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When Our History Meets Their History: Strategies Young People in Serbia Use to Coordinate Conflicting Group Narratives

Abstract

When a multiethnic state, such as the former Yugoslavia, dissolves in a violent ethnic-based conflict, new generations grow up on one-sided historical narratives. While there is plenty of evidence of how appropriating such narratives delegitimizes outgroups, studies on how young people coordinate diverse group narratives are lacking. To address this issue, we explored promotive strategies young majority group members use in building a more inclusive historical understanding of two conflicting (majority and minority) narratives. The sample consisted of ten pairs of ethnic Serb high school seniors with a task to jointly build one common narrative out of two one-sided narratives adapted from post-conflict textbooks of majority (Serb) and minority (Bosniak) ethnic groups. We used step-by-step dialogical analysis of semantic promoters in participants' interactions to capture how ingroup and outgroup perspectives are collaboratively positioned. Our results suggest participants use various cognitive, affective, identity and value-based strategies to coordinate

conflicting perspectives. The identified promotive strategies can help in developing evidence-based educational materials and teaching environments, especially in post-conflict and divided societies.

Keywords: History teaching, Peer dialogue, Semantic promoters, Majority, Minority, former Yugoslavia

Introduction

When a multiethnic state, such as the former Yugoslavia, dissolves in a violent ethnic-based conflict, new generations grow up on exclusive and one-sided historical narratives favouring the positions of dominant groups. Such representations of the past in post-conflict and divided societies further erode social cohesion, understood as a quality of intergroup relations and identification with superordinate collective identity (Schiefer & Van Der Noll, 2017). The influence of historical representations lies in their paramount importance for constructing ethnic identities and consequently for legitimizing existing social order and future policy (Halbwachs, 1925/2020; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Wertsch, 1997). As historian John Gillis (1994, p. 5) succinctly proposed, "...memories are not things we think *about*, but things we think *with*".

Nevertheless, it's tempting to ignore the issue of contested histories since facing them makes controversy and differences between groups more salient (e.g., De Baets, 2015). For instance, the dominant intervention models in mainstream social psychology emphasise commonality, while

history is disregarded as a field for potential confrontation (Gaertner et al., 1993; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Furthermore, research showed how representations of the past are most often used to obstruct reconciliation (Bar-Tal, 2007), delegitimize rights-based claims of minority groups (Sibley et al., 2008) or build exclusive identities (Carretero & Van Alphen, 2014). Thus, vast literature demonstrates how history is a barrier to harmonious intergroup relations in post-conflict and divided societies, but much less is known about whether history could promote cohesion.

To this end, alternative didactic approaches of learning history via multiple perspectives and developing narrative competence among students have been proposed (Carretero et al., 2018; Stradling, 2003). In social psychology, for example, recent works recognized the potential of multi-perspective approaches and alternative minority narratives to facilitate reconciliation processes in (post-)conflict contexts (Psaltis et al., 2017a; Uluğ et al., 2021), but the evidence of how individuals integrate divergent group-based perspectives is still scarce. To address this empirical gap, we explored promotive strategies young majority group members (ethnic Serbs) used when faced with the task of building a more inclusive historical narrative out of two conflicting (majority and minority) ones.

Coordinating Conflicting Historical Perspectives: Semantic Barriers and Semantic Promoters

Social representation theory is a useful framework for understanding how conflicting narratives of the past interact since it is sensitive to the transformation of social knowledge while moving between individuals, groups and their respective contexts (Moscovici, 1961/2008). According to Jovchelovitch (2012, pp. 441-442), we can think of historical narratives as specific kinds of social representations since they "fix meaning in the central core of social representations, are resistant to change and endure over time, but they are neither frozen nor stable: it is their very flexibility and imaginative characteristics that give them resilience". People's orientation towards historical narratives is contingent on their identification with social groups, which, in turn, are nested within a system of power relations, granting people more or less access to define social reality (Elcheroth et al., 2011). While majority narratives are visible, institutionally supported and sometimes even embedded in laws (Sokolić & Sokolić, 2019; Subotić, 2013), minority narratives are often silenced or explicitly sanctioned, which poses a threat to social cohesion (King, 2010; Kuppens & Langer, 2023).

While taking into account the *content* of social representations of history, we focused on the *process*, i.e. we explored how dominant (majority) and alternative (minority) historical representations interact in the dialogue of majority group members. To do that, we relied on Gillespie's (2008, 2020) elaboration of social representation theory, where he developed Moscovici's (1961/2008) concept of semantic barriers and

introduced the concept of semantic promoters. Semantic barriers and promoters are best understood as discursive strategies that prevent or facilitate dialogical engagement with alternative representations. As an illustration, Avraamidou and Psaltis (2019) demonstrated a wide array of semantic barriers in Greek Cypriot newspapers during the 2017 peace negotiation, such as rigid opposition (solution as the "end of Cypriot Hellenism") and transfer of meaning (labelling solution as "Turkish"), used to rule out reaching an official agreement. Semantic barriers were similarly used to dismiss alternative representations in a variety of other contexts: among locals in Ireland and Greece to reject representations of individuals seeking asylum for genuine reasons (Gillespie et al., 2012); in post-Soviet Estonia among majority and minority communities to reject historical representations of the other group and endorse or challenge system justification beliefs (Kus et al., 2013); in the UK among voters for and against Brexit to delegitimize different political views and vote choices (Obradović & Draper, 2022).

However, corresponding research on semantic promoters is lacking, and even the concept is often negatively defined as the absence of semantic barriers (see Gillespie, 2008, p. 388). As Coultas and colleagues (2020, p. 3) noticed in a recent study, "there has been much less theoretical focus on, or perhaps even empirical evidence of semantic promoters". One way to think of semantic promoters is via the process of self-reflection by which individuals de-centre from the dominant representation and become open to

discussing alternative representations as equals (Kadianaki & Gillespie, 2015). Actively engaging with the perspectives of other groups has been shown to be related to reducing reliance on stereotype-maintaining mental processes and promoting positive intergroup outcomes (for a review, see Todd & Galinsky, 2014). For instance, as the majority group members' representation of history is typically at the level of unquestioned common sense, contact with alternative minority representation creates a tension that could either be disregarded via semantic barriers or could facilitate change via semantic promoters. Humour and irony are an illustrative example of semantic promoters as they enable free play of representations (see Moscovici, 1961/2008). We expand this research by mapping and systematising promotive strategies young majority group members use to coordinate conflicting accounts of the same event, taken from majority/minority history textbooks.

Conventional and Alternative History Education in Post-Conflict and Divided Societies

On the one hand, research on history education in post-conflict and divided societies (Paulson, 2015; Skårås, 2021) suggests that in most countries official curricula impose a single authoritarian narrative, typically an ethno-national narrative or narrative of mythical unity. The endorsement of such a narrative is integral to a glorified but threatened and exclusionary

ethnic identity of the majority members (see Psaltis & Cakal, 2016). On the other hand, there is evidence that multi-perspective and multi-narrative approaches can contribute to social cohesion in contemporary ethnically diverse societies, even those burdened by past or current violent conflict. For instance, openness to a minority group conflict-related narrative predicted less competitive victimhood and less support for aggressive policies among majority members, while it predicted more support for pro-minority policies, non-violent conflict resolution and forgiveness (Uluğ et al., 2021, 2023; Uluğ & Uysal, 2023).

Putting the opposing narratives in contact, however, does not warrant positive intergroup outcomes since such narratives are organised as closed systems equipped with diverse semantic barriers that inoculate them against alternative interpretations (Gillespie, 2020; Wertsch, 2021). This is why multi-perspective didactic approaches provide a framework for coordinating different narratives by offering guidelines on: (a) *how* students should engage with the past - e.g., disciplinary practices such as consulting sources, comparing texts, and thinking about the context (Stradling, 2003; Van Drie & Van Boxtel, 2008; Wineburg et al., 2011); and (b) *what* students should learn about the past - e.g., dual-narrative textbook, where narratives of two groups are side-by-side with an empty space in between that should stimulate students to develop their own understanding of the contested past (Adwan & Bar-On, 2004). Yet, empirical studies on *how* young people deal with competing narratives are lacking, especially in post-conflict contexts.

Such research is invaluable if we consider youth as active agents rather than passive absorbers of narratives imposed on them (Carretero, 2011; Wertsch, 1998).

A scarce example is the research of Barton and McCully (2010, 2012) in Northern Ireland, in which they interviewed pairs of students from the same community (Protestant or Catholic) to investigate how they approached conflicting perspectives on the past. The results showed that most students neither unconditionally rejected nor appropriated ingroup narratives or practices of academic history. Instead, they were engaged in a more complex process of drawing from different historical discourses while trying to build their own informed position. However, the authors focused more on how students struggled in integrating the alternative outgroup perspective by, for example, assimilating outgroup experiences into the ingroup narrative, being ignorant about outgroup perspective or completely dismissing group-based history. Also, the history education of Northern Ireland is an exception among post-conflict societies as it relies on a multi-perspective curriculum (McCully, 2012; McCully et al., 2022). It would be instructive to compare these findings with post-conflict contexts with the single-narrative approach in history education, typical for countries which emerged from the former Yugoslavia (Marić & Jovanović, 2017).

Post-Yugoslav Historical Context: Serbs and Bosniaks

Serbia was one of the republics of the socialist Yugoslavia that dissolved in a series of interethnic wars during the 1990s, resulting in six independent successor states. To understand the relationship between Serbs and Bosniaks, one needs to be sensitive to the broader geographical context including neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a Yugoslav successor state, Bosnia and Herzegovina was formed with two entities (the Republic of Srpska and Bosniak-Croat Federation) and three ethnic groups (Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks) recognized as constitutional, after a four-year war among them. Although open communal violence between Serbs and Bosniaks was not present in Serbia as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, systematic harassment of Bosniaks by state authorities was part of everyday life during the 1990s (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, 2021). During these wars, history was often evoked to raise the sense of threat and mobilise people against ethnic outgroups (e.g., memories of Serbian victimisation by the Ustasha regime in the Independent State of Croatia in the Second World War fueled animosities of Serbs against Croats and fear of Croatia as a newly independent state). This use of history preceded and continued throughout the state crisis and the violence that ensued (Ivanović, 2023; Kuljić, 2002; Thompson, 1999). The successor states still foster one-sided interpretations of the past that favour the dominant ethnic groups (e.g., Đureinović, 2021; Jelić et al., 2021), and endorsement of these exclusive narratives leads to outgroup distrust and constitutes an obstacle towards reconciliation (Psaltis et al., 2017). For Serbia specifically, it means

there is no engagement with ingroup transgressions in the wars of the nineties in particular, and there is a sense of historical victimhood that is deeply entrenched in Serbian ethnic identity (Žeželj & Pratto, 2017).

In contemporary Serbia, ethnic Serbs (80.6%) are the overwhelming majority, while ethnic Bosniaks (2,3%) are one of the most numerous minorities (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2023). Most of around 150,000 Bosniaks live in southwest Serbia, where they are the majority in several municipalities. Memories of the war, insufficient minority rights and marginalization of the region where Bosniaks in Serbia predominately live contribute to the distrust towards the majority group and dissatisfaction with state institutions, which occasionally spark serious political tensions (Lazić, 2013a, 2013b).

History Education in Serbia: Between Policy and Practice

Even though the highest-order educational regulation in Serbia prescribes multi-perspective competencies, extensive research on history textbooks and teacher practice shows that the ethnonational narrative of the majority community dominates the actual history teaching (Ivanović et al., 2020; Marić & Jovanović, 2017; Pavasović Trošt, 2018). As a national minority, Bosniaks are granted a certain degree of autonomy in history education by law. In practice, however, the inclusion of Bosniak history is constantly contested by state institutions (Šuica & Radaković, 2023).

Hence, the young Serbs lack a balanced understanding of the regional past but rather grow up with a stereotypical image of the other ethnic groups (Šuica et al., 2020). For example, Bosniaks are viewed as Serbs who converted to Islam during the Ottoman rule (Ninković & Žeželj, 2023). Yet, recent research suggests that younger generations of Serbs are sometimes also critical towards the single narrative they encounter in school and aware that there is more than one side to the "story" (Obradović, 2016).

Current Study

We explore how young majority group members (ethnic Serbs) negotiate and coordinate conflicting majority and minority historical narratives while collaboratively trying to build more inclusive understanding. We focus on promotive rather than defensive strategies since we are interested in learning opportunities for majority group members when an alternative minority narrative is introduced. Thus, our research has a twofold contribution. First, we offer empirical evidence and extend theorization on semantic promoters by arguing that transformative dialogue requires active meaning-making, not only the absence of barriers (Gillespie, 2008; Kadianaki & Gillespie, 2015). Second, we contribute to previous history education research by demonstrating successful examples of coordinating divergent historical perspectives in spontaneous peer dialogue of majority group members (Barton & McCully, 2010, 2012), which

might be particularly relevant for societies with a single-narrative ethnonational approach to history education (Skårås, 2021).

To answer our main research question, we recorded and analysed the interaction of majority group student pairs trying to build their own account out of majority and minority versions of the same historical events. This design allowed us to analyse conversations in student pairs that are more genuine and elaborated than individual interviews with the researcher due to power asymmetries and transgenerational differences (Eder & Fingersoon, 2002). The inhibiting effect of the power distance is especially prominent when discussing content that might be considered controversial.

Method

Participants

We strategically selected the respondents to fit the aim of the research. Namely, we wanted to map as widely as possible the semantic promoters used in peer dialogue on competing historical narratives. To do that, we aimed for motivated and articulate students who are diverse regarding historical knowledge. Thus, the sample consisted of ten pairs of high school seniors from a central Belgrade gymnasium chosen by the history teacher based on the described selection criteria. There were seven female and three male pairs, and the age range was between 18 and 19

years. All participants and the researcher were majority group members (i.e., ethnic Serbs). We focused on monoethnic pairs since it is a typical educational setting in Serbia (i.e., most classrooms are monoethnic) and because we wanted to understand how majority group members coordinate majority and minority historical perspectives. Also, we used same-sex pairs since previous studies showed that gender asymmetries could significantly influence the process and outcomes of peer interaction (Psaltis & Duveen, 2006). Students in pairs had an affiliative relationship but did not know the researcher prior to data collection. Our sampling goal was achieving theoretical saturation by observing no new types of promotive strategies with additional student pairs (see Guest et al., 2006).

Procedure and Materials

Bi-narrative task. After giving informed consent, each pair of students in an online environment (Zoom platform) read two one-sided narratives about the same historical event from the perspective of majority (Serb) and minority (Bosniak) ethnic groups. Their task was to jointly build one common narrative or describe why they couldn't reach an agreement. While doing this, participants were free to use prior knowledge, internet search, insights from the discussion, comments/critiques of the accounts they would read or whatever they found suitable for the task at hand. The researcher gave the instructions and then switched off his camera without engaging

further with the participants until they had finished the joint essay. The discussions lasted between 37 and 88 minutes (55 on average), and were recorded in full.

Materials. The group narratives students read were adapted from the first post-conflict history textbooks of the two ethnic groups, which are ample with examples of ingroup defence and outgroup delegitimization (see Ivanović et al., 2020). Our main aim in selecting the texts was to create multi-perspective materials that (a) offer conflicting versions of events, but at the same time (b) enable optimal conditions for the students' decentration and coordination of perspectives. Therefore, on the one hand, we prepared narratives comparable in content, bias and structure. On the other hand, we omitted the most contentious events from the recent past, as we feared strong negative emotions may prevent any perspective-taking in the discussions (see Bilali & Mahmoud, 2017; Todd & Galinsky, 2014). Finally, to avoid the risk of data being overly influenced by a specific historical episode we created two parallel forms of the bi-narrative task that we randomized across the pairs.

The first historical episode was about the last constitution of Yugoslavia from 1974 and the so-called anti-bureaucratic revolution (1988-1989), together with 1990 Serbian constitution amendments that followed. Regarding intergroup relations, the 1974 constitution recognized Bosniaks as constituent people and gave more powers to republics (and provinces

within Serbia). The Serb narrative portrays the constitution as the breakup of Yugoslavia and injustice towards Serbia, and subsequent constitution amendments as the re-establishment of justice for Serbia. The Bosniak narrative views the constitution as the democratization of the state, while the anti-bureaucratic revolution and constitution changes are perceived as the breakup of Yugoslavia.

The second historical episode was about (para)military formations Chetniks and SS "Handžar" division in Yugoslavia during the Second World War. Chetniks were a Serb nationalist movement that started the war as a guerilla force against the occupiers but transitioned into a collaborationist movement that targeted non-Serbs and communists (e.g., SindbÆk, 2009). SS "Handžar" division was a force composed mostly of ethnic Bosniaks that was created by Nazi Germany to crush any resistance to the occupation (e.g., Andjelic, 2021). Serb narrative depicts Chetniks as a resistance movement, while it describes SS "Handžar" Division as "worse than the Nazis". At the same time, the Bosniak narrative views Chetniks as collaborationists and genocide perpetrators, while it describes the SS "Handžar" Division as necessary and different from Chetniks. All the narratives are available in the original and English version on the OSF platform (link).

Post-task interview. After participants finished the task, we conducted semi-structured interviews with them to better contextualize peer

discussions. The interview agenda (available at OSF) consisted of questions about participants' experience of the task, prior knowledge, group narratives, history education, historical knowledge, ethnic identification and willingness for intergroup contact with the Bosniaks. Interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Data Analysis

Students' discussions were recorded upon explicit participants' consent, verbatim transcribed and anonymized via pseudonyms. We used dialogical analysis since it is sensitive to how different social representations are collaboratively constructed and negotiated within multi-voiced speech (Marková et al., 2007). To explore semantic promoters participants used we relied on a step-by-step guide (Aveling et al., 2015; Gillespie & Cornish, 2014).

In the first step, we identified the *I-positions* of both participants by coding first-person pronouns/possessives and related utterances. Special attention was given to positions towards the ingroup and outgroup narrative, that is, towards Serb and Bosniak ethnic groups. In the second step, we identified voices of *significant others* by coding third-person pronouns/possessives and named individuals or groups, together with the referent text. In the third step, we inspected the interaction between

different I-positions and significant others, especially focusing on interactions between positions towards the ingroup and outgroup narrative. While the first two steps of the analysis (as well as the insights from the post-task interview) enabled an in-depth and contextually rich understanding of the data, the third step was essential for answering the research question. Accordingly, our unit of analysis was communicative relation (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010) as a minimal excerpt of the dialogue that contains interaction between voices of narratives rather than a single utterance or turn-taking of the individual. In each selected communicative relation, we focused on discursive strategies participants used to manage their positions and coordinate conflicting voices of narratives. We first analysed each pair as a separate case study and then proceeded to a cross-case analysis, which helped us make more generalised claims about identified semantic promoters. We also analysed how the voice of the researcher may have influenced the dynamics and outcomes of students' discussions (e.g., when participants refer to the researcher during their work) because reflectivity is an integral aspect of the dialogical method.

Methodological Integrity

To achieve a higher validity of our findings, we used several strategies. First, to provide a more contextualised analysis, we triangulated the data by including insights from a post-task interview with the

participants in addition to their peer interaction during the task. Second, to test whether our data was sufficiently diverse regarding the outcomes of the bi-narrative task (and thus possibly representative of semantic promoters), we analysed participants' joint essays resulting from peer interactions. The preliminary analysis showed heterogeneity in the essays, ranging from examples where ingroup narrative dominates to those where perspectives are integrated within a new superordinate narrative, although different types of outcomes were not equally frequent. Third, we performed sequential and iterative analysis of peer interaction, and moved from the analysis of single pairs of participants to a transversal and comparative analysis. This secured the credibility of the findings by preserving specificities of individual discussions and at the same time developing more general and shared categories of discursive strategies. Illustrative excerpts from the interactions were provided throughout the Results section to demonstrate that findings are grounded in the data. Finally, we conducted the collaborative analysis (the triangulation of researchers), across several phases: the first author went through empirical material and developed the initial list of semantic promoters; the second author then went through the empirical material and suggested revisions and elaborations of the proposed semantic promoters; all disagreements were thoroughly discussed with the first author in several iterations until a consensus was reached; lastly, the third author validated the final selection and content of the identified strategies.

Results

Preliminary analysis of interactional outcomes showed that six of ten essays contained successful examples of coordinating conflicting perspectives. Each identified semantic promoter appeared in the discussion of at least two student pairs[1]. Having in mind the novelty of our approach, we did not aim for an exhaustive categorisation of semantic promoters and breaking down the frequencies, but wanted to showcase the diverse discursive strategies young people from a specific post-conflict context use to open a dialogue between competing historical narratives. We grouped the observed semantic promoters into six clusters (Figure 1): two cognitive-based (introducing meta-frameworks and regulating consensus) that regulate patterns of similarity and differences between two representations, two identity-based (restructuring ingroup image and reflecting on the voices of the self) that regulate collective and individual identification, a value-based (appealing to universal moral norms) that regulate moral positioning, and an affect-based one (regulating affective involvement).

[Insert Figure 1 here]

1. Cognitive-Based Strategies: Introducing Meta-Frameworks

[1] Except two promoters that appeared only in one discussion, but we reported them since they were very elaborate, theoretically relevant and fitted higher-order clusters of strategies

In this cluster, the dialogic relationship between the voices of the narratives is made possible by introducing a superordinate framework that positions the two narratives as specific cases that can be derived from the framework. The semantic promoters described here are a cognitive strategy in the sense that they regulate two representations and allow participants to distance themselves while talking about the narratives/groups (Kadianaki & Gillespie, 2015). Additionally, participants in this cluster drew on different interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) while explaining more general patterns they have observed.

Recognizing Ingroup Bias. In this case, participants used the superordinate framework to illustrate how ethnic groups produce biased versions of history or how ethnic groups persuade audiences to take their position (e.g., by claiming the historical victim status). Participants did not restrict the ingroup bias only to narratives they read but extrapolated it to all ethno-national groups.

> *Aleksa: And there you'll see it in every text related to... I mean, every country will write about how someone else wanted to kill them, how someone will want to wipe them out, that's a fact, it always says that.*
>
> *Miljan: Let's also read the Serbian article, I'm curious.*
>
> *Aleksa: [reading out loud]*

Miljan: Here we go again, same story, different country.

Third-Group Blame. Unlike the previous case, where the meta-framework was used as universal, the next semantic promoter is about the strategic use of *third-group blame* in the local context. Namely, participants relied on the colonial conspiracy discourse of local politicians and Western powers as the superordinate framework that helped them explain the genesis of conflict:

> *Pavle: […] and there are three nations divided in Bosnia and Herzegovina, right? So, we are divided among ourselves because we carry a big burden of the past, a big burden of dogma that is unlikely to be resolved, primarily because why? Gentlemen politicians, right, do everything in their interest or the interest of their mentors, as mentioned here at the end of the text […] And then fertile ground is created for that Westerner who doesn't care what happened here, who stirred everything up to be like this. Then he comes, who, of course, has money, who previously destroyed my country, occupied my people, appointed people loyal to him, has money, controls the flow of money, and now he controls people, and he wants to fill people's minds with various information through mass media, mass control of the population, where everything is actually done to create the reaction they want, right, some reaction they*

expect... And so, people become zombies their whole lives, and that's it [...]

Recognizing History as Both Subjective and Objective. The next meta-framework is based on recognizing the dialectical nature of historical knowledge, i.e. that history is subjective and objective simultaneously. Here, participants first recognized that all historical knowledge is relative ("everything is from some perspective"), but then introduced a distinction between historical facts and historical interpretations as crucial when assessing historical representations.

Tijana: Hardcore, none of them is objective, so honestly you don't know what exactly happened there. Actually, you can never really know what exactly happened in history; everything is from some perspective, something...

Emilija: It's from someone's perspective, yeah.

Tijana: Yeah, how do you know, from the Nazi perspective, Hitler was awesome.

Emilija: Hitler was a god [laughing]

Tijana: [laughing] literally.

Introducing the extreme case of "Hitler" pushes the participants to reevaluate the "history is always relative" thesis and suggest a fact-interpretation distinction:

Tijana: […] No, you know what I mean, like Hitler, okay, there were those who supported him, but most hated him, and then it became common knowledge as a historical fact that they didn't like him because he killed people and so on. But what's the historical fact here?

Emilija: That's what I was getting to, a historical fact is that there was a [1974] constitution that granted autonomy to some territories of Serbia, and that's actually a historical fact. There was a constitution granting autonomy to some of its territories, and then, after about 10 years, they kind of reversed it, I mean, like they annulled the constitution with their anti-bureaucratic revolution, and that's it. And now, here we see how Serbs look at what happened and how Bosniaks look at it.

Tijana: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Contextualization. In the last semantic strategy of this category, participants relied on historical context as a superordinate framework. They assessed the content of the conflicting historical representations by trying to understand the socio-political contexts in which representations were articulated:

Ana: Yeah. Look, if this was written in, like he [researcher] said, '96, if it's from that period, it's very logical that it would be like this because that's the time of wars.

Milena: Yeah, "historical textbooks and articles" [reading sources below the narratives].

2. Cognitive-Based Strategies: Regulating Consensus

Dialogical relation between voices of narratives is enabled by actively searching and establishing equivalence/similarity. While both introducing meta-frameworks and regulating consensus are strategies that coordinate two narratives by explaining patterns of similarity and differences, the former evokes broader structures that produce these patterns, whereas the latter remains at the level of concrete historical narratives.

Finding Shared Meanings. Participants used similarity in the content of two narratives as the criterion for truth and a basis for relating the two narratives:

Dragana: [Laughing] I absolutely have no idea what the truth is here, what they [Bosniaks] wanted to do with that movement ['Handžar' division]. The only thing both texts agree on is that it was the first mutiny. Wait... What does it say exactly? There's one short part where they agree.

Establishing Equivalence. Participants acknowledged differences in content, but insisted on the similarity in what both

narratives are trying to achieve - defend their own position and blame the other. This enabled participants to establish epistemic or moral equivalence in relation to conflicting narratives. Even though this strategy might seem similar to recognizing ingroup bias from the first cluster, it is distinct since it does not generalize tendencies of narratives to all groups but rather remains at the level of concrete narratives/groups, as evident in the following extract:

> *Maja: You can clearly see who goes into details, who doesn't, and why.*
>
> *Anka: Yeah, exactly. They precisely choose where to go into details, where not to. Like that thing written there, they took this type of knife as a symbol, and then from our side, we say that type of knife was a symbol of Janissaries [elite soldiers of the Ottoman empire of Christian-descent], and it's not like that. [laughing]*
>
> *Maja: Literally.*
>
> *Anka: Literally, if we're honest, <u>everyone did terrible things, they [narratives] just detail their</u>... yeah.*
>
> *Maja: Yeah, it's like, <u>they write it in a similar way</u>.*
>
> *Anka: Exactly, <u>in a similar way</u>.*

Balancing Extreme Positions. Participants were searching for a moderate position (i.e., "middle ground") that combined both narratives while rejecting extreme positions:

> *Ana: I think there's no need. Do you want us to explain our stance now, why it shouldn't be written like this in textbooks, and then give our opinion that the truth is somewhere in between, that it's very possible they [Chetniks] were helping, but also doing terrible things?*
>
> *Milena: We can.*

Introducing Corroboration. To achieve consensus, participants acknowledged differences in content but tried to relate the narratives by introducing an external voice:

> *Milica: Is the anti-bureaucratic revolution missing from our text?*
>
> *Andrea: It's not there, no.*
>
> *Milica: We can add that, like mention that... our text [Serbian narrative] doesn't have it, and they did there like. I mean, it mentions this 8th session of this... Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, but I think we don't refer to it as a revolution.*

Andrea: What does Wikipedia say, [reading an article about anti-bureaucratic revolution] Mmm, yeah, you see, that's what I said. We don't mention it; if I understood correctly, the Serbs initiated that anti-bureaucratic revolution... since we didn't mention it in our text.

Milica: Yeah. I know, that's why I'm saying that we don't mention these... demonstrations either.

Andrea: Yeah. Probably because they're aware they didn't quite do that [in a good way]...

Milica: Yeah.

Participants perceived the external source as unbiased and independent of the two historical narratives, although they did not evaluate it critically (e.g., Wikipedia in their own language is perceived as a neutral representation of history).

3. Social Identity-Based Strategies: Restructuring Ingroup Image

This cluster of strategies is related to regulating social identification. More concretely, dialogical relation between voices of narratives is enabled by expanding the ingroup boundaries and achieving a more complex representation of the ingroup.

Acknowledging the Moral Heterogeneity of the Ingroup. As a reaction to the voice of the outgroup, participants were prompted to construct the ingroup as morally complex - including both positive and negative traits/behaviours/subgroups. For example, upon reading the Bosniak narrative, Miljan acknowledged that the ingroup may include some very problematic subgroups:

> *Miljan: It's stupid that they [Bosniak narrative] blame all Serbs for it, but it's some idiots [Chetniks] who are, like, in the vibe of, like, Nazis, just not Nazis, I don't know.*
>
> *Aleksa: Yes, yes. Wait, let's see what's next.*

Introducing Superordinate Identity. To make the responsibility of both sides salient, participants restructured the ingroup image by introducing superordinate identity categories that included the outgroup. In contrast to establishing equivalence, when they used this semantic promoter, participants were not distanced, but personally identified with the ethnic groups. That was visible from the way they used first-person pronouns - WE (Serbs and Bosniaks) all did X - rather than third-person pronouns - THEY ALL did X:

> *Anka: So, you know, if we're being honest, there were massacres on both sides, we won't deny that.*
>
> *Maja: That's right, yes. [laughter]*

Anka: We won't... We're all awful. [laughter] Awful [...]

4. Value-Based Strategies: Appealing to Universal Moral Norms

While the two previous clusters were focused on identities, this group of strategies is built around values. Participants distanced themselves from the narratives as they evaluated them morally. In other words, dialogical relation between voices of narratives was enabled by committing to universal moral norms as the highest criterion and using normative language (e.g., should, cannot) to criticize/correct any deviation from the moral norms.

Condemnation of Wrongdoing Regardless of Perpetrator Group*.* Participants established the status of atrocities as something that cannot be justified, denied or forgotten but should be acknowledged regardless of the group which committed it:

Andrea: Well, now I don't know, I kinda wanna say that those so-called Albanians were bothering us. They were constantly forcing people out of their villages in Kosovo. But there were times when our divisions, you know, would go and basically wipe out a whole Albanian village. They'd climb up a hill, I mean, and just level the entire village to the ground.

Milica: Yeah.

Andrea: Now, it's not written here, I don't know how to say it, I mean, you know, to say they did bother us, yes, they did force us out, and all that, raped, killed, and stuff. But we can't say that they are now to blame for the breakup of Yugoslavia and our actions and crimes. Now, how can we say that?

Milica: Mmm.

Even though Andrea started with ingroup victimization, she did not use it as a justification for the ingroup crimes, but instead pointed out it cannot be an excuse for unforgivable violent deeds towards the outgroup.

Promoting Enlightenment Values Through Education. Participants introduced enlightenment values as normative for the formal education of young people (e.g., objectivity, tolerance) while rejecting the values of one-sided narratives (e.g., promoting hate):

Andrea: Well, now I would definitely add at the end that it needs to consider both perspectives, or actually not perspectives but that history should be objective. We shouldn't be teaching kids in elementary school hatred at the age of 14, 15.

Milica: Yes, that definitely.

Andrea: That these young people should be informed about what happened in their history, so that no one can make fools of them, but they shouldn't hate anyone either […].

5. Affect-Based Strategies: Regulating Affective Involvement

Here, the balance between the two narratives is introduced by decreasing the affective involvement with ingroup narrative or increasing the involvement with outgroup narrative. Unlike previous clusters, this cluster of semantic promoters does not represent a concrete way of coordinating perspectives but instead, through affect regulation, it facilitates conditions for coordinating perspectives, i.e., enables equal treatment of narratives. Therefore, semantic promoters from this cluster are auxiliary, in the sense that they are usually nested within semantic promoters from other clusters, allowing for their synergistic effect. We opted to treat it as separate as we wanted to highlight that they serve a different function from the ones discussed previously.

Humour and Irony. Participants used humour and irony to keep an emotional distance from the narratives. It allowed them not to privilege the ingroup narrative, but instead to treat both narratives equally. In the following extract, Emilija and Tijana were parodying the two opposing voices:

Emilija: Well, I think it's pretty clear. I mean, you see these Serbs were like everything was stolen from them

Tijana: [laughter] Yes!

Emilija: I mean, sometimes I feel kinda dumb thinking like this, but it really seems like that's how they act.

Tijana: Well, Bosniaks kinda went a bit overboard too, I mean, everything is like Greater Serbia, Greater Albania [laughter] it's a bit, you know...

Emilija briefly hesitated to use humour when talking about ingroup victimisation, probably because of the normative ingroup-oriented empathy due to her ethnic identification. Tijana, however, reacted by supporting her humoristic approach, rather than supporting ingroup-defending self-censure. She did this by extrapolating parody to the outgroup narrative, thus establishing equivalence. This illustrates how humour is an auxiliary strategy to establish equivalence as a regulating consensus strategy. Nevertheless, establishing equivalence can appear in the absence of humour and irony or humour and irony can accompany another promotive strategy.

Outgroup Empathy. Opposite to humour and irony, this semantic promoter increases affective involvement with the outgroup

narrative. Shared empathy leads to legitimizing the outgroup voice and facilitates coordination of perspectives:

> *Ivona: Yes, a large number of countries are, um, for example, Bosnia and Herzegovina [reading Bosniak narrative] "constitutionally, legally, and politically equal to other republics," which is fair, realistically – poor Bosnia [laughter] - until then, it was kind of tossed around from state to state.*
>
> *Sara: Yeah, literally. So, it [1974 constitution] emerged because of the desire for change and democratization of states, and, well, I would say, because of the desire of these like federative units to be autonomous units, to like get their rights, but it was also something about the goal for Serbia to be on top and rule over all of them, that Greater Serbian hegemony, and stuff like that.*

Curiosity Towards Perceived Differences. When confronted with the opposing version of the narratives, participants showed positive affective responses (e.g., interest) without favouring the ingroup narrative over the outgroup narrative:

> *Nikola: Here [Bosniak narrative] it says something like that, only it doesn't mention anything about strengthening those other movements [from republics and provinces]. Instead, there's a big emphasis on the Greater Serbia project and what*

led to it. While, you see, in the Serbian text, it's stated as the reason [of the breakup of Yugoslavia] the strengthening of those other movements [from republics and provinces].

Uroš: Yeah.

Nikola: Very interesting, very interesting. Who's gonna type, you want me to?

6. Personal Identity-Based Strategies: Reflecting on the Voices of the Self

Similar to regulating affective involvement, this cluster of strategies is also auxiliary. Dialogical relation between voices in narratives is facilitated by participants reflecting on I-positions or positions of significant others and the way they affect the production of common knowledge. Such self-reflection creates conditions for integrating the outgroup narrative, usually in combination with some of the previous strategies. Therefore, it is crucial what happens after in dialogue.

Contesting Personal Default Narratives. Participants made explicit or questioned their "taken-for-granted" I-positions on the narratives and consequently considered how these positions restrict their views. This allowed them to explore alternatives and revise their positions:

Sara: You know what crossed my mind?

Ivona: What?

Sara: Since they say Serbia is subordinate, like, to the provinces, it depends on the perspective, because it is subordinate if we think that Serbia should be the main one and rule over everyone. And then if it's not the main one, if it's, like, equal or relatively equal to other countries, then it's considered subordinate. If we don't think it should be this Greater Serbian hegemony or whatnot, then it's like [laughter] you get it, [Serbia] it's not that troubled, it's literally just normal.

Ivona: True, the only thing is that it got equal, I mean with the others [republics].

Sara: Yeah.

Ivona: That's right, you see, from our perspective, we look at it like, "Oh, Serbia!" [inaudible, talking over each other, excitedly expressing an "aha" moment] ("Oh, Serbia!" symbolizes the perspective where the participants "feel sorry for Serbia's difficult position")

Significant Others as Regulation of Ingroup Bias. Participants recognized how certain significant others' positions are similar to the outgroup narrative. In the following extract, when faced with novel outgroup narrative, Ana used her parents' attitudes to help her open up towards it:

Ana: I, like, generally, I expected it to be something like this, that our side [Serbian narrative] would be kind of more neutral, not really praising or criticising them [Chetniks] too much because, you know, our guys were partisans [communist resistance movement]. And from Bosnia [Bosniak narrative], they'd probably make it seem like we slaughtered all of them, I mean not us personally, but like, the Chetniks killed everyone. I don't really know if they did that, but I know my folks don't like Chetniks.

Milena: Yes [repeating several times during Ana's talk]. Same with mine. My dad pretty much thinks that the Chetniks [laughter] are traitors of Serbian lands.

Ana: Yeah, that's how they taught me when I was little.

Milena: Same, same [...]

Multiple Semantic Promoters and Barriers at Work

So far, we focused on showcasing relatively isolated examples of semantic promoters by choosing the excerpts that best illustrate the unique attributes of a single promoter. However, the participants' interactions usually consisted of much more dynamic interrelation of different semantic strategies. In other words, semantic promoters and

barriers were actively negotiated both within (auto-dialogue) and between (hetero-dialogue) participants. For example, some promoters and barriers were shared, others are individual, some were resisted, and others were further elaborated. Hence, it would be simplistic to assume that an individual or pair utilizes a single semantic strategy or that strategies are used insensitive to their interactional effects. To demonstrate this complexity, we draw from the only interaction with explicit instances of disagreement. In the following extract, Dragana and Katarina discussed the claim from the Bosniak textbook that Chetniks intended to eliminate other non-Serb ethnic groups:

> *Dragana: I think that the thing about [Chetniks] wanting to create a homogeneous Serbia is totally true. Now, I don't know to what extent they went to make it happen. But as far as I know, I think it's true. That part...*
>
> *Katarina: Well, I think... I don't know, I mean...*
>
> *Dragana: I don't believe either side were angels [laughter].*
>
> *Katarina: Yes, but I think we were more angelic. I mean, I don't know... I mean, I don't know about the homogeneous Serbia thing... [struggling to express] I'm not sure because maybe they wanted that part of Bosnia where Serbs are the majority or something, but I don't think there were any ethnic cleansings*

there... Today, you have Muslims [Bosniaks] in Serbia, especially in that western part.

Dragana: You have because the Partisans won, not the Chetniks.

Katarina: Yes. I don't know.

In the above exchange, two participants were alternating between semantic promoters and barriers while managing dialogue between the narratives and between their positions. Dragana's first utterance legitimized the outgroup claim with high certainty (“is totally true”), based on the previously used semantic promoter *significant others as regulation of ingroup bias* evident in the earlier part of the dialogue ("my folks were in partisans, so I don't [like] Chetniks''). Katarina's response challenged this by communicating uncertainty and lack of knowledge, her common barrier to outgroup narrative throughout the discussion. Then, Dragana tried to open a dialogue between narratives by using semantic promoter *establishing equivalence* supported by *humour* (“*I don't believe either side were angels [laughter]*), but Katarina contrasted it with the semantic barrier of *rigid oppositions* (“*but I think we were more angelic”*) where the difference between Serbs and Bosniaks is fixed *a priori* (see Gillespie, 2008). At the same time, the evident tension between the voice of a friend and the voice of the (internalized) ingroup narrative in Katarina's responses might create conditions for coordination of

narratives - she opened up to acknowledging the outgroup narrative, but only partly, so the ingroup narrative was still not threatened (“*maybe they wanted that part of Bosnia where Serbs are the majority or something, but I don't think there were any ethnic cleansings there”*). Discomfort and uncertainty in Katarina's speech (repeating *“I don’t know”* and *“I’m not sure”*, hesitating) suggest some form of dialogical opening for alternative representation, which could be resolved either by strengthening resistance to the outgroup narrative or by the transformation of her previous position. Hence, even though mapping theoretically distinct semantic promoters is an important first step, to fully understand their interplay, it is important to explore in-depth how semantic promoters and barriers interact in speech and with which outcomes.

Discussion

By demonstrating and systematising diverse strategies young majority group members used to coordinate competing majority and minority historical perspectives, we aimed to make two contributions. First, we further map the concept of semantic promoters and contribute to its positive definition with concrete examples of discursive strategies that enable dialogical engagement with alternative representations of history. Second, we build on the previous studies on the potential of history

education to be a facilitator of social cohesion and reconciliation in divided and post-conflict societies.

The Importance of Studying Semantic Promoters

Our first aim was to offer empirical evidence and extend theorization of the concept of semantic promoters. Previous research engaged almost exclusively with elaborating the semantic barriers (Gillespie, 2008, 2020), while the semantic promoters were typically negatively defined as the absence of barriers, thus remaining an “empty” concept. We demonstrate that semantic promoters are also proactive meaning-making practices which can be described via two processes: 1) treating the dominant and alternative representations of history as equal, and 2) introducing a higher-order criterion that enables their coordination. Evidence from social and developmental psychology showed that recognizing the other as an equal and similar is the central mechanism of social interaction, facilitating the construction of new knowledge (Psaltis, 2005). Furthermore, attributing equal status to ingroup and outgroup narratives might promote the self-reflection process in which the narratives become something discussed rather than assumed or a priori dismissed, which could lead to more inclusive forms of knowledge (Kadianaki & Gillespie, 2014). In that sense, introducing a higher-order criterion would be similar to what Jovchelovitch and Priego-Hernandez (2015, p. 174) described as "hybridization", i.e. a

single mixed representational field created through the co-existence of different or even conflicting social representations.

The two described processes that characterise semantic promoters were not exclusive but often inextricably linked in speech. Nevertheless, we think it is theoretically valuable to distinguish between what we labelled *auxiliary semantic promoters,* such as regulating affective involvement and reflecting on the voices of the self, which enabled only equal treatment of the narratives, and *core semantic promoters* that incorporated both equality and coordination between the narratives. Participants' attempts to bring in the higher-order criterion included purely cognitive strategies like introducing meta-frameworks and searching for consensus, but also value-based strategies like juxtaposing general moral norms to one-sided narratives as well as introducing inclusive ingroup identity categories.

Having in mind the fact that clusters of semantic promoters we identified are theoretically quite comprehensive, it is important to understand whether they generalise across different contexts and modes of knowledge/practice. For instance, while we saw how introducing meta frameworks can help coordinate contested historical narratives, as this is a communication strategy, it could also be functional in the domain of interpersonal relations, e.g., marital disputes. On the other hand, the concrete choice of meta-frameworks is inevitably context-specific. For example, recognizing ingroup bias or recognizing history as both subjective and objective are probably characteristic only of the domain of contested

historical narratives. So even when aiming for generalizability, it is important to always remain sensitive to specificities of populations, social contexts and selected alternative representations (see Sammut et al., 2014).

How Semantic Promoters in Peer Dialogue Can Inform History Education

Our second aim was to contribute to previous history education research by demonstrating successful examples of coordinating divergent historical perspectives in peer dialogue. For instance, some of the strategies young people used closely resembled well-established disciplinary practices of historical thinking like sourcing, contextualization and corroboration (Wineburg et al., 2011). We observed these strategies even though our participants were not systematically trained to use them, having in mind the dominant one-sided ethnonational approach to history education in Serbia (Jovanović, 2020; Obradović, 2016). Such a finding supports the calls for more research on how youth actually consume narratives and discourses imposed on them that would complement the abundance of research about the production and intended consequences of official historical narratives (Carretero & Bermudez, 2012; Wertsch, 1997).

Strategies we identified in students' spontaneous repertoire were not limited to typical disciplinary practices of history. Instead, we also identified strategies typical for influential intervention models in social psychology.

For example, semantic promoter *introducing superordinate identity* is recognized by the common ingroup identity model as an essential process for fostering more positive intergroup attitudes and behaviours (Dovidio et al., 2007; Gaertner et al., 1993; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). Such promotive strategies based on affective and identity processes could be a way for social psychology to contribute to history teaching practice (see Psaltis et al., 2017b)

According to the Council of Europe (2018), balancing the cognitive, emotive and ethical dimensions of history teaching and learning is one of the key recommendations for quality history education in the 21st century. In this vein, Barton and McCully (2012) argue that the absence of an affective component from history teaching contributed to students' difficulties in engaging with the perspective of the other community in their studies despite a balanced curriculum in Northern Ireland. As we demonstrated, affect regulation via humour, empathy, and curiosity helped students deal with the contested past and was often a facilitator of cognitive strategies. The use of irony, which we also frequently observed, is also gaining attention in history education research. Namely, ironic understanding is regarded as a tool of cognitive flexibility that suspends the tendency to insist on a single truth when facing conflicting perspectives and opens students to a multi-faceted understanding of the past (Careterro, 2018; Wertsch, 2021).

In our research, students tried to build this multifaceted understanding by actively seeking meta-frameworks, restructuring ingroup image, appealing to humanistic moral norms and reflecting on their background. Thus, exposing students to the alternative minority narrative, with a cooperative task to create joint understanding out of two mirror perspectives, was enough to stimulate rich historical reasoning and a more complex representation of ethnic groups, even without scaffolding their discussions. This outcome, however, is not guaranteed in other comparatively similar situations across post-conflict societies, having in mind that we preselected participants, chose affectively less charged historical topics and focused on semantic promoters rather than barriers. It is likely that many young people fulfill their meaning-making needs by rigidly sticking to the ingroup perspective or uncritically engaging with popular content (e.g., intergroup conspiracy theories, Biddlestone et al., 2020).

Consequently, it is paramount that history education empowers young people to deal with the political and socially constructed nature of narratives. For instance, drawing on the strategies they spontaneously used could help us build evidence-based supportive teaching environments, as suggested in the dialogical teaching model (van Boxtel & van Drie, 2017). In other words, we could turn history classes into places of collaborative historical inquiry so that the goal is not a "transmission of ready-made representations or narratives but engaging students in dialogue about the

construction and evaluation of these representations" (van Boxtel & van Drie, 2017, p. 577). Therefore, we plan to build a communication manual that would rely on the promotive strategies we identified and offer them as educational materials that would facilitate historical dialogue.

To promote social cohesion in post-conflict and divided contexts, it is evident that history education should be interdisciplinary and diversified in terms of teaching methods, as an inclusive and balanced understanding of the past involves a complex interaction of emotions, identities, values and social discourses. An example of good practice is the collaboration of academic historians, social psychologists, history teachers, anthropologists and curriculum experts that resulted in recommendations for history teaching of intergroup conflicts (Psaltis et al., 2017b). We hope the promotive strategies we identify here could further inform existing recommendations and good practices in scaffolding young people towards developing more inclusive historical knowledge.

One could object to this idealized scenario, however, by noticing that, without redistributing power and resources within the educational system, introducing minority perspectives in textbooks and classrooms could have only limited effect on intergroup relations (see Skårås, 2021). While we acknowledge this important caveat, we argue that it could still be a positive change, especially in societies in which the system propagates the perspective of the majority ethnic group while silencing or ignoring alternative voices.

Limitations and Future Studies

Let us start with sample representativeness issues. We used theoretical sampling and strategically recruited the participants to be representative of the research question. The fact that we reached a theoretical saturation after the seventh pair - i.e. that we observed no new strategies in the new pairs we analysed - is further evidence of that. While some new lower-level strategies might emerge in the larger and more heterogeneous sample, the higher-order strategies (clusters of strategies) we identified are well-saturated across the pairs we analysed. However, our sample was not representative of the population of high school seniors. Thus, we cannot claim that the semantic promoters we identified would be present or equally frequent in the general population (of high schoolers). Future research should aim for more heterogeneous samples for making inferences about the frequencies of different semantic strategies in the general population. Second, we opted not to use the narratives about the most controversial historical events from the dissolution of former Yugoslavia in the 90s. Having in mind that highly-contested events may trigger more defensiveness and thus prevent perspective-taking (Bilali & Mahmoud, 2017; Todd & Galinsky, 2014), it is uncertain whether our findings would replicate with more sensitive historical events. Future studies could test this and consider scaffolding of peer discussions. Third, pairs of participants were in an affiliative relationship, which increased the

similarity between their positions and their motivation to reach an agreement, thus enabling us to focus more on how they manage differences between narratives. To increase initial asymmetries, future researchers could include the majority group members with different ideological backgrounds. Moreover, focusing on multiethnic pairs of majority and minority students would add one more layer of complexity to the interactions (e.g., Kolikant & Pollack, 2015), which we plan to test in future. Future research could also investigate minority members' reactions to competing historical perspectives, especially since they are under stronger societal pressure to accommodate the majority perspective. While gender differences in the interactions of our participants were beyond the scope of our paper, it could be relevant to explore if boys and girls prefer different promotive strategies or use them to a different extent (see Psaltis & Duveen, 2006). Lastly, we presented clusters of semantic promoters as considerably decontextualized - isolated from the dynamic nature of interaction. As we've already noted, semantic promoters and barriers were negotiated both between and within participants, leading to either transformation of positions or resistance. Hence, future studies should further explore semantic promoters and their outcomes as more nested in the flow of interaction.

Conclusion

Multi-perspective approaches exemplify how history education in post-conflict and divided societies could contribute to social cohesion instead of feeding further divisions. Our research can inform such history curricula as we explore how youth from the majority group experience it and how they interact with it. We demonstrate how, when asked to coordinate the conflicting majority and minority narratives, young majority group members manifested open-mindedness and creativity. To build a more inclusive version of events, they drew from a range of cognitive, affect-regulation, value-based and identity-related discursive strategies. We show that young people could be allies in making history education more multi-perspective due to their curiosity and openness to explore uncomfortable topics, which might come as a surprise for the older generations. As one Parisian teacher commented on the experience with a new textbook, "For teenagers today, it seems natural and interesting to have a Franco-German history textbook, but my grandmother is still horrified by it" (Gruber, 2006, p. 18).

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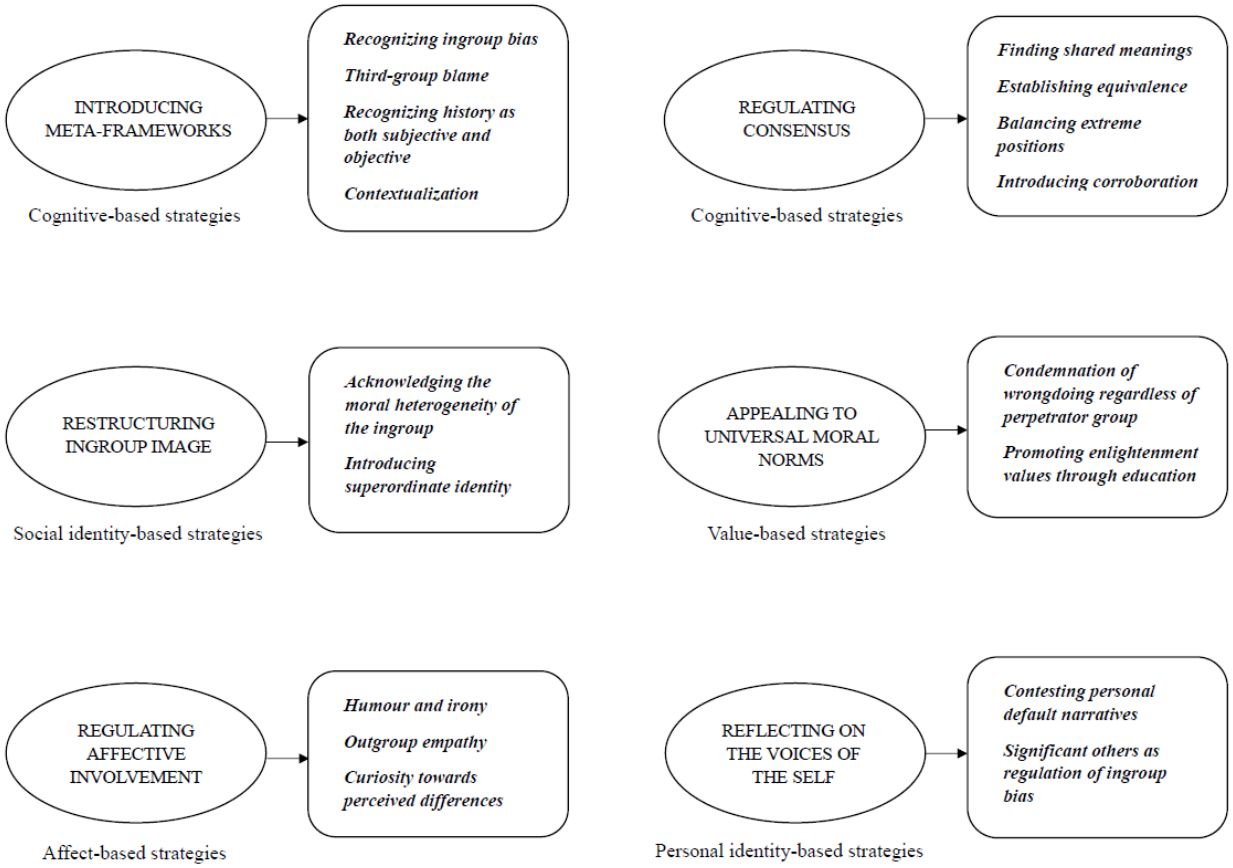

Figure 1. Semantic promoters identified in peer discussions