Encounter through confrontation

The School for Peace approach

Main themes

- Background
- The Neve Shalom / Wahat al Salam community
- The School for Peace
- The SFP' working method
- The SFP projects
- Research results

Background

- The 48 war- the Nakba
- Nation state
- The occupation since 1967
- 10,000 Palestinians in Israeli prisons
- Palestinians killed by Israeli forces 29.9.00- 31.8.07: 4,233
- Israelis civilians and soldiers killed by Palestinians 1,024
- 47 permanent checkpoints inside the West Bank
- 41 roads (700km) in the West Bank are open only to Israelis
- Between 2001-2005 Israel destroyed 668 houses as punishment
- In 2006 1,363 of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem their residency was denied
- http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=cjwI26-zV74

Neve Shalom/Wahat al salam

The School for Peace Methodology

Human Relations $\longleftrightarrow$ Conflict Resolution

Contact Hypothesis $\longleftrightarrow$ Inter-group Encounter

Goals

- Vision: humane and just society
- Developing awareness of the conflict
- Constructing identity
- Exposing oppressive mechanisms and developing critical thinking

Encounter structure

- Equal number of participants

- Two facilitators: a Jew and a Palestinian

- Two forums: bi-national/ uni-national

- Arabic and Hebrew are official languages of the encounter

Facilitators role

- **To help the participants identify and analyze the oppressive processes that take place between the two groups and to try to link these processes to the larger society**

- The person's identity & behavior are constructed upon conceptions and beliefs that are stable and deep seated

- We see the group as more than the sum of the individuals who comprise it and regard the encounter as between two national groups rather between individuals.

- The encounter within the small group is a microcosm of reality

Five stages of an encounter process

- Searching
- Strengthening of the Palestinian group
- Restoring the power by the Jewish group
- Deadlock
- A different dialogue

Youth Encounters

Change Agents

- Physicians
- Psychologists
- Teachers
- Journalists
- Lawyers
- Urban planners

Change agents activism

Facilitators training courses

- **Training course parts**
  - Experiential
  - Theoretical
  - Facilitation skills
  - Observation
  - Practicum

Facilitators courses graduates

Women Projects

National and Gender identities
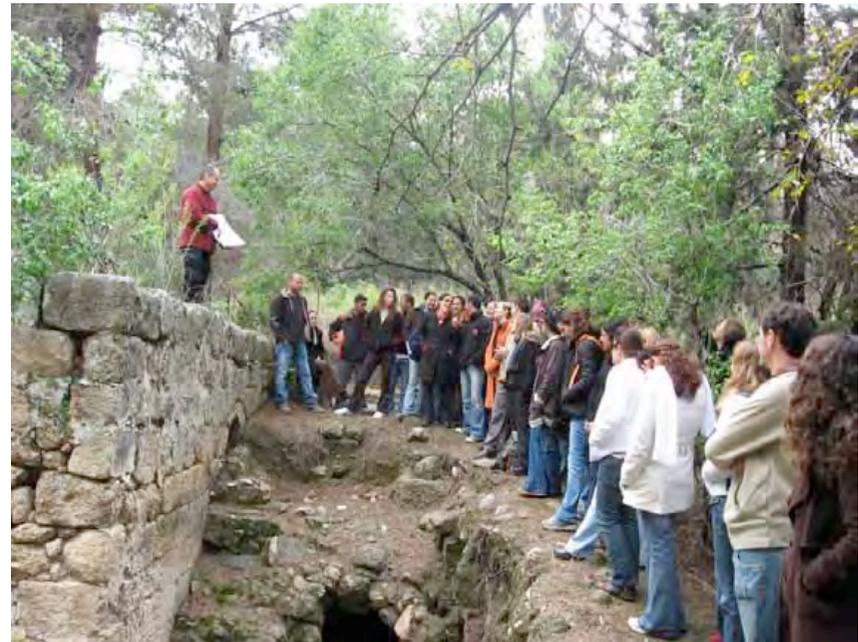
Women empowerment

Jewish-Palestinian conflict

Negotiations

Uni-national – multi-national

Training professionals in other areas of conflict in the world

- Cyprus
- Kosovo
- University of Peace in Costa Rica
- L.A unified school district
- North Ireland

Research: Theoretical framework

- Social identity theory
- Developmental theories of racial and ethnic identity
- Research on Whiteness
- Post Colonial theories on identity and conflict
- The social unconscious in group theories
- Critical Pedagogy

Interpretive qualitative research

- Full observation and video filming of the entire group process: 65 hours of group process

- Interviewing the Jewish participants before and after the group process and after 4 years

- Diaries

Process of majority group identity formation during a Jewish-Palestinian encounter

- **The competition over "who is more humane" a power struggle**
  - When the Jewish group's own humane image is challenged
  - When the Palestinian group calls for a civil state
  - When the Jewish group tries to restore power

The Jewish group uses the Palestinian extremist image in moments of distress

- The Jewish group came to the process with the extremist image of the Palestinians
- When they said a Palestinian I heard a terrorist
- The Palestinians' efforts to regain their humane image are reflected back to them through an inhumane image by the Jewish group
- In the struggle over who is more humane, victimhood is a life raft to which the Jews cling with all their strength.
- When the struggle over 'who is more humane' is in it's height, processes of mutual delegitimization occure.
- The main focus of the Jewish group is on the assertive voice and this voice is amplified voice in order to demonize the Palestinians
- The Jewish group tries to blur the differences between understanding terror and justifying terror, in order to preserve the inhumane image of the Arabs

- *Hatem (P): I don't justify it but I understand the feelings of someone whose house was razed; he spent quite a few years of his life in prison and was tortured by those criminals in the Border Police.*

- *Sigal (J): In spite of all that, it isn't justified.*

- *Hatem: I'm not justifying it, but I understand it. I understand what brought him to do something like that, and besides, he has no past, and he has no future, so he has nothing to fear.*

- *Sigal: So why aren't you justifying this? I don't understand why you-all aren't justifying Sigal: So why aren't you justifying this? I don't understand why you-all aren't justifying it? If he has no past and he has no future, why don't you justify it?*

The radical image is voiced when the Palestinians demand a civil state

- *Ido (J): …If the Palestinian residents of Israel identify with the Palestinians in the occupied territories who are fighting us and there are suicide bombings that blow us up and hurt us, and we are in a permanent situation and opinions become more extreme… the ideas raised here are very, very radical, positions that barely accept our existence here, our right to exist here, so we have to take some kind of stand that defends us, and there isn't a lot of room there for integration, unfortunately. I wouldn't want this, it's not my ideal, but I'm responding to you.*

- *Ahmad (P): When people talk about a solution they are talking about a certain partnership between citizens, you were talking from hostility, like how can I let my enemy...*

- *Sigal (J): What partnership are you talking about here? You are hurting us every day.*

The radical image serves as a tool to restore the power of the Jewish group

- The weekend story
- *Ayelet (J) The truth is that I really feel that the Arab group from my university has been put on trial here... And I feel that there's some kind of injustice, I mean, that we are remaining silent is because it is very convenient for us to keep quiet, because there is someone who is really doing the work for us, and yells at the Arabs from our group and tell you that you're, like, it's very hard with you, you're very aggressive and it's terrible… By the way, there's something twisted about this, because it's not that we're sitting here miserably while they shout at us; they are getting some very aggressive and extremist responses from us. We are all leftists and we've turned into right-wing extremists in this group.*

Processes of change

- When the Jews agree to accept the identity of the stronger party, they let go of victimhood and stop bringing up the image of the Arab as extremist

- *Now their culture does not seem as different from our. I mean they are basically students like we are, and we all take exams. Before, I thought it was this culture like the Bedouin. What stands out more for me is the situation they are in as opposed to the situation we are in, and not the cultural markers, but that they are in a situation of the minority, of occupation, of a very hard daily reality… As if it were natural to say that we accord more value to human life, and these are things I grew up with, that they have this exalted goal, and martyrs, and we are willing to send back masses [of prisoners] for just one captive [of ours], as if the value of human life for us is very, very strong. But on the other hand, we also have this "to die for our country." Before, I was less aware of their pain, the mothers' pain for their children. today, I don't know, it's hard for me to see it that way.*

Process of majority group identity formation during a Jewish-Palestinian encounter

- **The sense of threat as a formative component of identity and as justification for control- 4 types of threat were identified:**
    - Historical existential threat transferred to the Arabs
    - Real threat
    - The threat to the Jews' hegemony
    - The threat to the value of identity

"The identity isn't related to the threat; we related the identity to the threat since we have no other way to identify ourselves"

- Even the slightest hint of danger is perceived by the Jewish group as an existential threat

- The group develop critical awareness of the role and use of a sense of existential threat as a central component in their national identity

- The Jews grow aware of a vicious cycle in which they hang on to the threat that they create as a resource in maintaining their identity and use it to justify oppression of the minority

The threat to the Jewish hegemony

- The most difficult one to change

- Examined on 3 levels:

- In the power relations in the group

- Opinions before and after the course

- Content of the dialogue regarding the Jewish hegemony in the Israeli state

Images-------------------Threat

- **Noor:** *Maybe the power of the Arab group here the Palestinian group [is] to bring things, like, to the same level, and you feel that there's a group here that has rights and it also is able to make this happen. Maybe you have that sense of a threat.*
- **Ayelet:** *But on the outside, I want very much to give rights to the Arab group. But I feel that you don't give me rights; let's say I feel that, if it were the other way around and you were the ones ruling, you would kill us, like. If you had the choice and you were strong, I feel that you would really throw us out of here.*
- **Noor:** *Outside you have the feeling—*
- **Ayelet:** *And [you] don't relate to us as humanely as we relate to you.*
- **Sa'eed:** *Why do you think you're more human? Do you feel you are more human?*
- **Ayelet:** *I don't feel you act humanely toward me.*
- **Sa'eed:** *Not that you're more human.*
- **Ayelet:** *I feel that you're more humane toward yourselves.*

The threat to the moral value of the Jews' national identity

- A developmental process: First phase:
- Saving face processes
- Guilt and shame- dissonance between group positive moral image and the reality that the Palestinian group presents
- Strong attachment to the national identity
- Paternalism
- Acknowledging the injustice and taking responsibility
- Identity is not based on racism