The relevance of salutogenesis to social issues besides health: The next challenge

PROF. SHIFRA SAGY
BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV
Can salutogenesis explain some of the problems created by the current political and social climate in many areas of our world?

How can we explain the increase of xenophobia and racism in our millennium?

Can we understand our world today of international strife by employing salutogenic concepts?
"Who copes successfully and stays healthy?"

"Who expresses more openness to the "other"? (a parallel pathogenic question will be who expresses racist attitudes towards the “other”).

"Who is a social activist who pursues justness in the world"?

"Who is a peacemaker? "
Since attitudes and behaviors towards the out-group are developed within one’s social context, the relationship between SOC and intergroup relations should be explored not only from the individual level but also in the supra-system context.
The SOCC is related to a specific in-group and not to the "global orientation of the world" as it is defined for individual SOC.

It constitutes the three components of SOC: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness (Sagy, 1998).

**Community comprehensibility** relates to the perception that life in one’s community is predictable, safe, and secure and that one’s community is a place which is known and understood.

**Community manageability** relates to the perception that one’s community can assist its members, is available to them, and meets their demands and needs.

**Community meaningfulness** relates to perception that the community gives meaning to its members, provides challenges, and is worthy of investment and engagement.
Indeed, most of the research which investigated the concept of CSOC has focused on its relationship with well-being and health. Few studies, however, have attempted to connect salutogenesis and SOC to other social concepts like intergroup relations, openness towards the "other" and readiness to reconcile (Mana, Sagy and Srour, 2016; Sagy, 2014; Srour, 2015). These studies, indeed, connect the salutogenic paradigm with other interdisciplinary models and concepts like social identity (Tajfel 1981), acculturation (Berry, 1990), conflict studies (Bar-Tal, 1998) or readiness for reconciliation (Nadler, 2014).
The salutogenic questions in these studies are:

- How does a collective with a strong SOC perceive, feel or behave towards the "other"?
- Is the tendency of a group to perceive its world as comprehensible, meaningful, and manageable related to greater openness to the "other", or does it involve clinging to the rigid in-group identity and less openness toward the "other"?
- Is an individual, a group, a collective or a system with a stronger SOC more likely to live in peace/justice/good relations with their surroundings?
Strong community sense of coherence (CSOC) was correlated with:

1. Higher levels of acceptance of the in-group collective narratives
2. Lower levels of acceptance of the out-group collective narratives.
3. Higher levels of a tendency to adopt a separation strategy between the two groups in conflict.
A. Jewish religious communities in Israel: ultra Orthodox and national religious Jews (Somech & Sagy, submitted). The ultra Orthodox community exhibited stronger CSOC than their counterparts but also stronger connection of CSOC with separation tendencies.

B. Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo. Similar results were found in this context concerning the community concept SOCC and openness towards the "other" group (Telaku and Sagy, forthcoming).
We cannot ignore the importance of NSOC as a salutogenic resource in maintaining health and well-being in times of threat and violence. But, at the same time, we cannot ignore that Sense of National Coherence could be at the expense of openness to the “other” and readiness to reconcile with your enemy.

Strong negative correlation between strong SONC and level of openness to the narrative of the "other" group among representative sample of Israeli-Jews.

Strong SONC was negatively related to readiness to reconcile with the "other" among Israeli Jewish students (Sagy and Sarid, 2015).

This tendency was even stronger after the Gaza War in the summer of 2014.
“It is wise to see models, theories and even ideas as heuristic devices, not as holy truths”.
Thank you!