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How Do We Educate for Peace? Study of narratives of Jewish and Palestinian peace activists

Zvi Bekerman

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, mszviman@mscc.huji.ac.il

Ifat Maoz

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, msifat@gmail.com

Mara Getz Sheftel

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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How Do We Educate for Peace? Study of narratives of Jewish and Palestinian peace activists

Abstract

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Keywords: *Jews and Palestinians, personal narratives of peace activists, social transformation*

Author Bio(s)

Zvi Bekerman, lectures in the School of Education, and is a researcher at the Truman Institute for Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He can be contacted at mszviman@mssc.huji.ac.il.

Ifat Maoz, is a social psychologist, a senior lecturer in the Communication department, and a researcher at the Truman Institute for Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Mara Getz Sheftel is the Communications and Development Associate at the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI). She is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Public Policy from the Hebrew University and holds a B.A. in International Relations from Northwestern University.

HOW DO WE EDUCATE FOR PEACE? STUDY OF NARRATIVES OF JEWISH AND PALESTINIAN PEACE ACTIVISTS

Zvi Bekerman, Ifat Maoz, Mara Sheftel

Abstract

The present analysis focuses on the personal narratives of peace activists, the facilitators of reconciliation-aimed dialogues between two ethno-national groups in a situation of asymmetrical conflict: Jews and Palestinians. It puts forward the idea that these peace activists bring a wealth of knowledge from their personal and professional narratives to bear on their strategies and practices of social transformation. We posit that foregrounding this knowledge through the analysis of these narratives not only affords a better understanding of their theoretical perspectives, their practices, aims and goals of social change but also can greatly contribute to our better understanding of peace education processes in general and in particular to a consideration of the ways peace activists experience and creatively deal with the dilemmas and challenges they confront in their transformational work.

Introduction

The present analysis focuses on the personal narratives of peace activists, the facilitators of reconciliation-aimed dialogues between two ethno-national groups in a situation of asymmetrical conflict. It puts forward the idea that these peace activists bring a wealth of knowledge from their personal and professional narratives to bear on their strategies and practices of social transformation. We posit that foregrounding this knowledge through the study of these narratives not only affords a better understanding of their theoretical perspectives, their practices, aims and goals of social change but also can greatly contribute to our better understanding of peace education processes in general and in particular to a consideration of the ways peace activists experience and creatively deal with the dilemmas and challenges they confront in their transformational work.

Theoretical Background

Ask almost anyone in Israel, Jew (Ashkenazi or Sephardic, right, center or left) or Palestinian (Moslem or Christians, right, center or left), if they wish for a peaceful coexistence and they will all answer a positive yes. The problem is that all three words 'peaceful' 'coexistence' and 'yes' are not always interpreted the same way, nor is their meaning reachable, even when agreed upon, through the same path. As with many (all) other words, these words are always in the way somewhere

and their meaning is shaped ever anew by the complex sociopolitical context in which they need to make sense.

Social scientists, policy makers, and peace activists have been working for the last three decades (Maoz, 2004; Weiner, 1998) to develop, test, and implement social transformation strategies which might help reconciliatory processes. Dialogical encounters are, for the most part, the preferred strategy to improve relations and mutual perceptions between groups in conflict (Bar-On & Kassem, 2004; Bar, Bargal, & Asaqla, 1995; Kelman, 1998; Salomon & Nevo, 2002). The use of facilitated transformative dialogue encounters between groups in conflict follows from the assumption that ethnopolitical conflicts tend to be accompanied by psychological phenomena such as mutual prejudice, delegitimization, and dehumanization (Bar-On & Kassem, 2004; Bar-Tal, 2000).

Of the many studies that have been conducted on transformative intergroup dialogues, the majority have focused on attitudinal change based on pre and post measures (Abu-Nimer, 1999; Bar, Bargal, & Asaqla, 1995; Gaertner, Dovidio, & Bachman, 1997; Wood & Soleitner, 1996) and have paid little attention to developmental issues. Only recently have qualitative methodologies started to be implemented towards a better understanding of transformative group processes and have subsequently offered insights into some of the characteristic practices and dynamics which develop in the dialogic events bringing into light power struggles and intrinsic and extrinsic influences (Bar-on, 1999; Bar-On & Kassem, 2004; Bekerman, 2002; Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004; Katz & Kahanov, 1990; Maoz, 2000; Maoz, 2004; Salomon & Nevo, 2002). But for one exception (Nevo, Salomon, & Brem, 2002) no studies have yet been undertaken to try and better understand the perspectives and goals of those so central to the intergroup encounter, the peace activists/facilitators who organize and lead them.

The present study, situated within a narrative and dialogical perspective, is innovative in that it focuses on the experiences, goals and perceptions of those who lead these transformative dialogues – the Jewish and Palestinian peace activists and group facilitators. Through their personal narratives we try to better understand their vicissitudes when involved in challenging intergroup activities, their potential to effect change in the relations between the sides involved, and the strategies they implement.

In many fields concerned with human experience, theoretical developments over the past few decades have become axiomatic, suggesting that people order their lives through narrative (Bruner, 1987, 1990; Freeman, 1993, 1997; MacIntyre, 1981; McAdams, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrative theory posits that individual and group existence are experienced and explained as a sequential story which combines multiple and complex paths of development (Josselson & Lieblich, 1993; Riessman, 1993). Narratives have also been conceptualized as exercising social control (Mumby, 1993) and as being instrumental in reproducing societal cultural constructs. Van Dijk (1993, 1996) envisions them as stories, episodic or situation models, or mental representations of events or actions taking place in a specific social situation. According to this theory, people continuously engage in the process

of rebuilding these models according to the constraints of context. These models play a role both during discourse production and in discourse comprehension.

Life is said to become explicit in stories (Widdershoven, 1993) and many scholars suggest we create ourselves and our identities through narratives (Fisher-Rosenthal, 2000; MacIntyre, 1981; McAdams, 1990). Bruner (1986) conceptualizes narratives as providing individuals with a map of possible roles and trajectories where actions become possible. Polkinghorne (1988) points at individual narratives as the elements which allow for the construction of a sense of being in present and future, while offering at a cultural level the option to create a sense of shared values and common beliefs.

Within the educational research literature there is a rather long tradition of investigation regarding teachers' characteristics and individual perceptions (Carnahan, 1980; Clandinin, 1989; Doyle & Carter, 2003). More recently educational scholars have shifted their interests to individual teachers' perspectives and understandings of educational processes and accordingly have begun to explore teachers' perceptions within more socially negotiated perspectives (Britzman, 1991; Casey, 1993; Chan, 2006; Marsh, 2002).

Though the subjects of our present paper are not what could traditionally be understood as teachers we will adopt a similar approach which we believe is justifiable on two accounts. First, when considering the existence of educational goals to be mediated (through information management), the participants and the social settings within which the encounters take place, peace activists' work as facilitators is in many ways similar to that undertaken by teachers in traditional educational settings. Second, the scarcity or total lack of research on the characteristics and individual perceptions of facilitators involved in transformative intergroup encounters makes it of utmost importance to try and better understand what those so central to the intergroup encounters perceive as their aims, tasks, and obstacles in the dialogic encounter world. Our overall efforts is geared towards better understanding these peace activists' own perception of encounters, given the cultural resources (Neuman & Bekerman, 2001) they have available to make sense of their work in the complex world in which it evolves.

Our interpretative efforts focus on the centrality of concepts such as discourse and power. By discourse we point at the historically, politically, and socially, generated patterns of speaking and acting upon which individuals draw so as to attain meaningful communication (Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 1999). Simultaneously we emphasize the study of relevant knowledge, ideologies and other socially shared beliefs which is crucial in describing many of the properties and social functions of discourse (Van Dijk, 2006).

By power we point at the relational phenomenon that is continually being constituted and reconstituted as individuals move in and out of particular sets of relations (Foucault, 1980). Stories have persuasive functions and contribute to the reproduction of knowledge, Beliefs, attitudes, ideologies, norms, or values of a group or of society as a whole help sustain a given order as they are used to inform people or to tell the code of institutions and their inherent power relations. Thus

stories become essential in the maintenance and legitimization of dominant power and ideologies.

The notions of dialogic meaning and heteroglossia developed by Bakhtin (1981) and his school can help us understand the multi-voiced nature of all communicative efforts. In his analysis Bakhtin explores the differences in a variety of speaking genres as a means to dialogue among disparate groups revealing how authors speak not through a unitary voice but rather through the multiple voices of his or her characters. In this sense dialogue is not something which only happens between people and with language but also something which 'essentially' takes place within people and the dialogues they sustain with their memory and experience – their previous interactions and social experiences. Bakhtin not only addresses the inner dialogue of an author as expressed in the heteroglossia of the novel but also points at the heteroglossia of an author and his epoch. This social heteroglossia also known as the inherently intertextuality and interdiscursive nature of social interaction is not only a feature of novelistic writing but a feature of the world as it is expressed in its every day activity (Billig, 1987; Todorov, 1984; Van Dijk, 1996). In our analysis we specially point at what we believe is uncovered in the peace activists /facilitators narratives with regard to the heteroglossia/intertextuality/interdiscursive nature of their accounts as these are generated and shaped in the context of Jewish-Palestinian relations of power. In short we try and point at the socio-historical resources with which each peace activist seems to dialogue when conceptualizing his transformational work.

Given the centrality of the socio-historical context to any understanding of inter-textual inter-discursive perspectives, in the following section we try to render a concise, yet incisive account of the present situation in Israel given its historical evolution.

The socio-political context

Currently the Palestinian population within the internationally recognized borders of Israel is 20% and the Jewish citizens account for about 78% of the population (Israel, 2001) of Israel. Approximately 10% of the Palestinian population of Israel lives in mixed cities (in mostly segregated neighborhoods), while the majority of Palestinian Israelis live in segregated villages or small cities (Ghanem, 2001).

Since its inception, as is clearly stated in its Declaration of Independence, Israel has been committed to full political and social equality for all its citizens irrespective of their religion or ethnic affiliation. Still, even the Israeli government acknowledges that it has not been fully successful in implementing this ideal and has, for the most part, implemented segregationist policies towards its non-Jewish minorities. These policies have only recently began to be challenged in the courts of justice (Gavison, 2000).

These separatist policies were, for the most part, ad hoc arrangements, products of the military emergencies which accompanied Israel's development from the beginning of the Zionist colonializing process over one hundred years ago.

Though the outcomes are varied, they are most visible not only on residential arrangements but also on educational segregated systems (Rouhana, 1997).

The relationships between Palestinians and Jews within Israel have been strongly influenced by the Palestinian Israeli conflict which, in turn, has profoundly influenced the formation of Palestinian identity within the borders of the Israeli state. The Palestinian presence in the State of Israel and the awakening of Palestinian national consciousness has complicated the seemingly natural construct of the Israeli nation. The Jewish-Palestinian conflict remains the most explosive conflict in Israel, placing the Jewish majority and the Palestinian (primarily Muslim) minority at perpetual odds.

The development of Palestinian identity in Israel has gone through various stages tightly connected to their sense of citizenship and the situation of the Israeli state in international politics. In the years after the 1948 war, Palestinians were perceived as a threat by Jewish Israel, and suffered from military governance with its many restrictions on their civil rights. All Palestinian municipal, educational, social, and religious institutions were supervised to prevent the emergence of centers of power (Ghanem, 2001; Rekhess, 1988). Such supervision, though somewhat relaxed, continues today. Since 1967, with the incremental abolishment of the military governance, major changes have taken place. Today Palestinian Israelis have gathered enough strength to be able to challenge the Israeli Jewish hegemony while changing their self-identity from Israeli-Arab to Palestinian (Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004; Rouhana, 1998; Suleiman, 2004). This process of change was supported by the uprising of their brethren in the conquered territories. In spite of the structural differences which limit their civil rights, constraining them to a position of second class citizens by denying them equal access to economic, political, and social resources, most Palestinians in Israel say they would rather stay in Israel than move to a Palestinian state if one were established (Smootha, 1998). Palestinians in Israel experience Israel as a Jewish "ethnic" state, and not a democracy (Ghanem, 1998; Rouhana, 1998) and from their perspective Israel is a colonizing state which confiscated their lands (Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis, 1995). For the most part, Israel's ethnic democracy (Smootha, 1996) has not welcomed the political, cultural or social participation of groups outside of its legitimate, imagined, community (Anderson, 1991) of Jews. Palestinian-Israelis, though officially offered full rights as citizens, have chronically suffered as a putatively hostile minority with little political representation and a debilitated social, economic and educational infrastructure (Ghanem, 1998). While structurally the communities reflect a sharp asymmetry, their perceptions of the situation are similar. Both sides believe they have a monopoly on the objective truth of the conflict and on the identification of the perpetuating villain. These perceptions undermine the prospects for conflict resolution (Bar-Tal, 1990, 1998).

Methods

Population

Of the 24 peace activist-facilitators interviewed 12 were Palestinians and 12 Jewish. All participants interviewed have a rather long standing experience working, for the most part in full time positions, in inter-group Palestinian Jewish encounters in established organizations. Of the Palestinians five were male and seven female, and among Jews four were male and eight female. All Palestinians were born in the recognized boundaries of Israel and out of the 12 Jews three males and four females immigrated to Israel. All facilitators held at least a bachelors degree mostly in the areas of the humanities and the social sciences. The youngest interviewee was 27 years old and the oldest 55. The facilitators were interviewed between October 2004 and May 2005 in the framework of a research project conducted at the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and led by the first two authors. The central aim of the project was to reassess the potential benefits of inter-group encounters aimed at peace education. All of the peace activists were facilitators involved in dialogue initiatives conducted by a variety of private institutions for high school. These seminars partially supported by the Ministry of education run from one to three days and are conducted in retreat settings. All facilitators had participated in training programs offered by the same institutions responsible for the encounters programs which run weekly sessions for a period that usually extends between 3 or 4 months to one school year.

The research team included the three authors and five advanced students in areas related to peace education, and conflict resolution (two Israeli-Jews, 1 Palestinian, 2 Germanii).

Methodology

In-depth interviews of one to two hours in length were conducted with participants in English at a location of their choice. One interview was conducted in German at the request of the interviewee. All interviews were recorded and carefully transcribed for analysis. A grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was utilized stressing the importance of discovering theories, concepts, hypothesis, and propositions directly from the data rather than from a priori assumptions or an existing theoretical framework.

The transcripts were analyzed according to conventional qualitative methods (Mason, 1996; Silverman, 1993). Our first interpretative efforts were monitored through peer debriefing, paying special attention to the ways in which we, as researchers, allowed or hindered preliminary coding to be influenced by our prior expectations or theoretical inclinations. We carefully analyzed the data, looking for patterns and thematic issues of relevance, which were then coded as to allow for further analysis. The first codification, prepared independently by each of the researchers involved, raised multiple categories which needed to be narrowed

down for further analysis. A second reading of all the recorded materials allowed us to systematically reduce the categories by combining like terms and eliminating redundant ones. High levels of agreement between the coders were reached after thorough discussions (Glassner & Loughlin, 1987). In the present manuscript, so as to enable a more fluid reading of the texts cited from the interviews, we have at times slightly changed the citations from the transcripts. In our following "findings" section we present first rather long excerpts from two interviews (first a Jewish interview and then a Palestinian one) which we judge to be exemplary as they allow in depth analysis of the structures and strategies that manipulate the attitudes, ideologies, norms and values that are ultimately in the interest of the dominant group. This consequently shows the relevance of a socio-cognitive interface between narrative discourse and dominance allowing a parallel between macro-level notions such as group dominance and inequality and micro-level notions as text, talk, meaning and understanding. Following this section we mention in short how our full analysis of all interviews support these first findings.

Findings

In our interviews we asked participants to share with us what we conceptualized as being two trajectories a personal and a professional one. We hoped to find interlacing conceptualizations and similarities and differences at the individual level, within national/ethnic groups and across these groups. The results of our research validated our expectations and hopefully these findings will be demonstrated to flow from the narratives our participants offered more than from our own imposition. In qualitative approaches, those that follow the line of ethnographic inquiry closely connected to the anthropological tradition - the discipline of the anecdotal veto- generalization is anathema. Still we have chosen to focus at first on two narratives, one Palestinian and one Jewish, belonging to two male interviewees, relatively similar in age, education, training and experience in the educational inter-group encounter field. Our analysis of all the interviews generated, added to our rather long experience of inquiry in the field of inter-group encounters, cause us to believe that the themes raised in their accounts are in many ways representative of the experiences shared by many other facilitators involved in these educational initiatives.

A Jewish Trajectory

Yaron seems to be a 'prototypical Zabar' (the 'new Jew' of the Zionist revolution). He was born in Ramat Gan (in the coastal central part of Israel) over thirty years ago. His mother was a teacher in a segregated Jewish high school and his father was a high ranking army officer (a pilot in the Israeli aviation force). Both of Yaron's parents were born in Kibbutzim and both left at a rather early age. Yaron defines them as being "very Zionist" because "of the way they were brought up." The family included two younger children, a sister and a brother. Yaron spend a year in the USA with his family; "my father was send to study there at the marine

academy in Washington..." and except for this fact Yaron considers his childhood as "very normal, I guess Israeli way, kinda in a city, uh school, high school (line, 23)...I got the same kind of um Zionist affection from them (the parents)...I imagine school was less um dogmatic...but I still was on the same direction....there was no question of becoming an officer in the army (lines, 29-32)"

Yaron politically characterizes his family as "center left" and remembers the traditional family gatherings with his uncles and aunts, "it was always politics on the table." He is somewhat critical of their position: "from where I see it now, (they had) very close opinions...nothing radical (lines, 34-39)." In the nineties Yaron joined the army, and he quickly mentions that he only spent "a short period when I was sent to the occupied territories for three weeks (lines, 46-47)." Prior to this stint in the occupied territories, Yaron had been in flight school for a year but had not succeeded to become a pilot as his father had. During the three weeks in the territories Yaron was asked to take upon himself some military tasks a check point that made him feel uncomfortable, "I was unprepared perhaps...and I started asking questions (line, 56)." Luckily he was moved to another setting which allowed this uncomfortable sentiment to "kinda fade away (line, 66)." Yaron stayed in the army for five years becoming an officer. "I was in the army until '96, I spent five and half years there. But from '94 it was the Oslo period and all that talk and I um, I stopped, when I finished my military service I thought that I want to be involved in the peace process. Like I was always, I was always uh, taught, or to think about Israel and about the State and about society and this seemed like the most interesting thing happening and um and I would even say to myself that the same as my father went to the army twenty, thirty years ago for that reason then I'm going to work for the State, on peace. This is like the most important thing to do (lines, 75-83)." In order to do this, Yaron decided to study Middle Eastern Studies at Tel Aviv University where he also studied Arabic.

Yaron, though he had encountered Palestinians at check points during his army service, mentions that until he reached university he had never actually met Palestinians: "I understood that I had never met a Palestinian, I had never met an Arab and that was kinda a revealing thought for me. Um, I think like the left is, the left political wing is thought to think about the, I mean it's very clear that they are other, uh and they have very negative, um, um, like um, marks on them, negative, um characteristics...yeah, characteristics. Um. Like Oriental. All that kind of, the way Europeans look at um, Arabs. Yeah. Um. People are very politically correct but basically I think, yeah (lines 85-103)." He mentioned making a couple of "clumsy attempts" to meet Palestinians at the University and that through an advertisement posted at the university decided to join a facilitators course for intergroup encounters in order to meet Palestinians in a formal setting.

Yaron was profoundly impacted by this facilitators' course and it was through this course that he realized that the Palestinians are "not something that can be wiped under the carpet" and began to perceive himself as previously being "kinda of a fascist (line 131)." Only at this point does Yaron start to understand the power of the "Palestinian identity...the existence of it (till this point) I was thinking

in terms of equality like...I think...most of the left wing in Israel used to talk...I was going through an amazing experience (lines, 135-138)." Yaron's first experience at the facilitators course was transformative: "it was perhaps a mirror on my society, in general of the way ...I idealized the state...I saw people who live in the same area and think totally different...I remember their stories about the Shabak (the Israeli security services)...my father was in the army...it brought things about Israel being a ...moral society...I started going politically into a period where I didn't have any answers...I was very uncomfortable with Zionism and I was ...(lines 158-170)."

In the next section of the interview Yaron relates to the educational activities he conducted after he finished the facilitation training period. He shortly tells about the high school intergroup encounters he facilitated and describes their basic structure. He is very clear about what truly interests him in the intergroup dialogues. "Yeah. I'm mostly interested in the Jewish group um so that's, when I say it was a good workshop it means that uh, I felt that the Jewish group that I was working with uh was able to understand (the right questions), the important, the important thing I want to do is to help them start the process that I passed. Uh, looking back at their identity, understanding that uh, (I mean) stop living in the way that I lived up until the age of 26 (lines, 224-231)."

The uni-national meetings conducted during encounter seminars seem to be the component of the seminars that in Yaron's view, best serve his goals. During these sessions, participants are able to open up and question things that otherwise might go unstated, for example, considerations regarding the possibility of having a Jewish democratic state and the Law of Return (which offers immediate citizens rights to Jews immigrating to Israel). Yaron emphasizes that Jewish participants coming to these activities have little knowledge about some very central facts and that central to the activity is "letting them know about all these things (line, 44)." He mentions specifically the fact that while participants initially oppose the "right of return" (the right of refugee Palestinians to return to their lands taken in the 1948 war) they know little about what this is. Furthermore during the 'simulation' – one of the final activities in the seminar where Palestinians and Jews discuss the future of the state of Israel after peace has been achieved – while rather easily accepting the return of Palestinians the Jewish participants soon realize this would mean the end of the Jewish State and then reconsider their positions. It is this reflective process – aided by the facilitators – which Yaron believes to be the central contribution of the intergroup seminar toward Jewish participants.

Yaron also believes Palestinian participants have what to gain but he raises this issue only when asked about an opportunity when 'things' at the seminar do not go well. "... basically it's a very strong, it's a very good technique (the seminar) uh, it's a very good uh, but I think sometimes, uh like first of all the problem is there is a difference in the group in terms of education, or, I don't want to use the word mentality but I'll use it because I can't find another...(lines, 252-257)." Yaron tries to better explain the misused word and adds "(the) Palestinian group was... had a, had a very hard time expressing themselves. Perhaps it was the kids in the class who

were not very bright or uh, the questions they were asked to think about were also very new to them. Like, the possibility of changing the nature of the State was something they had never even been asked (lines, 259-262)." He believes Christian Palestinians want to melt into the Israeli Jewish society and that in general "The Jewish group gets frustrated because the two groups are at different places. The Jews are all ready to go into dialogue of conflict and the Palestinian group is not, doesn't, needs some more time uh, to stabilize its identity (lines, 277-280)." Yaron realizes the complexities of co-facilitating with Palestinian peers. He is an exception in that he speaks rather fluent Arabic, though he is aware that his Arabic literacy is limited and that he cannot understand everything, especially when colloquialisms are in central to the discussion. Still his situation is better than that of many other facilitators, most of whom do not understand Arabic at all and are embarrassed to "ask for translation" throughout the seminar, especially at the end of the seminar when the final arguments are made by the facilitation team. He well understands this asymmetry, which in his view primarily affords the Palestinian facilitator a more central place in the educational process, for he is doing most of the talking – both translating for the Jews and facilitating for the group as a whole.

Yaron believes that Jewish facilitators bare a "guilt factor" and that in their relations to their groups the Jewish and Palestinian facilitators do not share the same lot. "The Palestinian facilitator would be much more comfortable uh defending the Palestinian group. While the Jewish facilitator usually kind of wants to, to shape the Jewish group. He would be sometimes uncomfortable, there are times when he has to defend the group (lines, 323-326)." When asked for an example he mentions "If things are said, you know, in tone that is not uh appropriate or people are being accused in a () minutes where you have to, and I think it is much easier for (Palestinians) to do that work and to, Jewish they always have problems, they are not sure (lines, 328-331)."

A more specific example offered relates to language use in the encounters "Language for instance, we have this thing that we always when we have uh bi-national group we would start by speaking Arabic to the audience. This is kind of to shake the power relations from the beginning. And uh what happens usually to a Jewish audience that comes to a room and suddenly hears a lecture in Arabic, in other words from two minutes up to ten minutes, it is very disturbing. Sometimes I think there is a place for uh, I mean you shouldn't, you shouldn't go too much with that. I mean you should put a, perhaps explain sometime, translate, and on the one side its common that its uh, it's the right of the Palestinian facilitators to speak in Arabic. It's their right. On the other hand if they speak in Arabic most of the Jewish facilitators will not understand (lines, 334-346)."

Later in the interview Yaron mentions some other problems he perceives in some of the encounters. "Generally, yeah. If there was a lot of kind of like this is something that is kind of very common, the Palestinian boys would kind of, sometimes, would not be very, would be very compromising and like, and usually with uh Jewish girls (lines, 372-375)."

Yaron ends the interview recollecting on his own present situation "I'm not a Zionist any more, My vision is of a bi-national state. So personally I have changed a lot....it happened in the Intifda...having Palestinain friends telling me somebody died in the village (lines, 405-412)." But he adds "I still do reserve army service...I wouldn't go to the west bank but I still do reserve army service (lines 418-431)."

A Palestinian Trajectory

Khalid seems to be a 'prototypical Palestinian' born in the 'Jewish Democratic' State of Israel. He was born to a family with twelve children (six boys and six girls), in a rather big Palestinian segregated village in the north of Israel where "I finished high school...more or less my life was around that town and the school there (lines, 17-19)". During the school holidays he used to work "for Jewish farmers and other times in construction also in Jewish towns and neighborhoods (lines, 20-21)." Under these conditions he first crossed the limits of his home town. He summarizes his early encounters with Jews by saying, "I mentioned earlier I started to work when I was really young...and sometimes going to some of the nearby cities for fun...that was my day-to-day encounter with the Jews when basically this encounter was asymmetric, unequal...if it was at work so...well the Jews was to be the boss and...I was the worker or even going to, you know, to-to any place just to have fun it have never been like really...like a feeling of you have...to keep down the all the time and at one time I really had very not nice racist occasion that...like it was a slash in my face, like a/ you know, like a t-to know who you are and where you are, in which country, who you are dealing with so that was like my first shock I think that when I was maybe fourteen or fifteen this happened to me (lines, 54-63)".

The racist event Khalid mentions is too long to include in its entirety in this text. It relates to an incident that occurred while spending a day at the beach, in which a Jewish person stole his dog from him. What is central to his narrative is what he seems to have understood from this event: "(the lifeguard) refused to help us...it was a shock for me that all these people around, nobody cared ...and all of them were ready to help this guy steal my dog...(lines, 95-99)".

Khalid relates a second encounter with the Jews, one although unrelated to Khalid's specific encounter, which our previous interviewee also implied. "In (my village) it's like a big high school of it was only one high school and so the whole town went to this high school... and I was the head of the student's council and a guy from the town came to my father and said: well, listen, this guy from the Shabak (Israeli Secret Service), from the secret services wants to talk to your son, Khalid, and I suggest that he talks to him because he's a nice guy, he can help...I don't think that you can really refuse because he can be hurt if you refuse but he also can help Khalid...his name is Avi, and he was/ and his nickname is Abu Suleiman, he's Ashkenazi and he spoke Arabic better than me...my older brother had the honor to know Avi as well (and) my father was really scared because he wanted (Avi) talk older brother (to meet with Avi) although my older brother did not agree to... my older brother was not able to get into university... I believe

because he did not have good scores, good grades. My father still believes that because the Shabak ... (my father) he's from the generation of the Naqbe, of the catastrophe of forty-eight, so this is why he's very afraid and still has the memories of the Diaspora and maybe of the ... So my father spoke... You do whatever you want (he said) but I understood that my father wants me to meet with him, with this guy, because he is afraid that this guy can hurt me... one day, one winter day at two o'clock after midnight this guy from the town came to our house, knocked at our door, we were all asleep... my father was really he didn't know who's knocking ... and was this guy from the town. And my father says: What do you want? And he said: I came to take Khalid to meet with Abu Suleiman, with Avi. And (my father) said: Why now? It's (two o'clock?) And he said: Well, it's better now, nobody sees us, it's not good that people see us going together to this guy. He convinced my father that it's the best time and I felt kind of a I was already prepared, by some of my friends, little older friends who had such, like relatively similar experience, so I said: Well, I'll go! A-and I'll see what it leads to. I was seventeen years old (lines, 132-171)". The meeting, described by Khalid, includes all that can be expected from a meeting with the secret service. A somewhat dark small room, good and bad guys, a long interrogation and many more details which would make Hollywood films sound real. It took place in an "Arab house... in Haifa" and Khalid characterizes the investigation as "a very sophisticated one (and) kind of romantic scary... following the path of the stick and the carrot." He is told by Avi in great detail some of his daily activity with peers, girls, and even details of conversations "We can know everything!" Avi says. Avi just wants Khalid to cooperate in exchange he offers help with Khalid's studies, finding work, and even an allowance. Khalid ends this story joking about this, his first encounter with the state: "So, this was my first serious encounter with Jewish people at fifteen (the stolen dog), this was (laughs) my first encounter with the State of Israel as-as an institution, when I was seventeen (lines, 321-323)."

All in all Khalid is well aware that his own group cooperates in creating the sense that "Arabs are less" he says "Whenever a Jew came to my town, one of my relatives or my neighbors, or whatever, no matter who he is or she is and what qualifications they have or how clever they are, how stupid they are, or whatever everybody will feel obliged to satisfy them. They'll make like everything to make this Jewish guests satisfied. And you will find a whole neighbourhood busy satisfying him and everybody would come to say hello to them and shake their hands. So, it's like God came to your neighborhood, if you have relations to Jewish people you are considered to be important person, you have... you have relations, you are connected. And no matter who... who this Jewish is. So this, all this feel as if or if you know how to speak Hebrew, you are considered to be significant. Even if you worked for a Jew, ok, as a black worker, no matter what and you said every morning: Good morning/ good morning, Sir... Ok, we used to say adoni (master/sir). To-to when we worked for them I would say adoni. That's the word we used. You were considered to be benefited because you have these contacts. So all

of them messages you get through your life experience, that you're worth less than you are one ...one class below and...(lines, 350-365)."

Khalid also had other encounters with Jews in the form of organized Palestinian-Jewish encounters, which he participated in while at school. These encounters were offered by the NGO where he was ultimately trained as a facilitator before he started his university studies of Sociology and Education. His recollections of these seminars are very positive, not so much because of the Jews in them but because of the self-realization that Palestinians need not only represent serfdom. He recounts, "And I was very enthusiastic through this project, wanted very much to become a facilitator. I adored the facilitators. I had the feeling that they have a lot of power and especially the Palestinian facilitators, they were kind of personality. I liked the way I grew out of-of being non-personality in front of...of a Jew. And I saw then that, you know, they are fluent in Hebrew they are self-confident they had a say about everything happening and they lead sometimes and that was total, you know, total out of (?) for me (lines, 31-38)." Later Khalid was invited to participate in a facilitators' course at the NGO. He liked the idea of this opportunity and justifies his choice with the following: "Of course, that was kind of a dream for me at that time just to be out of the town and-and be by myself for the first time, I grew in big family we are twelve children. Six boys and six-six boys and six girls. I never had a-a room of myself I never even had, you know like a cupboard of myself to put my things, my clothes and...so the idea of having a room by myself without having to share it with somebody else and be away from my parents and be independent (lines, 453-49)."

A year after finishing the facilitators' course and with some experience working in the encounters Khalid started studying at a university and again tells of encounters with Jews during this latter period in his life. Khalid comments on the fact that university studies are considered "our army service" and adds that the focus of the first year of university of any Palestinian student "is English without which there is no chance to continue." Because of the experience he gained through the facilitators' course, his English, and almost more importantly, his Hebrew were better than most other Palestinian university students. Khalid notes that he formed more friendships with American Jews than with Israeli Jewish students because by this time making friends with "Israelis" was becoming very difficult for him. Not having Israeli Jews as friends at the university meant that he did not have the opportunity to get classroom notes from those for whom the class was conducted in their native language (OR mother tongue), Hebrew. The notes were necessary because Kahlid had to make as much time in his schedule in order to work to financially support his studies.

Khalid believes Jews respected him at the university. "I'll tell...so they have this kind of feeling of *yirat kavod* of respect kind of a respect fear, ok, I and... I think for many of them, for most of them it was unusual to meet Palestinian Arab and it was during the time I was living here and, yeah, I became secretary general of the community here, so I was really, I have like a strong self-esteem. And I would behave at university like I behaved here, I give orders to everybody here and kind of

boss here (lines, 458-462)." But this experience of relative power is accompanied by other experiences better known to Khalid from his past "I think stories like this tells this how-how these things work, so in one of my classes I...one of the guys who was every morning was sitting next to me and we never really had chance to talk, maybe good morning, that's more or less I don't really have much time...and this guy came to me and said: Good morning, how are you, how you fell today? and so on – ok, good, ok, I thought he was wondering... he's trying to, you know to open conversation with me or make me relaxed because maybe he thinks I'm tense of the situation (because it was immediately after a bomb exploded in the cafeteria of the university) or, you know... I have an old hebushit, (old Volkswagen) and I want to renovate it and people told me there are good garages in Wadi Choz (garage area in east Jerusalem). Do you know them? And I was think if I look at him like, you know... I continue to drink. See, no, I'm I thought maybe you know, you have contact, maybe you can you know take me to somebody and... I'm looking at him, again. No, I'm sorry, I didn't really mean it, I just, you know, I just wanted to have coffee with you and....(I thought) an Arab for him was the garage, you know? Ok, so when he saw my face, he saw a garage ...he saw a person, he's saying but of course he did not mean like, you know, this things happens without any intention, you know, but he thought like I would be the garage person, I am the person to take him to the garage, to a cheap garage or whatever but without not it doesn't meet the expectations, doesn't meet that stereotypical Arab Palestinian...(lines, 482-496)." Khalid also reflected on his perceptions in the encounters he facilitates. He finds it difficult to explain why he believes them to be transformative: "It's very difficult for me to describe (line, 552)." Still, in spite of this difficulty to articulate the process he says, "I want people to have in their way an experience ...a chance of an experience kind of what I have gone through (lines, 555-556)." He surprisingly sounds ambivalent about the outcomes "is it enough that they become empowered? because I can see also by the end of an encounter the Arab-Palestinian students are very frustrated. They say: "We came here, we talked, nothing has changed, we go back to the same situation. But at the same time they tell about very much satisfaction from the encounter, so it's frustration and satisfaction at the same time (lines, 560-565)." This ambivalence regarding the effects of the encounter brings him to consider his future. He begins this section of the interview by saying: "By the way the Palestinian community in Israel is very tribal community, until today (line 567)." He indicates that in the future "I think it's a time when I will feel secure enough to initiate things to lead things, (I will) open an NGO to do some activities of empowerment, of teaching colonialism...(and) English as a foreign language(lines, 581-583)." He believes Jews are more transformed by the educational process or at least those that work as facilitators. As evidence he mentions a few of his Jewish acquaintances who have changed their lives , for example by becoming professionally involved in the sphere of peace education or by becoming 'Refusniks' and refusing to serve in the army. He also shared with us his experience of traveling to the United States in order to raise money for his organization. Khalid relates that once, after making a plea for financial support to

Diaspora Palestinians, he was asked rhetorically if he expected their already limited funds to go to his NGO or to a children's medical clinic in the Jabalyah refugee camp. Khalid's answer was clear, it followed from his perception that his Palestinian brothers in the Palestinian Authority were the first priority, it was clear to him that the medical clinic in Jabalyah more desperately needed the support than his organization.

Other Jewish and Palestinian narratives (the other interviews)

As stated at the opening of this section, we believe these interviews to be somewhat representative of the facilitators we interviewed. We want now to offer some substantiation for this belief.

Each of the facilitators had very different experiences meeting with individuals of the other group. However all but one of our Jewish interviewees related similar stories emphasizing that their first meeting with Palestinians took place rather late in life or in sporadic events when because of their parents' profession they met Palestinians working for them. Palestinian interviewees had for the most part experienced similar encounters to the ones related to by Khalid (or heard about them from relatives) and this point is strengthened by Yaron mentioning during his interview having heard similar stories from his Palestinians colleagues at work.

None of the Palestinian facilitators reported on an early visit neither to any foreign country, nor as stated above, had any of them immigrated to Israel. On the other hand more than half of the Jewish facilitators indicated having a 'multicultural' experience in a foreign country when explaining their first interest in the inter-group encounters.

Almost all of our Jewish interviewees mention going through a transformative experience the moment they join the corps of intergroup facilitation. This transformation seems to center around the raising of doubts regarding the Zionist grand-narrative which they had become socialized to through schooling and or youth groups in Israel or the Diaspora. A few of our Jewish interviewees make mention in their interviews of the fact that they perceive differences between the Jews and the Palestinians attending the programs (or more generally regarding their communal-social organization). To the Jewish participants, Palestinians, for the most part, are thought of as being more traditional and somewhat lacking skills. The term 'mentality' is used to describe this difficult to define, but clearly sensed, 'cultural' difference. At times, Palestinian interviewees agree with these characterizations.

Almost all (indifferent of their national/ethnic affiliation) our interviewees pointed at the uni-national (ethnically segregated) activities as the ones considered to be the most important in the educational process.

Moreover they all seem to consider the effects of the inter-group encounter as one which deals with cognitive aspects related to better understandings of their present situations, identity reconsiderations and at times modification, and the learning of historical facts. Moreover, and in lines with our mentioning of the

cognitivist disposition of the interviewees, all facilitators seem to adhere to an individualistic perspective in terms of educational processes. The goal of the process is influencing the individual 'mind,' despite the declared aim of some of the Palestinian facilitators that their goal is to strengthen group identities. Still Palestinian facilitators, when asked what might need to be added to the present educational process, tend to mention practical activities as if pointing in the direction of some real political/social work/activity and not just more cognitive exercising. All in all, Jewish interviewees seem for the most part happier with the outcomes of the educational process for the Jewish participants than Palestinian facilitators for Palestinian participants.

Discussion

Being a Palestinian in Israel is not easy. Characterizing the narratives represented above as asymmetric might be a gross understatement. Khalid's story is not one of asymmetry but one of dispossession. Palestinians in Israel suffer from very deep structural constraints which impede their development in all ways of life and prevent them even from easily holding to a respectful self appreciation. If at all, outside of their immediate segregated context Palestinians still lack spheres of trust and support in order to develop any confidence in a better future. Jews on their side, as many other majorities, can be blind to any 'otherness.' This, in itself, could bring into question the potential relevance of cognitive educational approaches to change when the very basic structures are unsupportive of the change envisioned by good willed facilitators.

Our Jewish facilitators are indeed critical and reflective, but even so, their discourse is infiltrated by meanings they themselves realize are not appropriate. For example, Yaron is well aware that 'mentality' is not a fitting description of differences between the Jewish group and the Palestinian group, but common use, the cultural resources within which his language evolves, the authorial dictates of Zionist and psychologized perspectives serve him the words he regrets but is unable to find an alternative for. Similarly Yaron mentions the 'Israeli way' as a non inclusive category related to Jewish Israelis. These details are not unimportant as it is in the banality (Billig, 1995) of every day practices where dispositions are found, and not in the heads of individuals. Yaron tells us also about Palestinian facilitators having in a sense an easier task. At the declarative level they do indeed, the setting of the transformative intergroup encounter offers the opportunity to shake at least discursively the grand Zionist narrative. Yaron is part of this setting and he supports this ideological aim, but even when doing so he mentions that the Jewish facilitator has the difficult task to defend the Jewish narrative perspective. In an educational situation with adolescents this might sound like a good strategy, no one deserves to be fully denied specially when considering that the educational system in its totality, outside of the intergroup encounters, denies this emancipatory perspective. This being agreed upon, still we need to confront the fact that even in the most ideological emancipatory settings (the intergroup encounters) the hegemonic forces

hold the floor. Yaron does fear to prejudice the well-being of young Jews confronted with a strong critique of what till then was for them an undeniable justifiable 'truth' (the right of the state of Israel to exist as Jewish). Moreover we need to consider that this fact seems to go unaccounted for by the most experienced facilitators.

Similarly, but this time much more critically articulated, we need give attention to Yaron's description of the use of Hebrew and Arabic in the seminars. Yaron is one of the few Jewish facilitators who knows Arabic, but he does acknowledge that in the seminar 'game' Arabic and its use, though having the potential to make a point with the Jewish participants, risks also losing the game and the little that might be otherwise achieved by exhausting or upsetting the potential beneficiaries of the educational activity, the Jews. The hegemonic context is indeed powerful and overcomes even well intended declared emancipatory activities. The fact that a critical Zionist as Yaron seems to be, does not pay attention to this paradoxical situation might indicate his own imprisonment (still) within hegemonic thinking.

Yaron, in the interview offers evidence of his own transformation from an uncritical, politically-correct, traditional-liberal-left Israeli into a non-Zionist. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of this statement but there are places in the interview which open up the opportunity to question the meaning of his position. He still performs reserve army duties (though not in the conquered territories). Does this mean that his position reflects an understanding of the problems of the Zionist ideology as one related only to the Palestinians outside of the internationally recognized territories of the state of Israel? Or does he mean he sees no problem participating in the (almost only Jewish) army because he expects at some point Palestinians living in Israel to accept it as a civic duty? Not addressing these issues should be considered problematic at least at the level of those involved in directing the educational activity.

Yaron points, although not in a fully clear extent, to the Palestinian boys as creating some problems during the seminar in their approach to (flirt with) the Jewish girls. The use of the words "would be very compromising and like....and usually with uh Jewish girls" lead us to believe the issue in mind relates to endogamy as a preferred mating option. Even if this is not fully clear in the context of Yaron's statement we want to point through this example at the lack of clarity that exists regarding the preferred outcomes of the educational process for it to be successful in the eyes of our facilitators. In this case both Jewish and Palestinian facilitators, rather than pointing at some cognitive expected change – the Palestinians looking for the strengthening of the groups identity and the Jews in search of a core critical approach which would pave the way for a more just society – find it difficult to articulate exactly what they envision as a successful result of their educational effort. Even if we say they do this, a solution based mostly on equity (clearly not a bad starting option) which seems to work in lines with the intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954), the theoretical perspective stresses dysfunctional human relationships as causal factors of sectarianism in inter-group

conflict rather than historical forces of malign political forces (Cochrane and Dunn 2002). As such this solution falls short in its articulation of how individual behaviors are to be sustained in their every day activities.

At this point contact theories deal for the most part with prejudice reduction and majority/minority group relations and not with overall future interactional societal developments among individuals in groups in conflict. Given these theoretical focus on inter-group relations we need consider that the encounters, while acting as if persuaded by these paradigms, deal with living individuals who in-their-way-somewhere consider not only group relations but also individual relations. Similar issues have been raised in coexistence theorizing. Kriesberg (1998) posits that coexistence is an open concept that "leaves a great deal of room for various forms of relations," (p.183) and Bar-Tal (2004) recognizes the vagueness and indistinctiveness of the concept and the fact that it pertains only to minimal positive intergroup relations.

Khalid's story in contrast to Yaron's story needs not encounter alterity nor be in search of it after some transformative experience (as is the case of Yaron after his three week service at the check post). Khalid's becoming is conditioned by the 'others' denial and is shaped in dialogue with it. For Khalid joining the encounters professionally is not only finding a spot in a vastly racist society to find solace, respect, and recognition, or as in the Jewish case a place where to put some reality to liberal ideology, but a place to find a better 'material' lot. He can be better off but only in the place where at least declaratively he is involved in bettering Jewish-Palestinian relations, seemingly free but as shown above enveloped by the hegemonic power. In no segregated Palestinian school could the process accomplished by the encounters (easily) take place.

But Khalid is also a participant in the majorities' perspective on his community. For him too, Palestinians are submissive, tribal, and traditional, in short non-westerns and as such somewhat 'primitive.' He is captive of western epistemology as he also wants to emancipate the mind, but at the same time, he questions the potential of the encounter seminars and considers going back to work in his village.

In their narratives both men seem trapped in the cultural historical resources that surround them. Their discourses are invaded and help sustain existing ideological powers, understood as representations of aspects of the world, which can be shown to contribute to the establishment, maintenance and change of social relations of power domination and exploitation (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1993). Both state (Zionist) and psychologized western ideologies feed their imaginations and constrain them in their interpretative options. Khalid, Yaron and our other facilitators are animated and in turn animate (Goffman, 1974), in their generated interviews, by socio-historical processes which bring about the nation state and its accompanying technologies, a psychologized based education with its reified assumptions regarding identity and culture, and thus may be constrained in their educational efforts. Cognitive perspectives may be a good solution to majority participants interested in acknowledging and thus

“magically/religiously/psychologically’ purifying their souls but are not very helpful to minorities which readily realize that verbal laconic recognition without material change will not take them too far in their struggle for equity. Khalid knows this too well as he fears Palestinian youth in the encounters will become frustrated, and even Yaron seems to recognize this. Thus, both seem to prefer a unicultural approach which will allow them at least to achieve something – a rather small portion of their declared aims. Khalid will offer in these unicultural sessions some identity building hoping to scaffold the youth progress into an unsecured future and Yaron will get his participants, at age of seventeen to the point he arrived only at the age of twenty six. It is not for us here to decide if this justifies their hard work. However, their actions, even if successful, do not seem to threaten any established order and as such can be allowed to continue.

Last we want to mention one of the central issues we find in the accounts of the facilitator – one which crosses educational boundaries – which has to do with, what in educational spheres, is called a child-centered discourse or an individualistic perspective. This discourse situates meaning, learning, and motivations within the individual and considers identities to be categories of individual minds. The perspective in line with western paradigmatic developments is a cognitivist one in which learning follows development (Piaget, 1954). In educational theorizing these perspectives have come under attack for it has been shown they privilege children who are white and middle class thus projecting intellectual social emotional white middle class standards on all participating children. Moreover the individualistic perspective might infiltrate the educational activity overcoming the declared emphasis on group identity held by the facilitators (Bekerman, in press) .

The discursive approach we adopted in the analysis allowed themes to emerge and guided us in taking these categories and their descriptions not as reports of interior states of mind but as social action which when properly investigated afford access to a cultural universe and its content of moral assumptions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Silverman, 1993). The way people describe things and their reasoning about them are pragmatic selections (Sacks, 1992) from a range of cultural, contextual possibilities with which they sustain an ongoing dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981). Moreover mere describing is always a social and moral activity (Jayussi, 1964). These experiences/descriptions/accounts can either be denied or taken seriously. We strongly believe they need to be taken seriously. Successful social transformation is not dependent on the sharpness of theorizing but on the every day activity of those we mean to train and or transform. It is hoped that when taking these experiences/descriptions/accounts seriously both planners and researchers will be able to use them as constructs in the development of broader and better training and educational designs of social transformation.

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