therefore the pedagogical approach presented here to help studying changes in narrative and argumentative characteristics, is important per se, since it fosters historical reasoning and preserves social identity. This is not the place to articulate it here, and to stress the numerous pitfalls that endanger its enactment in classrooms. We only showed here that such an approach is possible, and we belief that the potentiality of this pedagogical approach is immense as it may direct intense motivations to positive learning outcomes.

A rich research agenda on argumentation and learning in History

As mentioned several times in this paper, argumentation was treated as a condition, a design thought to invite argumentation. We did not analyze here actual processes that occurred during the evaluation of sources, or the discussion in small groups. Comparing changes in narratives and argumentative level of texts after argumentative activity with characteristics of discourse in evaluation of source and of discussions is important to understand learning processes. Asterhan and Schwarz (2007) have recently initiated such a research direction for students who solved individually a problem on the evolution theory before and after discussing an issue on evolution in dyads. Like in the present study, the discussion was set according to an argumentative design. Asterhan and Schwarz showed that beneficial changes occurred in discussants for which the discussion was dialectic (with more than one argument) rather than one-sided. Qualitative analyses of gaining dyads showed the importance of repartition of arguments among both discussants and juxtaposition of arguments. The analysis of the discussions in small groups and of the evaluation of sources is in our research agenda. We expect that like for discussions in Science, change will be identified in

discussants that participated in dialectic discussions. However, we also expect that discussions in History involve more complicated processes than in Science, at least for 'hot' issues. Anyway, this new direction should shed light of why certain students abandoned their initial narratives while others modified them. In these in-depth analyses, we will hopefully understand more the role of social identity and ethnicity in collective study of history from multiple sources.

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Appendices

Appendix a: Question sheet

The same question sheet was supplied for phases 1, 3 and 4, and served as a

basis both for the writing tasks and for the discussion.

Id no.:_____ (grand)parents' States of origin :_____

The "melting pot" policy and the "standard education" institutions

during the absorption of the great immigration of the 1950's.

For 1st writing task: Please answer according to your general knowledge, do

not worry as to accuracy of details.

For further tasks: please try to support your personal opinion with information

gathered from the sources you have been given.

Question 1: "What do you know about the "melting pot" policy and the "standard

education" institutions during the absorption of the great immigration of the 1950's?"

Question 2: Did the immigrants progress and adapt with the help of the "melting pot"

policy and the "standard education" institutions, or were they damaged and

discriminated against because of them?

Question 3: "Were the "melting pot" policy and the "standard education" institutions

an essential step which contributed to the construction of the State of Israel, or were

they a destructive compulsive action?"

Appendix B

Summary sheet: **Cultural absorption -- the Melting Pot policy.**

Absorbing society's postulate: the immigrant should adapt to Israeli Society's values; productivity, secular-Hebrew culture. Pioneering settlement orientation, loyalty and willingness to fight for the defence of the State.

The educational ideal type: the *Sabra*, the "New-Jew".

Clearest institutional expression of the policy: the "Standard education" institutions in the immigrant camps. Comprehensive, secular socialist education system without parental choice, initiated during 1948-1951. Outside the immigrant camps some parental choice of educational system existed (between general, socialist, national religious and ultra-orthodx schools). However, in every educational system the immigrants were demanded to adapt to the particular absorbing sector and adopt its cultural values.

Official rationale of the policy: the new State needs loyal, well adapted and productive citizens. The immigrants can integrate and advance themselves in society only if they manage to behave like veterans. Jewish existence in exile was culturally and economically defective, and must be erased and rebuilt on the basis of the healthy new Jewish State in the Land of Israel.

Problems	Achievements
Conflict between religious traditions and secular ideology	Spreading of Hebrew culture and high literacy levels.
Conflict between states of origin cultures and Israeli or *Ashkenazi* culture.	Collective symbols and rituals: independence and commemoration days, foot trips, folkdance.
Conflicts between parents' values and views and those of the educators	A strong sense of solidarity and local patriotism.
Low level education systems in immigrant enclaves.	The common school and the army service as people's institutions and cohesive factors.

Appendix C

Source task

An 8-page workbook comprised of conflicting sources dealing with the "melting pot"
policy and the "standard education" institutions

Type, stand and reliability of the sources: 4 of the sources were primary
sources from the 1950's and 4 were secondary sources with more
contemporary perspectives (personal or historical). For each side in the
controversy regarding the ""melting pot" policy and the "standard education"
institutions there were 2 primary and 2 secondary sources. In each such pair of
sources one should be considered more reliable and one less reliable as shown
in table 3.

[Table 3 about here]

Following each source the participant had to answer 2 questions:

1. Grade the reliability of information or declarations in this source from 1
   (unreliable) to 5 (highly reliable) - why did you grade it so?

2. What could you learn from this source about the aims or outcomes of the "melting
   pot" policy and the "standard education" institutions?

Appendix D

Source evaluation coaching exercise:

David Ben-Gurion, a parliamentary speech regarding Yemenite immigrant children's education. Parliamenary protocols, 14//2/1951. The speaker was the leader of the Israeli Workers Party, Prime minister of Israel at the time of the standard education dispute.

We want to adapt the Yemenite immigration to the Israeli manners, the Israeli freedom, the Israeli equality, courage, culture and society…we want the Yemenite youth to produce army officers just like Ashkenazis, scientists, pioneers…to forget where they came from, just like I forgot I'm Polish.

David Ben-Gurion, "A nation's melting pot" In Vision and way. Volume C. Tel Aviv: 1952. pp.256-257. The author was the leader of the Israeli Workers Party, Prime minister of Israel at the time of the standard education dispute.

The burning question is the question of time, pace…America could wait three hundred years for the melting pot to work…not so Israel. **We have no time!** *…we must act quickly towards the integration of exiles…and the radical social economic transformation of the immigrant masses…we can shape them according to the needs of the crucial founding era.*

The "Historian's questions" (Each question was related to a graphic cue on the text which guided the answering of the questions):

1. Who created the source; what were this figure's political, social and cultural affiliations?
2. In which context and to what end was the source created?
3. What is the style of content (e.g. factual-neutral or manipulative-emotional)?
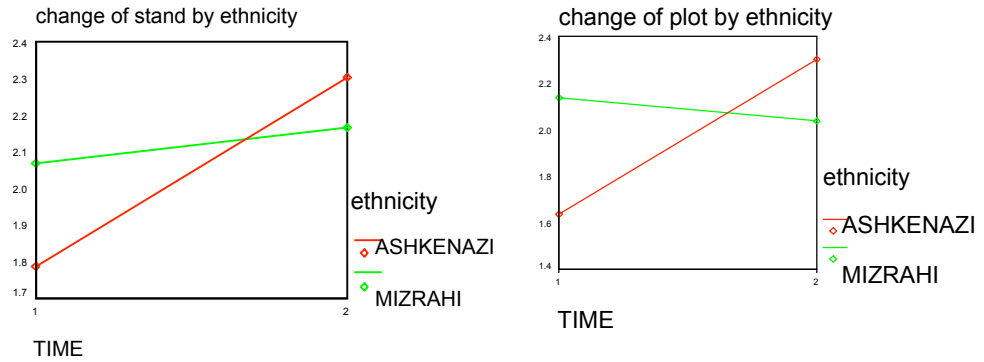4. Does corroborating it with another source raise contradiction or support?

Figure 1: graphs depicting the relative change of stand and plot in Ashkenazi and Mizrahi students' narratives

		gender		
Experimental group		male	female	Total
Historical argumentative (Sources group discussion)	ethnicity ASHKENAZI	10	7	17
	MIZRAHI	8	4	12
	Total	18	11	29
Control (textbook summary)	ethnicity ASHKENAZI	9	7	16
	MIZRAHI	11	8	19
	Total	20	15	35

Table 1: Distribution of gender and ethnicity within experimental groups[2]

	Pro melting pot policy		Against melting pot policy	
	reliable	unreliable	reliable	unreliable
primary	standard education curriculum **source 1**	standard education's director's defense in front of investigation committee **source 4**	investigation committee's report on education in immigrant camps **source 3**	MP's publ provocative speech against governmental educational policy **Source 2**
secondary	Historical research	Personal reminiscences	Historical research	Protest novel about

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[2] The difference in ethnic distribution between experimental groups was checked through $\_^2$ and Mann Whitney tests and found in significant

	About absorption of *Mizrahi* immigrants **Source 8**	of immigrant children's educational experience **source 5**	About the "melting pot" policy **Source 7**	immigrant child educational experience **Source 8**

Table 2: historical sources' stand, type and reliability status

Table 3: cross tabulation of initial and final stand by activity type

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[i] Due to the low frequency of students who reported interethnic origin they were not considered a distinct statistical group. Instead they were asked to which ethnic group they would ascribe themselves if they had to. Interestingly, 6out of 7 ascribed themselves to the *Ashkenazi* ethnic group. Due to the structure of the Israeli educational system, neither Arabs nor orthodox religious Jews participated in the study since these students are educated in separate systems.

[ii] 5 Dyslectic participants dictated their compositions to a researcher or a tape recorder

[iii] based on frequency of changes regardless of direction, counting cases above and below diagonal axis in the crosstablulation of pre-post results of the same category.

[iv] The percentage of final narratives presenting a different plot from the first narrative is 45.5% for Argumentative -Mizrahi, 46.7% for Control-Ashkenazi and 29.4% for Control-Mizrahi none of them reaching a significant level)

[v] Post hoc analysis results of independent samples t-test t=3.12, p= .003. final argumentative level of writing in argumentative activity group (M=4.14, SD=1.27) significantly higher than in control group (M=3.26, SD=1.04)

[vi] Post hoc analysis results of paired samples t-test t=2.16, p= .039.

[vii] The proportions for the whole sample were 47% "senseless sacrifice"-the plot scheme depicting Melting Pot policy most negatively. Another 27% were coded as the negative empathetic "tragedy of errors" and only 26% in the more positive "pains of redemption".

[viii]Linear regression revealed stand significantly predicted plot adjusted R^2=.21, R=.49 p<.01. Sommer's d for plot predicting stand insignificant.

[ix] Independent samples t-test for certainty (comparing negative stand with the rest) t=-2.67, p= .016. (M=1.23 SD= .72, M=1.82 SD= .39)

[x]Tara and Gadi come from   Ashkenazi families while Naan from a Mizrahi, all from middle class background.