The Dialectics of Peace Education in Israel and Palestine: Negotiating Barriers and Possibilities

Melissa Saul, Micheal T. Hayes and Dawn Shinew

Bowling Green State University, USA

Email: saulm@hawii.edu.

Abstract

The research described in this article was a qualitative examination of Israeli, Palestinian, and international peace educators' conceptions of their work and its impact on their intended audience. The purpose of the study was to examine the participants' conception of peace education, how they put this into practice and what barriers they experienced in conducting their work. A purposeful sampling of four Israeli, four Palestinian and four International peace educators working within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were interviewed. The participants were working to depolarize and rehumanize the stories and actions of the students in their educational programs by working through the deep intellectual and emotional issues that both Israelis and Palestinians face because of occupation. However, their visions were obstructed, both literally and figuratively, by the physical, intellectual and emotional barriers resulting from Israel's occupation of the West Bank.

Keywords : Qualitative, purpose, rehumanize, international

Introduction

Peace educators working in Palestine and Israel face unique challenges to conducting their work. Through the almost 60 years of the conflict numerous barriers have been erected between Israelis and Palestinians that hampers peace education. A fundamental barrier exists in the identities and legitimizing narratives that are constructed, maintained and distributed by the different groups in the conflict. The identities and narratives allow individuals within the different groups to make sense of the same conflict but from very different perspectives (Bar Tal, 2000; Saloman, 2004). Of central importance to the idea of narrative and identity is the collective: how the two groups create and distribute collective narratives that form a cohesive identity within Palestinian and Jewish/Israeli ethnic groups (Gur Ze'ev, 2003). In the context of the ongoing conflict, these narratives effectively establish a polarized relationship with the Other (Biton and Saloman, 2007). For Jewish Israelis the collective narrative of the Holocaust and the independence of Israel frames peace education encounters, whereas the collective narrative of the Nakba and the ongoing occupation of Palestine is the narrative that defines Palestinian identity (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008a). Such polarizing narratives are also distributed through textbooks used in Israel and Palestine (Firer, 1998; Moughrabi, 2001)

Research has shown that the collective narratives and identities that are formed on each side create significant barriers to peace education encounters. Because of these polarized social conditions encounters between Israeli Jews and Palestinians can actually strengthen stereotypes (Dajani and Baskin, 2006). Short encounters, in particular, do not allow participants time to have their prior understandings challenged or disrupted and participants rely on their personal

stereotypes to make sense of the situation (Suleiman, 2004). In some cases polarizing stereotypical identities and narratives are brought to the encounter by the organizers and facilitators. When working with children adults who organize and conduct peace education activities often bring essentialized identities that they impose or project on childrens' encounters within mixed group settings (Bekerman, Zembylas and McGlyn; 2009). An essentialized identity is a fixed and naturalized sense of self that creates insiders and outsiders that establishes an "us" and "them" mentality that is difficult to overcome.

Education occupies a conflicted or contradictory presence in the peace process. While educational processes may erect some barriers, it is also recognized that education is an essential element in achieving peace in the conflict (Zaslof, Shapiro and Coyne, 2009). While short encounters may activate stereotypes, the idea of creating encounters between Israeli Jews and Palestinians remains an important strategy in peace education (Abu-Nimer, 2004). For encounters to be productive they must openly address dearly held narratives of nation and culture (Bekerman, 2007). Moreover, the barriers erected and maintained through collective narratives and identities also represent an avenue of hope for working towards a condition of peace and coexistence (Bar-On and Kassem, 2004). Zembylas and Bekerman (2008a) suggest that collective narratives can be reshaped through "dangerous memories" that challenge the static and essentialized status quo (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008). The reshaping of collective narratives and identities must be approached as a political project that acknowledges and addresses the current political realties of Jewish Israeli and Palestinian youth (Hammack, 2010). It is possible for identities and narratives to be rewritten through sustained and focused effort. For example, Israelis and Palestinians have worked to write new kinds of textbooks that educate about the different narratives of land, place and identity that exist in the region (Adwan, 2001). The purpose is to disrupt the comfort of one's own perspective in an effort to make sense of and validate the other's narrative.

Global feminist perspectives

Import theoretical and conceptual insights for the study were also drawn from global feminisms. Global feminism offers the conceptual tools for understanding and analyzing the patriarchal, masculinist and militarized global hegemonies that produce and maintain inequitable relationships of power on a global scale, and how they can be challenged by developing counter-hegemonic narratives and practices in the context of education and political action (Cook and Cooper, 1995). Particularly relevant to this study, global feminism builds on feminist critiques of patriarchy as a form of domination, and applies it broadly to the central issues of war, peace, violence and domination of many different kinds (Connell, 2005).

Global feminism and peace education share some foundational perspectives that include the furthering of equality of rights through nonviolent action, encouraging forms of governance that give equal power to its citizens for making decisions, and finding ways to fairly distribute resources (Brock-Utne, 1985). Moreover, Warren (1994) suggests that feminism and peace activities share a goal of working towards dismantling forms of oppressive and hierarchical relationships of power that only serve the needs of a few.

Global feminists such as Reardon (2001) argue that working towards a "culture of peace" begins with an understanding and critique of the dominant ideologies against which it must be articulated and then moves to recommend ideas and practices that generate equality within multiple cultural spheres. Giroux (1991) argues from a feminist perspective for a postmodern discourse of resistance as a basis for developing a cultural politics and anti-racist and anti-sexist pedagogy as part of a larger theory of difference and democratic struggle. Increasingly, these differences and struggles have become global in scope and implication.

Common to all these educational emphases is the focus on human rights. Brock-Utne (1985) asserts that forms of oppression on major and minor scales have to be addressed within peace education. She states,

Only through respect for the equal rights of others and through work for the cessation of all forms of oppression on a major and minor scale will the concept of peace become a reality. So, logically, a commitment to peace education leads to a commitment to end sexism and racism and to the quest for ending the inequalities that are manifested in every aspect of society. (p.32)

It is important to note that the very idea of human rights can be critiqued for being based in a universalized western individualist notion of human and right (Wolper and Peters, 1995). A global feminist perspective would value a diverse understanding of the foundations and practices of these rights that might begin with the lived experiences of women

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(Binion, 1995) and in the epistemological foundations of indigenous peoples (Esteva and Prakash, 1998).

Rich (1984) coined the term "politics of location" as a way to understand the intersections of multiple identifications that construe one's standpoint in shaping political perspectives and knowledge, and to explore alternatives to the homogenizing tendencies of traditional feminism. Gender should not be a universal category that carries with it naturalized versions of complex social relationships. In global feminism, the idea of location is used to destabilize the vestigal unexamined or stereotypical images of colonial rule and other manifestations of modernity's structural inequalities (Mohanty, 2003). Grounding critique and action within a location highlights diversity and offers the opportunity for creating alternative histories, and identities that will allow for the generation of new strategic alliances across the terrain of difference (Kaplan, 2002; Laclau and Mouffe, 1999). A feminist ethic views this political project as constructing a common alliance with strategic goals while maintaining the diverse voices and identities that give it power. These "working alliances" would necessarily alter the concrete meanings and practices of any particular voice or identity as it became articulated with common political goals (Jakobson, 1998).

The purpose of this study was to examine how educators working in the context of the Israel/Palestine conflict perceived their peace-oriented work, and how their viewpoints were shaped within the current socio-political conditions of power. The following questions guided the research:

1. How do peace educators working in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories view their work?

2. How do these peace educators' positionalities affect their constructions of peace?

3. What do these peace educators identify as barriers and possibilities to working towards peace?

Methods

We situated this qualitative study at the intersections of critical ethnography (Madison, 2005, Smith, 2002) and an advocacy approach to research (Lather, 1991). In advancing similarly positioned work, Hemment (2007) explains, "We can no longer conceptualize the world in terms of 'cultures' – separate, distinct, hermetically sealed entities, existing outside of global relations of power. Neither can we get away with writing ourselves out of our (research)

accounts…" (p. 303). The explicitly stated goals of this research, therefore, are both to develop an understanding and advocacy for peace education across the socio-political divide that marks the conflict as we "challenge the status quo and contribute to a more egalitarian social order…" (Mehra, 2002, p. 77).

The status quo for participants in this research project is grounded in the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian territories. We use the terms occupation, occupied and occupier with a great deal of care, and rely on the United Nations designation of the Palestinian territories, Gaza, West Bank and East Jerusalem as being occupied by Israel (CF. Makdisi, 2008). For the occupied, movement is restricted and subjugation by oppressive forces influences everyday lived experience. For the occupier, privilege exists on certain levels, but if their work transgresses the barriers of Occupation, they may also be on the margins of the dominant society.

Peace educators in this study were initially identified through their participation in the International Democracy and Peace Education conference sponsored by The Israeli-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI). The conference was held in Antalya, Turkey because most Palestinians are unable to enter the Israeli territory and Israelis are restricted from going into the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Approximately 270 Israelis, Palestinians and international participants from some 20 countries participated in the international conference. From this larger group of conference attendees, twelve participants were identified through a purposeful sampling (Stake, 2006) with equal numbers of Israelis, Palestinians and Internationals recruited to participate.

Participants included nine women and three men between the ages of 25 and 55. The ethnicity of the participants included three Jewish-Israelis, an Arab-Israeli, four Palestinians, three Jewish-Americans, and one Jewish-Canadian. In addition to the semi-structured in-depth interviews, video-taped recordings of their presentations at the international peace and democracy education conference were collected, along with additional artifacts distributed by conference organizers and participants.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed. Initial analyses were strongly inductive (Hatch, 2002). Hatch describes inductive data analysis as "a search for patterns of meaning in data so that general statements about phenomena under investigation can be made" (p. 161). Subsequent rounds of analyses involved a constant

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comparative analysis (Glaser, 1967) and typological analysis (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993) that involved "dividing everything observed into groups or categories on the basis of some canon for disaggregating the whole phenomenon under study" (p. 257). Drawing from a critical ethnographic focus, the emerging categories were then linked to research, ideas and theories that highlight the political that is embedded in everyday life. The analyses were informed by extensive experiences that the first and second authors had travelling and conducting research in the region on various kinds of peace and social justice organizations.

The results of these analyses are presented in the following manner. First, participants' experiences and stories regarding structural barriers to peace education are presented. Next, we share the many ways in which these peace educators have created alliances and strategies that have challenged and destabilized these barriers. The extent to which participants built relationships across physical, ideological, and political barriers provides important insights into ways in which they have transformative agency to work towards deep levels of social change. Rather than fostering changes in perspectives or awareness transformation assumes an alteration in consciousness and ways of living in the world.

Results and Discussion

For the participants in this study Israel's continued occupation of Palestine, and the variety of difficulties this presents, colors all peace-education activities. While the participants were committed to working towards peace in the region, their visions were obstructed, both literally and figuratively, by the physical, emotional, and ideological barriers resulting from the Occupation. In the following section, we discuss our findings in terms of polarization and the extent to which the physical, ideological and political barriers polarize Israelis and Palestinians into separate, disconnected and conflicted groups. While some of these barriers are tangible and concrete physical manifestations, others are just as "real" though experienced on a more emotional or intellectual level.

Physical barriers

The physical barriers include the massive separation barrier, checkpoints and roadblocks, and segregated Jewish communities. The physical barriers impede the travel of peace educators and make it particularly difficult, if not impossible, for the peace educators and the participants in

their programs to meet. The physical barriers serve as perhaps the most extreme reminder that Israel has imposed a structure that controls and regulates Palestinian lives and distances them from Israeli society. Thaquan, a Palestinian man from Ramallah, explained this most clearly when he discussed his feelings about meeting with Israelis at the international conference, held outside the country, to speak about peace education in the area of Palestine and Israel. Upon returning to the West Bank, he would be confronted with the physical barriers that separate him from Israelis and internationals. Thaquan stated:

Taking Palestinians and Israelis outside the country, you feel that things will go in a better way, more smoothly. When they take out groups to share outside the country they can freely share with one another, but once we get back in the airport we are separated. We go to Ramallah and the others go into Tel Aviv. The same situation will return back. We will take the same road through the checkpoints, the tanks will invade Ramallah, I will hear the shooting, and some of the people who had wanted to go will never have gotten their permissions, so nothing will be changed.

Thaquan continues to work on his projects for peace within his own community, but finds that the work he accomplishes must be situated within the reality of the physical barriers erected through Occupation.

The most common type of physical barrier is the Israeli checkpoints. Checkpoints are military barriers set up on roads to check the movement of people within the Occupied Territories and the border between Israel and Palestine. The checkpoints are militarized and all individuals working the checkpoints are heavily armed. In recent years, the number of these obstructions has gradually risen (B'tselem, ND). These checkpoints restrict the movement of Palestinians and Israelis, delay travel or prevent, and create many difficulties for peace educators wanting to work on projects in the West Bank and Gaza. Anael, a Jewish woman from Israel, stated "the big barriers are checkpoints because it's so difficult for us to get the Palestinians to come and be a part of what we are doing. Every time is such an effort." Anael's organization, Creativity for Peace, is forced to go outside the country to do their work with youth because the barriers are too great and make it too difficult to carry out their work in the region.

Another physical barrier that impedes peace work between Palestinians and Israelis is the Separation Wall that now divides the West Bank and Israel. The Wall, constructed

by Israel, is comprised of a network of fences and 30 foot high concrete walls, which snake through the West Bank separating Israel from the West Bank and separates many Palestinian towns from each other. Ibrahim Issa, the director of Hope Flowers School in Bethlehem, explains that the Separation Wall has been a huge impediment toward moving in the direction of peace and reconciliation. He felt that some of the Israelis support the Wall because it is viewed as somehow fixing the security problem, "Yeah, some of them still want the Wall. They think it's a magical stick to solve the problem." Ultimately, Ibrahim explained, the Wall has hurt both Israelis and Palestinians in their peace building activities, "The Wall has been a huge deterrent in joint Israeli and Palestinian peace building activities because it makes it so difficult for each side to meet."

Another physical barrier is the illegal settlements erected by Israelis on Palestinian land. Many Palestinian cities in the West Bank have been separated from each other due to increased Jewish only settlements. The settlements are typically ringed by a wall, fences, and barbed wire. Enas, a Palestinian women lives in Hebron and works with the Library on Wheels, experiences the settlements on a daily basis and worries about the children living in her city. She stated,

The children in the old city [Hebron] are going through a hard situation. Children often have to face violent conditions because there are Israeli settlers and Israeli soldiers, and checkpoints.

Settlements make peace education efforts very difficult as educators and participants must circumvent them.

Ideological barriers

The second type of barrier is ideological and includes the stories and narratives of the "Other" that are propagated through the educational system, religion, and media. These socially produced, distributed, and validated stories are told by one side of the conflict about the other and vice versa (Bekerman, 2007). The stories that each side tells are framed by a collective memory conditioned by unique but overlapping histories and narratives that instantiate a perpetrator-victim dichotomy (Bekerman and Zembylas, 2010). Israelis tend to frame their stories in the context of the Holocaust and the importance of Israel as a Jewish state. Palestinians construct their history as a story in which Jews removed them from their homes appropriated their land and continue an illegal Occupation that impedes their human rights. These two narratives are polarizing and maintain and legitimate the barriers between Israelis and Palestinians.

These histories are often validated through school curriculum in Israel and Palestine. As Michael Apple (1979) has argued, the school curriculum is where problematic ideologies of inequality and injustice are effectively distributed and maintained. Israeli textbooks, for example, portray a nationalist Jewish-Zionist narrative with little mention of Palestinians (Al-Haj, 2005; Yogev, 2010), whereas Palestinian textbooks portray history but from their own standpoint and at the expense of Jewish Israeli views (Brown, 2003). Participants were adamant that a mutual lack of an appropriate education about the history of the region and cultures contributes to prejudices, stereotypes, and biases. Anat, a Jewish woman working for IPCRI, on peace education in Israel, suggested that, through their schools, Jews have constructed a narrative of victimhood that is rooted in their long history:

The education in Israel is very much focusing on the sense of us being victims. . . on the Jewish history and trials. The lessons that are drawn from it are very dangerous. There is no balance anywhere and I think that more awareness, a very deep understanding of human rights, and self-criticism and critical reading of our narratives, of our holidays, of our culture, would be very, very important and useful.

Rula, a Palestinian woman, explained that the curriculum in Palestine also perpetuates misperceptions about the conflict. When Rula was in school in Palestine, the school system was using a Jordanian curriculum which "did not have balance. It didn't have any Jewish views."

Political barriers

The third type of barrier is political and is constituted by a maze of rules, regulations, and policies that function along with the physical and ideological barriers to constrain peace education work. The political barriers often operate in concert with the physical barriers to severely restrict any kind of movement between Israel and Palestine or within Palestine (Halper, 2009). In order for any Palestinian to travel into Israel, or at times between Palestinian cities, they need permission. Rutie, from Windows: Channel for Communication, explained:

In order to get Palestinians into Israel they have to ask for permits. Up to the age of sixteen, it's usually not a problem. But the (peace education) facilitators have a problem.

Sometimes when there's a Jewish holiday there's a strict closure.

In addition to laws that require permission for movement, Palestinians also face curfews and closures that create obstacles for any kind of movement or peace education activities. Thaquan explained that the curfews placed on Palestinians can last from several hours to several days depending on the security forces of Israel. Enas further described the curfews, "From town to town it's more or less restricted. By the end of 2004, the situation in Palestine, especially in Hebron, we witnessed instability on a political level and on a security level. There were curfews that were imposed from time to time." The curfews are placed on entire towns and maintain a system of control over the Palestinian populations in the West Bank.

Theorizing barriers to a culture of peace

Participants acknowledged the existence of numerous barriers to conducting peace education work in Israel and Palestine. The physical, political and bureaucratic barriers are instituted by Israel and constitute what Halper (2009) calls a "matrix of control" that embedded in their occupation of Palestine. As Halper (2009) acknowledges, a "Kafkaesque" psychological drama is played out through a system of policies, laws, and restrictions. Further exacerbating the concrete, political and bureaucratic barriers are the epistemological and ideological components. These elements of control function to create and perpetuate deeply polarized beliefs, experiences and narratives of the "occupied" and the "occupier." These barriers serve to strengthen and exacerbate the collective narratives and identities that peace educators have found serve as barriers in the building of peace (cf. Bekerman, Zembylas and McGlynn, 2009; Biton and Saloman, 2006)

Destabilizing barriers to a culture of peace through rehumanization

While acknowledging the impact that the physical, ideological, and political barriers have on their work, the participants in this study employed locally relevant and contextually-based strategies in an attempt to circumvent structural barriers and destablize epistemological and ideological barriers to peace by building relationships that transcend these obstructions and promote agency. The focus of the peace education work is to work against depolarization through proximal encounters and the reshaping of identities and narratives. While the literature

on peace education in regions of intractable conflict clearly shows the difficulty of moving individuals out of their polarized identities and narratives it is through the use of narratives that the two groups can engage in a process of depolarization (Kuppermintz and Saloman, 2005).

The processes of rehumanization began with the peace educators themselves and their own life experiences. Many of the participants in this study had personal experience with the transformative rehumanization process that included a specific event in which they came to see the importance of seeing the "other" as human, dissolving the distinctions between an "us" and "them." For example, Anael explained that her perceptions shifted after she visited the West Bank for a peace workshop in Nablus. She had a physical reaction in which she felt the heaviness of the atmosphere, and she acknowledged how different this was from the life she led in Israel. The process of rehumanization is transformative as one side begins to open up and acknowledge that the other side has its own narrative, frame of reference, and viewpoint. By developing an awareness and empathy for the other's suffering, one can begin to be informed by and act upon a new perspective that challenges previous ideologies. During Anael's visit to Nablus, she heard the stories of the Palestinian women and recounted:

…my belief system crashed and I felt as if I had been standing on glass. Someone took a hammer and POW! Who am I now? I was in absolute shock. Like where have I been? Where have I been? Who are these people that I don't know in my backyard? …And I've never seen it! I saw their suffering as being so real and my suffering as being in my head, my thoughts. It was a shocking revelation for me. It was really, really painful hearing the stories of Occupation.

Understanding the importance of seeing the "Other" as human also informed

Thaquan's personal experiences. He and his family were forced into hiding when soldiers from the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) invaded Ramallah. To survive, his family needed water and milk, and Thaquan knew that to get these supplies he would need to reach out to one of the soldiers in a way that emphasized his own humanity. Thaquan explained to the soldier that he went to the American University in Cairo and majored in mathematics and minored in economics. According to Thaquan, "The soldier said,

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'Wow! You have a minor in economics; I'm doing a minor in economics also." Thaquan explained, "

We found something in common. We discovered some courses and some economic theories and the Israeli soldier told him, "I never heard that, I have the image of Palestinians as dirty people and lower class, but actually you changed this idea. I took his email and he took my email and to this day we still are friends.

Creating symmetrical spaces

A key starting point to the processes of depolarization rehumanization is addressing the assymetrical power relations of the conflict. A common practice was to meet in a neutral space outside Israel or Palestine that was not so politically charged, full of concrete barriers and constant reminders of Occupation. The Creativity for Peace camp takes place in the United States to start the process because, as Anael stated, "I think for the Palestinians specifically, for them to go to Israel would be so threatening, so scary . . . . All they know is a soldier. We start the process somewhere where it feels safer." Melodye, the director of Building Bridges, explained that leaving the region helps to address the inequitable balance of power and authority that is embedded in the social relations between Israel and Palestine, "We felt it was important to bring Israelis and Palestinians to the U.S. so that they could be on a level playing field."

Once removed from the externally imposed mechanisms of power the peace education programs try to extricate students from the political conditions that might invade their work by engaging in ordinary activities. Anael's goal is for the girls at the Creativity for Peace camp in New Mexico to feel the freedom they cannot feel at home, where they do not have the opportunity to meet each other. Anael explained:

I want to see the girls at camp, just living together peacefully, going bowling together, going shopping together, doing all these natural things together, that's what I want to see. I just want to see us being friends and being able to share our lives and to be free.

These normal experiences allow the girls to experience what is possible and to envision a world where the segregation they experience at home is mitigated. These experiences also allow for authentic (or at least depoliticized) integration and socialization between the two groups, something that is not possible in their lives in Israel and Palestine.

Dialogue

Peace education programs often incorporate dialogue as a central component. Dialogue has become a central tenant of many peace education programs and processes in Israel and Palestine (cf. Dov, 1998; Shimmel, 2009). As Bekerman and

Zymblas (2010) suggest, dialogue itself is not an answer or a privileged process in peace education and must be properly structured and organized within a broader social and educational context. The peace educators in this study felt that dialogue needed to be at the center of their peace education process. Anael described dialogue as central to the essence of rehumanization, which at its core involves simply "sitting with the other person." Melodye described the main point of her program as bringing people together. "What we're saying here is we're going to give you this opportunity to meet the Other." Ibrahim shared similar ideas, "…it's very important that people interact with each other at a human level, that they see themselves as equal human beings." This involves both explicitly talking about the conflict and providing youth opportunities to engage in activities and topics that are not directly related to the conflict.

Some of the peace workers laid a foundation for the exchange of ideas by encouraging participants to speak from their own personal experience. Instead of blaming each other, the focus is on how the issues affect them personally. Rutie explained that she tells students, "Don't say, 'You took our land, you killed our people!' These are slogans that you can't identify with." Rutie helps the youth focus on narratives of the family and personal memories, "They begin to exchange stories about their families and every family story is somehow connected also to the narrative. Something happened in so many wars, everybody has something to say. Every family has a story."

By speaking from the "I," the peace workers understand that depolarization and rehumanization begins internally and the first act of transformation is deeply personal. They do not begin by trying to dismantle the master narrative that generates polarization but with the simple act of telling ones story. Rather than focusing outward to the "Other," the telling and reimagining of personal narratives makes it possible for people to understand themselves and their stories first.

While many of the initial encounters focus on changing

the internal and personal environment, there is a time when it becomes important to focus outward and begin developing relationships through listening. The peace educators in this study described the importance of listening and hearing the Other's stories. Many of the educators expressed a need to "get out of the mind and work from the heart." For example, Rutie clarified that the participants in her program have a deep need to be heard and understood, **"**Students from both sides of the conflict want to have their pain, suffering, and fear acknowledged." She stated, "The Israeli kids find that their suffering is very real…Very often the Israeli kids feel that it's not fair, they ask, "We're very understanding and empathetic showing empathy to the person for their suffering, why don't they understand why we suffer too?" The idea is to move past one's own sense of suffering and have the ability to acknowledge the suffering of others. To do so requires a trusting emotional connection between the participants. Dialogue, narrative and identity cannot simply be cognitive and must include spaces for deep emotional work to occur. Moving beyond individual moments of care and to the formation of relationships of solidarity (Dean, 1996). This is particularly difficult when the source of suffering is perceived to be sitting across from you. This takes time, concerted dialogue and a committed personal relationship to the other.

By having the time to share with each other, the students begin to listen to one another. Leah's organization, Compassionate Listening, works on a more global scale by bringing internationals into Palestine and Israel to hear each side's narratives. Through intensive training in listening skills, she provides the participants the ability to see the conflict through a new understanding. She created these formalized training programs as a way for people to learn how to really hear the other person and compassionately listen with an open heart (Hwoschinsky, 2001). She has found that this training allows one to "rehumanize the other" and it creates an opportunity for the once held "polarized viewpoints" to be changed.

Theorizing depolarization and rehumanization

Participants engaged in or conducted a set of processes that were intended to depolarize by challenging and bridging the physical, ideological and political gaps. Because we examined peace education in a region of intractable conflict all of the findings were influenced by these barriers. The vast differences in equality and human rights between Israelis, Palestinians, and Internationals influence how the peace education projects are taught and received. These conclusions are consistent with research on peace education findings that different political, economic, and societal conditions inevitably influence how peace education is implemented (Bar-Tal, 2002; Salomon, 2002). This is particularly the case in regions of conflict (Rosen & Salomon, 2011).

The kind of peace education described in this study tends to emerge from two interrelated components: an understanding of systems of inequity coupled with a transformative praxis that works against barriers and binaries to establish caring relationships of solidarity. Feminist perspective on peace education suggest that political, cultural and economic activity must be viewed as situated at the intersection of regimes of power that are executed through patriarchy, capitalist domination, and militarism (Hammer, 2004; McLaren, 2002; Reardon, 2001).

Narga (2006) argues that education conducted from such a perspective should not be a homogenized outlook or the quest for some acceptable central location but the valuing of diversity and the acceptance of difference. The process of depolarization involved the establishment of relationships to move people out of their own extreme position in an effort to acknowledge "Others" and their situation. These peace educators worked across boundaries to bring people together from very different, polarized, and conflicting positions to communicate and listen to other perspectives in order to change deeply held convictions. However, the goal is not to just understand or listen but to be transformed in the process of these activities and moved to action.

A feminist tradition of peace education highlights a transformative pedagogy enacted through an ethic of care (Tray & English, 2008). It is a reciprocal form of transformation in which the arbitrary binary of self and society is dissolved in a recursive act of social and personal change (Mezirow, 2000). In articulating care as an ethical pedagogical stance, Noddings makes the distinction between caring about and caring for. Caring about can be understood as making people aware of issues, or learning to recognize the narrative of another. In caring for, participants establish reciprocal relationships in which, "the others reality becomes a real possibility" (pg. 14). Care is a deeply ethical construct that extends beyond women's interests and concerns and is exhibited as a foundational moral construct (Held,1993; Tronto,1993).

Conclusion

Local and global implications for critical peace education under Occupation

Many of the participants in this study acknowledged that their efforts may not create a sense of peace in the present, and that their work may actually lie in creating the conditions for a culture of peace once the intractable points of the conflict are overcome, negotiated, and mediated. For the participants in this study; whether Palestinian, Israeli or international, there can be no real and lasting peace until the Occupation is ended.

However, there is work to be done in the present and it begins with forms of education that destabilize, challenge or dismantle the system of occupation through depolarizing actions and the building of relationships through dialogue. It is important to note the difficulties under which peace educators conduct their work within Israel's occupation of Palestine. The participants in our study are hopeful, yet they understand that the barriers identified in this study will render any long-term effect very difficult if not impossible. Any desirable outcomes from the peace education activities can be transitory as participants re-enter the realities of occupation.

The goal of any action conducted with peace education in mind must be for building a just society through the active and engaged participation of citizens (Bartlett, 2008). In the case of the Israel Palestine conflict the most defensible political actions would be non-violent resistance and civil disobedience. To end Israeli Occupation, Abu-Nimer (2006) argued:

It should be emphasized that the effective daily actions include maintaining internal solidarity, finding alternative routes around checkpoints, continuing to harvest olives, holding strikes, boycotting, refusing to cooperate with Israeli civil and military administrations, protesting, blocking roads, hanging Palestinian and black mourning flags on electric-power poles, and educating foreign audiences about the impact and nature of Occupation. (p. 138)

For a model of how this can happen we need look no further than the history of Palestinian political action. Although American media highlights violent forms of resistance, Palestinian society has largely engaged in non-violent resistance to Occupation, and has a long history of non-violent resistance (Qumsiyeh, 2010).

The work to be conducted in peace education under occupation assumes two related actions: The analysis of

structural systems of violence and oppression that is coupled with a call to action. If the ultimate purpose of peace education is to create peace, it is imperative to ask, "What is really necessary under these conditions for peace to be achieved and maintained and what will this peace look like?" Such work must envision possibilities for a peaceful, connected and just future for both Israeli's and Palestinians.

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