

***Peacing Together* Conflicted Identities: Cultural  
Dominance, Affectivity and Bridgebuilding Amongst  
Moderate Israelis and Palestinians**

by

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation seeks to enhance the study of conflict resolution by building on literature which explores key questions centering on culture and conflict. Scholars who began developing this subfield of research have pointed to conventional approaches to conflict resolution that ignore fundamental cultural areas which are necessary to understand root causes of international conflict. This dissertation attempts to further existing research by integrating foundational academic work in critical cultural theory with existing scholarship on culture and conflict resolution. Weaving these areas of research together offers insight into “the central conflict” of this writing, the seemingly intractable Israeli-Palestinian struggle, within the context of Israelis and Palestinians that work together to challenge the current cultural paradigm.

In an attempt to outline key cultural components of conflict, a constellation of factors centering on cultural identity, collective memory and trauma are explored. While these factors have a “universal character”, they permeate Israeli and Palestinian dominant cultural narratives on many levels. This destructively manifests in the way the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians are constrained by discourses which effectively perpetuate polarized subjectivities. The internalization of this discourse situates individual consciousness within a collective struggle interwoven with dominance and affectivity. While relationships of dominance perpetuating destructive intra- and inter-societal tendencies are pervasive, other “relational outcomes” exist simultaneously. The use of narrative on collective, inter-personal and intra-personal levels, can be identified as the catalyzing processes used by agents who consciously choose to “creatively reposition” their place within dominant paradigm.

My case study, Peace it Together (PIT), a Canadian NGO which facilitates bridgebuilding between Israeli and Palestinian youth speaks to this agentive potential. Their summer peace camp uses media education through the development of filmmaking skills to assist participants to work through existing cultural constraints. The painstaking dedication required for incremental personal shifts to be possible is centered on PIT participants’ understanding that they are a part of these dynamics. PIT’s work is complemented by exploring like-minded organizations committed to deeper understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. Such initiatives are captured within the

emerging field of co-existence, which attempts to theoretically situate alternative approaches to conflict resolution.

**Keywords:** Culture and Conflict Resolution; Identity; Trauma; Collective Memory; Narrative; Co-Existence

## **Dedication**

To my parents, Noreen and Marvin Hershorn for their unwavering support, love and dedication.

To my sisters, Kim and Marny for our close friendship and adding much joy to my life.

To Bubby Libby, who first helped me understand the complexity and ephemeral nature of identity and inadvertently informed this work. You will always be fondly remembered.

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I would like to thank Lena Raz (pseudonym), Executive Director of Peace it Together, who generously helped me establish connections with the youth and staff that participated in the organization's summer programming. The Peace it Together participants enriched my understanding of the potential to transcend dominant conflict patterns which are often perpetuated within communities weighed down by generations of strife. Their strength, courage and enthusiasm speak to the power within the human spirit to envision and work toward creating a better future despite overwhelming circumstances. I am indebted to the PIT summer programming staff who shared this enthusiasm. Their insight into the benefit of dialogue and filmmaking processes to initiate shifts in identification and a commitment to work toward change amongst the PIT youth were invaluable. All of this enabled me to remain dedicated to my research in spite of the current polarized historical period, which can make it easy to fall prey to cynicism. This research therefore must acknowledge all of those that believe in the human potential to rise above dominant collective patterns of identification and have the wherewithal to continue to reimagine a more humanitarian path forward.



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# Introduction

Conflict between nation states, or between various racial or ethno-cultural groups, has been an endemic feature of modern life. There were two World Wars and innumerable smaller conflicts over the course of the twentieth century and there are few signs of any significant cessation of armed conflict in the early twenty-first century. At the time of this writing, for example, there are currently wars in Afghanistan, as well as a broad range of other armed conflicts in Africa, Asia, South America and the Middle East. In this environment of sustained and ongoing military conflict, it is not surprising that “conflict resolution” has emerged as a field of academic study. However, the academic study of conflict resolution remains somewhat disjointed. For example, a number of related fields of study and practice, such as mediation and negotiation, both intersect with academic work on conflict resolution and diverge from it. In addition, conflict resolution practitioners, including mediators, and other specialists in the field, typically have differing expertise and do not always share the same objectives. To complicate matters further, on the periphery of writing and research on conflict resolution is a vast body of scholarly literature on topics as diverse as war, peace-making, socialization, and questions around identification and collective memory. There is also a developing body of literature exploring the intervention of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in conflict situations in creative and positive ways.

This dissertation is focused on these somewhat peripheral areas of writing and research in the field of conflict resolution. At the most general level, it examines how critical cultural analysis can contribute to an understanding of human conflict. I argue that affective cultural patterns, which are often at the core of conflict in human societies, tend to be constitutive features of relations of power that reproduce and perpetuate conflict. Any comprehensive analysis of the social psychological and cultural aspects of conflict requires a parallel analysis focusing on the intersections of power and domination with culture.

These broad theoretical considerations provide context for a case study of “Peace It Together” (PIT), a Canadian NGO that offers a summer “peace camp” designed to assist Israeli and Palestinian youth work through and overcome differences in attitudes and identities. Through a combination of participant observation at PIT’s 2008 peace camp and follow-up interviews with 2006 and 2008 camp participants, I consider how PIT professional staff attempt to diagnose and to assist the youth overcome the deeply entrenched cultural attitudes and identities that underlie and maintain the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I also examine the apparent strategic successes or constraints of PIT, based on the opinions of young people who attended the camp. This case study leads to more general observations about how ideas drawn from critical cultural theory, as well as contemporary cultural studies, can enhance the field of conflict resolution.

It is important to emphasize at the outset of the dissertation that the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians goes far beyond religious and cultural differences alone and the resolution of conflict in the region will most certainly involve more than projects aiming to create changes in attitudes or identities. There is a long history in the region involving well-known contested issues over territorial sovereignty and the resolution of these issues will require complex political and diplomatic solutions. However, politics and culture are so tightly intertwined that neither aspect of the conflict can be isolated from the other. Attempts at political or diplomatic solutions typically fail because they are unable to resolve the deeply entrenched dominant attitudes, identities, and narratives that divide people in the region. This is not to say that these dominant attitudes, identities and narratives are set in stone and inevitably work to reproduce existing relations of power. A critical approach to the study of culture in conflict resolution does not simply focus on the stabilizing power of dominant cultural expressions alone; it also searches for cultural contradictions and alternatives that potentially challenge dominant expressions.

To develop these ideas in greater detail, I outline a constellation of key cultural factors, which are foundational for understanding societies in conflict. These factors include: *identity*, *trauma* and *collective memory*. I am particularly interested in the ways that these factors are taken up and expressed in the *dominant cultural narratives* found in Israeli and Palestinian societies and I provide an historical overview and contemporary exploration of the key components of these dominant narratives. In doing this, I attempt

to show how dominant cultural narratives on both sides of the conflict reveal themselves to be internally and externally destructive.

Of the numerous conflicts around the world, the one between Israelis and Palestinians has been one of the most enduring and vicious. Its roots are just as troubling as the current animosity we witness today. Like other Arab communities, the Palestinians were dominated by both European and neighbouring powers. From the time of the Ottoman Turks' domination in the fifteenth century, to the post-World War II period, there have been very few moments of genuine Palestinian autonomy. At the same time, the Jewish people have been victimized throughout European history, culminating in the horrific events of the Holocaust. Conflict was inevitable when two groups of people with such tragic histories, found themselves competing for self-determination on the same tiny piece of land, each convinced of the legitimacy of their claims. Accordingly, there have been five wars involving the Israelis and Palestinians leading up to the Gaza conflict of 2008-09. ('48, '56, '67, '73, '06, '08-09). This history of tension and conflict was compounded by the daily violence between the two sides during the Palestinian *intifada* or uprising periods (1987-1993 and 2000-2004).

Adding to the apparent intractability of the situation are political trends that have not been seen previously. The Israeli left, traditionally represented by the Labour party, has arguably collapsed. Seemingly long gone are the idealism and the possibility of the early to mid-nineties espoused by then Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin and realized through the fragile cooperation that existed between the newly created Palestinian Authority security forces and the Israeli Defense Force. Instead, we have seen more repressive policies put in place by right wing coalitions led by leaders such as Ariel Sharon and Binyamin Netanyahu.

On the Palestinian side, there is a widespread perception that Fatah leader, Mahmood Abbas, only delivers empty promises. The Palestinian Authority cannot seem to regain the trust of the populace and alternative party choices only serve to violently exacerbate tensions with Israelis. Since being elected in 2006, the more militant political organization, Hamas, has used its platform to brutally remove its political rival, Fatah, from the Gaza Strip and has called for "all of Palestine" to be "liberated." Hamas has received funding from Iran, a country that certainly does not envision a Middle East where an olive branch is extended toward the Israelis.

The road forward beyond these dilemmas often has the appearance of a media circus rather than a genuine peace process. One only needs to sift through sound bites from leaders on both sides to be entangled in a state of confusion. International envoys with tremendous diplomatic experience do not appear to assist the process and there is no viable lasting resolution in sight. Still, at the very moment that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict looks more entrenched than ever, there are signs of new openings that have emerged in both Palestinian and Israeli societies. More and more groups have emerged in civil society, which do not accept the destructive binary between the two sides. There appear to be substantial numbers of Israelis and Palestinians who are committed to transcending old impasses and finding innovative ways to listen to one another and work together. My research reveals how PIT has provided a forum for this new kind of collaboration.

In my case study of PIT, I use a methodology based on an evaluation carried out by Seeking Common Ground (SCG)(Breeze and Feldman, 2008), titled, “Building Bridges for Peace: An Intergroup Intervention for Israeli, Palestinian and American Teens - A Report on Theory, Best Practices and Evaluation after Fifteen Years.” I apply this methodology to the interviews I conducted with the youth who attended the PIT camps in 2006 and 2008. The interviews were conducted over several months in 2010 through Skype. SCG is a non-profit, organization located in Denver, Colorado, whose mission is to assist young people to affect change by building “peaceful communities through integration, socialization, communication and leadership development” (Ibid, p. 3). SCG’s main program, Building Bridges for Peace (BBfP), was established in 1994 and gathers American, Israeli and Palestinian teens for a rigorous peace building program. The report used a mixed methods approach, interweaving both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

I allow for the youths’ personal narratives to further inform the PIT story. I also borrow several “guiding questions” (p. 12) that SCG used in evaluating the impact of their program and I apply them to the progress the PIT youth have made since returning home, following their time at the peace camp. Most importantly, I explore whether the youth have been able to maintain new relationships with the other side, re-evaluate their relationship with their own community vis-à-vis the conflict and have been committed to “transfer” their experience toward peace-related activities back home. A more detailed

discussion of the assumptions and methods used in the study are outlined at the completion of this work in a methodological appendix (Appendix A).

The first chapter of the dissertation focuses on factors of cultural identity in conflict in the context of academic research on cultural domination and affect. The second chapter examines the role of dominant cultural narratives in the perpetuation or transcendence of relationships of power. This is followed by my case study of the Peace it Together peace camp and my exploration of sustained changes amongst the young participants upon their return home. The final chapter focuses on alternative and mainstream approaches to conflict resolution in respect to their contributions to challenging dominant constructions of identity.

## **Chapter 1.**

### **Culture, Affect and Dominance in the Alleviation of Conflict**

Affective patterns in human social life are deeply shaped by relationships of domination that often perpetuate conflict. Much of the research on such affective patterns does not come from the traditional fields of negotiation or conflict resolution. Rather, the bulk of the literature on relations between affect and dominance has come from the fields of social psychology, political science, and sociology. More recently, other fields such as anthropology, cultural studies, critical theory and communications have offered important new contributions to the study of affective dimensions of domination. This chapter provides an overview of this literature and works to build a framework of key concepts and ideas for a comprehensive approach to the intersecting roles of culture, affect and dominance in the alleviation of conflict.

#### **Social Psychological and Physiological Perspectives on Affect and Dominance**

Herbert Kelman, Professor Emeritus and former Director of the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Harvard University, has worked toward identifying the salient points underlying patterns of dominance. According to Kelman:

International conflict and its resolution must be conceived as societal and intersocietal processes that come about through the actions and interactions of large numbers of individuals who, in turn, function through a variety of groups and organizations and who are propelled by collective moods and states of consciousness with deep historical and ideological roots. (Kelman, 2007, p. 63)

This passage invites us to consider the multilayered nature of conflict relationships, which run throughout societies engulfed in conflict. While many conflict



resolution scholars limit their analysis to examinations of dominant institutions and to practices taking place through “official channels” of negotiation or mediation (Zartman, 1988; Druckman, 2007), Kelman has a more expansive approach, highlighting internal and external causal factors. Of equal importance is his emphasis on agency within the context of a multitude of structural realities. The last part of the statement cited above is, perhaps, the most powerful. For Kelman the affectivity of conflict is visceral as it literally courses through the fabric of individuals through their activities among their peers within and outside of institutions. To assert that people are “propelled” by “collective moods and states of consciousness” hones in on the reciprocal relationship of affectivity between the state and the subject—a relationship that is mutually reinforcing and continuously negotiated.

Paralleling Kelman’s approach are three scholars who consider slightly varying affective relationships with conflict. First, Daniel Bar Tal’s (2007) work on the *sociopsychological foundations* of conflict emphasizes the requirement of examining a “shared sociopsychological repertoire” within societies, including dominant societal beliefs, attitudes and prevailing emotions. For Bar Tal, these variables inform regimes of institutionalized dissemination which reinforce what he terms to be a *sociopsychological infrastructure*. This infrastructure feeds back into collective emotional patterns which are the basis for a group’s identity.

Secondly, Arie Nadler and Nurit Schnabel’s (2008) analysis of *socioemotional* intergroup dynamics center on the feelings of distrust that linger between groups. Nadler and Schnabel also explore challenging emotions which stem from varying levels of “worthy identity” among group members. The authors position this sense of worth in terms of the emotional struggles with victimization and guilt which many people involved in conflict experience. The process of healing such baggage involves accepting one’s own past collective “wrongdoings.” It also overlaps with the interplay between forgiveness and revenge, which people grapple with along their emotional spectrum. (p. 41).

All of this research originates with John Burton, who adopted Abraham Maslow’s work on the hierarchy of human needs and applied it to conflict situations. Beyond the basic human needs of food, clothing and shelter, humans also require safety/security, belongingness, self-esteem and personal fulfillment (Marker, 2003, 1). Of equal

importance for Burton are fundamental identity needs. Burton argues that such needs are essential for people's well-being and by extension the alleviation of conflict. In the work that follows, it will become clear that identity needs are just as fundamental as food and shelter. Personal recognition in this context is the basis of individual development and security in a society. Denial by society of recognition and identity would lead, at all social levels, to alternative behaviours designed to satisfy such needs, be it ethnic wars, street gangs or domestic violence (Burton, 1998, p.1).

Whether such needs are dealt with calmly or with great anxiety depends on one's emotional wherewithal. In other words, the way an individual manages his or her emotional responses is very significant. If one maps the range of such emotional responses by individuals or communities onto some sort of grid it is possible to see a graphic description of these responses. This could be referred to as an *affective spectrum*. When people react to conflict situations through unresolved emotions, they fall into the high end of the affective spectrum and this can have a detrimental impact upon their communities, their "adversaries" and, tragically, often their own lives. Still, outlining the contours of an *affective spectrum* requires a definition of the root term, "affect." It is important to note, that there is no commonly agreed upon academic definition of affect.

For my purposes, there are two scholars whose work best captures the meaning and importance of affect. Notably, Eric Shouse asserts that affect is essentially what "makes feelings feel" and determines the varying degrees of the quantity and quality of a particular feeling (Shouse, 2005, p.2). The triggers within individuals, which catalyze the quantity and quality of emotion, are of great importance when considering cultural reactions to conflict. In this sense, Virginia Demos' work may be viewed as literally, "moving deeper" into the study of affect by considering human physiology. Demos describes affect as:

comprised of correlated sets of responses involving the facial muscles, the viscera, the respiratory system, the skeleton, autonomic blood flow changes, and vocalizations that act together to produce an analogue of the particular gradient or intensity of stimulation impinging on the organism (Demos, 1995, p. 19).

While it is difficult to specifically pinpoint physiological responses during a given conflict dynamic, or mapping why one instance of conflict stimulates certain responses in one individual and not another, Demos' description is highly instructive nonetheless. She provides us with a general picture of how the body behaves when experiencing tension and conflict. Still, in order to fully grasp the importance of affect in conflict situations it is necessary to move beyond the body to the analysis of culture.

## **Emphasizing Culture in the Discussion of Affect, Conflict and Domination**

Kevin Avruch and Peter Black use a more anthropological approach to conflict. They argue that the realization of meaning in one's life is through the internal development that takes place in a distinctive cultural context. It is only through such culturally contoured individual development that people can effectively shape the external world (1991). The internal search for meaning is linked closely to the question of identity, an issue that is explored by Paul Sites. Sites (1990) asserts that identity satisfaction can only be realized through our relationships with others. What is required is a meaningful participation within social and cultural groups. The relationship between internal fulfillment and external development for Sites is thus closely linked to the presence of cohesive communities. When societies are not structured to create space to develop a sense of community, or belonging, for a significant number of its members, fissures begin to reveal themselves. Societies in conflict with each other often have characteristically damaged internal dynamics that reflect fractured human needs, where relationships of dominance prevail.

The point is that the defacto existence of domination is not something that can ever be wished away in conflict situations. Indeed there is a strong argument to be made for viewing culture and conflict as always being tightly interwoven. If culture is often viewed as a "whole way of life," to use Raymond Williams' famous definition, people's lives are often shaped either directly or indirectly by a wide variety of class, ethnic, racial, regional, national and gender conflicts. The influence of conflict on culture is so great that it prompted the British historian E.P. Thompson to suggest that Williams' definition of culture should be revised: from a 'whole way of life' to a 'whole way of conflict' (Thompson, 1978).

Without taking things as far as Thompson, I am persuaded by the idea that studying culture through the lens of domination greatly adds to the study of conflict resolution. It is equally important, in my view, to ask fundamental questions about any given cultures' relationship with domination as it is to understand the role of affective relationships within cultures. In order to develop this point further, we need to consider two pivotal questions: (1) "what do we need to know about culture to understand the nature of conflict?" and (2), "what do we need to know about conflict to understand the nature of culture?" (Cran, 2006).

By pursuing answers to these questions I am following Avruch and Black's (1993) argument that intercultural conflict resolution necessitates an assessment of conflict that is principally cultural. They argue that a given culture offers a particular logic and order in society. In one sense, culture can be likened to a lens through which people see the world. In another sense, anthropologists have suggested that culture works even more deeply to provide a "grammar" that shapes people's ability to interpret and communicate their understandings of the world (Levi-Strauss, 1963). All of these cultural components become normative, shaping the way we perceive immediate realities and how we feel about potential outcomes.

When thinking in terms of a culturally centered frame, it is important to adequately conceptually capture such an intricate process of "ordering" worldviews. There are many writers whose work might provide a useful starting point to understand this process, but I have found the work of British writer, Stuart Hall to be especially persuasive. Special attention will be devoted to Hall's work as it applies to his development of Louis Althusser's research. According to Hall, language is a key element of culture and language is "organized through an operation of codes" that are "buried in the symbols" and applied within related "rules of the language" (Hall, 1980, p.167). Why is this relevant for specific cultures which may be entangled in relationships of dominance; relationships which at various points in their history have exacerbated conflict to the point of violent engagement with another group? The answer Hall suggests (1980) lies in the tendency for people who live in a particular culture to acquire codes from an early age that shape their perception of "others." These culturally constructed codes become so deeply embedded that they become taken for granted and appear to be natural.

Borrowing from the late French Marxist theorist, Louis Althusser (1969), Hall deploys the concept of interpellation, or hailing as a key process which influences identity formation. Hall argues that the human socialization process takes place through various “ideological disseminating institutions.” Through their exposure to these ideological institutions individuals develop a receptivity and set of preferences for some codes and discourses over others. Whether codes are being subliminally introduced in the collective’s space, or whether individuals within a collective are unknowingly hailing particular views on an ideological spectrum, the subject is “being spoken for” (Hall, 1979, p.66). This speaking of the subject has implications for individuals’ lack of autonomy. According to Hall, people tend not to choose their place in society, rather their societal position and sense of identity are chosen for them. These embedded social positions and identities are woven into relationships of dominance which seep into the fabric of daily life.

My analysis takes an important cue from Hall (and Althusser’s) theoretical exploration but it is not exclusively guided by it. I take Hall’s discussion of ‘hailing’ as a valuable starting point, rather than an overarching analytical frame. While my research is influenced by this idea it is important to differentiate my position from the rather deterministic view outlined by Althusser. In Althusserian Marxism humans lack any real agency and act simply as “bearers” of a deep social logic that reproduces relations of production. Althusser borrows ideas from Jacques Lacan’s analysis of the “mirror stage” of child development. A child comes to recognize itself in the mirror, but the image it sees is a representation. As the child identifies with the image it derives pleasure from examining “itself” in the mirror, but in so doing, the pleasure of recognition actually derives from a form of misrecognition. Althusser extends the idea of the mirror to the ideological apparatuses of the capitalist state which provide people with a sense of identity and security, but in a way that interpellates them as ideological subjects. People grow into their subjectivity, where they are essentially formed by a dominant ideology existing prior to their birth (1969). In this sense, there is very little room for people to operate beyond such powerful structuring forces.

I argue in later chapters that my work with young Israelis and Palestinians often reveals somewhat similar constraining dynamics. At times, one can pinpoint national institutional realities where people on either side of the conflict literally “act out” an ideological frame where the pleasures of identity and belonging include a necessary

vilification of the people on the other side of the conflict. While there is a limited amount of room to stray from this kind of deeply embedded identity, there do appear in fact to be some contradictions and “openings” that run against the dominant cultural logic. My research suggests that there are indeed opportunities to provide space for an Israeli and Palestinian youth to challenge dominant norms. While one must endure tremendous cultural resistance on either side, people’s identities as either Israeli or Palestinian are not rigidly fixed nor completely determined by an overarching structural logic. Rather than a simple binary form of identification there are shades of grey here, forms of hybridization, which make it problematic to adopt ideas from Althusser, and even Hall, in an unfiltered way.

For example, Althusser does not refer to community pressure as a force that can complicate or undermine ideological institutions. Nor is there any significant mechanism in Althusser’s structural analysis to explain how hybridized identities might occur, or how opposition to ideological interpellation might occur. This is a critical factor which challenges Israelis and Palestinians who might see through institutional dominance and attempt to challenge traditional binaries of us against them. For this reason it is important to emphasize that I see Althusser’s concept of interpellation as more liquid and open-ended than he does. In this sense I find myself closer to Hall’s suggestion that ideology is a process of “privileging and preferring” some subjectivities more than others, without fully determining them. The issue of subjectivities “in dominance,” as Hall notes, is a contested terrain more than something that is fully guaranteed (Hall, 1982).

If Hall is correct then even the most deeply-embedded forms of subjectivity and identification are potentially changeable and this has considerable implications for the field of conflict resolution. To explore these implications I consider the following questions. What can we discover in respect to how relationships of power and dominance shape both conflict itself and perceptions of conflict? How do people’s integration of dominant cultural signs influence their own relationship with conflict? How do such signs reproduce relations that perpetuate conflict? How might such signs challenge or disrupt the “collective affective” societal balance? Finally, how can individuals shift their identities and perspectives from ones constructed by dominant cultural narratives toward alternative identities and perspectives? How might such self-discovery in turn inform and alter dominant narratives? How do we effectively place identity, collective memory, trauma and dominant Israeli and Palestinian cultural

narratives into an analytical cluster which captures the root causes of conflict involving these two groups?

As alluded to at the outset of this writing, I argue that these areas are foundational to our understanding of conflict. When situated together as a constellation, specific patterns amongst groups can be identified which may be viewed as literally structuring behavior in conflict situations. This constellation of factors therefore plays an important “productive role” in creating particular conflict identities. While the production of identities or subjectivities through collective memory, trauma and cultural narratives often manifest in relationships of dominance perpetuating destructive intra and inter-societal tendencies, other “relational outcomes” exist simultaneously. Certain individuals consciously choose to recognize these tendencies yet not be constrained by them.

As will be seen in later chapters, such people use their agency within communities that collectively choose to work toward transcending dominant cultural patterns. While some might view these efforts as oppositional, this would not be an adequate characterization. While such groups oppose violence and the perpetuation of the same conflict dynamics repeating themselves generation after generation, they recognize that they are a part of, not separate from these dynamics. Their initiatives are therefore part of a process of working through various levels of opposition – while more polarized and destructive outside of their “progressive circles” – which are still pervasive and requiring dedicated work in order for incremental shifts to be possible. The use of narrative on collective, interpersonal and intrapersonal levels can be identified as the catalyzing processes which help these groups “creatively reposition” themselves. An in-depth theoretical exploration of this process can be found in the chapters which explore the Peace it Together peace camp. Cultural studies research on oppositional cultural codes will be developed further as a means to clarify the unique orientation of the organization, which seeks to transformatively move beyond binary relationships. I argue that this level of abstraction is needed to provide for an effective evaluation of varying Israeli-Palestinian conflict dynamics. This theoretical orientation is consistent with my development of the constellation of factors surrounding identity in conflict explored in depth below. These areas produce both dominant subjectivities, and those which are less detrimentally encumbered and therefore in transition.

## Theories of Identity

There are two specific streams of identity theory which entered academic discourse over a period of twelve years. Tajfel (1981) and Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory and Turner's (Turner et al., 1987) self-categorization theory may be viewed as a starting point when attempting to pursue questions of identity within cultural frameworks pertaining to conflict. Tajfel and Turner's early work attempted to unearth the underlying psychological reasons for individuals belonging to specific groups to accept or dismiss their place within the group (Tajfel, 1981). Turner (1987, p. 42) argued that there was an intrinsic need for individuals to distinguish their own collective in positive terms from others in order to realize a positive social identity. Tajfel's self-categorization theory was essentially an extension of this perspective, highlighting the "cognitive factors" which encompass such categorization. This notwithstanding, Tajfel asserted that any thorough examination of identity needed to be coupled with motivational concerns.

These motivational concerns allow us to broaden the scope of analysis beyond a surface approach to identity centering on why individuals identify with their collectives, to understanding the implication of such relationships for intergroup relations. Extending the analysis toward a more unmapped, less rigidly defined space provided additional conceptual room to work with. Marking tendencies of individual behaviour within groups allowed scholars to now have a gauge of "probability" (Huddy, 2001, p. 133). Prototype theory emerged, centering on how individuals within groups most typify their fellow members (Huddy, 2001, Lakoff, 1987). Self-categorization researchers who incorporated prototypic or "tendency-influenced" analysis could be seen as making an effort to bridge theory with real life. Tendency centered thought naturally lends itself to the grey areas which inevitably unfold in the everyday world. Such thought also compensates for the narrow categories of association between individuals and groups which characterized early social identity theoretical analysis.

As noted above, Tajfel and Turner initially explained how a key component of one's identity is formed in the way individuals seek to position their group in a positive light. The connection with the group could be viewed as part of one's "existential survival" in the world. This cannot be reduced to a mere association, but realized more broadly rather, in affective terms, "beyond mere cognitive classification of the self and others into a shared social category" developing through, "felt attachment between the



self and the in-group as a whole (Brewer, p. 20, 2001). One can go further and draw a correlation as to the degree to which group identification is imbedded in personal feelings. The extent of one's emotional affiliation can create a formulaic relationship where one's sense of direction and worth cannot easily be disassociated from that of the collective (Brewer, 1991). With this, it is clear how the conceptual advantage in identity work provided by Tajfel's later emphasis on group tendencies could be augmented further.

For example, Brewer's shift beyond the cognitive allows us to identify how "root level" tendencies develop. This lays bare two essential questions: What is the relationship between individual cognitive and affective processes in social interaction? If group association and development is inextricably interwoven with a "felt attachment," then how is such affectivity channelled in intergroup associations? I will attempt to answer this further below with my broad examination of underlying factors of conflict such as collective memory, trauma and dominant cultural narratives.

The degree of attachment to one's group is related to individual and collective orientations toward other groups in a variety of ways. While self-worth depends on the degree of acceptance within the in-group, it is not the only salient factor to be considered. An individual's affirmative self-evaluation can also depend on one's comparative assessment to the dominant norms of the in-group and out-group (Festinger, 1954). In this sense, one might ask oneself about the extent to which he/she has conformed or internalized in-group social norms. The internalization of such norms may then be used as a rationalization or justification for how one's life and related behaviour contrasts with the behaviour of groups that are positioned in opposition to one's own.

### ***Stereotyping and Identity***

The internalization of dominant norms within the context of identity development, and the level of "felt attachment" to one's group, are directly interwoven with questions of stereotyping. Individuals behave differently depending on whether the context is within or outside of the collective. This reality reflects a level of comfort with habitual internal cultural dynamics. The facility with one's own identity and perspective, and comfort with others who share similar subjectivities, often engenders distrust with those not belonging

to the group. Such distrust can develop into monolithic stereotypical attitudes toward others which are sustained and become reproduced over a long period of time. So the reality which emerges is a very simple construct of “our values,” behaviour and norms placed on a “worthy pedestal,” while the other side’s orientation is rejected, devalued and demonized (Brewer, 2001 p. 30). This basic dichotomy typifies virtually all group conflict in varying degrees.

It is important to accurately capture these accentuated differences between groups. Bar Tal (2005, p.23) indicates that the beliefs that form stereotypes emanate from “cognitive structures” which “pertain to mental representations.” This is an important delineation as it gives the stereotype form. We could therefore easily position these structures as one would geographically with places on a map. Through cultural socialization, an individual cognitively processes data systematically so schematic variables such as the appearances, personal traits and expectations of other groups are carefully arranged. Mental representations informed by the relationship between one’s direct personal experience and dominant cultural narratives create imagery which conveniently bring the schematic variables to life. The coupling of cognitive structures and mental representations are part of a web that weaves each member of society together by virtue of a coherent social logic.

Stereotypic patterns cannot simply be reduced to cognitive levels however. Jamrymowicz and Bar Tal (2006) argue that the rigid construct of others endemic to stereotypic thinking emerges through the “activation of stable affective reactions.” So while the schematic variables may be structured cognitively to a certain degree, these scholars argue that, “information related to the stereotyped group is selected and organized in accordance with affect (Ibid, 2006). So the reactive personal state is within one’s physiology, beyond a discourse which one is simply “born into,” transcending the state of solely being replayed repeatedly in one’s mind.

How can the subjective and collective cultural content of this affective state within intergroup situations be further clarified? Bodenhausen et al, (1993) use the term “integral affect” to refer to collective emotional tendencies which tend to arise within particular situations. What is critical here is that integral affect within such situations tends to be destructive, “often involving anxiety, irritation, disgust, and other negative feelings” (Dijker, 1987; Jackson & Sullivan, 1989; McConahay, 1986; Stephan &

Stephan, 1985; Wilde & Shapiro, 1989). The extent or depth of affect in this case would be considerably more substantial when members of oppositional groups are forced to confront each other face to face. The catalyzing force of arousal is at the core of the research on affect related to stereotyping.

As noted above there are any number of cultural triggers enveloped within in-group-out-group relations. Tajfel's self-categorization theory gives us a clear indication as to how absorbed "cultural data" is stored at the cognitive level and used in a pejorative juxtaposition with groups in opposition to one's own. Brewer's exploration of "felt attachment" provides us with a sense of how one can personally satisfy their need for a fulfilled sense of identity through an "affective adhesive" within a cluster of cultural codes. This relationship is important, as Ortony et al, (1988, p. 12) indicate that even those who specialize in cognitive theory, have recognized that the physiological components of emotional dynamics are incontestably salient. Without the triggering point or arousal, we cannot see the whole picture; the moment where a given culture, another group and the self transparently interact. While one's own culture shapes the socialization process, the other group informs a rationalization of "our experience" with suffering or justification for inhumane violent action against "them." The aroused self is vulnerable at many affective levels. Bodenhausen et al (1993. P. 14) indicate that:

Too little arousal may limit alertness and motivation, while too much arousal may prove to be distracting and may create biological interference limiting processing capacity and efficiency. At these non-optimal levels, arousal may encourage reliance on simpler, and perhaps more dominant response strategies.

This is therefore an indication of aggression stemming from low or high levels of arousal. Such emotional volatility directly informs an increased dependency on very simple destructive societal norms emanating from a given cultural discourse. In fact, Bodenhausen (1990) has indicated that arousal at either extreme of the spectrum is connected with heightened dependency on "stereotypic (simplified) response strategies."

### ***Affectively Charged Emotions Which Shape Identity***

Simplified responses through arousal are endemic within the "viscerally-charged" affective state, where people often succumb to more vulnerable identification through destructive emotions such as fear, shame, rage and revenge. As the individual attaches

him/herself to an unfulfilled dominant vision of collective identity, an opposing group is often the target of such unhealed emotions, which are easily aroused through a perpetual discourse of “lack” that circulates through a given identity group. Thomas J. Scheff (1994) captures the reality of this affective state that merges the physicality of such visceral emotions with the realities of the social structure. He argues that, “Just as fear automatically signals a threat to the safety of the physical self (our bodies), so shame automatically signals a threat of our social self, the person that we think we are and expect others to think we are” (p.52). It is important to consider Scheff’s emphasis on the social construction of the internalization of identity and how this relates to behaviour with others. If an individual expects others to assess his/her behaviour in line with the dominant societal norms, then a clear issue of acceptance is in question. Orienting one’s life according to the approval of others becomes an existence of containment. This state is permeated with fear as one is micro-managing each thought and action, abandoning agency by eliminating spontaneity and a more fluid unfolding of personal experience.

Lazarus (1991) considers such a pattern as part of an “ego-ideal” where shame is centered on pleasing others. Therefore, if one is not conforming at every turn to what has been internalized through the collective “ego-ideal,” then a social norm is transgressed, leaving a festering of the interplay of guilt and shame for susceptible group members. Very much in line with the simplified response strategies during the state of arousal captured by Bodenhausen, Horney (1950) points to such a degree of vulnerability within a “false self” categorized around a “pride system.” All of the dominant cultural norms in this case, are internalized and micro-managed by individuals who encompass this false self within a pride system based on illusion. In this sense, one is not genuinely developing the self, but distorting self-development by attachment through pride to an utterly destructive existential reality. Horney indicates that the pride system is built on the basis of “humiliation” or “shame” and follows a series of unfolding variables of, “honour, insult, vindictiveness and revenge” (Scheff and Retzinger, 1991).

Dominant discourses of identity are filled with rhetoric which stimulates such a sequencing of emotions, arousing a given collective. Such a pattern is essentially an endless cycle because of the degree to which individuals within collectives often become prisoners to these emotions. This constraining state of being is captured by Scheff and Retzinger’s (Ibid) allusion to Lewis’ research on “shame-anger variants.” The scholars

indicate that Lewis considers guilt as a, “shame-anger sequence in which the anger is directed back at self, and resentment is a shame-anger sequence in which the anger is directed out at another” (p.13). In this sense, a person chooses to conform to norms and a story “recording” which is continuously replayed in their minds. Alternative possibilities of agency are abandoned or never realized and this keeps one dissatisfied, whether consciously or unconsciously. This is not to dismiss the institutions within given societies which may force people to both conform to dominant norms and not provide much discursive room to move beyond “othering” another group.

Notwithstanding such forces, the intersection of all of these emotions at the personal, collective and intergroup levels are of significant importance for understanding the basis for conflict within and between societies. Questions of desired or actualized revenge resulting from harboured resentment make up one of the important areas worth noting. Such affective responses may be viewed as an expansion of the inner turmoil experienced by individuals through their constrained existence stemming from conforming to dominant collective norms and subjectivities. The level of destruction is multiplied when expanded to the societal level.

In a similar way to the scholars’ exploration of the destructive emotions above, eighteenth century Bishop Joseph Butler (1726) argues that, “the passion of resentment” operates in a “defensive role” outlined by the “rules of morality” within the social order. Butler’s particular wording of the “affective disposition” of resentment separates him from others. His emphasis on the term “passion” is instructive when considering the earlier discussion. We can extrapolate his use of this term by stressing the degree of vulnerability that members of a collective experience when being completely constrained by dominant norms. They can be easily manipulated in this state and have nothing else to draw upon other than the passion of avenging a particular collective humiliation allegedly experienced at some point in the past. The collective literally embodies a “defensive role” which is clouded by a dominant discursive message that distorts notions of morality. The prevailing discourse would often be couched in terms of “honour” and “pride” while hiding what’s being destructively perpetuated at the expense of individual personal development.

In her book, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, Martha Minow (1998, p. 11) cites Polish Solidarity Activist Adam Michnick. Michnick powerfully captures the damaging effect of events that can unfold within a society galvanized by revenge:

First, there is a purge of yesterday's adversaries, the partisans of the old regime. Then comes the purge of yesterday's fellow oppositionists, who now oppose the idea of revenge. Finally, there is the purge of those who defend them. A psychology of vengeance and hatred develops.

While my work attempts to clarify the root causes of enmity between nations, it is important to consider the internal antecedents of conflict which lead to hostility and violence. For this reason, Michnick's exploration of the internal dynamics of revolution stemming from revenge is so valuable. In this context, the repressive forces within societies can destructively constrain individual thought and action. As Michnick indicates, members of a given populace could then create a new authoritarian structure and be equally as repressive. Similarly, if the original societal structure remains intact, the above-noted emotions of "pride" and "honour" can be called upon and directed toward an external enemy. In both cases, rather than collectively healing the trauma of the impact of a discourse of violence, violence takes a new form and is perpetuated. Minow cites Michnick's work in relation to the Bosnian and Rwandan atrocities of the 1990s.

In the case of Bosnia, an ancient discourse of violence was used to instigate new crimes against neighbouring enemies. The case of Rwanda is a legacy of Belgian colonialism and the preferential treatment given to the Tutsi over the Hutu population. In Rwanda, as in many conflict zones, rather than root level healing, power has been repackaged to favour the victimized group. This is captured eloquently in the title of Mahmood Mamdani's (2002) article, "When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda." The content of this work reflects one of the fundamental questions which I consider in the context of my research. How can relationships of dominance which manifest in varying victim-perpetrator cycles of violence be transformed so that these calamitous patterns do not continue?

## Trauma

The etymology of the word trauma is linked to the idea of a wound (“Trauma,” n.d.). Dr. David Becker, a lecturer at the Free University of Berlin, has direct experience with trauma, having worked for many years with victims of political persecution in Latin America. He argues that to understand trauma we need to clearly grasp it contextually. For him, the interplay of a specificity of situational dynamics leading to traumatic outcomes for people is most salient (Becker, 2004, 2). Becker makes clear distinctions between trauma, a traumatic situation and the symptoms that emanate from these dynamics. He notes how trauma as a concept has been examined in three different ways. Firstly, its application medically encompasses a thorough body of symptoms, as is the case with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Secondly, trauma evolved to include therapeutic work that stemmed primarily from the victimization experienced during the Holocaust. Finally, trauma has been examined as a social and political process which emphasizes the relationship between individual and collective steps toward healing it (Becker 2004, p.3). Becker’s distinctions allow for a non-reductionist approach to the study of trauma.

Becker’s direct field experience and academic work has enabled him to problematize the field in a concise yet thorough manner. Along with his review of how trauma has been explored, he makes further significant distinctions. While he defines trauma as severe damage to individuals or societal structures, he provides more conceptual room for what he describes as a “traumatic situation.” Such a situation involves an incident or several incidents “of extreme violence that occur within a social context...exemplified by war” (Becker, 3, 2004). While Becker provides readers with a broad enough picture to apply thoroughly to different facets of events involving trauma, other scholars tend to focus on one specific aspect of the traumatic situation.

Cathy Caruth and Ruth Leys both focus on the symptoms that develop through traumatic experiences. Their work gives us a glimpse into the destabilizing experiences of a victim’s suffering. Caruth defines traumatic dissociation as a reaction involving, “intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event.” (Caruth, 1995, p. 4). The situation is not fully absorbed in the moment, but is repeated at a later point, viciously tormenting those who have gone through the trauma. In a similar way Ruth Leys (2000) points to victims fixatedly “performing” the original experience

during ongoing flashbacks. These episodes graphically illustrate the torment that individuals suffer through as a result of their experiences with trauma. While the cyclical patterns working their way through people's lives provide us with an indication of the traumatic experience, they do not outline how trauma is formed.

It is important to situate the individual cognitively prior to and following the traumatic situation. Ronnie Janoff-Bulman (1985, p.17) points out that people live according to certain "assumptions" and individual "theories" that enable them to establish their aims, organize their schedules and perhaps most importantly, "order behaviour." The assumptions can be viewed as ways that individuals filter reality based on what is learned through their environment. As most people may agree on certain common realities – such as how dominant societal institutions are run - significant personality variance in a given populace is indicative that other factors need to be considered. Janoff-Bulman's discussion of "theories of self" is consistent with a theme that I have highlighted elsewhere in this chapter: the self is a complex construction that is much more than a passive reflection of a person's social and cultural context (cf., Epstein, 1980; Parkes, 1971, 1975).

Instead of "theories" of the self, Lisa McCann and Laurie Ann Pearlman (1990) prefer the term, "personal schemas." They extend the analysis of the self by linking personal schemas to the basic human needs alluded to earlier which include, "safety, trust/dependency, independence, power, esteem, and intimacy" (p. 5). Life circumstances may unfold which can either reinforce or detrimentally alter one's schema. A traumatic situation can overwhelm a person to the extent that their schema is forever altered. It may be instructive to view coping with this quandary as an unfolding process where one's personal threshold lies on a scale ranging from relative security if stability persists, toward a state of debilitating volatility if overwhelmed by a traumatic situation.

This may adequately illustrate an individually constructed schema, but what is the role played by collective social and cultural dynamics? Jeffrey Alexander attributes "traumatic status" to actual or invented occurrences, not because of their real detrimental impact, but because of the conviction that such events have jarringly, and unfavourably damaged the identity of a given group. In this sense, Alexander views identity as a "cultural reference" that may be vulnerable when established "patterned meanings" are



threatened. According to Alexander, the degree of group vulnerability is not an outcome of any major single occurrence but rather “the effect of a sociocultural process” (Alexander, 2004, 9, 10). A degree of instability cannot be understated when considering the factors that culminate in “traumatic status” as an effect of sociocultural circumstances.

Still, it is important to outline a critical component responsible for the perpetuation of cultural trauma. How does an event that later becomes so integral to collective identity enter into a cultural discourse to begin with? What gives an event such impact that it is viewed as literally doing harm to collective belief systems? An analysis of the interrelated forces of dominance and narrative is key to answering this question. Returning to Alexander, he places such dominance squarely within the grasp of human agency. It is through such “reflexive social agents” that “the successful imposition of a “new system of cultural classification” wielded through “power structures” is realized (Alexander, 2004, p. 10). There are several things happening at once here. Firstly, the new collective story is not derived from a census that gauges public opinion in terms of the traumatic impact of the event in question. While there is no question that any such occurrence affects people across societies in different ways, this is not the salient factor. The sociocultural process is dominant, and is relayed vertically, whereas a few aforementioned “reflexive social agents” who reside at the upper echelons of power, derive the “new system of cultural classification” selectively. The “new system of cultural classification” is essentially part of an emerging language or vocabulary introduced to the population which alters the dominant cultural narrative.

In this instance, it is instructive to return to the work of Stuart Hall. While some members of society will see through how the altered discourse is manipulated or used self-servingly by those in power, the majority will most likely use their agency to replicate it without much reflection. The vulnerability that they feel by the traumatic event, which is compounded by how “reflexive social agents” in power use the event, tends to reproduce a dominant interpretive frame. Preferred and privileged dominant meanings push oppositional meanings to the cultural margins. In this sense, most subjects have no genuine voice, and are therefore “spoken for” (Hall, 1979, p.66). This paradigm is one where substance and tone are carefully packaged through an orchestrated process whereby dominant meanings become encoded in representation. Negotiated and even oppositional meanings can be taken from dominant representations, but representations

are typically decoded in the context of societies that are 'structured in dominance' (Hall, 1980).

Somewhat similar to Hall, Ann E. Kaplan (2005) emphasizes the complexity of social identification while outlining how dominant identities and perceptions are reproduced. Writing on the impact of trauma, Kaplan argues that secondary or vicarious trauma through most societies' disseminating institutions can "arouse anxiety and trigger defense against further exposure" (p.87). Kaplan asserts that members of a given population actually experience symptoms related to such exposure. So, in this regard it is important to view trauma more expansively in all of its varying shades and therefore include affective/reactive tendencies that differ throughout a given population. These may be informed by prior traumatic experience related to imagery being presented or general sensitivity to difficult imagery. The number of times such imagery is relayed, and the tone used by broadcasters, are equally important factors.

Still, it is important to place these dynamics within the fundamental human traumatic response of fear explored earlier. On this point, Matsumoto (1989) argues that emotion is experienced universally in firsthand traumatic experiences. Stamm and Friedman (2000) emphasize that, "cultural factors may influence the likelihood that fear will be evoked or expressed by a person from a specific ethno cultural group" when encountering such dynamics. Given the multitude of personal affective factors that are possible in vicarious situations referred to by Kaplan, we can extrapolate and include Matsumoto and Stamm and Friedman's work within her secondary frame. How can we account for the numerous ways that subjects "can be spoken for" which are informed by a coupling of their own lifelong exposure to cultural influences over time and personal experiences with trauma? My exploration of collective memory will clarify this relationship in more depth.

## **Collective Memory**

Before considering theoretical explorations of collective memory it is important to begin with an attempt to define memory itself. Bartlett makes a distinction between perceiving and remembering. The former may be viewed as an immediate affective reaction to a grouping of "sensory stimuli." The latter is a means of utilizing such

groupings of stimuli. There is awareness by the person remembering that these stimuli have become accessible through any of the body's senses (Bartlett, 1932, p.14). The body reacts in the moment to any number of these triggers in one's environment. While such triggers can be elicited through a familiar smell, image or sound, how can they prove to be reliable for an outside observer in terms of the validity of a given memory? If life is constantly in flow and people are continuously bombarded with any number of stimuli that can trigger a variety of "internal memory processes," how can a clear-cut stream of memory associated with a given situation be identified?

Bartlett felt that such questions are contentious as he pointed to the "mobility of images" in our lives, exacerbated by the human imagination. This could be developed further when considering what people perhaps unconsciously inject into their memories. Bartlett points to human "interest" and "feeling" as influential variables which perhaps distort memories, enabling them to become self-fulfilling constructs. He asserts that:

the human organism would say, if it were able to express itself 'This and this and this must have occurred, in order that my present state should be what it is'...I believe this is precisely and accurately just what does happen in by far the greatest number of instances of remembering. (Bartlett, 1932, 202).

Bartlett's work gives us an indication as to how individuals can distort memory. But, how can we take memory a step further and capture it at the interpersonal or community levels? I believe we must return to consider questions of affectivity. The "building blocks" of collective affectivity are propelled through sharing public emotions in social contexts. There is a human tendency for emotions to be shared socially shortly after a viscerally charged event. Such patterns tend to be repetitive in nature. (Rime, 1989; Rime, Mesquita, Philippot, & Boca 1991; Rime, Noel and Philippot, 1991). Although this data was gathered in a Western European context, we could extrapolate more broadly and consider the Middle Eastern cross-fertilization of European and Semitic cultures. This will become clearer within the Israeli-Palestinian dynamics outlined later in the analysis.

When a personal story about an emotionally challenging situation is relayed, what impact does this have on the listener? How does related information become circulated throughout a society? There is scholarly evidence which demonstrates that

when others absorb information from an agitated person, their own, “autonomic nervous system activity reveal increased arousal” (Lazarus, Opton, Monikos, and Rankin, 1965). There is a transfer of conflict-laden affect here as there is clear evidence of the physiological effects experienced through the encounter. This may be viewed as “destructive exponential growth” where each member of a community experiencing some degree of trauma relays their circumstances to another person. A multiplier effect unfolds, as each jarring story that is relayed and absorbed in an initial addresser-addressee dynamic is then, in turn, spread further throughout a given community in a similar way.

We may be reminded of the children’s game “broken telephone” when considering this pattern. The game requires that children sit in a circle with an initial message/topic being provided by an adult. This game often takes place in a classroom setting and is coordinated by a schoolteacher. The children are asked to whisper the message sequentially into each other’s ears until the last child relays the final message back to the group. The children tend to completely distort the original information given. The purpose of the game is to determine a group’s capacity to listen and communicate effectively.

It is useful to return to Bartlett in order to explore such scenarios further. He indicated that memory is questionable amongst human beings when considering the self-perpetuating catalysts of “interest” and “feeling.” With this idea as a starting point, we can then imagine the colossal degree of distortion as the pattern of relayed information circulates throughout communities and societies as a whole. The affectively charged nature of such information colors the development of memory. While the scholars noted above capture the mechanisms of remembering, and how memory often circulates through given societies at the interpersonal level, it is still necessary to emphasize how memory is constructed. In other words, what are the trickling-down processes that feed memory into the collective consciousness?

While a truism, it is necessary to emphasize again that memory takes place with one’s association to other group members. The major societal events that are brought to our attention, however, require mechanisms for such information to be relayed. The most relevant example would be the political rhetoric expressed by politicians through the dominating forces of corporate media. An exploration of such forces is not the

primary focus here, but rather the importance lies in the societal effect of relationships of dominance which have been relayed through such platforms. The “father of collective memory” Maurice Halbwachs defined the field in terms of the extent to which individuals situate their thought, “in these frameworks and participate in this memory” that they are “capable of the act of recollection” (Coser, 1992, p.38).

There is a window of agency to be found in both Bartlett’s and Halbwachs’ work as they both do not position the individual within a paradigm of passive interpretation. Bartlett’s analysis of the act of remembering as the utilization of a group of stimuli, and Halbwach’s discussion of the ways individuals situate their thoughts in social collectives, both provide some analytical room for varying interpretations. Still, in Halbwach’s work in particular, patterns of elite dominance remain constant. He indicates that the past’s “reconstruction” is dependent upon the contemporary agenda. Such an agenda, “is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of society” (Coser, 1992, p.38). These “predominant thoughts” are more likely to be shaped by dominant groups than by subordinate ones. Schwartz echoed this point (1996, p.277) as he wrote about one discourse prevailing over others where the past is essentially a “mask concealing the interests of the powerful.” This line of thinking lends itself directly to other studies that further explore socially structured memory.

For example, Michael Schudson indicates that the construction of memory takes place through the way language is assembled, by people’s reactions to social cues which are themselves carefully orchestrated and with the way recall itself is collectively structured (Schudson, 1995, p.347). These are just three of many sophisticated structural patterns emanating from elite levels that are very difficult for the average person to acknowledge let alone consciously transcend. Eviatar Zerubavel (2003) eloquently explores the complexity of elite structuring of the past in his book, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*, where he points to various “mnemonic” variables which directly inform a collective’s relationship with memory. Of particular importance are the time lines that are used for commemoration, where “eventful” periods on the calendar are distinguished from “uneventful” ones. Such selective fabrication is even more pronounced in cultural documentation where “sacred periods” have been carefully chosen and are manifested in national museums or historical textbooks.

Zerubavel's inquiry led him to explore many cultures through what he refers to as "commemograms," or the most sacred periods on the societal calendar to see if he could discover overlapping patterns. In a study of 191 cultures, he discovered that most events that tend to be commemorated have taken place over the past two centuries or were drawn from a culture's early history. Such research affirms an earlier thesis advanced by Carole Blair (2006). Blair asserts that:

Memory...remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived (p.52).

The gaps in Zerubavel's study and aptness in Blair's assertion are clear indications of both the selectivity and the ulterior motives used by those who manipulate collective memory. Rather than placing his research under the rubric of "collective memory," Erik Hobsbawm similarly points to the "invention of tradition" (1983). As is the case with other scholars in the field, he does not sweepingly dismiss much of the content of commemorated traditions, but rather centers his criticism on how they are packaged. Hobsbawm argues that there is a clear contradiction between the continuous transformations of the contemporary world and the efforts to orchestrate certain facets of social existence as "unchanging and invariant" (p.2). Pointing to national movements, how are we to reconcile the construction of new symbols or the use of patriotic tools with strategies of commemoration akin to those described by Zerubavel? Hobsbawm points to the benefit of investigating such patterns as they are significant indications of societal issues which may not be otherwise acknowledged. Echoing Halbwach's allusion to collective memory being utilized through elite channels, and Blair's reference to how such memory is "vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation," Hobsbawm, indicates that the quintessential pattern, "for all invented traditions" is the "use of history as a legitimator...." (Ibid, p. 7-12)

The success of such motives through their impact on a given collective should never be understated. As will be seen below when exploring dominant Israeli and Palestinian cultural narratives, they have a very real impact on the population. Iwona Irwin-Zarecka (1994) emphasizes that the rhetoric used in "memory conflicts" cannot be ignored. The delicate manipulation of collective memory through evoking "national honour" or past victimization she asserts, tell us a great deal about the basic moral

obligations brought into play (p.81). When we think in terms of the breadth of the collective memory literature - with its emphasis on a discourse that is being carefully shaped to meet a specific elite agenda in a given period of time –what are we actually conceptually exploring? Metanarratives are those narratives that help direct, shift or capture what has been conveniently wielded through collective memory. While Zerubavel can accurately gauge how memory is carefully selected, it is important to emphasize the narrative thread which links what took place several hundred years ago, for example, and how this is “relevant” for the current state of a given nation and the direction of its identity.

Metanarratives are the comprehensive interpretive constructs which include all of “the basic symbols, values, beliefs, and behavioral codes of a collective, and serve, therefore, as the symbolic representation of the national ethos” (Auerbach, 2009, p. 297). Since metanarratives touch upon all of these areas, using one’s agency to distance oneself from them is very rare. While Halbwachs provided enough analytical space in his research for individual autonomy in terms of situating the self within this overarching discourse, the constellation of a given metanarrative is often more powerful than individual strands of collective memory. For your average person, the onslaught of daily societal symbols and behavioural codes, which are carefully packaged and repackaged, is more potent than one story “from time immemorial” within a collective discourse.

To clarify this point, it is important to draw a distinction between national narratives and metanarratives. National narratives are clear stories referring to the triumphs of glorified individuals from a nation’s past, which are subject to the manipulation and selectivity referred to earlier. Metanarratives are “abstract, intangible and nonfigurative” and their elusiveness is partially related to the fact that national narratives are packaged within them. Moreover, an individual can much more easily relate to the plight of an old national hero and associate it with the current predicament faced by his or her nation. This story often becomes a catalyzing force, galvanizing a population to sacrifice for their country (Auerbach, 2009, p.298). In the next chapter, I explore the impact of dominant Israeli and Palestinian national narratives and their anchoring metanarratives.

## **Chapter 2.**

### **Reproducing Conflict: Dominant Israeli and Palestinian Narratives**

This chapter begins with a brief historical overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, focusing on events that took place in the years prior to the establishment of the state of Israel. It is necessary to outline these historical events so that readers are provided with an appropriate contextualization for the analysis of dominant Israeli and Palestinian cultural narratives, as this is the chapter's central focus. It is important to ask how each group's separate and interwoven histories appear to have shaped their worldviews. To what extent have victim-perpetrator relationships stemming from long periods of marginalization seeped into the "cultural lexicon"? How are these narratives "operationalized" strategically by societal leaders? After considering these questions and pointing out how narratives touch upon multiple level relationships of dominance, I identify how these narratives may be viewed affectively. These "cultural stories" seem so pervasive that they can constrain the vast majority of people from each cultural group; even those who have made a concerted effort to transcend them. Finally, I provide a brief literature review of the conceptualization of narrative theory, particularly in respect to how narrative can be considered in everyday life.

#### **Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

The years leading up to the establishment of the state of Israel were important both on a broad geo-political level and at the level of local communities. The Middle East and North Africa had been the domain of Ottoman Turkish rule since the fifteenth century. In the broadest geopolitical terms, this region became a key site of military, economic and cultural battles between the Ottomans and the rising powers in Western Europe. By the late nineteenth century, European forces were becoming stronger and the fortunes of the aging Ottoman Empire were in such decline that it seemed only a



matter of time before Ottoman power would collapse altogether. The dissolution of Ottoman control in the region effectively occurred by the end of World War I and ushered in a new period of European dominance.

Notwithstanding their history of conflict in Europe, Britain and France realized that if they cooperated, they could mutually benefit through the construction of new colonial outposts in the Middle East. This posture was solidified with the Sykes-Picot agreement between the two countries, which was essentially a plan to divide up the Middle East into 'nations' according to agreed upon "spheres of influence." The new English-French alliance epitomized imperial rule by disregarding the rights, of locals, coercing or incorporating regional elites and, of course, extracting available resources. Much like imperial patterns in other parts of the world, this pattern of European colonialism contributed to aggravating and exacerbating divisions between the vulnerable communities they exploited (Smith, 2010, pp.53-64). In the face of the shifting borders of colonial reorganization in the region, groups of people without national representation attempted to position themselves so that their interests could be heard. For many Jews and Arabs, self-determination seemed to be the only way forward beyond being treated as pawns in a ruthless game of realpolitik.

Representatives of European Jewry felt that taking action was crucial, because Jews lacked any coherent space for national expression in the face of European colonization in the Middle East and faced intensified state sanctioned violence all over Eastern and Central Europe. The visceral existential implications of their situation brought to the surface a central cultural message that had circulated for centuries at the level of folkloric imagination. Since the Romans expelled Jews from ancient Israel in the first century CE, the return to their land always remained central to Jewish cultural consciousness. This was part of an affective belief system anchored in the pages of the Torah and therefore continuously circulating amongst its adherents. Cleveland (2004, p. 240) notes that:

Palestine occupied so central a place in Jewish religious culture because of the belief that the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel after the Exodus represented the fulfillment of God's promise to the Jews that they were destined to complete their destiny in Zion.

The emergence of late nineteenth century Zionism, brought an idea which was predominantly religious and cultural to the status of a widespread continental political movement. The growing politicization of this movement was greatly aided by Theodor Herzl, a secular Austro-Hungarian Jewish journalist whose cultural and political sentiment was altered considerably by the circumstances he was exposed to professionally. Herzl's witnessing of vicious xenophobic cultural violence directed at Jewish communities in Europe jarred him personally. The circumstances of the day began shaping him politically and he could not continue simply covering the news in a detached, impersonal manner.

In 1896, Herzl wrote *Der Judenstaat* (The State of the Jews) which outlined the Jewish plight in Europe and introduced what he viewed as the only solution to the problem, self-determination. The momentum created through his publication led to the convening of the first World Zionist Congress the following year (Robertson and Timms, 1997). Still, Herzl's book only crystalized an already strong Zionist impulse in Europe. For example, as early as 1881, mass immigration to Palestine took place with an influx of Jews escaping life-threatening circumstances in Eastern Europe. This emigration was known as the first *aliyah* (literally meaning "going up" or ascending to Zion), and was considered the primary major modern relocation of its kind for Jews. The second *aliyah* (1904-14) of 40,000 immigrants was triggered by similar repression in Russian controlled Bessarabia. The 1920s would see the third (1919-23) and fourth (1924-29) *aliyahs*, with another 100,000 Jews arriving in Palestine (Stein, 2003). The political backdrop to all of this this was the new postwar context of British colonialism in the region.

The British mandate in Palestine was created by the United Kingdom to include a territory extracted from what was previously designated as "Ottoman Syria." Britain officially ruled this territory between 1920 and 1948, though they had been militarily

positioned there for many years previously<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, during the First World War the British had allied themselves famously with Arab leaders in the defeat of Turkish forces. This history of alliance, and of promises made in wartime, gave a measure of legitimacy to British rule for some Arab leaders in the early war years. This fragile thread of legitimacy was shattered in 1917 when British Foreign Secretary, Lord Arthur James Balfour issued a statement to Walter Rothschild – a prominent leader of Britain’s Jewish community – to be relayed to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. The document read as follows:

His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country (Rogan 2009, p.154).

The geo-strategic implications of Balfour’s Declaration were largely Machiavellian. While Britain and France formed a strategic alliance that essentially divided the region’s spoils territorially, each side was still methodically positioning itself to outmanoeuvre the other. The British had their eyes on controlling the waterways and, by administering Palestine, they would hold land adjacent to the Suez Canal, making it inaccessible to France. Considerable political maneuvering took place outside of these countries circles as well. Zionist leader, Chaim Weizmann, based in London, was a catalyzing force behind the creation of The Balfour Declaration. His relentless lobbying efforts arguably played a key role in the British cabinet’s recognition of the document. He drew upon the sensibilities of a few compassionate men who acknowledged the humanitarian needs of a marginalized and oppressed community. Weizmann was not

<sup>1</sup> The San Remo Conference (1920) awarded Britain the mandate for Palestine, and the military administration was replaced with a civilian one. Two years later the League of Nations formally recognized the mandate and added provisions that raised Zionist expectations. These included the incorporation of the Balfour Declaration and the recognition of Hebrew as an official language of Palestine. These actions infuriated the local Arab community. (Ovendale, 1999, p.51)

naïve, however, and he knew that this sensitivity needed to be packaged within the broader aim of reinforcing British geo-strategic dominance.

Still, while Weizmann knew he needed to be strategic and convince the British government of supporting the Zionist cause, he ultimately could not predict the long term reliability of a “national home for the Jewish People.” The wording of the Balfour Declaration certainly provided no guarantees that Britain would, indeed, use “their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement” of creating a national homeland for the Jewish people. On the contrary, in an apparent attempt to allay the fears of the local Arab communities inhabiting Palestine, Balfour stated that, “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”

The events that unfolded from 1917 until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, suggest that perhaps the British were so completely blinded by self-interest that they were unable to accurately gauge the complexity of the situation on the ground. The Balfour Declaration’s superficial allusion to all players involved carried considerable ambiguity, foreshadowing the chaos which would later ensue. Moreover, the vacuum of leadership and infrastructure needed to attempt to accommodate the needs of both Arab and Jewish communities led to each group attempting to take the situation into their own hands (Rogan, 2009, p.154).

The waves of Jewish settlement, along with growing resistance to the British Administration, culminated in mass rioting by the Arabs in Palestine. Interwoven community tragedies would further exacerbate tensions a decade and a half later. As a result of the emergence of Nazism, a Fifth *Aliyah*, brought 250,000 more Jews to Palestine. This influx of people catalyzed the local Arab population, and there was widespread rebellion between 1936 and 1939. They were incensed over Zionist political gains and a rising Jewish population, British colonial administration, and their own ineffective leadership. Mass demonstrations, were followed by attacks against Jews and finally a general strike on April 19, 1936. After a series of revolts over the next three years, by March of 1939, the numbers of Arab and Jewish casualties was in the thousands. Calamity begot calamity and the overwhelmed and ill prepared British were losing many of their own troops. The British responded to Arab outrage by considerably reducing Jewish immigration with the “White Paper” of 1939. This legislation, along with the fact that many countries around the world were refusing to accept Jewish refugees

desperately trying to escape the Holocaust, led to the deaths of millions of people (Cleveland, 2004, p.260).

As news emerged of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis in Europe, geopolitical momentum swung in favour of the Zionist cause. The West began to support the settlement of Holocaust survivors en masse and viewed the establishment of a Jewish state as a necessity. When U.S. President Harry Truman became a strong adherent to the cause, international pressures for a Jewish state heightened even more. However, even as the global political dynamics began to shift, the Jewish population in Palestine was quickly losing patience with the British political administration of the day. The mid-to late 1940s saw a number of well-coordinated attacks by fringe armed Jewish units as well as the Jewish *Haganah* (Jewish Defense Force) on many British installations. The combined factor of these attacks and pressure from the United States put the British in an untenable position (Cleveland, 2004, p.261). This led Britain to request that the quandary be placed in the hands of the United Nations (UN). To this end, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was created.

After a series of deliberations about whether the Jewish and Arab populations should manage the territory as a federation, or control separate parts of it in two neighbouring states, the latter idea prevailed amongst members of the General Assembly on November 29, 1947. It was agreed that the British would end its mandate by May 1948. The Jewish population was in favour of the partition but the Arab population was highly opposed to it. This led to utter turmoil in Palestine as the intense fighting of the 1930s repeated itself with the perpetration of mutually reciprocated heinous acts of violence. This situation coupled with the fact that the Arabs were poorly organized in comparison to the effective forces of the *Haganah*, led to the dispersion of hundreds of thousands of Arabs from the territory.

On May 14, 1948 Israel declared its independence leading neighbouring Arab states to respond angrily. Strong opposition to the UN partition plan was articulated along with an expressed commitment to provide military aid to the Palestinians. However, despite widespread support for the Palestinian cause, there was little unity among Arab regimes in the region. Each tended to pursue its own particular strategic objectives at the expense of a united front and the Israelis defeated the Arab armies by the end of the year. Israel was able to expand its borders further and hundreds of

thousands more Palestinians fled the land leading to an enormous demographic shift. Prior to the war, the Palestinians considerably outnumbered the Jewish inhabitants and now it was the Jewish inhabitants who became the majority. This was the origin of an ongoing Palestinian refugee crisis as there were now more Palestinians outside of their place of origin than within their homeland (Caplan, 2010, pp. 107-111).

The pattern of reciprocal violence in the years leading up to the establishment of the state of Israel, as well as the ensuing war, set the tone for a conflict that has continued for more than 60 years, and shows little sign of abating. The determination of each community in the conflict to convey their historical claims, and their sense of victimization, to the rest of the world, has left little room to consider the other side's suffering. Each party to the conflict tends to invest more energy attempting to legitimize their entrenched interpretations and positions than in negotiating solutions, and each party works especially hard to lobby the international community to gain a strategic advantage over the other. This situation is somewhat reminiscent of the positional maneuvering by earlier generations seeking the support of Western powers in the decades prior to Israel's existence. This has led to a culture where positioning one's group for dominance rather than cooperation has become the norm and where a set of powerful, inextricably interwoven, Israeli and Palestinian victim-perpetrator narratives have emerged. These cultural discourses permeate foundational conceptions of collective identity in the region and require more detailed discussion.

## **Zionism and Dominant Israeli Narratives**

Early Zionists, made a conscious effort to transcend the reality of what they believed was the weak "Jew of the Diaspora," who did not live on his own land and could not defend himself. There was an attempt to reverse the history of having been a victimized people, culminating in the disaster of the Holocaust. The direct opposite persona was carefully crafted using the mythology of the ancient past. Echoing her husband's writing on collective memory, Yael Zerubavel (1995) points to the use of what she terms "commemorative time" as a narrative mechanism through which Israeli collective identity was constructed. Such a tool, wielded by the Zionists conveniently "elaborates, condenses, omits or conflates historical events" in order to develop a "counter memory" and reinvigorate the Jewish national entity.

The Zionists' use of commemorative time could only be effective with the execution of another key facet of collective memory. The two millennia long exile period was presented monolithically, where only experiences of persecution were recounted. The whole period was represented through a discourse which focused on events such as pogroms (attacks on Jewish villages by local authorities in Eastern Europe) and ejection from their host countries. This discourse emphasized the constant reality of threat and fear (Zerubavel, 1995, p.9, p.18). Jewish holiday celebrations for example, which later became commemorated national Israeli holidays, were not central to the discourse, only peripheral, and often overlapped with the dominant frame of victimization. The period of slavery endured by the Israelites at the hands of the Egyptians, central to the Passover narrative, is an important example of this.

The process of perpetuating such a myopic discourse did not adequately come to terms with a legacy of oppression. The careful orchestration implemented to deny the past was used to selectively highlight and reshape a particular ancient historical event. By contrast, the new narrative of "heroic Jews" defending their land at all costs at the time of the early Roman period BCE, proliferated during the Zionist movement at the inception of the modern state of Israel. These constructed heroes opted to fight the militarily superior legions, eventually taking their own lives rather than giving up their position on top of Mount Masada (Bar-On, 2000, p.117, Bar-Tal and Salomon, 2006, p.26). Several years before he came to office, the first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, emphasized this denigrating narrative of past experience as an important aspect of the new national memory. He asserted that:

We had lived the life of exile, dependence, humiliation, slavery, and denigration. Not only that others brought upon us, but that we ourselves brought upon us, for we accepted our weakness, our lives in a foreign country, our exile...We did not know how to live as free men and we did not know how to die as free men (Ben-Gurion, 1944).

This view is foundational for understanding the importance of the discourse of victimization in the construction of Israeli collective memory. Beginning with the context, Ben-Gurion's words were uttered as a commemorative statement honouring the 1920 "armed defense of the Jewish settlement of Tel Hai as a 'second Masada'" (Zerubavel, 1995, p.79). The significance of Tel Hai was that it was part of a territory in the north of present day Israel that was divided between the British and French and only partially

allotted to the Zionists. The implications were vast, as the Zionists viewed the territory strategically as a northern stronghold, and therefore wanted to control all of it. The Arabs disputing the territory were under the French Mandate of present-day Syria. This all culminated in a battle won by the Zionists, where they gained a larger portion of the territory initially allotted. In terms of collective memory, this battle was viewed within the juxtaposed frame of the “heroic Jews” defending the land that was theirs and the weakness of their counterparts still succumbing to vicious anti-Semitism in Europe.

Returning to Ben-Gurion’s words twenty-three years after Tel Hai is highly instructive within this context. First, four years after these views were expressed, Israel was officially recognized as a sovereign state. If Israel’s future Prime Minister is contextualizing the formative years leading up to the establishment of his country in victim-perpetrator dynamics, it is valuable to extrapolate and place his words in a metanarrative discourse. As noted earlier, Auerbach described metanarratives as “abstract, intangible and nonfigurative” (Auerbach, 2009, p.298). Of equal importance is the fact that national narratives tend to be packaged within them.

Ben-Gurion’s couching of Israeli discourse with terms such as “humiliation, slavery and degradation” lends itself to a higher likelihood of the internalization of victimization for the collective. This expression is intertwined with the curious status of what it is to live existentially as “free men.” Commemorating Tel Hai within this context indicates that being free means literally arming oneself to “protect/re-capture” one’s “ancient-new land.” The militarization of freedom in the success of this battle leads to the perpetration of new victims, in this case, the *othered* Arab, standing in the way of the fulfillment of the Zionist dream. The commemorative timing of his statement was at the height of the Holocaust in 1943. The relatives of those who settled in Israel were being slaughtered *en masse*. As tragic as this is to capture in light of the above, the Holocaust affirmed for Zionists that the “weakness” of the old needed to be transformed through taking their lives into their own hands as “free men.”

This militant call to arms further exacerbated the tension lying within the Israeli relationship with their new lives in the Middle East and their European recent past. It is fair to characterize this relationship as a violent internal struggle both collectively and personally, as it is impossible to dismiss centuries of oppression within a new embodied “heroic Jew.” The past simply does not disappear in a vacuum. The sublimation of this



internal struggle within Israel is nowhere better represented than in the early Israeli treatment of victims of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). According to three articles in the Israel Medical Association Journal printed in the late 1940s, (Halperin, 1949; Kalmus, 1949; Wollman, 1948), Israeli soldiers who suffered psychologically during the War of Independence (1948) were considered “unfit, fearful, psychopathic hypochondriacs eager to evade the service.” This is further compounded by more damaging evidence found in these reports, which reinforces the attempt to stigmatize Jewish life in exile. The literature alludes to the preparedness of the native born Israeli or *Sabra* and the unbalanced new arrivals who were still victims of their past suffering. The connotation was that the former were less susceptible to being traumatized during battle, while the latter were imagined as having a greater tendency toward breakdown. This type of divisive dialectic continued for decades, though would moderate slightly in later years (Witztum and Kotler, p. 107, 108).

The resentment between *the Sabras* and recent survivors of life in exile was not the only internal schism. As Ella Shohat has noted, another schism can be found in the case of Jews who emigrated to Israel from Arab countries (Mizrahi). She asserts that the Mizrahi held an inferior place within a “‘minority/majority’ battle that was tainted by Eurocentrism. Such Eurocentrism can be traced back to the history of marginality and exploitation of Jews in Europe and particularly through the sense of exclusion felt by those Jews who grew up around European, “nation-states.” Shohat argues that European nation states, traditionally “imposed a coherent sense of national identity precisely because of their fragile sense of cultural, even geographical belonging.” (Shohat, 2006, p. 207, 208). The construction and positioning of narratives of exclusion and victimization within the establishment of a new Jewish homeland only served to replicate – with less severity – the marginalization Jews experienced in exile. If the “heroic Sabra” discourse was constructed around a rejection of the European Jewish experience with victimization, and designed to forever alter the existential orientation toward a “strengthened autonomy,” then where did other Jews, from relatively cohesive communities that lived more harmoniously for centuries with their Arab neighbours fit in? The answer to this question is that Jews from neighbouring Arab countries were more likely to be marginalized from the “heroic Sabra” discourse than European Jewish immigrants. In this sense, the ‘heroic Sabra’ discourse carried the potential to become hegemonic and exclusionary.

## Palestinian Narratives

Palestinian nationalism first emerged in the waning years of the Ottoman Empire, when Palestinians increasingly came to identify with the Arab goal of liberation from the Ottomans. Arab hostility to the Ottomans created a situation where it was not uncommon during World War I for Arab nationalists to ally themselves with the British, who were fighting the Ottomans. During the War, Palestinians believed in the promises made in the McMahon-Hussein exchanges about support for Arab independence if the Ottomans were defeated. So they were overcome with a sense of anger and betrayal when the British later proposed in the Balfour Declaration, a Jewish state in Palestine. It is well known that the Palestinians refer to the establishment of the State of Israel as the great "Al Nakba" or disaster (Abdel Jawad, 2006, p.87). This event reinforced and foreshadowed an even stronger sense of collective identity for Palestinians. This identity was permeated with a discourse of "dispossession and exile," where the narrative of loss was squarely placed on the shoulders of the Israeli perpetrators. As there was no indication of an Arab or Palestinian complicity in these tragic circumstances, the discourse of victimization was especially powerful (Khalidi, 1997, p.19; Kimmerling and Migdal, 1993, p.345).

The Palestinian tragedy of "Al Nakba" had an overlapping impact on personal, community and national levels. The virtual eradication of the existing Palestinian social structure through the creation of the State of Israel resulted in large numbers of Palestinian refugees along with the disappearance of Palestinians from established urban centers. The status of suddenly being refugees shifted Palestinian collective identity considerably. This distinguished them from other Arab communities, as displacement became their defining position in the world. The numerous urban localities - with their various complementary local features - had been integral to a sense of collective consciousness prior to the mass influx of Jewish immigrants. The circumstances of the conflict with the Zionists forever transformed the "local spatiality" of the average Palestinian as identity became firmly nationalistic (Nassar, pp. 24-37, 2001-2). Palestinian historian Issam Nassar refers to this process as a "rhetorical shift" which had direct implications for a new emerging discourse.

This discourse was understandably flowered with an idiom of victimization, capturing all of the hardships experienced by the Palestinians, real and imagined. Nurith

Gertz and George Khleifi (2008), highlight several themes which began to emerge which described Palestinian sentiments of suffering leading up until the 1967 war with the Israelis:

Palestinians perceived as victims of an abominable crime and of a Western conspiracy; betrayal of the military in Arab countries; demonization of the Zionist enemy; the wish to return to lost homes; rage and a determination to take revenge and overcome humiliation; the glorification of Palestinian heroes...(Gertz and Khleifi, 2008, p.55).

## **Orientalism in Israeli and Palestinian Discourse**

It is useful at this point to return to a metanarrative frame to accurately consider the dominant Israeli and Palestinian discourses under discussion. In his book, *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said sought to demonstrate the existence of a systematic and deeply-rooted ideological discourse that ran throughout the cultures of the Western colonizing societies. He calls this discourse “Orientalism” and he argues that it tends to legitimize everything that might be seen to encompass “oriental culture.” According to Said, this discourse was so pervasive in the eighteenth century that distorted prejudicial perspectives of inhabitants of the Middle East were commonplace. Said describes the sophisticated nature of the assembly of this discourse as, “a set of structures inherited from the past, secularized, redisposed, and re-formed by such disciplines as philology, which in turn were naturalized, modernized...” (Said, 1978, p.122). Citing one Orientalist scholar in particular, Ernest Renan, Said points to a discourse saturated with binary thinking. All that was recognizable (European) was acceptable while anything outside of this lens (Oriental) was reduced to that of the peculiar. This was a reinforcing and binding polarization of an entire region/ethnic entity. Such Eurocentrism was buttressed semiotically with the use of language and related imagery which placed “the orient” within inferior categories (Said, 1978, p.41, 43).

Are there any implications of this legacy for understanding the competing Israeli and Palestinian narratives that have become dominant since the late 1940s? On this point, Said argues that a strong orientalist discourse was adopted by pre-Nazi era European Jewish Zionists. This later informed both the repudiation by *Sabras* of the persecuted, ‘weak Jew in exile’, and their push to reinvent Jewish life forever in nationalistic terms. Said argues that while eighteenth century European Orientalist

scholars such as Renan created conceptual schisms which greatly influenced public perception of the Middle East, Zionists began to directly live according to Eurocentric Orientalist dictates. He asserts that, "what we have now is a Jewish hero, constructed out of a reconstructed cult of the adventurer-pioneer-Orientalist...and his fearsome shadow, the Arab Oriental" (Said, 1978, 286). Said essentially views the orientation of the Zionist subject as being "spoken for" through European hegemonic discourse.

If we move from the mentality of Zionist pioneering days to that of today's Arab observers, a radically different discourse emerges. Arabs, who are sympathetic to the Western conspiracy thesis, view what is currently taking place in the region as a form of neo-imperialism. As noted earlier, the modern Middle East grew out of centuries of Ottoman rule and twentieth-century dominance by Britain and France. In this context, one could understand the Arab perspective, wondering why thousands of European Jews were suddenly streaming into what they believed was their territory, no longer to be dominated by outsiders. Said extends the analysis to include the issue of American neo-colonial interests and their relationship with Israel. Considering the Bush administration's invasions and military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, Said postulated that Israel essentially adopted the same policy of regime change vis-à-vis the Palestinians. Said argued that the United States has augmented, "as Israel would like to," the firm belief that, "it is entitled to change regimes."

Said is essentially saying that the reality of military might has shaped U.S. and Israeli foreign relations postures. According to this view, a sense of entitlement has created a position where both countries believe that there is nothing wrong with manipulating the process of those who hold power in the region to reflect their own interests. Said asserts, that this orientation is rooted in a plan to replace the regimes across the Middle East, including Iraq and Iran to suit Israel's conception of the region. (Said, 2003, 141, 143). Said wrote this nine years ago, shortly before his death. However, one could plausibly argue that there is no major divergence in American policy today, considering the Obama administration's military involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya and now Syria.

Perhaps it is not surprising, given Said's own Palestinian heritage, that Palestinian narratives themselves echo Said's critique of Orientalism. Still, there has been a subtle shift in these narratives to accommodate a more self-consciously

articulated Palestinian identity. Until the 1960s, the Palestinian Al-Nakba tended to be viewed in broader terms, as an occurrence which also included the “Arab nation.” This expanded definition typically contained a view of the Palestinian national fight as a broader defense of collective Arab self-esteem and integrity against hegemonic forces (Weibman, 2009, p. 30). However, the 1960s ushered in two important outcomes in terms of shaping Palestinian national identity and a reclaiming of Al-Nakba as their own.

Firstly, the 1967 Six-Day War between the Israelis and other Arab countries compounded the Palestinian tragedy. The Israelis captured all of the current West Bank and East Jerusalem formerly held by Jordan and Gaza, which had been under Egyptian rule. There was a growing sense of abandonment as the Palestinians felt that these countries, along with Lebanon and Syria could have fought harder to protect them. A new tormented ethos entered the national picture. “We” are not only victims of Western imperialism through the fist of Israeli forces, “we” are also ignored by our brothers (Ibid, p. 30). This directly informed the sense of collective humiliation alluded to by Gertz and Khleifi. In 1968 the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) created its national charter infused with the al-Nakba discourse. Their platform was designed to reverse their collective trauma and reclaim all of their lost land.

There are obvious parallels to the Israeli Metanarrative described earlier. Just as Israelis repudiated life in exile, created antithetical, mythical national heroes and justified their claims through a collective historical presence in the same geographic area in ancient times, now too were Palestinians positioning themselves monolithically. As Weibman (2009) asserts:

The problematic historical sequence is manifested in the Palestinian tendency to ignore the present and exchange it with the past, and a fixation with history, manifested along three axes: memory of a lost paradise, mourning of the present, and description of the forthcoming return (p.41).

All of these “axes” are problematic in one way or another. First, Palestine was certainly no paradise when either the Ottoman Turks or the British dominated it. Secondly, because mourning the present is mostly dominated by the Al-Nakba discourse of dispossession, there is little ground for any realistic compromise with the Israelis under

current conditions. Equally unlikely, and counterproductive, is a notion of returning to pre-Israeli Palestine without a significant Jewish presence.

There is no disputing that the Palestinians have experienced injustices or that their situation has been exacerbated by repressive Israeli policy. But, imaginative solutions to current problems are arguably limited by a vision based on the idea of reclaiming a non-feasible illusion. Along these lines, Palestinians have also played “the victimization card” by using similar rhetoric to the Israelis. The ‘exile dichotomy’ found in phrases such ‘destruction and redemption’ (shoah u-geula) and “Holocaust and rebirth” (shoah u-tehiya) have been destructively appropriated. These terms have been altered to “nakba and resistance” (nakba wa-muqawama) and “perseverance and resistance” (israr wa-nidal) (Weibman, 2009, p.35). Consistently spreading such a narrative facilitates the internalization of injustice, which is often used by both sides to justify more acts of violence. After more than a half century of conflict in the region evidence suggests that the victimization narrative is a path that leads to nowhere.

## **Dominant National Conflict Narratives: A Closer Look**

With each side focusing on its own suffering, there is little capacity to acknowledge the tragic experiences of the other side, nor the perpetration of suffering inflicted on the other. All the suffering that has been lived in the Jewish experience in exile, culminating in the Holocaust, continues to underlay contemporary Israeli national narratives. In addition, as many commentators have noted, (Bar Tal and Teichman, 2004) the Israeli discourse of security is fixated on the monolithic Arab, whether Palestinian or otherwise who has little other purpose than “pushing Israel into the sea.” The dominant Israeli media mostly constructs the Palestinians within a frame of threat (Philo and Berry 2011). It could be argued that the same Eurocentric discourse, which was inherited through Orientalist scholars like Renan and reshaped to create the “heroic Jew,” has also been used to frame Palestinians as “other” in this respect. Military superiority, United States assistance, the security wall and checkpoints are all conflated in terms of protecting “us” against “them”.

Similarly, as noted earlier, the Palestinians tend to place the Al Nakba experience above everything else. The intifadas, which began in 1987 and 2000

respectfully, glorified martyrdom for the national cause of imagined justice. In a similar way, the endemic pattern of suicide bombing, prior to erecting the security wall, was widely glorified by Palestinians within a “national hero” frame. However, the national narrative of “struggle,” used by both Fatah and Hamas, often does clearly identify specifically what a “just struggle” should consist of, let alone making an effort to clearly delineate between violent and non-violent struggle for its citizenry. Without such distinctions, there is little room in Palestinian discourse to identify realistic and achievable goals or effective strategies to achieve them. This is not to trivialize the immense power differential between the two sides, or the greater number of Palestinians over Israelis victimized by the conflict. The point is to illustrate that dominant Israeli and Palestinian discourses provide no meaningful options beyond endemic and irresolvable conflict.

Whether the focus is on the perceived illegitimate actions of the other side or how history has wrongfully contributed to today’s injustice, the dominant discourses described above are endemic and are institutionalized through a variety of cultural products such as films, television programming and the theatre (Bar Tal and Solomon, 2006, p.34). One of the most destructive examples of a cultural mechanism which institutionalizes these dominant narratives occurs in educational systems. The texts used in schools – with some exceptions – highlight direct cultural antagonism. What is viewed as beneficial for one society is seen as a detriment for the other group. On this point, Dan Bar-on asserts, “While Israeli texts refer to the first Jewish immigrants to Palestine as “pioneers,” the Palestinian texts refer to them as “Zionist gangs” and “terrorists” (Bar-On, 2000, 88). Those who hold a central place as the greatly admired figures of one side’s narrative are completely vilified by the other side.

In this regard, Daniel Bar Tal and Gavriel Solomon (2006) outline several major functions of conflict narratives. First, dominant narratives which emphasize injustice often sanction violence as a form of legitimate retribution. Such narratives also establish a mentality of separation and supremacy. This often exacerbates divisions between groups by characterizing adversaries in dismissive terms while venerating one’s own group. A final feature of conflict narratives is the reinforcement of one’s social identity (p. 24- 33). Researchers assert that conflict narratives emerge out of a society’s “ethos” and collective memory. Ethos includes the main collective beliefs which instill a specific prevailing direction and create meaning for a given society. Thus, Mordecai Bar On

(2006, p.145), asserts that conflict narratives are usually exclusionary, tending to deny the collective existence of the enemy.

Mark Tessler (2006) points to the consequences of accepting the legitimacy of the other side's narrative. This process could contribute to a considerable degree of existential angst, and if it is to be done transparently requires an acceptance of the reality that a narrative truly is a "story" as opposed to "objective history" (p. 175). This might potentially lead to a crisis over determining what is actually real versus what has been distorted collectively. The critique of dominant narratives holds the potential to lead to a much broader form of counter ideological thinking. This most likely would call into question the behaviour of political leaders and mainstream institutions.

## **Affective Spectrum: Israeli-Palestinian Dynamics Rooted in Fear**

It is necessary not to diminish the reality of the multiple layers of psychological violence which exist within individuals among the Israeli and Palestinian populations at large. While there are a significant proportion of people on both sides who do not perpetrate destructive acts of militaristic violence, the constellation of factors associated with identity, trauma and collective memory explored above perpetuate a high degree of aggression. From those whose political views are to the right of centre to others who may be seeking to create solutions to remedy the divide between the two sides, I would argue that these factors reproduce a range of difficult emotions that challenge even the most open minded. This range of emotions is usefully thought of as an affective spectrum that lays beyond legislative politics. While the affective spectrum contains considerable overlap with political and culturally centric views, there are important distinctions to be made. The spectrum does not span a simple trajectory. For example, it does not simply run from those who are most fixated on their sense of victimization, and therefore seek to forcefully "resolve" their perceived problems, to others willing to take steps toward transforming relationships with people who have been designated "traditional enemies." Rather, detrimental cultural narratives circulate within all members of a collective, even to those who have participated in bridgebuilding exercises in the past. The above-noted layers of violence can only be shed incrementally. Steps taken



toward humanizing the other side are inextricably linked to questioning oneself in a way that challenges, and potentially alters, dominant cultural codes.

In this chapter I have tried to show the prominence of fear in dominant Israeli and Palestinian narratives. Overcoming this fear, and reorienting the affective spectrum on both sides, presents major challenges. In a lecture focusing on the conflict from a psychological perspective, psychotherapist Yaron Ziv<sup>2</sup> emphasized the damaging culture of fear which has a hold on each side. His description of fear begins with triggers at the level of the body that ultimately extend to one's immediate surroundings. He asserts that fear occurs, "in situations of threat and danger to the organism..." where people are placed in a position to respond by adapting. This form of adaptation is infused with an ongoing sense of needing to be prepared to respond to a threatening situation. This state of being is accompanied by a sensitivity related to signs of perceived threat in one's environment. For this reason it is necessary to explore the sensory level when examining the human experience of conflict rooted in fear.

It is useful at this point to return to the definitions of affect referred to in my introduction. Virginia Demos describes affect as:

comprised of correlated sets of responses involving the facial muscles, the viscera, the respiratory system, the skeleton, autonomic blood flow changes, and vocalizations that act together to produce an analogue of the particular gradient or intensity of stimulation impinging on the organism (Demos, 1995, p. 19).

By thinking in terms of a fear-conflict-affectivity relationship, we have a much deeper picture of the dynamics of human conflict and, by extension, we can begin to move beyond a point of paralyzing impasse. This is by no means a straightforward or linear task, given the fact that affectivity is a subjective experience and an observer cannot accurately gauge how a phenomenon can interrupt or detrimentally "intrude on" the body's various physiological systems in a particular moment of conflict. Moreover, the

<sup>2</sup> Lecture, "The Arab Israeli conflict- psychological perspectives," Peretz Centre Vancouver, August 19, 2009

state of affectivity may or may not be related to the degree of one's emotional resilience, as the severity of a given conflict situation may override this factor. For this reason Eric Shouse's contention that affect is essentially the trigger that determines what "makes feelings feel" in varying degrees of quantity and quality, points us to what needs to be considered in assessing the complexity of conflict dynamics. (Shouse, 2005, p.2).

It is important to go further in illustrating how fear also creates a deeper feeling of association and sense of unity with others from the same background. This collective solidarity motivates members of the same group to take action to defend one another in order to deal with perceived danger and respond to the group in opposition (Folkman and Lazarus 1984). According to Ziv<sup>3</sup>, the volatility of this state of being is exacerbated by the fact that both Israelis and Palestinians act out of the PTSD state alluded to earlier. While PTSD is often associated with former soldiers who are psychologically damaged following their experience on the battlefield, it can arguably be considered more broadly in this case. Ziv reaffirms the impact of the narratives explored earlier by arguing that the Israelis have not been able to let go of their experience of the Holocaust, while the Palestinians hold onto their sense of victimization stemming from the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, or Al-Nakba. In other words, both groups' psyches are rooted in their dominant narratives of trauma.

Ziv firmly believes that these groups' past histories with conflict – either between them or experienced through defeat at the hands of another dominating society – has led to past burdens being relived in the present. When viewing this through an affective lens, it is not difficult to see that both groups are repeatedly being stimulated through a memory reserve of "re-felt" traumatic emotions. This makes it clearer how the definition of PTSD can be extended to non-combatants to include entire collectivities.

Psychotherapist Gina Ross (2007) has created the term "trauma vortex" to include, "the self-perpetuating, dynamic, and escalating spiral of trauma's pain and confusion." She argues that the Israeli and Palestinian populations with their

<sup>3</sup> Lecture, "The Arab Israeli conflict- psychological perspectives," Peretz Centre Vancouver, August 19, 2009

overwhelming histories are “in the clutches of a “multiple vortex” fed by a plethora of cultural stimuli” (p. 294, p.296). Vancouver based psychotherapist Jennifer Shifrin, who has lived in Israel and run workshops dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, similarly characterizes both groups. She asserts that a re-cycling of trauma occurs in many Israeli-Palestinian dynamics. Those who have been involved in previous traumatic situations are often triggered even when non-threatening dynamics unfold. A single image or reference can elicit a physiological response, which tends to stimulate the following pattern. All that which was previously experienced is re-lived and exacerbated, adding more emotional baggage to the traumatized state. Unlike Ziv, Shifrin argues that it is not uncommon for people in positions of influence such as politicians to make poor decisions by acting through their own traumatized history. Rather than evaluating what might be best for the future of both sides of the conflict, their vision narrows and decisions often detrimentally inflame, rather than alleviate the conflict history between the groups.

Psychoanalyst Iris Singer characterizes the psychological state of Israelis and Palestinians as resting on an “insecure base.” She draws on research which explores the type of care infants receive and their subsequent development. What she terms “secure attachment,” and nurturing, instills adequate mental stability within individuals. Singer argues that a successful transition through future life stages - beyond the protection of the mother and toward autonomy - necessitates the internalization of a secure state of being, rooted in a genuine feeling of safety (Singer 2006). The antithesis of the secure attachment or base is an insecure one, characterized by anxiety. The anxiety is pervaded with a “pre-symbolic dread of annihilation” which tends to surface later in life as, “real or existential...vulnerability” (Singer, 2006, p. 177). This vulnerable state significantly constrains people’s maturation into inner-directed self-assuredness.

Singer asserts that social collectivities also require a secure base in order to co-exist and realize a well-developed, interdependent position amongst other nations in our globalized world. Without this, we often witness a teetering foundation where cooperation is impeded and compensated for by a misplaced nationalism. At the centre of this nationalistic impulse is a much larger scale equivalent to a distorted romanticization of the mother-infant relationship. Singer argues that, “both peoples, (Israelis and Palestinians) now insecurely attached to their motherland, fear for their survival and are too paralyzed by that fear to negotiate their survival.” (Singer, 2006,

p.178) She refers to Manenti's exploration of what he terms "psychosocial trauma as inhumanization" in the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict. Such a state can be characterized by the inability to think clearly, communicate transparently, feel a sense of compassion for the trauma experienced by others and a motivation for retribution, just to name a few points. Singer asserts that these are identical traits found in children who experience, "abusive disorganized-chaotic attachment patterns" (Singer, 2006, p. 179). These points echo Ziv's contention that trauma-induced fear has led to damaging intra and inter-community development patterns.

## **Narrative and the Shift from Dominance to More Fluid Personal and Collective Identities**

In the previous chapter I outlined a significant amount of literature which outlines the power of dominant forces that constrain individuality. The spoken for subject was viewed as re-enacting related patterns – essentially vulnerable to manipulative forces and acting out based on an insecure, compensational affiliation with the dominant group. Collective memory discourse and the weight of trauma seemed to anchor individuals and communities in irresolvable internal and external relationships of violence which would appear to dictate the direction of their lives. Within this, it may be difficult to see where there is room for identity to be one's own, to truly live as an autonomously functioning individual. Is it possible for constraining cultural patterns to continue collectively, while certain individuals find the strength, clarity and acceptance not to "re-cycle" them within their lives? Can people consciously identify the destructive nature of patterns of socialization and recognize that these do not serve themselves, their community or those who were held to the position of being in opposition. Can we not consider that there is in fact space for individuals to enter a "non-spoken for" existential reality that transcends the impact of trauma on identity, thereby subverting dominant discourses and narratives? Entering this "non-spoken" for space creates opportunities to see things in new ways and holds out the possibility of transcending dominant discourses.

If we take a closer look at narrative theory, we can see that a duality exists in the way narrative is conceptualized. When narrative is applied to everyday life, it can in some instances be a constraining force that limits individuals from drawing on their full capacity to engage freely with others. Conversely, narrative has sometimes been placed

in an autonomous realm as a “site of interaction,” unfolding through human conversation and social relationships. Hayden White argues that the plot of a given narrative has a meaning that is enforced on unfolding elements within it, “revealing at the end a structure that was immanent in the events all along.” This implies little room for surprise, as a reader learns to expect a particular sequence to unfold. The spontaneity and unexpected occurrences, which naturally unfold in everyday life, lose their significance. Overlapping with historical narratives or societal dynamics, events are “endowed” with importance. We see a direct overlap with what was explored earlier in terms of collective memory, where through such narratives, there is a “moralizing component” with specific lessons to be learned. White concedes that within the rigidity of such a framework, there is a sense of ongoing “regularity” as not much space is given to human agency (White, 1981, 14, 19).

The power of narrative structure is echoed by other key figures in the field. For example, Northrop Frye (1957) posited that literature is formed “out of its own traditions” so even progressive work emerges out of “traditional roots.” For Paul Ricoeur, these longstanding roots impact the fluidity of narrative configuration where moments in the narrative are awkwardly “tied together” (Ricoeur, 1981, p.287). This body of literature is more open to the role of human agency than the structuralist view expressed by Althusser, as discussed in the last chapter, or by Hayden White. Ricoeur, in particular, emphasizes the power of narrative to act as a constitutive element in the construction of subjectivities and, indeed, in the reflexive making and remaking of culture itself.

Along these lines, Walter Fisher (1984, 1987), suggested that humans should view themselves as *Homo narrens*, and Alasdair Macintyre has argued that, “we understand our lives in terms of narrative.” Fisher’s term carries a considerable amount of conceptual weight. If we are inextricably interwoven with narrative, “being” itself is a story. In this sense, one cannot separate the person from the story. According to Macintyre, all humans have the potential for reflexivity. In both cases the story begins with the person, not a constraining structuring force which does not allow anyone involved to exercise their human agency.

Jerome Bruner might also be viewed as problematizing White’s exploration of the plot structure. For him, the narrative is multifaceted and cannot be limited to the narrow constraints of a given plot. Bruner argues that there are a wide spectrum of components

which inform narrative-subject relationships, lying somewhere between the extraordinary and the mundane. For example, narrative is clearly a means to utilize language, where the significance lies in the creative use of tropes or playing with metaphors (Bruner, 1990, p.33). Bruner equally points to folk psychology or everyday life, where agency is paramount. In this sense, human beings orient themselves based on their values and pursuits. Bruner is not dismissive of dominant societal forces attempting to wield their power and shape narratives. He does however provide room for more open, fluid spaces of “encounter” as he sees opportunities to “negotiate meanings.” He argues that these meanings are, “made possible by narrative’s apparatus for dealing simultaneously with canonicity and exceptionality” (Bruner, 1990, p.47).

In respect to the exceptionality of the human experience, there is so much that takes place within one’s relationship with his/her unfolding personal narrative. People may continuously be drawing on any number of components of lived experience at any given moment. A particular circumstance could elicit a given memory, while another sequence may bring one back to a separate life chapter. A key component of this is the relational factor, perhaps most central to the evolving personal story. An inextricable part of this is the use of language referred to by Bruner above.

Bakhtin believed that the use of words in life in general, through time, continually re-shape our perception and influence the next chapter or moment of understanding. This will involve one speaker at a given period of time having an impact on another and vice versa. Bakhtin argued that the cross-fertilization of language expressed, “for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else’s” (Holquist, 1981, p.293). The Bakhtinian perspective gives one a sense that humans literally embody the encounters that they have had with an innumerable number of individuals throughout their lifetime. At one time we may be expressing a point of view which was informed by a “light” encounter with a friend, while at another point we may draw on a particular thread which emerged through an exchange with someone we were in conflict with.

Donald Braid develops a different perspective on the exchange with another when he considers experiential meaning and the personal narrative. His work centers on the affectivity which arises, “between lived experience and the process of following a narrative” (Braid, 1996, p.5). Part of this deals with everything which informs a particular

perspective through one's life experience. This extends to a listener's receptivity and "filtration system" during the encounter. In guiding my own encounters with participants at the Peace It Together camps I sought to consider several important questions along these lines. Is a listener attempting to absorb the teller's story in a detached way, where there is an effort made to let go of their own side's dominant narrative for a period of time? Conversely, is the listener projecting all types of associations on the teller based on an inability to be detached? What would make such a narrative more neutral or accepting of the listener's perspective? How might the relayed narrative arouse reactions in the listener?

Braid asserts that, a "listeners' sensory perceptions and their interpretations of the social dynamics" inform the story being told. This has direct implications for the concept of the affective spectrum I introduced earlier, as the lens through which one views the unfolding story informs a listener's degree of receptivity. There may be an open or reactionary response to any number of narrative components including, "timing, intonation, gesture, and situational context" (Braid, 1996, p.7). All of these variables are important to consider if one would like to carry out a thorough exploration of interpersonal dynamics informing the evolving narrative. Finally, the significance of the subjective life experience in the narrative context has informed recent research developed by social-psychology scholars. This research has pointed to "stories" as "central to creating meaning of life experience" (e.g., McLean, 2005; McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007; McLean & Pratt, 2006; Pasupathi, Mansour, & Brubaker, 2007). These studies also highlight that "the psychological process of story making, or narrative construction" is directly, "related to intimacy, well-being, and ego development." (King & Hicks, 2006) Here we see an affective approach to identity which centers more on variables associated with personal development through the lens of the subject rather than forces which structure thought and hamper growth.

In the chapter which follows, I am especially interested in this "lens of the subject" when it comes to evaluating the reactions of participants in PIT camps which try to bring young Israelis and Palestinians together. To what extent do camp participants appear to be shaped by dominant Israeli and Palestinian narratives? To what extent are camp participants engaged in reshaping, reworking, or rejecting these dominant narratives? In a Bakhtinian sense, which instances tend to bring one or the other pattern

to the surface? Is it valuable to look at the encounter itself as an evolving story? How does this story inform one's relationship with one's own dominant cultural realities?



## **Chapter 3.**

# **Disrupting Dominant Narratives and Remaking Identity: Peace it Together as an Agency of Conflict Transformation**

The last two chapters have explored a variety of perspectives on individual socialization and trauma, as well as collective memory. I have also attempted to outline dominant Israeli and Palestinian cultural narratives which play an important role in producing the kinds of subjectivities among Israelis and Palestinians that sustain a seemingly endless cycle of conflict.

This chapter turns to an examination of Peace it Together, an organization which attempts to challenge and to reorient these subjectivities in an effort to promote peace. I begin by providing a brief overview of the organization. I then explain how I came to my decision of using PIT as my dissertation case study. This is followed by evaluating the unique approaches to dialogue and filmmaking programming at the organization's summer peace camp. My assessment is based on extensive interviews with PIT staff, including dialogue facilitators and film mentors. This was complemented by additional commentary by former PIT participants which reinforced the staff's perspectives. My exploration of the filmmaking process in particular is drawn from extensive personal reflections provided by film mentors, who outlined why they believe that this form of media was an innovative approach to conflict resolution. What emerged was an implicit realization that the film mentors' efforts were essentially initiating the youth in effective forms of media education. This involved activities with all camp participants prior to, during and following the film production process. As will be seen, the film mentors also emphasized how being involved creatively assisted the youth tremendously in letting go of many of the dominant inherited cultural layers of conditioning inherent to the conflict. Their commentary on creative endeavours at the camp is supported theoretically at the

conclusion of this chapter with scholarly evidence highlighting the transformative impact of creative processes.

Peace It Together (PIT) is a community-based organization in Vancouver dedicated to fostering peace and understanding between Israeli and Palestinian youth. The organizers of PIT run a biennial “peace camp” that brings Israeli and Palestinian youth together in the neutral territory of British Columbia. The camp invites participants to engage with the other side’s collective narrative and diametrically opposed historical perspective. To this end, the organization views itself as shifting “the barriers that discourage” the youth “from working toward peace” (Peace it Together Strategic Plan 2010-13, p.5, 2010). The goal is to develop “effective peace builders” who will return to their communities and create change. Following two weeks of dialogue-centered activities which enabled the youth to work through their anger and mistrust, PIT organizers attempt to forge new forms of commonality, and new ways of thinking and feeling, by teaching filmmaking skills. Professional mentors, who specialize in areas ranging from documentary film to animation, guide the young participants from the formulation of ideas to the production stage of their film projects. Projects are meant to focus on issues related to the conflict and the act of making the films assist Israeli and Palestinian youth to work through their differences. Following the camp, the films are used by former participants and selective educators to “catalyze mass audiences to engage in similar processes” (Ibid, p. 5). In a sense, Peace it Together is engaging in critical media education as a strategy of conflict resolution.

## **My Personal Experience with Peace it Together**

I became aware of Peace it Together shortly after my arrival in Vancouver in 2006. I was thinking of a dissertation that might explore some intersections between communications, cultural studies and peace studies and I was fascinated by PIT’s reputation for success and especially by the fact that PIT was using film and video production as a conflict resolution strategy. This motivated me to spend two years working through different methods of research that would allow me to use the organization as a case study. Finally, I approached PIT’s Executive Director, Lena Raz, about the possibility of attending one of their “peace camps” as a participant observer. PIT was looking for people to fill voluntary positions for the 2008 peace camp and I

made an arrangement with Ms. Raz to attend the camp in this capacity. This gave me an opportunity to observe, speak to staff members, and interact with the camp's young participants.

I was originally given the task of working in the kitchen as a preparatory cook and serving meals to the youth and staff. A local Lebanese restaurant generously donated their resources and time through catering the camp meals. While the food was delicious, limited funding determined that a diverse menu was not possible. Falafel and Mediterranean salad was a lunch standard and I often heard mutual frustrated expressions from both the Israeli and Palestinian youth about the lack of variety being offered. Comments such as, "Falafel again!" and "Why would they serve Middle Eastern food to people from the region!" were commonplace during my time at the camp. Despite my position as a supposedly objective participant researcher I couldn't help feeling that the solidarity expressed in this regard might translate into even greater common ground in the areas that truly mattered at the camp.

The opportunity to work in the kitchen and serve food at the camp turned out to be the best gift I could have asked for. As I was extending the ladle with portions of rice or salad, I also had an opportunity to extend myself personally. These moments were elating for me, as I finally had the opportunity to talk to the now well-known PIT youth, whose presence at the camp was covered by many local, national and international news publications and programming. By working in the kitchen I was able to develop a comfortable relationship with the camp's young participants. They came to know me as Rob, "that guy in the kitchen who is so interested in our lives." While my background did not completely make sense to them - being a PhD student who curiously found his way into culinary responsibilities - I was part of their camp experience. While they clearly knew that I wasn't a dialogue facilitator or a film mentor, I was there with purpose. "Did this guy really want to have us as the focus of his PhD?" they wondered. When Lena Raz gave me permission in 2010 to interview former camp participants I found that the relationships I had built with the 2008 youth, made the experience much more meaningful. They all remembered me and were interested not only in my research about them, but my life in general. This seemed to carry over to my interviews with the 2006 youth, with whom I did not have any direct personal experience.

The 2008 camp took place at Xenia, a retreat centre, on Bowen Island, British Columbia. The centre usually has spiritual retreats for individuals and groups of people who feel that they need a break from the intensity of everyday life, and are prepared to embark on an inward journey for deeper fulfillment. A few minutes walking distance away from the retreat centre itself, one can view “Opa,” one of two old growth trees on Bowen Island. Guests are encouraged to visit the tree and appreciate its natural splendor as it is considered a “sacred space.” One is drawn into Xenia proper by an old wooden cabin which dates back to the 1880s. This cabin is in fact a restored structure which is the oldest heritage building on Bowen island. On the first floor, beside the kitchen and dining room where I worked, could be found the lobby or living room area, where the youth had an opportunity to relax and speak informally. Just outside of the building is a garden, which outside of its aesthetic beauty has plants which have been used to make teas served by the centre. In view from the cabin, is a thirty-foot forest green yurt. When the centre hosts groups, workshop sessions are generally held there. While traditionally, yurts were portable tents used by nomadic peoples of central Asia, in recent years they have been used as art and performance spaces, as well as for wide variety of social and ceremonial functions. This space turned out to be one of the most important spots for the purposes of the PIT camp. PIT used this building as the centre for dialogue and other creative activities.

## **The Dialogue Sessions**

The dialogue portion has evolved since the peace camp was conceived in 2003. It should be noted that a camp was held in 2004, prior to the introduction of the filmmaking component. At that time, the program incorporated a diversified arts perspective, balanced with cross-community facilitated dialogue. My research focuses on the 2006 and 2008 camps, when the organization settled on filmmaking as its creative component. In 2006, the facilitators had a variety of personal and professional influences. A lead facilitator from an Israeli background was brought in, while there was some carry-over of staff from the original 2004 camp. At that time, there was an unintended marked distinction between the dialogue and filmmaking portions of the camp as professionals from each specialization were not clear how to seamlessly move from one format to the other. By 2008, an effort was made to integrate them so that they became mutually supportive. This will be explored in more detail below.

According to Canadian facilitator, Leo Aarons, when it came to the 2006 dialogue group, there were a number of different professionals with varied facilitation influences. While they had communicated prior to the start of the camp regarding planned facilitation approaches, what ensued was a “sort of patchwork of different workshops.” In contrast to the previous summer session, the 2008 camp benefited from a unique scenario where the three principal facilitators (including Aarons), were in Virginia together, doing their Masters degree in Conflict Transformation at Eastern Mennonite University.

Aarons, who had past PIT experience, suggested to Executive Director, Lena Raz, that his colleagues be included in the facilitation team. The group would include Betty Carthen, who had extensive experience working in restorative justice in Canada, and Palestinian-Israeli Dadi Beeyeh, who had worked in Jerusalem with Search for Common Ground, a bridge-building organization. Aarons indicated to me that the fact that this group were close friends enabled there to be a deep level of trust going into the camp. They were able to spontaneously rely on each other and support one another during the PIT dialogue workshops. Unlike the 2006 facilitators, the 2008 group had the benefit of sitting down in the same location and extensively working through an elaborate workshop plan that was revised a number of times prior to the camp. It is important to place such developments in the appropriate context by considering how young the organization is. There has been much organizational progress over a relatively short period of time. The most important evidence of success, of course, can be found in the personal transitions made by the youth involved. Evidence of this will be outlined below in my exploration of the dialogue sessions at the 2006 and 2008 camps.

Drawing on the work of Burton and Maslow alluded to earlier, in 2006, a few PIT facilitators conducted a human needs workshop involving the Israeli and Palestinian youth. A pyramid was drawn on a white board outlining basic physical needs and safety concerns on the bottom with more complex fundamental self-fulfillment/development needs on top. The youth were asked to outline the specific needs which were most salient to the other group. Footage of this workshop was captured in the documentary “Peacing It Together,” made by filmmaker Pat Eriksson, who would later become a film mentor at the 2008 camp. This allows any viewer to witness genuine expressions of compassion emerging from the commentary expressed by the participants. Miri, an Israeli participant felt that the Palestinians needed, “their own independent country, without the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) inside...” This is a powerful statement which

has implications for revisiting Israeli security policy. The conversation turned to Palestinian perceptions of important Israeli needs. Comments were made which overlapped with the problem of suicide bombings and rocket attacks within Israel perpetrated by Palestinian extremists. In this context, Sam, a member of the Palestinian delegation expressed that the Israelis are, “in fear, so they need safety.” His comments are a direct reflection of Palestinian youth sentiments that there was no place for such violence within the conflict.

This led into a general discussion about what the 2006 youth learned through several dialogue workshops. Fundamental issues of clearly understanding the perspective of the other side surfaced. Sam joined in the commentary again and said that, “I learned that the Israelis can understand that we are suffering.” The face-to-face recognition of one side’s pain by participants from the other side had a tremendous impact. Israeli participant Barein, in an apparent affective response to Sam indicated that, “I didn’t know before how important it was for them that we listened to them.” These opportunities to express oneself, and voice feelings that affect one’s respective group contributed to many important personal shifts among participants. This was reflected in a short workshop focusing on the changes which participants recognized within themselves towards the end of the 2006 camp. The youth talked about not feeling as compelled to assertively advance their point of view, to take time to listen and learn to accept what other people were saying.

The bucket exercise, another major dialogue activity held in 2006 and 2008, took place roughly three days into the camp. It was designed to draw to the surface (mis)perceptions and stereotypes held by each delegation. Nine buckets were placed into the middle of the dialogue circle, labeled with contentious words designed to elicit an affective response. These included such terms as: Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Zionism, suicide bomber, Jew, Arab, Israel, Palestine, among others. The process essentially involved the youth placing their own association with the posted word on pieces of paper which they placed inside of the bucket. Once the buckets were filled with paper, the facilitation team removed them, and wrote up all of the associated terms under their respective headings on flip chart sheets posted on the wall.

According to Leo Aarons, the conversation which ensued following the examination of each term unfolded as follows. A participant from one group would

express shock that the other side would think in a particular way about a valued cultural symbol. The facilitators then asked the youth what specifically surprised them about the response from the other side. This question was an attempt to discover what was particularly hurtful for participants to hear. For example, Aarons described a conversation that unfolded in 2008 which reflected the pain that surfaced through this exercise. One of the Israeli youth expressed that:

it surprised me to see a swastika placed under Zionism. Okay, what's that about...because to me, Zionism means my future, my homeland, my identity, a source of strength....

The 'bucket exercise' provides an opportunity for people on one side of a conflict situation to see how their key cultural symbols are viewed by people on the other side. It may be uncomfortable for one group to discover that what they have held as sacred symbolically might be viewed negatively by others but PIT organizers believe that there is value in allowing these perceptions and related feelings to be brought to the surface. Aarons characterized this type of dynamic in the following way. "It invited them to be able to talk about their perceptions of these things and again, it's a tool for understanding and unpacking the dimensions." In this sense, the bucket exercise may be viewed as a process which unearths the multilayered components of the conflict and calls into question some of the fixed associations which the youth remain attached to.

While the rest of the activities explored below took place in 2008, similar overlapping exercises were held in 2006. One such noteworthy dialogue activity was called "go where you belong." The participants were asked to close their eyes while the facilitators placed different coloured dots on their foreheads. The former were asked to remain silent and instructed to pull fellow participants to parts of the room where others from the same colour grouping were standing. The fact that no one never officially knew for sure which colour was placed on their foreheads necessitated a reliance on other people to place them. This process brought forth an important consideration regarding participants' assumptions with respect to the correlation between where they belonged and the colour on their foreheads. This "determining factor" of belonging brings issues of power and identity to the surface. When another person told the youth that they were yellow, for example, what specifically led them to accepting this designation? This overlaps with issues relating to the choices people make. Why do people select one

collective over another one? How do these choices have an impact one's sense of identity?

The description found in the PIT curriculum notes with clarifications made by Aarons evokes imagery of the youth pushing and pulling each other in order to bring fellow participants into particular colour groupings. One might view this as a metaphor for the difficult affective relationship Israelis and Palestinians have with the cultural norms they struggle with – where there is tremendous pressure to align oneself with dominant perspectives and narratives. The follow-up process of reflecting why one chose to join one colour grouping over another furthers the momentum for calling one's identity into question.

Aarons observed that the youth began to say to themselves, “how is Israeli identity constructed? How is Palestinian identity constructed? Why is it that we draw borders at that point?” Speaking for himself and the other dialogue facilitators, he began to see that a shift seemed to be initiated through this process. There may not have been any dramatic transformation in identity affiliation, but there was some indication of the youth accepting the notion that preserving “the humanity” of one's group does not have to be a mutually exclusive dynamic. Aarons asserted that PIT participants realized that:

that the boundaries around identity could be blurred a little bit, that we could toy with it, that we could start questioning a little bit. Participants are going to go back and be Israeli and be Palestinian but maybe there'll be this little bit of doubt about...the meaning of that theme being so steadfast.

The rationale here is to promote a shift in identification that might constructively inform the youths' relationship with others from their home communities. Following all of the demanding collective dynamics, the youths' personal stories were the focus on the afternoon of day 4. The youth were given flipchart sheets and markers and were asked to draw pictures. The purpose of creating these images was to capture how they came to be who they are and to highlight important things that have happened in their lives in general. The inclusion of this activity is a key example of how PIT emphasized intra-personal explorations within the collective process. They attempted to get the youth to see that internal processes lead to greater interpersonal understanding and have the



potential to contribute significantly to the alleviation of conflict. Zoe, a 2008 Canadian participant expressed the benefit of the drawing activity as follows:

everybody kinda showed themselves, for the first time, they really, really opened up, not about the conflict, and not about ,uh, being a Palestinian or being an Israeli, but being themselves, as individuals.... I think it was really effective in bringing the campers together... people definitely felt more, more connected to one another to each other... everyone told personal stories... things that they were involved in, personal struggles... I think it really helped with the Israelis and Palestinians... helping them to see them that you're not just an Israeli, you're not just a Palestinian, you're more than that.

Aarons insisted that special consideration needed to be given to moments where heated exchanges arose over contested areas such as the final borders of the future state of Palestine. It is very easy to single out obvious developments such as budding friendships or expressions of compassion as the most significant moments of the camp. When a youth from one side would “call another out” about a particular issue that the latter only viewed through their own collective cultural lens; when voices were raised, tears were shed and a clear response was not forthcoming, in actuality such a moment was evidence of an “unfolding transitional dynamic”.

During my interview with Aarons, we watched a clip from PIT 360, a short documentary film about the 2008 camp, made by a few Canadian participants from the 2006 camp. The scene may be viewed as an example of the unfolding circumstances alluded to above. The viewer witnessed several participants from the respective communities debating issues of identity which centre on each community's place in the Middle East. For example, Amy, an Israeli participant, seemingly innocently refers to David Ben Gurion's Israeli declaration of independence. She alludes to the recognition of this event by countries around the world, mentioning that it was their responsibility to decide that Israel was deserving of nationhood. However, Jamd, a Palestinian participant, did not let her clarify statement but aggressively reacted to what she said:

In your opinion, you think the Israeli people deserve a life more than the Palestinians?

Amy became overwhelmed with emotion as tears began streaming down her face. She defended herself by saying that Jamd distorted the message she was trying to convey. Jamd continued and said:

I'm from 1948 lands, I live in a refugee camp now, do you know what the meaning of this is?

The scene then shifted to a clip prior to the peace camp featuring Jamd in the Al-Aroub refugee camp. He described the difficulty of growing up with soldiers constantly patrolling the area. The scene returned to the exchange between the youth. Amy remains upset and tries once again to reach Jamd:

I understand that life is miserable and you live under such bad conditions...we didn't come...like okay, we're looking for a country, okay Palestine, let's throw all of the Palestinians off and live there...no.

Aarons characterized the youth state of affectivity during such a moment in an intriguing way. Rather than emphasizing the division between the two sides, he considered the exchange a productive tension that was part of building a relationship between them. He asserted that within such a situation the youth experience the following:

I'm starting to think I'm almost starting to trust you and I want you to do something now with all of what I bring... I'm now comfortable enough that I'm going to test this in a really big way.

I would argue that it is important to identify such moments in dialogue literally as entry points, where parties with histories of enmity are prepared for what could be termed, "entering the space." When we consider that opportunities for these groups to meet are very rare, the encounter in itself is a significant occurrence. When such a meeting reaches a point where a contested verbal exchange takes place, as Aarons indicated, we have evidence that an attempt is made to tackle longstanding diametrically opposed worldviews. As we could see from the exchange above, transitioning through these perspectives is painful. All of the foundational variables of identity, collective memory, trauma and dominant cultural narratives - which I explored in depth earlier - are at stake. The opportunity being presented is one of meaning making, where the narrative does not have to remain stagnant. The affective encounter literally becomes an embodied experience, where the other side has a face. The person vocalizing their

experience and the other individual being addressed become changed actors in an evolving story.

The significance of “entering the space” is given closer attention as an analytical frame applied to my interviews with the youth below. Their continued relationship with the meaning that was initiated during the camp is elaborated considerably as they place themselves unconventionally within their societies’ dominant cultural narratives in the years following the camp. This notwithstanding, there is more evidence from the dialogue at the camp itself of the profound impact that productive tension with the other side has.

For example, 2008 Canadian participant Adiha echoes Aarons’ point when referring to another heated exchange at the camp. She indicated that when discussing issues around territoriality and national status one Israeli said, “if you want your land back, then where do you want me to go?” The Palestinian participant said, “well why didn’t you think of that before...before you came?” Adiha pointed out that following these points in the discussion no one could utter another word. She indicated that:

even though they had no answers...those moments in the dialogue were the best parts of it...questions that can’t be answered that are finally voiced, there’s something about them.

These silent moments together were just as powerful as the exchange itself. Once again there is evidence that simply “entering the space” with the other yields a particular kind of productive or affective tension which is a critical component of shifting relationships. One moves beyond one’s collective and feels the raw quality of the present moment. You transcend the words that are uttered, and the person associated with the collective who uttered those words, and you are left with a group of people in the room, sitting there grappling with the silence. As Adiha explained further:

you just realize that with a lot of this conflict there are no answers - we sit there in silence and move past the history.....all you can do is just sit there with other human beings and together realize well there’s really not much more to say so we’re just sitting here together and that itself is something.

It is important to place those involved in Israeli-Palestinian bridgebuilding work in a proper context. The complex, multilayered nature of the conflict often does not give

facilitators a definitive sense of completion. There is more of a consideration of a level of acceptance of the other side in the context of the tremendous challenges of the conflict. As Aarons explains, in other conflict resolution work he's been involved with, "There's been accountability taken, there's resolution that's being felt or some kind of 'ah, it's done', right?" Whereas the PIT youth can become friends and recognize that:

They have a much better understanding of what they don't agree on. And, they obviously see a human behind that disagreement not just a bunch of ideas, but there's a person there in the story....

An important challenge of the camp is to learn how to go beyond this uncomfortable reality and accept that experiencing the human connection with the other side is a good starting point. Within this, it is important that facilitators remind themselves that they are attempting to provide a more expansive experience for the youth. A central outcome of this is that the youth consider what future role they can play in improving the conflict. They are encouraged to reflect on how their personal values can inform a new relationship with their communities and the other side.

Betty Carthen echoes Aarons' perspective of the unique work of the peace camp. In her experience, participants in the other programs she has worked on, "learned about restorative justice" and related, "communication and mediation skills." In those instances the objective was completely transparent. With the PIT camp, "It's harder" as the, "objective is to sufficiently engage the parties on the conflict." It is up to the facilitators to continue to revisit whether they have adequately addressed this requirement throughout the course of such a process. I will explore similar challenges and transitions made during the filmmaking process below.

## **Media Education Through Filmmaking: An Innovative Approach to Conflict Resolution<sup>4</sup>**

As noted earlier, 2006 was the first year PIT formally integrated filmmaking into its program. That first year was a period of experimentation and a more marked distinction between the dialogue and filmmaking processes seemed appropriate at the time. When planning the 2008 program, the staff felt that it would be more beneficial for the filmmaking process to begin prior to the completion of the dialogue sessions. It was determined that a fluid transition between the two formats would help the youth play their roles more effectively in the latter process. It would also allow for the dialogue facilitators to be clearer as to how they might be able to assist with filmmaking. At any given moment a dialogue facilitator was asked by a film mentor to contribute to the production process of a film based on his experience with a given PIT participant or a particular need that arose which required the former's assistance. All of the staff needed to be flexible and open as they had to be ready to respond under pressure to meet the requirements of a successful peace camp.

A professional in the field ran a storytelling workshop during the closing stages of the dialogue sessions in order to get the youth to begin to literally think of themselves as storytellers. They were asked to think carefully about the following questions: What is a story? Who tells stories? Why do people tell stories? How do people tell stories? This led to an extensive discussion about all of these considerations. Once this was explored in enough depth, the youth were then asked to take part in an exercise where they would divide themselves in pairs. One participant would play the role of the storyteller, while the other one listened carefully. The storyteller was asked to relay a story in some detail of a time and place where they felt happy. The youth then reformed as a group while the listeners were expected to recount the story in segments, appropriately outlining the beginning, middle and ending portions.

<sup>4</sup> I encourage readers to spend a few minutes watching the PIT films soon after reading the sections below which pertain to them (<http://peaceittogether.com/films> and

After approximately eight days of dialogue (varying slightly between the two camps) the group transitioned to solely focusing on filmmaking. The youth were divided up to work on one of three different genres of film: drama, documentary and animation. Filmmaking mentors specializing in each area assisted the youth in all facets of the filmmaking process. Each film group included a cross-community team of Canadians, Israelis and Palestinians.

Several creative exercises were used in order to allow the youth to effectively adapt to filmmaking. This began with a video biography session, where participants were asked to simply introduce themselves for approximately one minute in front of the camera. When not being filmed, they were able to stand behind the camera. This exercise therefore enabled them to learn two complementary processes. They were initiated in important technical skills while furthering their capacity for expressing themselves. A key part of this exercise was the deliberate omission of any perspectives of the conflict. This enabled the youth to explore their voice in a way they most likely never have previously. They were given the permission to play with the biographical exercises using available objects such as dramatic accessories or through other creative tools which they developed personally. As 2006/2008 Drama Mentor Carry Meena asserted, this process is:

a way of getting people out of literal representation....I ask (the youth) to show more kind of metaphorical representations of who they are...and start thinking that way...and start thinking of symbol.

This process of self-exploration is intended to be “transferred” to playing with and altering entrenched symbolic representations of the conflict once the youth begin working on the films themselves.

In order for the youth to enhance their technical skills in conjunction with what they already learned about storytelling, there was an additional camera-centred storytelling exercise. The youth were asked to film a sequence where they were visually capturing a small story. They were asked to prepare a number of shots based on their own autonomously established ideas. The purpose was for the action represented by the individual shots to convey the story. This helped the youth actively integrate the concept of a narrative arc. Two more exercises were carried out for those involved in documentary films. As most documentaries contain interviews, the youth took turns

interviewing one another. Documentary film mentor Wanda Dane, got the youth to pay special attention to several key considerations for documentary filmmaking. These included the premise's importance for the youth, what audience members might like to discover about a particular subject and how to narrow down and more succinctly convey the film's message. A couple of well-known documentary films were screened as well, to provide the youth with good examples of what they could learn from the "final product" of such features. Once the drama and animation groups began moving forward with their ideas, the youth were provided with guidance on script writing and storyboarding processes respectively.

An additional important workshop held in 2008, aided considerably in the drama and documentary film processes in terms of youth perceptions of the conflict. A media literacy session run by Carry Meena attempted to get the youth to reflect on their worldview. She suggested that the participants think deeply in terms of how the news reaches its audiences. What emerged in the discussion was the discovery that while people make an effort to seek information, very often information "finds us." The youth were asked to identify specifically where news appears when it is not being sought out. This led to a discussion about the reach of advertising. In considering the barrage of information circulating throughout society the youth explore the degree to which people may have the capacity to filter information. Is it possible to dismiss certain messages while selectively choosing to engage with other ones which discerning eyes may "value" more? Participants were then asked to consider whether they could point to a specific time in their lives where they critically engaged with media messages. If so, what did they do with the powerful messages they grappled with? The youth were then asked to explore media circulations and choose images which elicit strong opinions/emotions. Once all of the workshops were complete the participants then had one week to create their film, from the conceptual stage to its completion.

The media literacy exercise was especially valuable for those youth who produced and were featured in the film "Turning the Lens." I'm beginning with this 2008 film as there was a specific pattern of working through dominant identity constraints in two particular 2006 film processes. It therefore makes much more sense to analytically group those films together following my exploration of "Turning the Lens" and a complementary 2006 film.

The film began with an audio sequence with the Israeli, Palestinian and Canadian youth indicating which media sources they access on a regular basis. Then a quote by Malcom X appeared on the screen:

The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses.

This is followed by selective youth being featured one by one expressing what they learned about the other side through their respective media.

Jamd (Palestinian participant): I think that the TV gave me a certain picture of the Israelis, gave me a certain belief, it is just killing, destruction and particularly the occupation of Palestine.

Koef (Israeli participant): I think that the Palestinians are presented in the Israeli media part of the time in a sympathetic manner like, 'Look what we are doing to the poor Palestinians' or in a negative light, 'all the Palestinians are terrorists.' And they just show Hamas or the Islamic Jihad and not really the Palestinians on the street.

Jamd (Palestinian participant): Most of the news that I hear or received as a Palestinian, as a person, is not about the Israeli people, it is mostly about the army and the soldiers and what they do, for example the occupation of Gaza or something like this.

Israeli participant Ganni spoke of how she envisioned the Palestinian participants prior to the peace camp.

Ganni: Yes, I imagined them like how I see them in the news, I thought they would be extremists, very religious...that they would be extremists in behaviour. I thought that they would be poor and come from homes with lots of children. I thought that some of them would be barefoot and such, because you see them barefoot in the news with ruined houses.

The camera then dissolved to playful images of the PIT participants. The emphasis was on contrasting the youths' expressions of their earlier misconceptions with the harmonizing dynamic experienced at the camp. In other words, the emphasis for the audience was that conflict and misunderstanding are not inevitable for the two sides.



The expressions of the youth in the remaining interviews in the film shifts from focusing solely on the media's narrow messages to include new understandings gained through the PIT experience.

Naiz (Palestinian participant): We always see on TV how aggressive they are with the Palestinians and how they treat them in a bad way, not in the way of human rights. That is what the media shows us, how much they hate Palestinians, how much they like to kill them and don't treat them well. But when I came to this camp, everything changed.

Jamd: I think the picture I got from the media and the news in general was incomplete in regard to the situation in Israel, and what happens there. So, when we came here and saw the Israelis and saw how they act and saw what their ambitions were, saw that they like peace in the same way we like it, my opinion changed. Or actually it didn't change, it completed the picture that was previously incomplete.

Then a quote by William Bembach appears on the screen:

All of us who professionally use the mass media are the shapers of society. We can vulgarize that society. We can brutalize it. Or we can help lift it onto a higher level.

Gwen, an Israeli contributor to the film, indicated that one of the film's highlights was to demonstrate how successful the camp's programming was. Although preconceived notions of other groups often persist, it is possible for perceptions to shift. Baha, a Palestinian contributor to the film, agreed that the film was completely, "representative of the peace camp." She indicated that stereotypes are often pervasive but need to be viewed in their proper context. The efforts of politicians and mainstream media frames are responsible as they, "don't want people to work with each other to co-exist." Baha insisted that while these factors are the biggest obstacle, PIT demonstrated that those efforts could be erased. The expressions of the youth featured in the interviews for her was substantial enough evidence for the audience that this was in fact the case. The youths' personal development related to the media literacy skills which they developed and their new understanding of one another was also supported by film mentor, Wanda Dane's commentary about her experience working with the youth on the film. She expressed that:

I think it was kind of empowering for all of them because they could all see a certain commonality in the fact that they were all savvy enough to look at representations being presented to them by their respective medias and kind of sense around the idea that all of their medias were portraying their situation in stereotypical ways that didn't necessarily lead to greater understanding.....the fact that they were all (Canadians, Israelis and Palestinians) able to say, 'yes I'm hearing these kinds of representations and I think that doesn't do justice to the fullness of the situation...' was very significant.

The filmmaking process was reflective of the enthusiasm of those youth who voiced their changed perceptions noted above in the film. Gwen and Baha agreed that the team members' efforts were collaborative and complementary. Each person took turns shooting, directing and editing while everyone's opinions were valued equally. This all contributed to the process running very smoothly. As Dane indicated, "They really felt a very united front in terms of trying to turn the lens back on some of the forces that they thought were responsible for perpetuating the conflict" and identifying one of, "the key players that kept their camps at odds in general." The lens was also turned back on the media at the beginning of the 2006 film, "On the Line." This film demonstrates the potential shift which can take place in the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians when they have the opportunity to get to know one another on a personal level.

At the beginning of the film we see darkened images of two young men from either side. They are separately simultaneously voicing the threat from the opposing side in their respective languages. They use expressions of victimization to convey their messages.

Israeli: They are all brain washed

Palestinian: They Are thieves

Israeli: They Want to Take Over Israel

Palestinian: They Are Heartless Killers

Israeli: They Are Happy When Israelis Get Hurt

Palestinian: They Are Blood Thirsty

Israeli: They Exaggerate Their Suffering to The Media

Palestinian: They Pretend to be the Real Victims

In Unison, Spoken in Both Languages: THEY WANT TO HURT US

This was a clear effort by the filmmakers to directly engage with what has yet to be healed in terms of the Israeli and Palestinian affective victim-perpetrator relationship.

The film is then creatively set up to present the audience with a shift from a collective relationship of dominance to a more intimate personal narrative by focusing on the close friendship which developed between Rin and Jadhi. This relationship embodied the collective transformations made by both groups. The youth witnessed the deep connection which developed between the protagonists as the camp evolved. Perry, a Canadian participant, had the privilege of being Rin and Jadhi's roommate and was auspiciously chosen as one of the young producers of "One the Line." His "inside perspective" of the bond which developed between his roommates, led him to convince everyone involved that a simple story capturing the fluidity of their connection would be most appropriate. In my interview with him, Rin captured both the significance of "On the Line" for the camp as a whole and how this was underlying Perry's inspiration and drive.

it was symbolic to the camp that the Israeli guy and the Palestinian guy get.....they get together just like this, so naturally and they get along through all the barriers and through all the different backgrounds that they come from...and this is why....and he wanted to make a film out of this, and this is what was done.

Shifting back to the film, the following scene captures Rin and Jadhi expressing their bond by the shoreline of Galiano Island, where the film was shot.

The dialogue unfolds as follows:

Rin: Of course we have different backgrounds....we do not share the same past, though we are in the same country...

Rin: Logistically it would be a problem to meet.

Jadhi: We can keep in touch over telephone, email...

Rin: Before the camp and before I knew Jadhi, my feelings for the Palestinian people were different...I did not know so much about their suffering...now I know much more about it and it helps me to understand them more.

Jadhi: I'm now sure that there is Israeli guys who want to live in peace...to understand us and respect us...because all of us are human beings.

Rin: Of course like most Israeli guys, I will go into the army...

Jadhi: I feel sad about that because....I see that he don't have any bad intentions about the Palestinians...when I asked him questions, he told me he will never try to kill any Palestinian...he will just be on the safe side in the army...I think that I trust him.

The film then shifts from documentary format to a dramatic scene. In my interview with Jadhi, he expanded on the significance of what was relayed at the end of the "lighter" film dialogue captured above. While the relationship between him and Rin had many moments of simply exchanging information about common interests and having fun as teenage boys, it could not truly grow without being properly challenged. Jadhi indicated that he needed to delve deeper following one of the dialogue workshops.

I wanted to know what he believes in, what he was thinking about. He answered... he's really thinking about this very much these days. Like he started thinking about ...the army case, in a different way he used to...

Jadhi indicated that Rin began talking about the issue of him entering the army on a daily basis. The reality of this issue was affectively circulating through the thoughts and exchanges between these young men and therefore could not be ignored. It enabled "On the Line," to truly "embody" the depth of their experience.

In the dramatic scene, described below, what we are presented with is fictional, but very real when we consider everyday Israeli-Palestinian dynamics. This "art imitating life" scenario projects two years into the future in 2008, when Rin is in fact of age and drafted into the Israeli army. The scene begins with a very dramatic overtone, accented with foreboding instrumental music as a hazy image of an individual wearing army fatigues is shown. A moment later, one can more clearly identify a young man, played by Rin, holding a machine gun, positioned at a checkpoint. A group of people is directly in

front of him. At the back of the crowd, we see Jadhi wearing a kafiya (Palestinian national scarf) and looking quite tense. Rin points to Jadhi and waves him through. The two young men stare at each other at the checkpoint line for what seems like an eternity. The foreboding music continues, while the camera is skillfully used to present alternating angles of the encounter; lighting is manipulated to capture the blank expressions on the young men's faces and soon after the screen becomes dark and the credits begin to roll.

When I asked the protagonists in my separate interviews with them in 2010, what it was like to play the roles required of them in the film, their responses reflected the affective struggle they were presented with.

Rin: Because it makes you feel like you're the bad guy, and you know you are the bad guy and there's nothing you can do, because you know you were the good guy before and now you are playing the role of the bad guy and it doesn't fit to you, and you don't feel that you belong to this ....to play this role...even though it was only a film.

Jadhi: I was not in Canada at all at that moment....there is a checkpoint on the entrance to my city...and I always suffer at this checkpoint too much and I was just standing on the checkpoint, I was very far away and at that moment that was very true for me I just forgot the place I was in, I went back to the old moments before the camp, the moments we sat at this checkpoint, the suffering we see everyday...and I was having that fear inside me. Will I meet you there Rin? Will this moment be truth someday or not?

This leaves us wondering what actually will unfold in the young men's lives in the coming years. Will the future turn the film on its head by providing a "life imitates art scenario," where their societal constraints place them in compromising positions? Fortunately, my interviews with both former participants give us a more in-depth perspective of the significance of "On the Line" and their relationship following the camp.

Rin and Jadhi have managed to maintain a strong connection with one another following the camp. They would often chat online through "MSN instant messenger" or on Facebook and periodically speak over the phone. When I asked the former Israeli participant whether "On the Line" came up in conversations they would have, Rin indicated that his Palestinian counterpart repeatedly said that he never wanted to see his friend play a similar role such as the one depicted at the checkpoint in the film. Rin promised Jadhi that this would not be the case and he deliberately pursued a position in

army intelligence so that he would never have to be in combat. Whenever they spoke, the young Israeli reminded Jadhi of this promise, convincing him that he would stay true to his word. Rin did in fact honour this, leading to Jadhi being forever grateful.

I thank him you know... I knew he did that for my sake and he did that to not letting me see him some day in army position. I appreciate that so much and I felt so great about him. ....that this guy is really honest with what he did so yea. He acted from that and he made sure he's not gonna be standing on land holding a gun at a checkpoint.

What is important is that the PIT youth felt that this relationship should not be limited to those present at the peace camp but be relayed to all those who would have the privilege of viewing the film; to serve as a testament to the transformative potential of an encounter with the “the other” in a setting designed to challenge the dominant identities and narratives that sustain conflict. Perhaps relaying the story in more depth here, provides the reader – and future film screener – with an expanded perspective which further validates the unique bridgebuilding experience provided by PIT.

One 2006 film in particular, “Sweet Like Chocolate” best exemplified the challenge of moving beyond “affectively dominant” discourses. The production process relationship was strained right from the beginning. Dav, a slightly right of centre male Israeli was grouped with Dilha, a much more right wing veiled female Palestinian youth. While remaining quite nationalistic, Dav hesitantly offered Dilha an olive branch in the early stages of filmmaking. In general, he was adamant that the only way forward for the Israelis was to maintain their security posture through such means as checkpoints and the security wall in order to protect themselves. He did however express some regret that Palestinian lives were detrimentally affected by these measures. His patience was limited though, and he really had to make a concerted effort to listen to perspectives from the other side. It became clear during the first part of the camp that Dilha was considerably less amenable to multiple perspectives on the conflict than were her Palestinian delegation colleagues. In fact, her militant expressions were so pronounced that Dan Zeer, a drama film mentor, got the impression that she essentially came to the camp to, “look her enemy in the eye.” She had witnessed a lot of violence growing up in the West Bank town of Asira al-Qibliya, adjacent to Yitzar, an Israeli settlement. Her personal views did not seem to stray too far beyond the Palestinian national cause. While both Dilha and Dav were excited to express their opinions, the dialogue facilitators

and film mentors went to great lengths to ask them to listen carefully to one another, in an attempt to moderate their perspectives.

As the camp moved forward, Dilha expressed regret at certain inflammatory statements she made toward her Israeli counterparts. She attempted to convey to everyone that her disposition emanated from a lot of frustration over her aforementioned life experiences. She told the group that the only Israelis she ever met were those in uniform under threatening circumstances. Her expressions of embarrassment revealed that the Israeli delegation for her entered a broader frame, which included a certain degree of humanization.

Although there was evidence of a small personal shift, Dan's task as the film mentor was considerable. Dilha insisted that the film subject matter focus on the hardships faced by the Palestinians. She asserted that each side should have an opportunity to tell their stories. Dav expressed to her that he understood her need to relay a message which she felt strongly about. He indicated that the Palestinian stories were much more striking than those which the Israelis could tell. By proceeding with Dilha's proposed format, the film's message would be dominated with the difficulties experienced by the Palestinians, therefore overshadowing the original purpose of bridgebuilding. The tension which Dav experienced at the beginning of the process, was now heightened even more. He did not know how the group would move beyond this impasse and wanted the process to run more smoothly. It took team member and fellow Israeli delegate, Rin, to allay his frustration by expressing that the process would become easier. He told Dav that, "you need to be more patient with her. We have to work with her until the end of this process and don't worry, it will be better."

Zeer's solution to these challenges was to creatively avoid entering into a direct engagement with dominant cultural discourses. He suggested that the participants explore the conflict in esoteric terms. How could the conflict be presented in an indirect way, where the audience would be delivered a nuanced message of what it might be like to live more peacefully? This engendered a series of non-conventional questions that fellow participants featured in the film were asked. This triggered a future oriented aesthetic centred on an overarching theme of "what would peace taste like." Affective elements related to senses, tastes, and smells were then prominently featured in the

film. Though there was some initial reference to the difficult feelings associated with the conflict, the hope-oriented sensory frame quickly dissolved this.

Early on in the film, Neeha, a female Palestinian expresses,

There's always this fear...it's not fear anymore, it's just a part of me, part of who I am, part of everyday...the fear of not surviving...of losing someone...maybe being bombed, maybe being murdered or something...as a Palestinian, there's always this kind of fear that haunts you wherever you're going.

The viewer is exposed to foreboding music in the background with haunting imagery of corroded earth. The film transitions with an expression of freedom by Daes, a male Palestinian participant,

When you feel the real meaning of freedom, you start feeling the joyful things and the happiness of other people and the laughs of small children...you will see life not as white and black...you will start seeing life in a coloured way....

This statement is followed by imagery of nature: including a field of flowers overlooking the ocean, a sunset and a tree with ripe apples. We are then exposed to several PIT participants expressing what peace would mean for them. This commentary is bookended with more images of nature and calming ambient music.

"If I imagine peace it would be like fruit salad"

"soft, calm"

"Maybe something sweet like chocolate"

"Anything that makes you feel good, when you think about it, it makes you drool...something that makes you feel warm like...a good ice-cream or your grandma's soup."

The film closes with an expression of a vision for peace by an Israeli youth.

"To live without war, with trust on both sides, and that's how things should be."



The last frame is a cleverly captured image of a raspberry bush fading in the distance to reveal a rusted fence bordering it. This may be interpreted as a guarded, though hopeful consideration of the message of the film.

Did the experimentation with the senses and hope for the future have any impact on the relationship between Dilha and Dav? Something extraordinary did in fact take place during the filmmaking process which positively altered their relationship. The love which they separately developed for their specific roles in the filmmaking process and how those roles intersected led to an unexpected affinity for one another. Zeer explained that,

the thing that's so cool about it is that he loves to take pictures or to edit, she loves to use the camera, which are two things they didn't necessarily know before they got into this process... so she went out and shot some extra video and I could just see the joy on his face when he loaded the video into the system and it was like, 'this is exactly what I needed.

This is precisely how Dav and Dilha divided up the responsibilities throughout the filmmaking process. What is fascinating is that the work that each person took on, had a broader significance than simply reducing the tension between them. Zeer indicated that in some cases the camera person-editor relationship works well, while in many other instances, editors are dissatisfied and tend to direct a lot of animosity toward the former. So for an Israeli and Palestinian who have experienced such a significant ideological and cultural divide to have slipped so comfortably into their film roles and work so well together is quite remarkable. Zeer added that the smooth filmmaking relationship directly contributed to dissolving the constrained cultural lens through which they originally viewed each other. As Dilha became excited about the film work, Dav's earlier perspective "softened." He recognized the individual beside him, behind all of the resentment that she originally expressed. Their professional interaction lent itself to a broader context for her feelings to be understood. As processes "clicked" on the set, Dilha seemed to reciprocate Dav's personal shift with her in an unspoken fashion. The earlier charged dynamics and evidence that each side had been dealing with a "perceived enemy" altered into a humanized relationship centred on appreciation and respect.

A similar tension-filled process unfolded during the filming of “Misinterpretation,” another poignant film produced at the 2006 camp. The story generating process was one in which affectively dominant relationships with the conflict were aggressively articulated by the Israeli and Palestinian team members. Zaran, a female Palestinian team member was not interested in focusing on everyday conflict-ridden Israeli-Palestinian dynamics. She anticipated that there would be disagreements within the group if they attempted to negotiate such subject matter. In our interview, she indicated that, “I didn’t really actually want to make anything that has to do with the occupation 'cause I know that’s going to create arguments or problems.” She believed that it would be more valuable to have a film with a more “hopeful” message, such as developing a satire on the Israeli and Palestinian political leadership. She felt that such a premise would clearly delineate between the contrasting views of leadership and the people in general. The rest of the group disagreed and successfully pushed for a theme that directly entered scenarios which reflected critical conflict dynamics.

This led to the tension which Zaran originally anticipated as she and her Israeli counterpart began echoing dominant perceptions of parties to the conflict. When discussing how representatives from either side should be depicted on screen, an accentuated “spoken for” struggle ensued. Bernie, a Canadian member of this team asserted that, “Zaran wanted soldiers to be portrayed as this great evil. And Vlad (the Israeli participant) wanted them to be portrayed as heroes.” This point of contention led to a series of heated disagreements throughout the early filmmaking process. At this time, Bernie seemed to exert most of her energy attempting to prevent her fellow filmmakers from shouting at each other. She noticed that the reason for their hostility was less about the film itself and more about attachment to their particular perspectives.

The film was divided into two distinct sections. The premise for the second part centred on a nervous-looking man with Arab features entering a bus filled with passengers who appeared to be uncomfortable at the moment he appeared. The sweat dripping down the man’s brow made him particularly suspicious for those present. The fear that the other actors playing bus passengers display and assumption that most audience members make at this point is that this person is a suicide bomber. The scene was executed outstandingly as it was completely emblematic of the film’s title, “Misinterpretation.” The central theme leads into preconceived notions emanating through a dominant discourse held in this case by the vast majority of Israelis.

The thought-provoking play on emotions, used through manipulative imagery pushes the audience to call their assumptions into question. Why is it that the first reaction one might have is a direct association with a suicide bomber? Do certain ethnic features revealed through the protagonist's appearance alert us to prejudicial attitudes held by audience members leading toward an "automatic" association with a "prototypical terrorist." How does this intersect with "orientalized" messages which often filter through Israeli media that would lead to such an association? How does the assumed suicide bomber plot, trigger affective reactions amongst Israelis who have lived through the personal trauma of a family member being victimized by such a bombing? How does this elicit emotions or attach itself to the perpetuation of the ongoing Israeli collective trauma narrative or "trauma vortex" (Ross, 2007)? In what ways do these factors inform the Israeli discourse of security? If we are to enter a discussion involving both communities, where is the line drawn between one group's perceptions of terrorism versus another's perceptions of fighting for freedom?

At the end of the frame, the film reveals that in actuality, the man's disposition is due to the fact that he is late for work. We may imagine audience members pausing at this point, and recognizing their own preconceived notions. Such "Misinterpretations," as captured so aptly in the title, intricately push the buttons of many communities negotiating their relationship with its theme. The filmmakers were of course the most affectively vulnerable parties involved. This reality revealed itself when the main premise of the film was agreed upon while specific components of the representations being used were still in dispute. Bernie recounts:

I remember (Zaran) wanted it established strongly that he wasn't a suicide bomber before he came on the bus, um, even though that was the whole point to have assumptions be made and have them proven wrong. She wanted him to seem as innocent as possible, because she didn't want him to be villainized.

Bernie juxtaposes what Zaran was pushing for with Vlad's position. She asserted that:

He was extremely adamant about the other actors looking as nervous as possible, as uncomfortable as possible, because he felt that would really portray the sense of worry and fear that people have in that situation.

Each person wanted the characters featured in the film who represented their own side to appear as “the true victims” in a realistic conflict situation. Again, it is important to emphasize Bernie’s earlier point about the young filmmakers being more attached to the message they wanted to relay rather than the film itself. Another way of looking at this, however, might be that each side wanted the audience to be more affected by the characters being portrayed in a vulnerable way. Zaran and Vlad’s relationship on the film set was a “spoken for” heated dynamic which is played out on many levels by Israelis and Palestinians all of the time. So much effort is made to convince the rest of the world who “the real victims” are.

Despite all of the difficulties which arose in the early stages of the filmmaking process, something remarkable happened when the group agreed to move forward with what would become the final product. Zaran and Vlad realized that leaving the film scenes with an ambiguous overtone was an acceptable compromise. In this sense, their focus began to shift beyond the rigid cultural lens that would have slanted the film in favour of one dominant narrative over another. They now knew that if they did not redirect their energy toward creating a film that they were mutually proud of, then they would have no material to validate all of the efforts that they had made at the camp up until that point. There would be no future audiences who could observe what PIT was trying to achieve. This awareness of needing to work together dissolved much of the earlier tension and redefined their relationship. As Bernie conveys:

no scene could have been completed without supporting one another—you can’t direct, shoot, or operate film all by yourself...and so by switching off roles, we supported each other in each other’s scenes. One person would direct and everyone else would fill all the other roles. And then we would switch off. And everyone knew that it would be their turn to do the same. And there is equality in that.

When I asked Bernie what she personally witnessed in terms of how the need to support one another affected the relationship between Zaran and Vlad, she asserted that:

I would say that at the end of our film, I would use the term ‘chummy’ – everyone was very chummy in our group....we appreciated each other a lot more. Even Vlad and Zaran got along...they cared for each other in the end. When we had our screening at the very end, we were tight. We were so excited to be there working together and to be showing this to so many people together. We felt like a unit, basically, because we had all worked so hard on this together.

## ***The Impact Of The Filmmaking Process***

There is evidence from “Sweet Like Chocolate” and “Misinterpretation” that filmmaking seems to lend itself well to the resolution of conflict. Drama and documentary film mentor Pat Erikson (2006, 2008 camps) argued that:

...when you all have different visions or different ideas, in a way, you have to come up with a consensus. You have to come up with a solution that will work for everybody.

When considering the polarized perspectives amongst Israelis and Palestinians in general, the accomplishments of the PIT youth films projects are significant. This is compounded further by the fact that the relationships with their counterparts on “opposing side” are only one facet of an unfolding process at the camp.

The issue of representation is paramount if we are to clearly examine the filmmaking endeavours. The youth often begin the relationship with their peers during the filmmaking process by trying to represent where they come from. They want to convey to a receptive audience who they are at that period of time, and who, they, could potentially be as a society. The multivocality inherent within this process weaves personal and collective narratives. Layers of personal experience and collective memory challenge the expression of a coherent narrative. The youth must deal with an exhaustive negotiation within their affective spectrum. This is informed by the conflict between the weight of cultural pressure to conform to dominant narratives and the belief that there is another way forward beyond animosity. All of these thoughts and related emotions are part of an inner dialogue “circulating through participants.”

Pat Erikson described an example of the challenge of moving from “who we are” to “who we could potentially be” when outlining the generation of ideas amongst Palestinians in two of the film groups at the 2006 camp. He indicated that, not unlike Dilha, the Palestinians want the films to centre on the pain that they experience through the conflict. He expressed that effective films are about transformation, where the conflict presented at the beginning is resolved by the end of the story. It was necessary to convey to the youth that their feelings related to conflict could find their place in the film, but the creative development of a story arc was their opportunity to present something new, rather than be held to stories that perpetuate themselves within the

actual conflict. Pat and the other film mentors were attempting to get the youth to think about their most important audience in advance, their own communities.

In terms of the original intentions of some of the Palestinian participants, Erikson tried to convey to them that:

if the film was just about suffering and... you bring it to the Palestinians and they would say, "oh yeah, we agree with that ... of course, that makes sense.

This he argued would not lead anywhere as there would be no community growth by recycling an old narrative of victimization. The mentors made the same efforts with the Israelis to move beyond narrow themes such as past history or existential security challenges. The seed was planted for all participants to go back home and provoke the taken for granted assumptions and dominant cultural narratives of their group. The aesthetic piece's engaging components seem to lend themselves to introducing a new vision for these communities without inappropriately jarring their "comfort zones." Some evidence of this will surface when I recount the youths' evolving post-peace camp stories emanating from my interviews with them below. This notwithstanding, it is important to also capture how the reality of pressured deadlines and the creative process in itself can be transformative.

Dan Zeer emphasized that the nature of both sides needing to collaborate with one another under tight deadlines necessitated that the youth play their role effectively. Whether script writing, camera shooting, or editing, the youth were given a week to create and polish their films. This did not leave much room for bickering over extraneous detail. It also seemed to enable a greater appreciation for a team member from the other side to be realized. This entailed the unique contribution each individual was making to the filmmaking process which from Zeer's perspective, further aided with the release of all the charged emotions that existed at the outset of the peace camp. In other words, fellow participants became to a great extent, just appreciated co-workers, doing their jobs. The working relationship seemed to naturally dissolve some of the thick layering of each side's narrative.

While recognizing that the pressure of the film deadlines brings a unique cooperative spirit to the filmmaking process at PIT, for film mentor Carry Meena, the

inherent creativity involved was the most transformative factor. Though she recognized the value of dialogue, she believed that the creative momentum during filmmaking at the camp brought the youth to another level of clarity, understanding and dynamism. She asserted that:

Even if you have disagreements...the reality of the need to create and then the fun of creation, the actual going out and shooting and setting up a scene and coming up with the idea...starts to basically build a sense of solidarity that I think doesn't come easily when you're just talking. When you're talking, you're mentally processing information that you're carrying with you. When you're in the act of creation is when you're actually allowing a space to just consider each other as co-artists...and in so doing, you're all of the sudden in the process, you're on the train, you're not even thinking about it, you're just in the process of making something. It's in that that I think a lot of things actually start to become...not resolved, but absorbed on another level because of all of the sudden you're in it together...and the sense of accomplishments that happens when the piece is done speaks for itself.

For Meena, there is something within the creative process that is innate, that simply humanizes experience more for those who engage in it.

This process can be arguably understood by returning to Demos and Shouse's definitions of affectivity and considering them from a positively enhanced affective standpoint. While Demos (1995, p.19) outlines the physiological responses of the body during the state of affective arousal, Shouse (2005, p.2) characterizes affect as essentially what "makes feelings feel" and determines, "the varying degrees of the quantity and quality of a particular feeling." So, what might be happening at the level of the body during the creative process? How does an "excited response" through engagement with a given art form alter one's self-perception and relationship with others? Can this process further transform efforts made towards greater understanding of others from a group conventionally held in opposition? Does the awareness that one may be contributing to the greater good also positively enhance the affective state?

Cynthia Cohen, Co-existence Program Director of the Alan B. Slifka Program in Intercommunal Co-existence at Brandeis University, asserts that, such creative processes, can establish "special qualities of attention and response" at personal and collective levels, for both producers of the art form and audiences. This triggers the enhancement of numerous receptive qualities such as self-reflexivity, compassion and

fluid interrelatedness. Shouse's contention is directly reinforced in this sense as Cohen argues that our sensory system becomes intricately interwoven with our cognitive capacity, leading to enhanced, transformed perception. She asserts that, "we see ourselves seeing, notice ourselves hearing, and become aware of ourselves as makers of meaning" (Cohen, 2005, p.5). This directly reinforces what Drama Film Mentor, Carry Meena was describing about the experiential dynamics of filmmaking at the PIT camp from an academic perspective. Meena's metaphor of being "on the train" is apt, as momentum just seems to be created through the personal and collective shift.

While the cognitive level is important, the affective/experiential "beingness" takes on a life of its own in such processes. This reality is significant for two reasons. Firstly, drawing on the last point, we can begin to understand "life" and "flow" as unique when one is "presently engaging" with a creative opportunity of the moment. This "newness" provides space for momentarily transcending past lived experience, acquainting oneself with the possible, while not dismissing what remains to be worked upon. This leads directly to a consideration of what does remain from the past. How can PIT participants "adequately place the parts of themselves" that are still attached to what has been "affectively inherited" through dominant societal discourses? How do they now consider the vast majority of their fellow citizens who are still "spoken for" or continuously "recycling" various components of such discourses? Perhaps they need to place all of this in the context of the significance of their own transformations.

Both "entering the space" of grappling with a stagnant narrative and creatively attempting to shift it cannot be understated. As Cohen argues:

the arts can help us become critically aware of the symbolic structures through which we compose meaning. This level of meta-cognition is often necessary also in the processes of reconciliation, as former enemies reassess the symbols embedded "within enmity discourses" (Cohen, 2005, p.5).

When taking part in dialogue – however necessary this might be in the early stages of an encounter between groups - rationally searching for the appropriate reply can be exhausting. Even when groups are seeking to reach a greater sense of understanding, they are extracting from part of a very charged, learned discourse. Though at times related portions of discourse may appear to be lighter, they still overlap



with the multilayered tension which has festered over decades of conflict. The logical centre of the brain may still feel combative, not allowing for a certain degree of “affective release” when dealing with such dynamics.

Just as a person can be overwhelmed physiologically by the “affective weight” of a dominant culture so can one move forward and let go, be inspired, and be re-energized. This applies directly to a group of representatives drawn from a collective embroiled in conflict, as is the case with the PIT youth. Earlier I explored the work of Bodenhausen et al, (1993) on “integral affect,” which amounts to collective emotional tendencies that tend to arise within particular situations facing a particular group. These often arise through the perpetuation of “stereotypic patterns” and tend to activate “stable affective reactions” according to Jamrymowicz and Bar Tal (2006). If one’s body and emotions can be compromised in detrimental situations which essentially amount to recycled patterns of conflict between groups, can the converse not be valid? Lisa Schirch and Michael Shank (2008) argue that:

art can explain emotions, ideas, or feelings that words alone cannot. Many art forms communicate through symbols, the nonverbal, the human body, the senses, and the experience and expression of emotion” (p. 236).

Schirch and Shank assert that the healing potential does not only take place on the individual level, but collectively as well. For them, art can forever alter all that has been inherited. They claim that, “art helps reclaim the body (alienated by oppression, abuse, violence) and is an important tool in liberating, transforming, and revolutionizing individuals, relationships, and societies” (Ibid). There is much potential within this with regard to shifts in personal and collective relationships in identity, collective memory, trauma and dominant cultural narratives.

Montreal based performance artist Devora Neumark, a PhD candidate in Humanities at Concordia University, has done extensive research on the use of creative processes in healing local and international conflict. She also has directly used her artwork in community development and confirms that such processes can alter relationships. She asserts that “memory can become flexible” when informed by new dynamics with those from a collective which originally held a negative association of another group (Neumark, p.6, 2005). Craig Zelizer’s (2003) research has explored the

beneficial impact of art-based processes in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He firmly believes that the arts can assist with shifting perceptions of identity within and between groups and can lead to collective action toward change.

We can place such artistic processes in a broader context by briefly turning to another medium. Tia Denora's research on the transformative effect of music on people explores how the art form "enlists the body" through "entraining bodily activity." She explains how those engaging in it begin to transcend previously limited personal pathways. At the centre of this is a renewed agentive orientation, which positively alters "current modes of embodied and subjective being..." Denora explored the impact of music in a therapeutic context. She provides evidence that the healing impact of the medium used within the therapist-client relationship often leads to the latter gaining a deeper awareness of his/her "presence to himself." (Denora, p.138, 141). We could clearly see a direct parallel with filmmaking based on the above-noted impact it had for the PIT youth.

The PIT youth filmmaking process is also part of a larger trend in the storytelling experience itself which has been increasing exponentially within community work pertaining to youth and beyond. The phenomenon of digital storytelling has emerged as a result of technological developments over the past fifteen years. Joe Lambert, co-director of the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in Berkeley, California was a key figure in the proliferation of the medium. His workshops have been drawn from activist traditions and integrate imaginative writing practices and drama therapy (Li Ying, 2008). What ensues, are short pieces which attempt to convey a poignant message. While Hull and Katz (2006) describe this creative process as a means to "craft an agentive self," Nora Paull has argued that it enables participants to "re-conceive and reframe individual experience in the past" (2002) and by extension, "create new personal definitions" thereby altering the life story. Digital storytelling has been particularly useful tool for minorities around the world to find their voice and challenge all that which has led to their sense of marginalization.

From Meena, LeBaron, Shank and Schirch's focus on affective healing, to Neumark and Zelizer's application to international conflict, to Denora's broader aesthetic contextualization, we have clear evidence of the transformative power of artistic creative processes used among groups who come out of conflict situations. The phenomenon of

digital storytelling points to the potential reach of the final creative product. PIT places all of its films online, so it is certainly part of this same digital trend. As anyone can access the films, the prospect of catalyzing, “mass audiences to engage in similar processes” is great. As noted earlier, this is one of the goals outlined in PIT’s 2010-13 strategic plan. The receptivity of potential audiences itself is an evolving story as there is no telling how many people will affectively respond to the films and initiate their own autonomous projects with similar goals. This evolving story parallels the transitions that youth made during the filmmaking process. As with the other components of the camp, we do not know where their transformed experience will eventually take them. What we can explore however, are the shifted perspectives and related endeavors of the youth since the camp based on my interviews with them conducted for several months over 2010 and 2011.

## **Chapter 4.**

### **The Return Home: Post Peace Camp PIT Youth Interviews**

This chapter is based on interviews I did with the youth who attended the PIT camps in 2006 and 2008. The interviews were conducted over several months in 2010 through Skype. A discussion of my methodological approach, along with a list of the questions I used to guide the interviews, are outlined in Appendices A and B. PIT Executive Director, Lena Raz, assisted me with contacting the youth. She sent an initial mass email that I followed up on directly. I sent subsequent emails and also attempted to contact the youth through Facebook. A total of eighteen former PIT participants responded and agreed to speak to me, including 9 Israelis and 9 Palestinians. In analyzing the interview data I became satisfied that all of my respondents were able to provide an in-depth perspective of their peace camp experience. In that sense, I was much more interested in the qualitative tenor of interviews, than in any quantitative measurements or summaries derived from frequencies of opinion or impression. For that reason, I have not included interview material in this chapter from every person I interviewed in 2010. Rather, I have chosen to highlight those individuals whose narrative I felt most vividly illuminated the factors which inform conflict identities and how these factors intersected with what the youth experienced during, and following, their time at the PIT peace camp.

This does not mean that I approached the interviews, and the compilation of interview data, in a random or haphazard manner. In preparation for writing the chapter at hand, I organized the results of my interviews into categories that reflect impressions that former camp members had of their experiences as well as any personal transitions that they reported. I was especially interested in examining youth transitions based on whether they have been able to develop new relationships with the other side; whether they developed a personal conflict with ongoing dominant realities on their own side and whether or not they have decided to actively make a difference by being involved in

peace-related activities upon their return home. In examining the post peace camp interview material, it became clear that the engagement experienced by PIT youth - through reflection and action taken - have altered their relationships with their counterparts from the other side. It is truly difficult to understand the depth of what it means to enter such a space. To begin this process it is useful first to assess the youths' progress based on their personal experience with dominant interwoven cultural components of trauma and identity.

### ***Culture, Trauma and Identity: Reflections by PIT Youth***

The question of trauma was explored in depth in chapter 1. A distinction was made between the theoretical exploration of trauma along with traumatic disassociation on one hand – which has a viscerally debilitating impact on the body – and the societal angst informed by questions of identification, collective memory, certain aspects of “classic trauma” for most citizens (those who experience it on primary or secondary levels) and dominant cultural narratives. My reference to cultural trauma appropriately expands our understanding of the destructive experiences of those people living in international conflict zones. The impact of difficult prevailing conditions is often exacerbated in an indirect though damaging way on people who view messages emanating from their media. Divisive political rhetoric or violent conflict imagery is highlighted, giving the impression that it is conveying the “entire picture” of reality. In my interviews with PIT youth I emphasized the impact of traumatically influenced events on their lives. I asked them about the ways that PIT may or may not have altered their perceptions of these events.

Like many Israelis, Barein, a 2006 Israeli PIT participant, was greatly influenced by a dominant Israeli perception of Palestinian people. When she was younger there were a considerable number of suicide bombings in Israel. So any person or prevailing situation associated with that threat created an affectively charged daily orientation within her environment. Barein indicated that:

my opinion wasn't very good, about Palestinians people, and I thought they were all against us, you know, and they wanted to kill us, so I was very afraid when I saw, like, Arab men on the streets. Freaked me out. Or on the bus; the bus—it's the scariest on the bus.

Despite this very difficult atmosphere, Barein had been provided with tools which helped her to resist seeing the conflict through the conventional binary. She was part of a community which attempted not to let fear paint a monolithic picture of the other side. For example, her school invited speakers from across the Israeli political spectrum. The left-wing perspective that she was exposed to in particular was complemented by a school program which provided visits to Arab schools within Israel, enabling the youth to have an opportunity to get to know each other. So, Barein's fear of 'the other' was tempered to a certain extent.

Barein reported in our interview together that PIT helped bring her perspective of the "other side" to another level. She indicated that:

when I went to Peace It Together, it was really good for me, because I realized that I saw like, they were just people like me; they were very nice; I loved them...I saw that even though they have different opinions, there are still some people you can talk to on the other side.

A key question for Barein and the other PIT youth is whether these feelings are sustainable. Can personal incidents with "the other side" that are difficult and directly reflect some of the most challenging issues for the broader collectives be mitigated by one's experience at the peace camp?

One day in Jerusalem in 2010, an Arab man assaulted Barein. She relays some of the details of the incident:

I think he's from Gaza,...somehow he got to Jerusalem, and he started to attack, like, ah—you know, I know that he attacked me, but then, ah, the police, ah, investigate him, and he told them he attacked like two more young, ah, women before me. And he...choked me and he really banged my head over the wall, and someone come and, ah, saved me. And I'm sure he saved my life, you know?

Barein needed to go to a trauma centre for a period of time. I asked her whether she was able to separate the severity of this experience from her relationship with the Palestinians from the PIT peace camp.

I know that this specific man that attacked me is not like my friends from the camp... I can separate that. I have no problem with them because of him, you know?

This incident brought Barein directly back into an affective relationship with dominant aspects of the conflict. She could have called upon the fear which she was exposed to earlier in life which was pervasive throughout Israel during the barrage of suicide bombings. One could easily see how her recent personal experience with trauma at the hands of a man who derives from the othered community could have pushed Barein directly into the dominant cultural ethos. As this was not the case, perhaps this could be viewed as a victory for PIT's program.

Neeha, a 2006 Palestinian delegation PIT participant had high expectations following the peace camp. She could not however be prepared for the political climate exacerbated by an unfortunate intricately interwoven personal experience. This experience led her to cease the efforts she made to continue peace related work. Her efforts to shift the dominant collective perspectives she grew up with were badly damaged by another post peace camp experience which intersects with issues of trauma and identity. The particularly disturbing nature of the incident led her to eliminate all connections she had with the PIT Israelis for a period of time. She explains:

I cut off contact with everyone from the camp after a friend of mine died in Gaza because of the Israeli siege that happened a couple of years back and she died for no reason and I was in such a great shock that I decided to remove every Israeli I have from my Facebook account...I removed almost everyone from my friend list and I don't really like to talk to them anymore... It's just hard to talk to them knowing that my friend is dead because of their government.

The tragic irony of the friend who was killed in Gaza was that Neeha met her at another peace camp a couple of years before. This is compounded by the fact that her death made international news. She was one of two daughters of Izzeldin Abuellaish a famous Palestinian doctor who had trained and worked in Israeli hospitals. He captures his experience of that tragic day in his book, *I Shall Not Hate*.

Neeha's friend's death seemed to have found a place simultaneously within her personal struggle with the conflict and the collective Palestinian discourse of threat and fear. She expressed that:

They're all gonna go to the army and they're all gonna be recruited so maybe today, maybe tomorrow, maybe ten years from now, one of them will be put in a situation and maybe one of them will hurt someone I love again...I can't help but wonder when I'm going to see one of them at the checkpoint when I'm going to visit my grandma's. I just keep looking at the faces of the soldiers at the checkpoint and I'll be like maybe it's someone I know.

Neeha's affective experiences are not monolithic however as the challenges she has had with the other side cannot eradicate how the Israelis from PIT touched her. While earlier it seemed clear that the removal of friends from Facebook during the Gaza war was an indication that she could not separate them from the actions of the Israeli government, this action turned out to be a temporary distancing. Neeha could not ignore having been personally touched during her experience at the camp; so much so that she recently accepted her former Israeli roommate from that period as a friend on Facebook again. Neeha's feelings for this person and by extension her transformation at the camp is evident in this sequence of our interview.

RH: Why do you think you felt you were ready to accept her as a person... did you welcome her back in your life just because of who she is as a person without considering the fact that she's Israeli?

N: Yes. That's exactly my point. I mean who she is as a person, she's so sweet and so caring and throughout the camp we were so close, and it's been two years since my friend died and I had to move on so I accepted her friend request again.

Neeha's experience is clearly "multivocal," as seemingly contradictory parts of her affective experience inform her choices at different times. Despite the resistance from her own community and her connection to personal tragedy she somehow manages to listen to that voice that still would like to change the conflict for the better. It seems that the positive affective relationships with the Israeli delegation will never leave her. She expresses that:

I'd be the first to promote peace if it started happening but in the meantime I think it's really hard.

As noted earlier, in the filmmaking section, Dilha, a 2006 Palestinian delegation PIT participant came to the camp from a right wing perspective, having grown up beside



an Israeli settlement. She was directly exposed to violence with frequent patterns of “attack and counterattack” taking place between the two communities. People she knew personally were killed during the intifada period of 2000-2004. During our interview, it was clear that Dilha was still deeply affected by the trauma of the conflict. She was very hesitant to move beyond the dominant collective frame. As I alluded to earlier, PIT staff and other participants indicated that Dilha was difficult to reach during the camp. She continuously wanted to present an exclusively Palestinian perspective of the conflict, with little room for divergent voices to be heard. Dilha’s situation differs from the others as she emphasized trauma as more of a foundational component of her experience, rather than referring to an incident that was emotionally jarring after the camp.

Despite her hardened views, Dilha was able to turn trauma on its head by “entering a new conflict” with her own community. One of the key aspects of Dilha’s shift in perspective which she attributes to the camp is her critical view of Palestinian politicians and media. This is part of a new relationship or conflict with her own community. She asserts that:

I really think the leaders are not acting in a good way... they are not looking for a solution for us...they are not helping because they are not doing development in country...they are just looking at the conflict and not looking for anything else.

Dilha indicates that the politicians’ drive to maintain power overrides any other issue. She is equally concerned with Palestinian media, which she views as perpetuating the Palestinian sense of victimization:

It’s just showing the suffering of people, but it’s not solving anything and it’s not trying to make people more adult in politics.

She argues that people need the assistance of the media so that they can become more politically mature and contribute constructively to community development. This will instill a motivation for personal and collective growth – something Dilha argues that the Palestinian community desperately needs. Though she is still firmly behind the Palestinian national cause, her willingness to point out what is wrong with it is very significant. She directly attributes her refined perspective to her experience at the PIT peace camp. For someone coming from a community which experiences so much

violence, it is remarkable that Dilha is able to let go of and directly challenge the dominant Palestinian frame of victimization.

Dilha's perspective in terms of "entering the space" and challenging dominant cultural norms directly applies to questions of identity and collective memory explored in depth at the outset of the dissertation. Her point of view may be viewed as one which candidly calls into question approaches to community resistance. The significance of this is paramount as this struggle is at the centre of the Palestinian national cause. For this reason it is important to return to Neeha's perspective for a moment. She speaks to the challenge of transgressing dominant orientations towards resistance when exploring the concept of "normalization." While Dilha highlighted areas that could be revisited in terms of the Palestinian national cause, Neeha points to the difficulties of reaching out to the other side. Both examples may be viewed as ways in which a community's experience with trauma may constrain identity. They provide us with insight in terms of the way cultural pain may directly inform troubling and in some cases, destructive internal and external identifications.

### ***The Cultural Weight of Normalization and Prejudicial Attitudes***

In my interviews I was interested in exploring the set of internal cultural constraints and prejudices that tend to exacerbate tension within and outside of each community. On this point, Neeha noted the way the Palestinian community have typically used the term "normalization" in respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to Neeha, any discussion related to the peace process can generally be included under the category "normalization." She argues that, "People here don't really accept the idea of co-existence. I mean, people here are just, it's a red line. When you talk about peace and co-existence, it's a red line with most people because practically everyone knows a martyr or is a relative to someone who died.... it's hard to break the barrier between us and people who already have the stereotypes and who already have all these ideas in their heads."

Whether her contemporaries unconditionally adopted the dominant "normalization" narrative or simply had difficult experiences with the Israeli army, it seemed that opening up to telling others about these Israelis at PIT who were interested in peace made her life amongst her community more challenging.

...it was so hard for me to admit to them that I'd been with people from let's call it 'the other side', and some of them called me a traitor and some of my friends bailed on me...and some of them came from different cities, some of them experienced Israeli attacks first-hand and it was hard to open up to them...

This experience, while overwhelming for Neeha at times, led her to reflect further regarding the destructive Palestinian relationship with the conflict. The following exchange between Neeha and myself during our interview clarifies further the nature of the violent affective identification which the vast majority of people in both communities have with the other side.

RH: I'm getting from...what you still witness around you and what you grew up with you said is that people almost as a reflex will react when there's anything associated with Israel or Israelis or Jews, right? Rather than stepping back and really seeing what the situation is.

N: Yeah, so it's not just one side, it's sad on both sides to have these prejudices without really thinking about anything.

RH: So is it what I described earlier where immediately there's an image of someone from the other side and a whole story is conjured up in somebody's mind who is conditioned with that from a very early age rather than trying to see through the surface? Would you agree?

N: yeah

Jadhi, a 2006 Palestinian delegation PIT participant felt transformed through his experience at the camp. Never had he imagined that he would have an opportunity to be part of a group of Palestinians that was openly sharing feelings and thoughts with Israelis. He "entered the space" to deal with the conflict through his direct engagement with his own side's layers of conditioning and the affective encounter realized at the camp. As will be demonstrated below, Jadhi's experience is indicative of the transformative potential within the relational encounter. We will see that normalization is not necessarily a fixed state, equally hindering members of the Palestinian population. Following his time in Canada in 2006, Jadhi asserted that, "my ideas, my thoughts, my stereotypes yes it was different, totally different." He actively spoke to friends and other community members, emphasizing that the two sides need to talk to each other for any

collective change to take place. His conversations were complemented by community screenings of films from the camp. Whether verbalizing his enthusiasm or allowing the films to express the message he wanted to convey, he directly pursued a path undertaken by few Palestinians. He would emphasize that at the peace camp, “we touched people and we got touched actually,” not shying away from the depth of the affective encounter. Jadhi was crossing two interrelated taboo zones for Palestinians in this sense. He talked openly of a recent and potentially future experience of normalization with the Israelis and he did not hide the degree to which each side felt the healing power of this relational experience.

In fact, having been “touched” to the extent that he was, Jadhi attempted to transfer his experience further. This was no easy task as he needed to deal with a considerable amount of community resistance. There was an onslaught of ridicule directed toward him as many fellow Palestinians repeatedly referred him to as “the co-exister.” Jadhi’s remarkable patience paid off as an interesting dynamic unfolded through his continued efforts. Derision turned to curiosity as people began inquiring about his PIT experience. The “co-exister” became a beacon of expansive awareness, opening up previously unimagined worlds for people. Talks and screening with contemporaries soon led to similar encounters with the next generation of Palestinians. Jadhi indicated that, “I started actually affecting, making an effort on people’s children, on a lot of my close friends’ children.” He asserts that they were all captivated by the stories he would tell them about the peace camp. Suddenly the “space entered,” one forbidden to Palestinians in general, expanded considerably. Here we have an indication that when efforts are made to introduce another paradigm, another way forward, that in time, with an adequate period of engagement people can be receptive to change.

Perhaps the weight of the constellation of factors which encompass identification within conflict dynamics outlined in the first chapter simply requires the right person or circumstance to initiate a “thawing” of the layers of inherited conditioning. Jadhi argues that there is a need to let go of attachments to old narratives by emphasizing many people are hampered by “the mind...it’s all about the stereotypes and ideas inside our heads.” Were those people he spoke with just waiting for someone to openly challenge the narrative which has circulated throughout their lives repeatedly? Was their response a realization that the internalization of dominant narratives, keeps one constrained by them? Whether or not those who spoke with Jadhi personally shifted to that extent, it is

clear that “entering the space” or grappling with what remains dominant provides an opportunity for new stories to develop and for lives to be positively altered accordingly. When we consider Jadhi’s reference to the “cultural liability” of stereotyping, we can imagine how such an orientation affects both sides.

Naf, a 2008 Israeli delegation PIT participant managed to directly transfer his peace camp experience to younger teenagers and children during his year of volunteer experience with Garinam Omanuyot (GO) or Art Corps, prior to army service. The organization may be viewed as an extension of the PIT creative process through filmmaking as the former uses music, art and theatre as educational tools. The work with GO provided Naf with an opportunity to challenge the dominant Israeli collective ethos by contesting prejudicial attitudes reflective of it demonstrated by the GO youth. He indicated that his experience with GO enabled him to see clearly that people generally “hate” the unknown.

He points specifically to mainstream media as a culprit in the socialization of these young people. Naf’s work with these youth is essentially a process of countering the detrimental socialization they demonstrated by pointing out how “unconscious” their expressions have been. He has let them know that cultural signs can be shifted, as there is room to modify both what we witness in terms of how collective identity is represented and what our relationship is with this representation. He cleverly draws an analogy with corporate symbolism, which aptly contextualizes the GO youths’ socialization.

Yeah, I got to hear a lot of prejudice...you get to see how much the media affects people today. And I’m not talking only about the conflict, I’m talking about general society, I mean about, how can I say this, the concept of beauty is being changed by the media. If it has a Nike sign on it, it is beautiful, and if it doesn’t, it is not. It is unbelievable.

Fellow 2008 Israeli PIT participant Koef had the good fortune of finding himself placed by the IDF with his friend and fellow delegation member in GO. Koef expands on the process of assisting with shifting perceptions of young Israelis. He describes how he worked with several boarding schools across the country engaging the youth in a similar way to Naf. Koef explained how he took things a step further however, by not simply outlining socialization processes, but emphasizing “universal truths.” On one level, the deconstruction of the layers of socialization essentially entails directly pointing out the

destructive nature of the youths' behavior. Koef, however, believes that his work has the potential of leading the youth toward more of a healing relational orientation, where they could effectively "enter the space" with the other in the future and be aware of the commonalities that exist between them. Koef asserts that he was, "trying to teach the kids to love other human beings... teaching human values." Naf and Koef's experiences at PIT were shaped equally by their affective encounter with Daouhz, a 2008 PIT Palestinian participant. The encounter these young Israelis had with him, brought their moderation to another level.

Despite his young age, Daouhz works as a photojournalist in Hebron, where he actively documents the Palestinian experience with the Israeli army. At the same time, he emphasizes the need to reach out to the other side on an ongoing basis in his online blog. The energy which goes into his work can be paralleled with his commitment to the Islamic faith. These combined factors significantly altered a very limited perspective that Naf had of the followers of this faith. He essentially placed adherents at the opposite end of a polarity from those Palestinians that are actively involved in peace work. His encounter with Daouhz allowed him to work through his own prejudicial attitudes. He realized that while he was able to teach those who overtly expressed prejudice, the cultural layers run deep and one can surprise oneself with how much further they need to go to be more broadly open-minded. The beauty of Naf's experience was that his shift in perspective came through the realization that he shared mutual values with Daouhz. Naf's explains that:

Well, first of all Daouhz to me is a very big inspiration, and a type of nature force. I mean he is unbelievable, the things he do, the things he writes, is very deep. He touches the very flesh of what goes on.... he managed to break an image of a fanatic Muslim – that every religious Muslim is fanatic – and he managed to break it by being peaceful and open minded, and viewing a bigger picture, and speaking words of peace, and still being very in touch with the religious, with his identity.

Koef's experience with GO enabled him to enter a deeper new conflict relationship with his own side based on their limited and distorted representation of the other. He was further transformed by the impact of the relational experience he had with Daouhz and fellow Palestinians at the PIT peace camp. Koef expressed that:

hearing that these people have lives that don't revolve only around the conflict. They have interests, they have things that they love and people they love and friends and family and I mean, you never really get that on the news too much, the human aspect.

While recounting the growth of learning about the everyday Palestinian, Koef captures the depth of the internal struggle triggered through the relational encounter. He asserts that,

Okay, this person who I know is feeling what my country is doing or feeling the conflict directly...it's directly affecting this human being. You know it puts much more...brings it much closer to what's happening with me.

What he expressed captures both how individual and collective relationships with the conflict are interwoven, and how the affective encounter can deepen an internal long-term personal negotiation with one's own group. The difficult challenge of this inward journey may be allayed by drawing on the work addressing cultural layers of conditioning at the PIT peace camp. Highlighting this through Koef's personal experience above adds considerable meaning to our understanding of the challenge of dissolving the layers of prejudice or misconception. In this context, it is important to understand that even those who are the most open minded have an opportunity to dissolve deep layers of conditioning. People like Koef and Naf have an opportunity to guide others who are caught up in dominant prejudicial attitudes in perhaps the most profound ways. We have seen that their efforts teaching others about the damaging relationship with cultural stereotypes or prejudice, coupled with personal work on related issues can allow for deep healing to take place.

### ***Working Through the Weight of the Conflict and Affectively Touching the Other***

As noted through my earlier reference to the film PIT 360, Amy, a 2008 Israeli delegation PIT participant, found herself at the centre of a key collective Israeli-Palestinian existential debate. My interview with Amy revealed how her exchange with Jamd affected her in a more in depth way. It turns out that his commentary about soldiers was particularly difficult for her to listen to, as her boyfriend was entering the

army at the time of the camp. A period which was simply a way of life for Israelis suddenly entered a completely different context. For the first time in Amy's life, she needed to grapple with the relationship between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian civilians. Her encounter brought a collective societal discussion into a personal affective struggle.

At the same time one could argue that a level of comfort was reached between the two sides for these issues to be discussed in the first place. As each side accepts to listen to the other however, the vulnerability factor reaches a new level of intensity. While Amy's struggle was challenging, it led to an unexpected experience – one where “the other” would become the voice which soothed her pain. One could consider these stages of opportunity as unique to the PIT peace camp setting. The comfort level reached to challenge the other side followed by the personalized experienced which overlaps with grappling with collective dynamics seems to be part of the natural momentum of this encounter. It would almost appear that one needs to be initiated into these stages to experience the most profound affective exchange with the other side. This is exactly what unfolded for Amy as she describes how her tent mate Naiz comforted her. Her new Palestinian friend embraced her and was Amy's

best friend for those five minutes, ten minutes... she hugged me and talked with me and said that I'm gonna go back to Israel and everything is going to be okay. Those were the five minutes I started believing in Naiz, and in all of the people inside of the camp.

I attempted to contextualize Amy's experience by stating the following in our interview.

RH: And you had a very human moment, where Naiz was reaching out to you...it was something where maybe she was separating herself from what she experienced with her relationship with Israelis?

The affective nature of her time at PIT created a very real sense of the humanity of the other side. It motivated her to directly attempt to transfer her experiences to others in her community. She made several DVD copies of the films from the camp and distributed them to many friends and acquaintances.



Every time there was someone new, I was like, 'I want to show you my films.' I was like, so enthusiastic. I was trying to show them for everyone I can.... I tried to make them (her community) feel what I felt in the camp through all the films, tried to pass them the message through the films.

Naiz, a 2008 Palestinian delegation PIT participant from Nablus emphasized that the peace camp completely changed her perspective of Israelis as it was the first time she encountered people from the other side that were not wearing a uniform. Her above-noted experience with Amy, her tent-mate at PIT, was just one of many transformative experiences at the camp for her. Her summer experience motivated Naiz to become directly involved in transferring her experience to others in her community. Naiz was fully prepared to enter a new relationship with the conflict by initially discussing her experience with members of her community. Her commitment moved beyond this however and she soon found additional ways to be involved in peace-related activities.

She entered an essay competition sponsored by an Israeli newspaper with Koef, the Israeli 2008 participant mentioned earlier. The competition was designed as an open-ended one, where participants were to write about what peace meant for them. Despite the tense political climate at the time of her writing, she was determined to remain committed to her beliefs. In an indirect response to community members succumbing to fear and frustration following the Gaza conflict, Naiz and Koef's essay was titled, "The Day after the Gaza War: What Young People Can Do to Strengthen the Prospects for Peace." Naiz viewed the circumstances at the time as temporary and remained steadfast in her faith in the younger generation to effect change.

She captures these sentiments along with pointing out the difficulties that the older generation has in accepting to let go of their collective resistance to reaching out to the other side. While her comments can be applied to both sides, her writing specifically calls into question what she believes is a stagnant position within the Palestinian community. She effectively enters a new relationship with her own side by expressing her conflict with what she believes is a very narrow position.

There is hope for a peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict, and that hope is the younger generation on both sides, of whom more and more are challenging the traditionally held views of "us against them."

For Naiz the older generation:

lived with the conflict more and they're so stubborn—I don't think they change their mind about the Israelis. So, if our new generation grew up as love, and forget what they hates, and forget about the fighting and killing—like we should teach them how to, how to—they should hear the other part, and talk with them, and see what good in them, and not the bad thing; um, maybe we can change how, how they think, about each other, and stuff like that. ... Young people can change their mind; they can understand more.

Naiz commitment to transfer her experience to others in the global community is evident through her participation in two international fora. She attended Global Changemakers and One Young World conferences respectively, showing films from the camp. The former is essentially a side event to the World Economic Forum, designed as a platform for “the voice of the youth” (Global Changemakers, 2011). The latter considers itself the “premier global forum for young people of leadership caliber,” where the “youngest, brightest and best “people are brought together to “ensure that their concerns, opinions and solutions are heard” (One Young World, 2011). Naiz indicated that the participants at the fora were asking questions such as, “do you think this is going to make a change,” and making comments such as “we believe in these kind of camps are gonna doing this, and bringing teenager, uh, Palestinian teenager and Israeli teenager, we believe that there will be a reason for peace.” She added that:

...all these things, they asked me so many questions about the films. I find that they like it, and they really support these ideas. That everybody should do that, and they should talk.

In addition to her international screenings, Naiz wanted to reach out to her own community by showing the PIT films in Nablus. She tried to contextualize the films' messages by emphasizing the ordinary nature of most Israelis, who simply want to provide for their families. Her point was emphasized further by separating the people from the army's actions and Israeli governmental decisions which “ruin lives on both sides.” Though there were a diversity of responses from the audience with marked expressions of resistance, Naiz's message seemed to have struck a chord with several people in attendance. Naiz captured these sentiments by noting that:

They said, 'Maybe someday this thing would work.' Some of them said that. 'Maybe a peace can be, can be come if...the two sides talk, sit and talk to each other.'

## ***Relationality***

When moderates actively try to illustrate to their own community the benefits of more broadly understanding and attempting to gain compassion for the other side, there is considerable potential for growth and increased understanding. In the context of PIT, this of course is an extension of all of the lessons the youth gained at the camp through concerted efforts to “enter the space” and be open to the stories their counterparts from the other side were expressing. Sometimes however, the encounter does not have to be so complex in terms of the dynamics or the outcome. It is not uncommon for the meeting itself – absent of carefully developed workshops or plans – to be the catalyst for transformation.

Drawing on her own experience from the camp with Naiz and a few others, Amy believes that an increasing number of simple exchanges may just be what is necessary for more people in Israeli and Palestinian society to pursue the path of peace. She asserts that:

just give them five minutes with someone from the other side, someone they talk to, can talk to about music, I don't know, the regular stuff in life. And that is it... Yeah, just like it is not always about the conflict, about conversation, and formal stuff. Sometimes it is just, I don't know, the kind of conversation I had with Naiz and with Yaa, and just you know we sit next to each other, talk about music, friends, and our school, boyfriend, girlfriend stuff, the regular stuff.

How interesting to learn that simply spending time with another human being, talking about your interests, experiencing the subtleties within an interaction can positively alter constructed images of the other. This certainly was the case with relationship between 2008 Israeli youth Naf and Koef and their Palestinian friend Daouhz. We learned about a similar dynamic in the filmmaking section as 2006 PIT participants were motivated to develop a film based on the close connection between Rin and Jadhi (On The Line). The youth felt that this relationship was symbolic of the camp. Without it being documented, who would believe that it was possible for a young Israeli and Palestinian to become so close? Is it valid to consider the simple presence of someone from another community, along with engaging in everyday conversations, as a legitimate catalyzing force for change?

In virtually every interview that I did, there was a comment about the shifts people made by simply being with someone from the other side. Whether participants were referring to sharing a meal, living in the same sleeping quarters or partaking in a recreational activity, they felt that these dynamics helped them make deep personal transitions. On a separate but related note, Rin and Jadhi commented that such experiences were part of gaining trust for one another and bringing up more difficult issues. Such issues are often viewed as impasses in the conflict, so it is truly a remarkable accomplishment in itself that there are circumstances where they can actually be discussed in a civilized manner. This echoes dialogue facilitator Leo Aaron's belief that the intensity of the dialogue sessions is an indication that there is a certain comfort level realized by the youth. He essentially argues that the youth would not be able to broach such points otherwise. This all seems to emanate from the simplicity of the encounter realized by many of the youth earlier in the camp. The everyday relational shifts experienced at the camp could potentially lead to broader change should the former participants choose to continue to draw on it and use their agency accordingly.

## **Chapter 5.**

### **Cultural Theory, Narrative Analysis and the Impact of Peace it Together**

The interviews discussed in the last chapter suggest that PIT's program had considerable success in transforming participant's relationships to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But what broader implications can be drawn from the results of PIT's program? More specifically, how might we use contemporary cultural theory to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of PIT youth? This chapter seeks to answer to these questions by addressing a variety of relevant themes from cultural theory, postcolonial theory and philosophy. I begin with a discussion of the work of Grace Feursverger, a scholar who has explored similar bridgebuilding work between Israelis and Palestinians.

#### ***The Shift From Insider/Outsider Relationships to 'In Between' Spaces***

In her book, *Oasis of Dreams*, Grace Feursverger (2001) examines the relationship between Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli children in an integrated school in the mixed town of Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam. Her research emerges through direct fieldwork with the children and teachers. She uses a "reflexive ethnographic approach" placing herself as both outsider and insider within the research process. She is an insider by virtue of the fact that she is a Jewish daughter of Holocaust survivors who grew up in Montreal. She is an outsider, as she did not grow up in the village where the school is located. On one hand she has a direct relationship with the Jewish story of victimization and like most Jews was raised with the inspirational redemption narrative of the establishment of the state of Israel. On the other hand, not growing up in Israel prevented her from experiencing the multilayered realities interwoven with redemption; including violence, loss, trauma and an often-polarized relationship with identification. Moreover, her aforementioned non-residency in the village, excludes her from having experienced its progression or frustrations firsthand.

Feursverger argues that the “insider/outsider” relationship “presupposes that there is a border” which delineates belonging or exclusion. Yet, the evolving narrative of Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam is interwoven with threads based on reality and others that build on the human imagination, which implies that the “insider/outsider” relationship may include all of those involved in the school (Feursverger, 2001, p.7-9). It is perhaps limited to view this relationship as one that simply lends itself to observer status. Perhaps this could be expanded, as everyone involved in the precarious dance of negotiating dominant relationships may be viewed as straddling or straying from rigid demarcations. In this sense, the border is not simply a place marked by territory or necessarily includes those who may be habitually recognized as belonging based on culture or related factors. The border is actually a relationship which rests inside of and between the inhabitants of the school. This relationship is negotiated and takes different forms depending on daily unfolding circumstances. Feursverger believes that this state of “inbetweenness” is lived by many people “in the postmodern and postcolonial world” with growing diasporas and considerable migration taking place on an ongoing basis (Ibid, p.9).

Without providing direct examples from the school, it is important to extrapolate and apply this concept to those who have attended the PIT peace camp. The dialogue sessions in particular provide us with examples of the “inbetweenness” which emerges through the encounter. The human needs workshop allowed each side to develop compassion for one another. The youth were able place themselves in the shoes of their counterparts and understand the universality of human suffering. They were equally able to understand the basis of the prevailing needs informed by collective narratives. The “Go Where you Belong” workshop led facilitator Leo Aarons to conclude that the youth began to realize that, “the humanity” of one’s own group, “doesn’t have to be at the exclusion of another – that the boundaries around identity could be blurred a little bit, that we could toy with it...” Expanding on Feursverger’s allusion to postcolonialism, there are a number of sources within that field which can help us further understand the significance of the “inbetween” relationship she refers to.

### ***Postcolonial and Anthropological Perspectives***

Postcolonial theorist Gloria Anzaldua introduced the concept of the *borderlands* (1999). Her work focuses on Chicano culture along the United States-Mexico Border.

She describes the collective interplay of these cultural influences in affective terms, as she views the border as:

a site where many different cultures ‘touch’ each other, and the permeable, flexible, and ambiguous shifting grounds lend themselves to hybrid images. The border is the locus of resistance, of rupture, implosion and explosion, and of putting together the fragments of creating a new assemblage (Keating, 2009, p. 177).

Temporary sites of “intercultural exchange” such as the PIT camp with its multiple indicators of personal transformation are arguably relevant examples of a “borderlands.” In the case of PIT, the permeability and flexibility in the youth perspective came through in repeated examples of transitions from fixed identity associations noted in the last chapter. The implosions or explosions varying in scale took place throughout the camp. Sometimes they manifested themselves in cultural exchanges relating to questions of nationhood, as was the case discussed earlier between Amy and Jamd. Other moments were equally powerful such as the “silence which spoke volumes” according to Canadian participant Zoe. These and other instances at the PIT “site” of exchange certainly led to reconfigured relationships or new assemblages.

Anzaldua focuses on the artistic productions developed by the Chicana artist living on the borderland. Just as I have described with PIT, the process is simultaneously subjective and collective. She argues that:

By disrupting the neat separations between cultures, they create a culture mix, *una mezcla*, in their artworks. Each artist locates her/him self in this border “lugar,” and tears apart and rebuilds the “place” itself (Ibid, 177).

Anzaldua views these artists as producers of knowledge, finding affinity with American and Mexican cultures, but not succumbing to domination by either. The PIT film process certainly provided altered narratives designed to provoke rigid associations with dominant discourses held by audience members back home. One could imagine the youth continuing to negotiate the messages which they produced in their films over years. This notwithstanding, their productions strove to disrupt the “fixed border” within the cultural imagination. This happened by using a more neutral “sensory premise,” as was the case with “Sweet Like Chocolate.” This also took place in “Misinterpretation” where the film essentially held a mirror up to the audience’s assumptions.

The “sites” referred to by Feursverger and Anzaldua can be linked conceptually through the foundational work of Homi Bhabha. According to Bhabha, such “spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (Bhabha, 1994, 1). Israelis and Palestinians who participate in the intercommunal experience offered by PIT have the unique opportunity to lift the veils of distortion embedded within dominant Israeli and Palestinian cultural narratives.

If we apply Bhabha’s work to PIT – as was the case with Anzaldua – strategies for selfhood may be viewed as singular or communal. The self, one’s collective and another collective can all play a role in developing and mutually reinforcing their growth. While I have argued that PIT’s processes are part of a momentum towards shifting identification, perhaps drawing from Bhabha and considering the formation of “new signs of identity” as part of an act of defining “the idea of society itself” is just as valuable. While it is beneficial to begin with “hegemonic forces” towards the malleability of a dominant cultural symbol “toyed with” through bridgebuilding efforts, it is possible to go further. Bhabha’s words may be viewed as the outcome after years of participants incrementally problematizing their relationship with dominant cultural forces. There are several PIT processes and outcomes which echo Bhabha’s call for initiating new signs of identification. The “inbetweenness” or interstices (Bhabha, 1994) - to use his terminology - are directly part of what I referred to earlier as “entering the space” or grappling with one’s relationship with dominant discourses. Shifts in perspective are difficult, as one has to re-explore meaning that one is inundated with over the course of a lifetime.

While fixed identification and the manipulation of *hailed* narratives is a “trapped space” – perpetuating victim-perpetrator dynamics – Bhabha again is speaking in a postcolonial context, calling for the transcendence of these inherited, rigid constructs. He sees this emerging through *hybridities*, which reposition the community and the individual outside of themselves through an endeavor “of revision and reconstruction” (Ibid). For my purposes, the hybrid relationships being developed by Israelis and Palestinians that seek to reach across the “conflict divide” embody an exchange of new stories; those that are permeated with plots centring on healing which respects collective humanitarianism. These spaces of hybrid cultural exchange are always in transition and



delicate and must therefore continually be re-negotiated depending on the circumstances.

The openings for communities that Bhabha speaks of can directly be paralleled with the work of anthropologist Victor Turner. Pointing to the research of Van Genep, Turner asserted that the former discovered that even in ritualized activities inherent within any culture, there are instances where individuals are freed from the normative constraints which tend to define such practices. Turner labeled these transformative moments as “liminal” spaces. He argued that within such spaces, “the possibility exists of standing outside not only from one’s social position but from all social positions and of formulating a potentially unlimited series of alternative social arrangements” (Turner 1974, p. 14). While we are not speaking of ritualized activities in the case of PIT, it is still valuable to extrapolate and consider the weight of inherited conflict stories. To complement Turner, fellow anthropologist Clifford Geertz, in a seeming rebuttal to an Althusserian perspective on culture argued that, “Culture is not about power...something to which social events behaviors, institutions can causally be linked. It is a context – something which can be ‘thickly described’” (Geertz, 1973). Geertz “thickness” metaphor is an apt reference to the multilayered richness which takes place within specific moments of the cultural encounter. I am not completely persuaded by Geertz’s desire to separate culture from power to this extent, but his point about context is important and aligns well with Turner’s “view of liminal spaces providing an “unlimited series of alternative social arrangements.” Perhaps there are more limits to these “alternative social arrangements” than Turner is willing to recognize. Still, the point is to emphasize the extent to which culture inevitably allows some possibilities of ‘standing outside’ dominant social arrangements.

While Turner highlights moments of shifting perception within traditional ritualized activities, I would argue that the potential to alter conditioning is greater within processes which deliberately seek to construct alternative standpoints that might provide ground for compromise or negotiation. In the case of PIT’s program, for example, I believe that more spontaneous cathartic “moments” can be engendered, because there is facilitation which provides for opportunities to be open to another’s narrative.

## ***Divergent Textual Readings: Media Literacy, Polysemy and Active Audiences***

Moments of transition from dominant to alternative or negotiated meanings often leads to a greater degree of receptivity to the other side's perspective. It is important to identify examples that the PIT youth were "intersecting with" and to contextualize such engagement with supporting literature. As noted earlier, one important part of the PIT program was to involve Israeli and Palestinian youth in a media literacy workshop. Through this program the youth realized that it was possible to "step back" and reflect on the barrage of media messages circulating throughout their societies. The emphasis on media literacy extended to the filmmaking process. The film, "Turning the Lens," revealed that the participants were able to identify how destructive their mainstream media could be. They pointed to the monolithic picture of the other side that they have been presented with for years and how this contrasts with the encounter with their counterparts at PIT. The metaphor of the lens being turned back on the media was apt. Indeed, film mentor Wanda Dane indicated that the youth were able to demonstrate to their audience how savvy they were in "calling out" the slanted representation they had been exposed to.

Theoretically we could place such representations in a broader context. How do they parallel the constraining forces enveloped within the constellation of factors associated with trauma, privileged identities, collective memories and dominant cultural narratives? Van Dijk asserts that, "representations work to interpret the world in ways that fit the existing schemas of social knowledge" (Van Dijk, 1993). So we have corporately controlled media that tend to serve the existing agendas of dominant groups. Social knowledge is packaged and ideas which impede rather than further social change are perpetuated. Van Dijk emphasizes that such schemas are in fact "mental ones" essentially served to the populace in order to shape their worldview. It is important to note how conveniently Van Dijk's conceptualization is linked to both collective memory and trauma theory explored above. While I alluded to the power wielded through the corporate media earlier, it is worth briefly emphasizing the common threads of schemas and representation which present themselves here.

Janoff-Bulman (1985) and McCann and Pearlman's (1990) work on trauma referred to the personal schemas we have which are interwoven with basic needs such as self-esteem and how these can be detrimentally altered if interrupted by a traumatic

situation. The literature on collective memory, suggests that memory is often vulnerable and manipulated by those in power. If we link Van Dijk's assertion with what we know about collective memory and the volatility inherent within personal schemas in conflict zones, we are witness to a potentially devastating cycle that can be triggered at any time.

This pattern is not a "sentence" however, written into the DNA of those who inhabit these regions. If we return to the PIT media literacy workshop, and the film, *Turning the Lens*, as just two of numerous examples of devoting some time to recognizing and addressing dominant norms, we can see the creation of potential interstitial spaces along the lines of those suggested in Bhabha's work. Research on the polysemic interpretations of texts, allows us to understand the significance of the youths' decisions to attempt to transcend the socialization which the vast majority of their fellow citizens succumb to. There has been growing momentum over the last two decades in cultural studies to consider the multiple meaning potential of texts. Instead of exploring meaning in a narrow sense, as situated solely within the text, academics have asserted that, "a text's meaning emerges through a contested process of interpretation and argument" (Jasinski, 2001, p. 439). Certainly much of the understanding realized through PIT came from hard fought debates which challenged either side's comfort zones related to their relationships with dominant narratives. These moments create more room for polysemic understandings and working towards transcending what remains of "spoken for" dominant perspectives.

According to Fiske (1987), polysemy refers to the "unresolved contradictions" (p. 392), the "gaps" (p.398), or the "fissures" (p. 402) that mark texts. While this perspective often applies to popular culture, it is clear that there are a considerable number of unresolved contradictions that find their way into both dominant Israeli and Palestinian media. All we have to do in the Palestinian case, is examine the comments made by Dilha during our interview, who insisted that the conflict frame supersedes any other television programming, such as more attention paid to social problems. This was also reflected in the fissures presented in the student film, "On the Line," where the opening sequence had a "representative" from each side deliberately echoing the language of blame used by the other's media. The film later revealed that there was a definite "gap" between such a frame and evidence that close friendships were possible between Israelis and Palestinians. In Fiske's view, "a text has a representational or mimetic

function, but because what is being represented (the society) is itself fractured and divided, the text will contain fractures and divisions” (Ibid, p. 392). The youth process of “entering the space,” and directly engaging with dominant representations opens up the realm of possibility for meaning to be manifold.

Recognition of polysemy has contributed strongly to the growth of “active audience theory” which postulates that meanings are engendered at the point in which “the reader and the text” meet, and that every meeting which follows “could potentially create a new meaning” (Philo, 2008, page 5). Within this, there is an opportunity with each news telecast, for example, for an audience member to gain a new understanding of what is being presented. Such a viewer is not passively absorbing the messages being presented, but rather incorporating fragments of the story with each viewing; reading them carefully and reaching an informed understanding culminating in a subjective worldview. Active audience theory and polysemy emerge out of Stuart Hall’s (1980) foundational “Encoding/Decoding” essay. In this research, Hall provided openings beyond his focus on the “spoken for” subject in his 1979 essay noted earlier. In “Encoding/Decoding” Hall established two positions which are of value here. The “negotiated” position has a combination of “adaptive and oppositional” elements. Viewers might be in accordance with the dominant perspective presented, but such a perspective is problematized by their personal values and general life orientation. Of equal if not greater importance here is Hall’s consideration of the “oppositional code.” The viewer in this sense has diametrically divergent perspective than that of the message presented. This perspective is a decoded one, often read with a consideration of the hegemonic intentions wielded by powerful forces which cater to selective interests. This of course means a viewer is essentially actively aware of the type of dynamics which Van Dijk and other relevant scholars explore.

It is instructive to consider these theories in the context of the PIT youth who are continually exposed as audience members to the dominant discourses which perpetuate violent relationships in their societies. The opportunities to learn how to think critically through the development of media literacy skills and their encounters with the other side afforded by PIT, have given them a highly evolved lens which enables them to constructively re-create meaning with every new encounter. Having experiences that tempered some of the charged emotions along their affective spectrums, provides them with a considerable advantage over their fellow citizens. Morley argues that “a range of

'experiences of life' can incline people to different readings. (1986 p.42-43). The PIT youth as audience members, as meaning makers and agents furthering the lessons they acquired through their experience at the camp, can draw on broader texts and more clearly understand context in their relationships with the conflict. This is no more evident than in the example of the work of two former Israeli participants, Naf and Koef, explored earlier. They actively assist younger Israelis whose views reflect stereotypical perspectives of Arabs presented in the media to understand how limited their perspectives are. They point to universal human values and illustrate how expressing prejudice is just as detrimental to those who voice such opinions as it is for those being targeted. Having experienced a facilitation process that triggered an internal "negotiation" with dominant views, it seems that one can later contest and often transcend them. This leads to the most valuable outcome of all, imparting the lessons learned to others who could benefit from the transformed perspective.

Polysemy, active audience theory and related research lend themselves well to the poststructuralist turn in cultural studies. Countering the foundational work of Althusser's early structuralist analysis, and even of Hall's (1979) appropriation of Althusserian ideas, was Derrida's poststructuralist perspective. Derrida repudiated what he viewed was a myopic adherence to an invariable belief in the binding polarities of structuralism. Within this, he asserted that there was a privileging of expression based on the illusionary notion that there is a clear route to, "truth and stable meaning;" that it is not possible for "truth or meaning" to exist "outside of representation" (Barker and Galasinski, 2001, p.9). It is important to mention that Derrida's work greatly informed the research of postcolonial scholars such as Homi Bhabba. This is not to dismiss the usefulness of structuralist analysis. It has given us many tools to analyze major societal tendencies that are in fact structured through language and interpellate individuals into relationships of power. But, in the same way that Hall moves away from the Althusserian language of interpellation, in favour of the more open language of texts "privileging" and "preferring" some meanings and interpretations, it is necessary in cultural analysis to acknowledge the potential openness of representation.

Derrida argued that, "the continual supplementarity of meaning, the continual substitution and adding of meanings through the play of signifiers, challenges the identity of noises and marks fixed with meaning" (Barker and Galasinski, 2001, p.10). It is useful to view this process in terms of the iterative nature of the encounter with the *other* in the

Israeli Palestinian context. Going back to my reference to Israeli and Palestinian textbooks, it is difficult to imagine many students straying from the diametrically opposed views presented. When one side's villain is another side's hero, the "interpellative power" of the text most likely leads to long term fixed perspectives for those exposed to such views in the vast majority of cases.

However, when we consider the unfolding relationships in the filmmaking processes of "Sweet Like Chocolate" and "(Mis)interpretation" we learn about the charged internal relationship between dominant, predominantly assimilated cultural texts and the youths' vulnerable affective spectrum. This revealed an attachment to those texts as difficult emotions were articulated through "spoken for" expressions wound up in dominant discourses. It seemed that while the youth wanted to make a quality film, they could only stray so far from the "affective call" of national identification. The film process later revealed that the "noises and marks fixed with meaning" could be challenged. The youth were able to "play with signifiers" to the extent that they were satisfied with the new meaning being relayed to the eventual audience. A fascinating dynamic unfolded as shifts in the dominant cultural narrative within the evolving film story took place simultaneously with manifesting positive developments in the youths' relationships. Dav and Dilha in the case of the first film, and Zaran and Vlad in the case of the latter, were all able to work through layers of cultural resistance and simply appreciate one another as co-workers.

The PIT peace camp revealed moments where the process of working through resistance was considerably less overt. There were repeated examples of youth who simply said that that eating in the same dining area, sleeping in the same room or going for a walk with their counterparts from the other side were the moments which were the most transformative. These spaces provided opportunities for conversation which centred on common interests based on age group rather than identity conflicts. As in the case with the filmmaking process above – though with less effort involved – the personal shift lent itself to shedding layers of collective conditioning and transforming perspectives of the other side. Up until this point, the evolving narrative in this section has considered the personal development that ensued through active engagement with the other side. We can now complement the theoretical analysis presented above with an exploration of relationality which draws on a rather different set of authors.

## ***The Relational Encounter: Buber, Levinas, Bakhtin and Schrag***

When we examine Martin Buber's work, we can understand his interchangeable application of the terms "dialogue" and "being." For Buber, dialogue consists in what he describes as the "narrow ridge." This entails a cognitive orientation where the thinking literally comes from your heart (Buber, 1958, p.4). The term 'narrow ridge' does not imply that the scope of dialogue is limited; rather the focus is expansive, attempting to draw the best out of humanity. In this sense the interpersonal engagement is based on our natural highest qualities, rooted in our conscience. Buber asserts that, "There is not I taken in itself, but only the I of the primary word I-Thou and the I of the primary word I-It" (Ibid).

There is a great depth in this statement. The I-Thou by its very nature is transformative. It is an expression that is voiced with one's entire essence. According to Buber's worldview this "beingness" is benevolent. The extension of the I-Thou is the I-It. This part of the theory must be viewed as an expansion of the former term because the quality of one's disposition comes from the same "heart based" place. One extends oneself further though as the "It" really is a consideration of the whole of a person. As the individual being spoken with becomes better acquainted with another through dialogue, the bond grows stronger; the depth of the other is experienced more clearly. So, one's addressing of an "It" beyond the "Thou" is a fuller sense of another individual, enabling more of his/her character and persona to come through.

Directly in line with the "whole beingness" rooted interaction which characterizes Buber's dialogism, Emmanuel Levinas emphasizes the humane-centered inflection of a given utterance. He asserts that, "...my *Saying* already testifies to the infinite, which reveals itself in giving me the breath for this very *Saying*." This *Saying* or expression is based on what he views as an intrinsic "testimony" which is from his perspective "preconscious." Levinas's approach demonstrates that the place of a person in this state is altruistic, or as he puts it "being-for-the other" (Levinas, 1972, p.97). Again we return to the affectivity of one's expression in dialogue with another. It is the word that is uttered from the lips of an individual in a given moment which is felt by the addressee. In the moment that the words are expressed, Levinas argues, the transformational potential can be realized. So language for him is less about relaying particular thoughts, but is grounded in the relationship that an expression affords.

According to Amit Pinchevsky, the Levinasian “Saying,” is “characterized by signification.” The “Saying,” “‘touches’ before it offers knowledge, it provokes before it makes sense, it makes contact before meaning...” (Pinchevsky, p.220, 2005). The meaning of the “Saying,” directed at another, registers in the consciousness of the recipient before he processes it cognitively. The substance of the message in this initial stage of absorption is less relevant than the recipient’s recognition of the addressor’s disposition and the “registration” of the intention of what is being conveyed. With this affectivity experienced, the depth of the substance relayed by the addressee can be absorbed with one’s “whole being,” to use Buber’s terminology.

Some ideas from Mikhail Bakhtin complement the above relational approaches. While much of Bakhtin’s research centred on the novel, he considered himself more of a philosopher than a literary scholar. He used literature to experiment with his, “ethical and philosophical interests” (Min, 2001, p.5). Michael Holquist, in his book, *Dialogism*, captures Bakhtin’s philosophy of dialogism stating “the very capacity to have consciousness is based on otherness.” The “otherness” represents a person one is relating to; the difference between one person and another is not divisive however. Consciousness is in fact expanded through relating to another individual. In this sense, Holquist advances the Bakhtinian argument by asserting that it could “never be stressed enough that for him ‘self’ is dialogic, a relation” (Holquist, 1990, p.18). Using Todorov’s description of Bakhtin’s analysis of Dostoevsky can further expand the essence of Bakhtinian dialogism. Todorov begins by expressing that “Bakhtin’s reflection of the novel turns into an anthropology.” He argues that:

It is the human being itself that is irreducibly heterogeneous; it is human ‘being’ that exists only in dialogue: within being one finds the other.  
...foremost, there is always becoming in completion (Todorov, 1984, p. x).

Todorov’s support of Bakhtin’s work is captured within the lens of a study of humankind. The diversity of an individual is experienced in dialogic interactions. This diversity is naturally part of one’s “beingness.” Being in this sense is lived through dialogue. This can be viewed perhaps as one “is” the dialogue with the other. The “is” or “beingness” is not separate from the dialogic interaction. Each interaction informs the next one as every person we are speaking with leads us forward on our personal



journey. Nowhere was this transformed relationality more pronounced than the relationship between Rin and Jadhi at the PIT camp.

We are continually evolving, or as Todorov puts it, “becoming” in dialogue. I argue that this is what we see with the PIT youth. The encounter with the other side leads to the integration of new formally oppositional threads of narrative which become a part of the self. The “becoming” relationship with these threads continues to evolve but always remain one with lived experience. While considerable personal shifts can be realized through the beingness experienced in the encounter, the transition is usually accompanied with older voices that linger internally. As evident in the PIT youth interviews, at times the youth can speak from that place within themselves which has shifted through the relational encounter, which transcends dominant cultural discourses. At other moments -often depending on how a particular collective issue intersects with personal experience – they “speak” from a more conventional perspective which remains fixed for the vast majority of people on their side.

While first introduced by Bakhtin in his book, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929/1973), the concept of polyphony can also be applied to everyday life. Cultural psychologist, Hubert J.M. Hermans, borrows from Bakhtin and argues that the self is a “dynamic multiplicity of different I- positions” (1992) and that, “each I-position has its own story to tell, each one functioning as interacting characters in a story, establishing specific relationships” (Hermans 2004, p. 297). While Herman speaks of subjective “positioning and re-positioning of the self” depending on the circumstances, as alluded to earlier I would argue that each “I-position” is less premeditated. Once again, one’s affective spectrum is most relevant here. The analytical research variables used to assess the PIT youth interviews are good examples of how we can understand the more involuntary, less orchestrated relationship with one’s internal voices. For the PIT youth, it was important to ask how the political climate and intersecting personal and community dynamics influenced their perspective of the conflict and the other side. One very difficult event such as the Gaza War of late 2008, for example, temporarily led to the emergence of more dominant collective voices amongst many of the PIT youth.

Affectively charged collective messages which proliferated throughout the youths’ communities tended to trigger voices internally which echoed from earlier periods of their life, years before the peace camp. It seemed that in some in cases, such “I-positions” led

to a distancing from their counterparts from the other side for a period of time. While many youth would feel the collective pain of the political climate, my interviews revealed that they would often still speak affectionately about their friends on the other side within a short period of time. Relationships that were temporarily compromised were soon re-established. In other words, it did not take long to let go of the circulating internal collective voice and reintroduce the voice which called upon the transformed relational experience. This point can be enhanced by drawing on Bahktinian scholars Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) perspective of all of the influences which may inform the relational moment. They argue that such a moment "is situated among personal emotion, pain, and knowledge bases, as well as cultural rhetoric...and moral symbols" (182). This is clearly in line with what I would argue are the key components of the affective spectrum alluded to above.

As an extension of relationality all of this alerts us to the potential of language as a creative tool. Calvin Schrag (1986) looks at the quality of language in terms of communicative praxis involving texts which are in print but also verbalized and formulated into action by groups of individuals. For him the action of the "living text" is poetic, with expansive possibilities. He uses the metaphor of texture as a means to convey the sensory nature of the developing text. Texture therefore can be felt through human activities, goals and choices. Textured relationality was certainly present in the PIT filmmaking processes, highlighted by the sensory theme underlying the film *Sweet Like Chocolate*. We learned that capturing peace in the abstract in terms of taste allowed for both a diffusion in entering more habitual conflict discourses and an opportunity to blend a textured vocabulary that drew on hope and imagination. At the centre of Schrag's conceptualization of texture is embodiment and its inherent fluidity, where interaction propels dynamics forward through "praxial intentionality." This is clearly beyond constrained inherited meaning within rigid dominant conflict discourses. For Schrag, unlike those fixed discourses, bodily presence "does not congeal as a sign" but rather, "announces its presence in person" (Schrag, 153, 154). All that is embodied within the expression in a given interaction has the potential to grow exponentially. In a similar tone to Donald Braid's writing, Schrag asserts that there is a diverse quality to embodiment which involves "the deployment of gestural meaning and articulation" involving, "nonverbal behaviour in gestures, facial expressions, and body language"

(Schrag, 34). With all of this we can clearly understand the depth of what unfolds in the moment of an encounter and what resonates for those present long after it has ended.

It is clear that whether we recognize purely relational qualities such as Buber's concept of "beingness," Levinas's concept of "Saying," or Schrag's concept of "texture;" or whether we can identify more multilayered, polyphonic tendencies, the various threads stimulated internally through the encounter can potentially be expressed to others and continually re-shaped. It is valuable to return to the Bakhtinian notion alluded to earlier and understand what takes place in shared expression. He argued that language, "lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is always half someone else's" (Holquist, 1981, p. 293). Similarly, Hans Georg Gadamer's perspective emphasizes language as an ongoing practice in order to understand the concepts being produced or emerging through it. He argues that within this production "not occasionally only, but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 64). For our purposes, the text began in the affective PIT youth interaction. Moments of dialogue, filmmaking or simply being in the presence of the other helped re-write a number of formerly fixed texts. In many cases this assisted the youth to re-write the collective story within their communities and to "transfer their experience." New authors were then able to have an opportunity to re-shape earlier versions of their experience that no longer echoed dominant texts.

## **Chapter 6.**

### **Peace It Together and the Promise of Conflict Resolution**

This chapter seeks to evaluate the work of PIT against the background of some other existing practical initiatives designed to resolve conflict. I begin by examining related research loosely considered under the rubric of “coexistence.” This extends to a review of what can “go wrong” in conflict resolution when groups involved are not provided with the tools to transcend polarizing cultural dynamics or given the foundational work which outlines effective processes to assist with altering these relationships. At the centre of these processes is an emphasis on neutral settings where commonalities between groups are more easily highlighted. The chapter then explores the work of organizations based in Israel and elsewhere that use a variety of related bridgebuilding methods to work toward greater understanding between communities of Israeli and Palestinian moderates. This is then countered with an examination of conventional conflict resolution methods that often serve to exacerbate rather than alleviate conflict dynamics.

#### **Co-Existence as a Strategy of Conflict Resolution**

Eugene Weiner’s (1998) research on co-existence is based on the indisputable reality of dissimilarities between groups existing at individual, collective and international levels. While this could be considered a truism, it helps to contextualize the meaning of Weiner’s conception of co-existence. Weiner argues that co-existence involves existing, “together, in conjunction with, at the same time, in the same place with another” (Ibid, p. 16). Co-existence is not viewed as a solution to age-old animosities or societal inequalities; it does, however, make a case for the value of placing two groups with a history of tension, together in the same place, at the same time. This is meant to occur

in neutral settings, in locations where conflict is unfolding. These may include troubled communities, educational settings or religious institutions, to name a few examples.

Those who espouse co-existence, along the lines noted above, place great value on the idea that tensions between groups can be offset to some extent simply by bringing parties to the conflict together into a common situation. At the core of this approach is the fact that parties to a conflict tend to be haunted by the tremendous psychological weight of the fear of a return to violence. This approach is built on a stance which accepts the absence of a return to violent engagement as an adequate goal, should the other factors not be realized (Weiner 1998). Still, while there is certainly a modest, pragmatic, dimension to this goal, one wonders if it is ambitious enough. How does such a position hope to contribute to alleviating root causes of conflict by severely limiting its scope in this way? Does this complacency not have the potential to reignite tension between groups? There is no better example of this than the often poorly facilitated dialogue between groups of young Israeli-Jews and Israeli-Palestinians that take place in Israel.

Ifat Maoz (2004) and her colleagues have undertaken some telling research on one of these organized Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli youth dialogues. For Maoz and her colleagues:

The question is – to what extent does the communication in relationship-building dialogues between groups in conflict, actually match the ideal of a ‘respectful two-way’ dialogue, and to what extent does it reflect the existing external political situation of competitive, a-symmetrical relations between the groups? (p. 1077)

Such dialogues are continuously negotiated within and between each group, often leading the conversation from moment to moment in both conflicting and cordial relational directions. Of course, cordiality is not necessarily more fruitful than conflict in getting to the root of group tensions. On the contrary, sometimes cordiality might mask feelings that are not otherwise brought to the surface. By contrast a certain degree of managed conflict between groups might very well be a productive tension which leads the groups toward greater understanding. In some cases, however, aggressive participants can nonetheless direct the discussion to reflect prevailing collective relationships of dominance.

Maoz's work centres directly on this issue. For example, she explored the fact that a few less vocal Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian-Israelis wanted to discuss some of the key issues related to collective identity touched upon by national leaders on either side in the early 2000s. One of the more assertive participants, Uri, insisted that while each group had grievances, these should not be the focal point of the discussion. He argued that both groups should simply relate to one another as "people" respecting their common humanity. Uri dismissed a suggestion made by several of the other participants present that there is value in discussing some outstanding identity-centred issues. Uri believed that the leaders' discussions had been unproductive and any conversation building on these discussions would have little purpose.

By ignoring issues of identity, which other participants were clearly concerned about, an opportunity for establishing further understanding and respect was squandered. The push for a so called "humanity-centred" dialogue was paradoxical, as it silenced those voices that seemed to genuinely be interested in working through key issues in order to further engage the opposing side. Uri pushed differing opinions aside for most of the dialogue and thereby successfully imposed his own perspective on the group. Maoz and her colleagues argued that:

Uri is literally preserving the Jewish-Palestinian dynamics in the general society. Being at the top of the power hierarchy as a Jewish male, he is speaking as someone whose opinion is important and must be accepted (Maoz, 2004, p. 1084).

What was especially evident here was the lack of a competent facilitation team to adequately anticipate and deal with someone like Uri. His behaviour could have been skillfully addressed, while adequate space could have been provided for participants who wanted to voice their constructive opinions. Participants wanted to directly engage with key components of the conflict and one might speculate that if both groups had a chance to voice their opinions, this might have contributed to unpacking some of the baggage carried by participants.

John Paul Lederach, Professor of International Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame, writes:

People need opportunity and space to express with one another the trauma of loss and their grief at that loss, and the anger that accompanies the pain and the memory of injustices experienced (Lederach, 1997, p. 26).

If we place this statement in the broader context of the factors that shape behaviour in conflict situations, we can begin to understand the significance of Uri effectively stifling his contemporaries. Whether or not any of the young dialogue participants directly experienced any form of loss, the fact that they have a relationship –even a secondary or vicarious one – with dominant Israeli or Palestinian constructions of identity, collective memory, trauma and/or narratives is significant. The PIT youth for example were able to experience “productive tension” during their dialogue sessions to directly test one another on contentious aspects of the conflict. While the emotions were charged during those instances, the opportunity to voice personal opinions, which were often directly interwoven with collective angst, enabled an important shift to take place. Affectively challenging the other side deepened a level of trust that had been built over several days. This trust encompassed personal transitions that dissolved the “fixicity” of dominant narratives. All of this took place well before the youth engaged even more deeply through the creative processes of filmmaking. If we contrast this with the participants in Maoz’s study, we can imagine them leaving the dialogue space feeling even more disillusioned and further vulnerable to future encounters where dominant voices in the conflict prevail.

As noted earlier, “co-existence theory” is not part of a cohesive body of research, but is informed by overlapping perspectives offered by a number of noted conflict resolution scholars. For example, Michelle LeBaron (2003) and Lisa Schirch’s (2005) visions of healing conflict are developed through a community paradigm. They apply their research broadly to groups from international conflict zones that often have a long history of discord. Both LeBaron and Schirch highlight settings where people are willing to work toward transcending the history of conflict that has damaged their communities. They emphasize what can be transformed through exercises which go beyond traditional conceptions of dialogue. The settings are much less formal than conventional conflict resolution sessions between country leaders that take place in boardrooms, or even formally arranged dialogue sessions between opposing parties to a conflict. Advocates of co-existence related activities emphasize processes that help participants transform

their assumptions about the other group by drawing parallels between seemingly diverging worldviews (LeBaron 2002). Such processes are brought out in the open and addressed directly.

Complementing Cynthia Cohen's exploration of creativity noted earlier, co-existence-related activities emphasize metaphors that both parties use in association with the conflict. These metaphors are important because they convey exactly what someone is feeling and thinking about the other group and the history of the conflict as a whole. Each expression used by individuals is an indication of where they lie on the affective spectrum and how this reflects their relationship with the factors informing identification in conflict zones. LeBaron asserts that a co-existence session which works through the metaphors used by each group, leads to greater understanding about *the other*. This complements Cohen's exploration of how creativity draws to the surface a deeper awareness of the symbolic structures through which meaning is composed. The former argues that metaphors, "make explicit what otherwise are hidden: assumptions, perceptions, judgments, and worldviews" (LeBaron, 2002, p.184). This is part of an evolving narrative between participants that creates a sense of community among them. It enables the emotional barriers between groups to be lessened considerably. This process is "relational" insofar as it strives to build connections between people which were previously unimagined, where a new context continually "re-forms" perception. Along with a context that has never been experienced before, conciliatory language used by people often associated with a more threatening discourse is evident. LeBaron notes how, in co-existence related sessions, the context helps to shift hardened perceptions of the other group, while the nature of the language used rewrites old entrenched narratives.

Lisa Schirch's perception of conflict resolution is very similar to LeBaron's. While LeBaron stresses a need to examine the metaphors used related to a group's experience with conflict, Schirch analyzes the context of what needs to be worked through in co-existence practices in respect to each party's dissimilar "cognitive worldviews and cultural identities" (Schirch, 2005, p.147). She considers these components within the frame of each group's symbolic perceptions of the conflict. The symbolism within a given culture's worldview, or its sense of collective identity, can exacerbate conflict when such a "story" provides little room to accept another perspective or when little effort is made to understand another culture. As explored



earlier, symbolism can be drawn on by divisive leaders and ignite further tensions between cultures.

Schirch's approach to the use of symbolism focuses on alleviating the tension by altering the context of a conflict. She has also written about communities with a history of conflict being brought together in informal settings, such as dinners. Because such a common ritual practice and setting is universal, open dialogue often ensues allowing people to freely discuss their views. With the aid of facilitators, there is ample opportunity to create new overlapping cultural symbols and transform old identifications (Schirch, 2005). Schirch insists that what often unfolds amongst participants is the realization that although the narrative can shift and new perspectives may be realized, their discussions surprisingly reveal existing common cultural practices/symbols. Schirch draws on the work of Victor Turner to capture what can take place between people when ritual is used to transform conflict. As noted earlier, Turner classifies ritual contexts as "liminal spaces." Schirch adds that, "ritual spaces are in-between, set aside contexts where the rules for acting & interpreting meaning are different from the rest of life." (Schirch, 2005, p.154). These processes are part of the creation of a new community of likeminded moderates who want to reach out to one another.

Lederach develops the philosophy of *conflict transformation* which is very similar to LeBaron and Schirch's approach to co-existence. His work emphasizes the possibility of transcending existing conflict dynamics without disregarding the difficult realities which may emerge. He firmly believes in the human potential for change and the possibility that we can draw on our limitless capacity for creativity to engender something unprecedented. In his book, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, Lederach asserts that, "the moral imagination" is the "capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist" (Lederach, 2005, p. 29) His work explores, then goes beyond, dominant socialization processes. While such socialization stems from the power dynamics which proliferate throughout a country's institutions, and how such forces, by extension, tend to mould people's worldview, this does not capture the entire picture of reality. Lederach recognizes these factors, but sees an opportunity for transformation. This is very important if we are going to consider ways to transcend the factors which tend to structure dominant identity relationships in conflict zones. Whereas societal codes may be entrenched and hegemonic to a certain extent, Lederach finds the space for reality to

be more open. He does this through his own unique perspective of the term metaphor. He views the use of a metaphor as:

a creative act. The spontaneous way it is formulated brings something new into the world. This something new interacts with the world and has a life. Metaphors...take on life of their own and speak to the conflict, to the problems, and to the ways forward. They usually lead me toward an aesthetic appreciation of the context, the process and the challenges of change (Lederach, 2005, p.73).

At the center of co-existence approaches is the opportunity to shift metaphors, to create something new in a unique dynamic of interpersonal and cross-community exchange. Martha Minow (2003) complements LeBaron, Schirch and Lederach's perspectives by indicating that initiating group "encounters" gives people an uplifting experience which allows for the transcendence of stereotypic thinking and develops bonds of, "equality and mutual acceptance" (p. 217). Minow has explored related work in Rwanda, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, which points to the fact that such processes can work internationally. Contrasting with Weiner and Slifka's theoretical exploration, and Maoz's example, are there other forms of dialogue, types of settings or specific facilitation approaches which might alleviate dominant cultural tendencies? In other words, can we find practical examples which touch upon what LeBaron, Schirch and Lederach allude to, in line with the approach used by PIT? For my purposes I will refer to organizations involved in such activities as carrying out "bridgebuilding."

## **Bridgebuilding Organizations: A Community of Moderates**

Seeds of Peace (SOP) is one of the original programs in North America seeking to ameliorate relationships between Israeli and Palestinian Youth. Based in Maine, the organization paralleled the Oslo Peace Accord. In the summer of 1993, the organization gathered a total of 46 Israeli, Palestinian and Egyptian teenagers together for three weeks. While the Israeli and Palestinian communities continued to participate in the camp, SOP has expanded its programming to include sessions with youth from other conflict zones, such as the Balkans and South Asia ("Seeds of Peace, Programs," n.d.). In a similar way to PIT, SOP attempts to assist the youth to discover their ignorance about the true identities of their counterparts from the other side and by extension what is missing in terms of their own self-perception.

This process involves efforts to eliminate stereotypes and lingering animosities which exist among participants. Like PIT, SOP firmly believes that living with youth from the other side in itself can facilitate a changed perspective for those present. The living presence of the other allows for deep issues endemic to the conflict to surface. The youth realize that suffering is prevalent on both sides and burdens all communities affected by the conflict. The recognition of pain seems to call attention to the way participants have been socialized. Just as in the PIT dialogue processes, where there was a realization that identity could be “toyed with,” the SOP youth begin to understand that the perspectives which they were originally expressing were in fact those voiced by “teachers or families or governments, and that those opinions now seem badly flawed” (Wallach, 2000, p xi.) The program emphasizes the youths’ ability to make decisions autonomously and thereby provides them with the freedom to choose how they would like to replace the misrepresentation which they have been fed over the years.

The SOP program has a strong physical component which includes daily sports activities such as swimming and soccer, as well as a ropes course which emphasizes teambuilding. Nonetheless, one hour and forty-five minutes are set aside daily for dialogue sessions (Beinart, 2005, p. 242). The main difference between SOP and PIT is the latter’s emphasis on creativity through filmmaking. Meena, one of the filmmaking mentors at PIT, emphasized how important it is to consider the extent to which dialogue can shift individual and group perspectives. While the SOP dialogue activities bring a lot to the surface, do they really provide a deeper level of reconciliation than PIT film group processes? Is there not a danger of replicating some of the tendencies captured by Maoz? The difference between Maoz’s example and SOP is that there is a level of engagement beyond dialogue in the case of the latter. Maine’s natural setting allows for SOP to provide participants with a break from the charged atmosphere back home. Moreover, when combining the acquisition of leadership skills with discussion of key components of the conflict, there is some momentum forward. I was struck by how many PIT participants had attended SOP or other more dialogue centred programs. It seems clear that such programs can be part of one’s personal trajectory toward growth and can complement arts-based programs.

In addition to the elementary school in the mixed village of Neve Shalom/ Wahat al-Salam noted earlier in reference to Grace Feursverger’s book, *Oasis of Peace*, there is another program that is important to mention in the context of co-existence-related

activities. The village's "School for Peace" provides educational intergroup contact programs which focus on acceptance of the other side through a thorough exploration of broader encounters between Arabs and Jews in the region. Overall, the school seeks to create more equitable and respectful relationships between the two parties to the conflict (Feursverger, 2001, p.88). Lying somewhere between Weiner's definition of co-existence, and the productive tension of "entering the space" described by PIT facilitator Leo Aarons in reference to the youths' testing of one another - which took place once a level of trust was realized at the peace camp - we find an overlapping dynamic at the School for Peace. During one session, Jewish-Israeli facilitator Tirzah, and Palestinian-Israeli facilitator Ahmed, emphasized that friendship was not the key focus of the encounter. The space was designed rather for bringing views to the surface, venting frustrations or allowing for an exploration of areas that needed to be examined more closely. The facilitators strongly emphasized the need for each participant to voice exactly what they were feeling in relationship to the conflict. Contrary to the encounter described by Maoz, the facilitators created ample opportunity for difficult emotions to be honoured and voiced. The benefits are evident through Feursverger's description of the receptiveness of one Jewish-Israeli male, Emmanuel, to this approach. She indicated that, Emmanuel, told her:

I don't know how Ahmed (Palestinian-Israeli facilitator) did it, but when he said that I had a right to my feelings, my belligerent attitude started to change. He made me feel like he was really willing to listen to me. So I became ready to talk (Feursverger, p. 153, 2001).

Other participants echoed Emmanuel's enthusiasm. As there was a thawing in older, more dominant perspectives, the facilitators were successfully able to reach participants, enabling them to understand the extent of the other side's suffering.

The Peace Research Institute of the Middle East (PRIME) has also singled out the educational process as instrumental in changing attitudes amongst Israelis and Palestinians. PRIME is a non-governmental organization based in Beit Jalah, West Bank, whose mission is to seek joint recognition and peacebuilding through cross-cultural research projects and community outreach. Their "Shared History" or "Dual Narrative" project is the organization's cornerstone initiative. It centres on instructors and educational institutions as catalysts in shifting the dominant perspectives of each party to the conflict. The objective of the project is to help reverse the polarized content

of mainstream education in Israeli and Palestinian institutions which often serves to foment animosity and misunderstanding and therefore contributes to perpetuating the tension in the region (“Learning Each Other's Historical Narrative in Israeli and Palestinian Schools,” n.d.).

As noted earlier, in Chapter 2, when focusing on dominant Israeli and Palestinian narratives, classroom textbooks often adopt a narrative highlighting the heroic endeavors of one side with the juxtaposition of *the other* in vilified terms (Bar On, 2000). Beginning in 2002, groups of Israeli and Palestinian instructors and historians developed a broad corresponding narrative encompassing both communities’ histories. One year later, Hebrew and Arabic versions of this new complementary story began to be tested in Israeli and Palestinian educational settings. The merits of the project are not only limited to a revised curriculum that youth from both sides can engage with. Teachers within each community have also been encouraged to work together to discuss the updated material and consider mutually beneficial ways to relay it in the classroom. The initiative is intended to capture the other side’s perspective of an equal series of historical occurrences rather than create a cohesive, unified narrative.

Of course, the political environment has not been conducive to the creation of this cohesive, unified, narrative. Still, beginning for youth in their mid-teens, the “dual narrative” project has presented an opportunity for young people to go beyond their own side’s historical frame. They have an unprecedented chance to learn the root causes of the conflict through the lens of people, who are often held to enemy status. In this sense students can assimilate the antecedents which form the “opposing side’s” perception of truth as it relates to the latter’s understanding of all that unfolded historically. Between 2002 and 2007 the project was provided with a two million dollar budget funded through the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Palestinian National Authority. The short-term success of the project is evident in the consistent involvement of teachers throughout this five-year period. There has also been widespread agreement in terms of the last iteration of the dual narrative text which has been published in Hebrew, Arabic and English. Most importantly, there has been evidence of more accommodating perspectives among students who have been exposed to the new texts as opposed to their counterparts using the older ones, containing more polarized views (“Learning Each Other's Historical Narrative in Israeli and Palestinian Schools,” n.d.).

While many on both sides remain constrained by dominant narratives, the “dual narrative” project provides a space of liminality or “in-betweenness” - to borrow from Turner and Bhabha respectively – which creates an opportunity for humanization. Monolithic constructions of victimizer-victimized or finite perceptions of entitlement to land begin to be revisited and re-shaped in the individual perception of the national imagination. Ilan Pappé contextualizes the project within the context of a “fluidity of structures that compose the communities of individuals” whereby, “the colonizer was not always powerful nor was the colonized always powerless, just as the occupier was not always in control, nor the occupied a pawn” (Pappé, 2006, p. 200). This is a direct indication of genuine attempts being made to challenge victim-perpetrator roles.

### ***Responding to Trauma***

There is some evidence to suggest that groups whose members have experienced the most painful or violent interactions stemming out of the conflict also have some of the deepest potential for reconciliation. In this regard, The Parents Circle: Bereaved Family Forum, focuses its efforts on Israeli and Palestinian families who have directly experienced deep trauma and tragedy. The Parents Circle has offices in both Palestine and Israel and its mandate is to bring families together from both sides that have lost their kin as a direct result of the conflict. It is almost unheard of for an organization to bring immediate family members of lost relatives together while a conflict is ongoing. Several hundred families have participated in the forum since it began in 1995. The Parents Circle offers face-to face reconciliation programs involving dialogue workshops for youth and adults as well as leadership colloquia for youth. The organization is committed to prevent further bereavement while hostilities remain. It attempts to pressure the population at large and public figures by relaying its message on a broader scale. It is also committed to assist members to mutually support one another on an ongoing basis. In an environment where media tend to perpetuate the conflict narrative, the Parents Circle’s efforts to spread their message of healing has proven challenging (“The Parents Circle, About,” n.d.).

Another organization, Just Vision, has the goal of redressing the vacuum of media coverage of everyday Israelis and Palestinians by focusing their efforts on ending the occupation and the conflict as a whole. It has used mainstream and non-conventional media to highlight Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilding activities. For

example, the organization produced the award winning documentaries “Encounter Point” and “Budrus” which focus on efforts to create change in the region. The organization also provides separate accompanying interactive educational guides on its website for high school and college educators to help broach the difficult issues presented in the films. Just Vision’s website also provides web links to various historical and contemporary positions on the conflict. In addition, Just Vision has carried out extensive interviews with participants so that audiences around the globe can gain a deeper awareness of and support their endeavors (“Just Vision,” n.d.). As Just Vision Director Ronit Avni explains, the organization wanted to discover:

Who are these peacebuilders? What are they doing? Why? At what cost? What lessons have they learned along the way that could prove beneficial to others seeking to follow their lead? How is it that many survived losing their children, their homes, their liberty, and their sense of security and now pursue a non-vengeful path? (Avni, 2007, p.169)

This process draws attention to a diversity of voices that do not reflect the dominant conflict binary in Israel and Palestine. This is an attempt to point out that there are people who have alternative stories and who want to seek a new path out of the conflict. The research outlined in earlier chapters demonstrates that PIT also attempts to provide alternative narratives, in a similar way, and speaks to the multilayered nature of the conflict. It is also important to point out that Just Vision’s efforts may help the sustainability and momentum of moderate organizations seeking to continue bridgebuilding activities. PIT dialogue facilitator, Leo Aarons, noted in an interview that people in such organizations could not continue their activities indefinitely without a network<sup>5</sup>. Perhaps the personal shifts beyond polarized identification taking place within moderate groups, and the continued commitment of organizations like Just Vision, will be enough to ensure that these organizations continue their efforts.

Combatants for Peace (CFP) is another progressive organization worth noting. CFP has gathered former Israeli soldiers and former Palestinian fighters together since 2005 to discuss the militant activities with which they have been involved, and the

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Leo Aarons, PIT peace camp, August 2008.

personal shift which brought them to a point where they realized the futility of aggression. The organization has regular meetings so that participants can understand the transformed narrative of their counterparts from the other side. Efforts are made to hold ongoing educational sessions in universities and among youth groups to relay their message. Speaking engagements are delivered jointly by Israeli and Palestinian representatives who focus on the alteration from aggression to the awareness that there is path forward beyond violence. The organization also attempts to reach the public through bi-national teams determined to relay their non-conventional message. The hope is that because so many Israelis and Palestinians have had similar experiences with traumatizing violent conflict, they will be able to relate to the difficult stories which the “Combatants” tell about their experiences. These stories are written in depth on the CFP website, so those who may have some initial exposure, can gain a more extensive picture if they so choose. Just as the Parents Circle, CFP provide everyday Israelis and Palestinians with an opportunity to directly engage with dominant cultural narratives. Most importantly, this enables both groups to realize firsthand perspectives of why these narratives are problematic and how they can detrimentally impact people’s lives (“Combatants for Peace,” n.d.).

### ***Healing the Wounds of History***

The affectively charged emotions which shape identity assessed in chapter one directly intersect with the vulnerable circumstances involving the above-noted groups willing to sit down with “the enemy.” The significance of people opening up to the other when considering the weight of the conflict cannot be understated. They must grapple with their past relationships with fear, shame, honour and revenge (related to questions of identity, explored in depth in chapter 1) in the context of how these emotions have circulated throughout “their affective spectrums.” They also know that reconfiguring their relationships with the other, has a direct painful impact on their associations with their own communities. In most instances, moderates who reach out to the other side are subject to derision. I noted earlier, for example, how this occurred with some PIT youth who faced resistance from their communities (see Chapter 4 and the results from my interviews with Neeha and Jadhi). Still, a number of scholars and conflict resolution advocates have created processes that include unconventional approaches to dealing with the charged emotions noted above (Volkan 1988). These emotional components intersect with the potential to shift beyond the constraining cultural factors of



identification outlined above. Without using my terminology, some scholars have explored related processes in depth (Coy and Woehrle 2000).

One of the most profoundly transformative processes which seeks to address the root causes of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is the “Healing the Wounds of History” project developed by psychologist and drama therapist Armand Volkas’. Volkas’ work attempts to shift “victim-perpetrator” dynamics through a multi-stage exercise which focuses on both parties to a conflict acknowledging the emotions which stem from it. Of equal importance is the attempt to instil a genuine sense of compassion for the other side. Volkas, the son of Holocaust survivors, has brought together other survivor’s children and the children of Nazi officers. Gathering people from other groups with a history of conflict later followed this.

Volkas has insisted that in order to begin the healing process, it is essential to recognize and “own” the “potential perpetrator in all of us” (Volkas 2008). Together with Palestinian drama therapist and colleague Amal Kouttab, Volkas began holding “Healing the Wounds of History” workshops between Israelis and Palestinians. Formally sitting down with “the enemy” is viewed as the initiating portion of the project. This is followed by what can be referred to as the humanization process through storytelling. This phase is unique because it places the historical trauma experienced as one which is part of a shared legacy. Members of each group not only recount personal stories that speak to this legacy, but are asked to dramatically re-create their experiences. What makes this process especially powerful is the fact that it is often someone on “the opposite side” who is given the task of replaying a given narrative. While preconceived notions of the other begin to dissolve, a sense of compassion ensues. These developments allow for an opportunity to move into the most difficult part of the exercise. There is an attempt to dislodge the “insecure attachment” – using Iris Singer’s term - to the perpetrator-victim binary (Volkas, 2008). Finally, Volkas’ aforementioned foundational concept of recognizing “the perpetrator within” is then delicately introduced.

This is broadly contextualized in terms of the guidance participants are given to acknowledge that humans have the potential to act mercilessly under conditions of inconceivable strife. Entering into a collective grieving process follows this challenging portion. This stage is of paramount importance as it allows both groups to feel the intensity of emotions that rise to the surface for them relating to the conflict in a way that

transcends dominant collective narratives and “one-sided woundedness.” Volkas describes the grieving time together as one which “can have a profound cathartic effect.” The significance of this transformational experience is immense as he argues, “until that pain is grieved fully, the traumatic legacy will continue to be passed on to the next generation” (Volkas 2008). The importance of this statement places Volkas’ work at the forefront of studies focusing on the alleviation of root causes of entrenched conflicts.

Overall it is clear that there are many examples of approaches to bridgebuilding which contribute to transcending the affective weight of the constellation of factors that impede identity development beyond rigid polarities. This is supported by Gavriel Salomon’s commentary on Yifat Biton’s (2002) study of bridgebuilding work on peace education. Both scholars have a considerable amount of expertise in these fields. Solomon asserts that, “participation in a year-long peace education program served, among other things, as a barrier against the deterioration of perceptions of the other side, which afflicted nonparticipants” (Salomon, 2006, p.4). While this statement was based on a brief evaluation of educational settings similar to those involving PRIME’s “dual narrative” project, it is directly applicable to the other examples presented above. Each project is based on reaching out to the other side and dissolving the inherited conditioning groups have been exposed to throughout their lives.

It is beneficial to place the efforts made by groups involved in bridgebuilding in a wider context. Several studies have touched upon the importance of such work in terms of its potential long-term impact (Baskin 2001, Baskin and Al Qaq, 2004). The emphasis on potential is key as in many cases this is only speculative. These studies do however provide key variables to examine when considering bridgebuilding work. The focus seems to be on “building” the momentum for similar projects to gain awareness of each other’s efforts and clarifying ways to work together. The latter point emphasizes drawing attention to those groups who are involved in overlapping work. It also delves into identifying related interests between these groups and finding ways that they could support each other. Attempts to determine the success amongst such organizations echoes Salomon’s efforts to determine the benefits of bridgebuilding work. These also are very similar to the methodology I borrowed for my PIT youth interviews from Seeking Common Ground (Breeze and Feldman, 2008).

Baskin and Al Qaq (2004, p. 546) attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of bridgebuilding programs through such questions as “are participants more aware of the problems and fears of the other side?” and “are participants willing to speak out for peace and coexistence in their societies?” I attempted to explore similar questions in my case study of PIT. It should be noted, however, that it takes a determined researcher to effectively gauge the benefit of peace work beyond simply outlining generalities. Such an effort does justice to the important foundation Salomon and Baskin, and Breeze and Feldman, (authors of the Seeking Common Ground study), have established to pursue such work. Their research lends itself to a consideration of a number of other salient points.

For example, Baskin’s emphasis on overlapping interests and commonalities between groups involved in conflict resolution is a clear indication that no project can really function sustainably on its own. As noted earlier in reference to PIT dialogue facilitator Aaron’s commentary, what is required is a strong network to reinforce all of the efforts being made in bridgebuilding programs. Another point, which is very difficult to adequately gauge, is the relationship between groups involved in bridgebuilding and conventional peacemakers. How does working toward peace “from the bottom up” through NGOs compare with the top down efforts initiated by politicians? I would argue that the benefits of community endeavours through committed NGOs like PIT are evident in contrast to the limitations of more conventional approaches to conflict resolution.

## **Conventional Approaches to Conflict Resolution Thought and Practice**

It is important to consider conflict resolution thought and practice in the context of its contribution to assist communities to move beyond constrained cultural identifications. We know that PIT and other bridgebuilding organizations are committed to working toward transforming at least some of the lingering damage amongst participants shaped by aspects of individual and collective trauma, dominant cultural narratives, and collective memories. Such organizations have little interest in managing conflict as an end goal, but rather making a contribution to addressing its root causes. Still, how does

this kind of approach compare and contrast to more conventional approaches to resolving conflict?

The best-known literature on conflict resolution encompasses the core areas of negotiation and mediation, each of which includes a variety of analytical approaches that both overlap and diverge academically and practically. Two factors make a review and analysis of this material extremely challenging. First, because these core subfields in the conflict resolution literature have overlapping and diverging components, it is necessary to be very selective and attempt to highlight the most relevant threads that exist between the two. Otherwise there would be a danger of embarking on an exercise in ambiguity in an attempt to articulate the most pertinent theoretical issues within and between these areas. Second, there is a theoretical vacuum within the negotiation and mediation sub-disciplines because they are rarely approached with the academic rigor one might associate with the social sciences or humanities. Mediators, practitioners in the field, and scholars from various academic specializations, which often do not intersect, have all made contributions over the years without the development of a cohesive canon. These fields have evolved somewhat differently in North American and international contexts, further adding to their complexity. Also, various authors can apply the same terms differently, adding confusion to any examination of these fields. According to William Zartman (2007), there is also little hope that any of this will change in the future. He asserts that, “the diverse sources of conflict resolution ideas make universal agreement on conflict resolution precepts and techniques unlikely” (Zartman, 2007).

It is important to note that much of conflict resolution thought developed in the bipolar Cold War world. This fact is significant, because as I will demonstrate, the various theories found in my analysis are directly reflective of what emerged from that period. In other words, conflict resolution theory and application were anchored in an idiom of divisiveness. While an emphasis on division prevailed over cooperation, strategic moves orchestrated to gain power over another party were stressed above finding ways to reach mutually beneficial outcomes (Kriesberg, 2007). Furthermore, over the last twenty years, negotiation and meditation have been examined in North America very prescriptively (Druckman, 2007 Raiffa, 2002).

## ***Negotiation***

Negotiation texts often appear as inflated practice manuals which include some analysis. The goal is to make recommendations to two parties in conflict in order to rationally and fairly reconcile a civil dispute. Approaches to negotiation analysis tend to be methodically broken down in terms of specific stages of negotiation. Beginning with the “diagnosis stage,” each party is advised to answer questions such as accurately identifying any discrepancies between their real interests and stated positions. The process would continue with a conflict formulation stage. Negotiators in this sense would need to identify what specifically must be worked through and how it can be resolved. (Druckman in Zartman, 329). It is also advised that any concessions to be made to another party take place in the latter portion of any negotiation.

While this literature has much value for practitioners operating within a conflict resolution paradigm or setting which reflects such prescriptive methods, it is quite reductionist as negotiation analysts tend to use diverging ways to refer to virtually identical facts (Zartman 1988). Also, as will become evident when examining international negotiation thought further below, a broader conflict context necessitates clearly identifying the particularities of specific conflicts.

Moving beyond the approach noted above, are certain analytical approaches within the study of negotiation which draw on some aspects of contemporary social and political theory. For example, “structural analysis” places parties to a negotiation in relationships of power. Power is considered in terms of the parties’ initial position in a dispute and how each side can manoeuvre to lead to their ultimate success. Focusing on the way parties of varying strengths reach their goals is of great importance in the context of structural analysis. For this reason, power in this paradigm then shifts analytically to be viewed through a tactical lens. In this case, power through action is emphasized over power simply wielded in terms of the strength of a party’s specific stance. The use of such a stance which carries one party through a negotiation is appropriately modified with the addition of the “tactical variable.” The application of tactics may be viewed as an exercise in power which often can be steered by one side to inform another party’s expectations of the process. All of this is done to lead to the acquiescence of an opponent to a particular proposal. Despite the fact that power implicitly permeates structural analysis writing, it is often couched in “incidental” or

“situational” terms. This seems odd however, when such studies continuously emphasize one party’s attempt to gain an advantage over another one (Zartman 1988). Such clumsy scholarship has provided structural analysis with a fragmented theoretical framework.

Another conventional approach is, “process analysis,” which outlines negotiations through a number of concessions which stem from a particular aspect of each party’s negotiating posture. This aspect differs to some extent depending on which variation of the theory is being applied. What is consistent in process analysis however is its inclusion of security point theory. A security point is the advantage that one party has over another before the negotiation takes place. This advantage emerges in terms of what one side is willing to concede at the outset of the negotiation. Process analysis rests on the argument that one side will make a concession based on a, “a comparative calculation of its own versus its opponents costs or of its own costs versus some acceptability level.” This is supposed to be an indication of the extent to which a specific party is willing to make concessions until an agreement is realized (Zartman 1988). Without explicitly stating it, process analysis is an additional theory based in power dynamics, where proposals and security points are continuously being negotiated. The formulaic element, where an analyst might assume a given pattern based on anticipated assumptions of possible concessions and the weight of a given security point make this theory highly flawed. One could argue that ignoring the subtleties of the interpersonal dynamics between parties is a glaring oversight which cannot be ignored.

Jurgen Habermas’ approach to dialogue through his theory of communicative action can be used to accurately place the theoretical limitations of these approaches to negotiation analysis. The Habermasian position focuses on normative bases for argumentation within established fields such as law or art. When assessing these fields, he asserts that we can find spectrums of argumentation which become customary through institutions leading to professional modes of conduct (Habermas 1984). Implicit in the above-noted subfields of strategic and process analysis is the emphasis on rational actors making decisions. Habermas suggests, “the rationality of an expression depends on the reliability of the knowledge embodied in it” (Habermas, 1984, p. 8). What we can take from this is a question of the degree to which an individual is indoctrinated with institutional or protocol norms. Transpose such normative constraints to approaches within negotiation analysis and one can see that what may be determined as “rational”

for some is actually very limited and perhaps even counterproductive when it comes to the goals of transforming conflict. In other words, “rational argumentation” may be viewed as another way of simply reproducing the same formulaic template which often does not lead to long-term sustainable shifts in the make-up of given conflicts. When placing negotiation in a broader conflict context, do more flexible approaches problematizing “rational argumentation” exist? In an effort to expand such a context and try to provide some analytical space for the negotiation subfield, it is valuable to examine a key theorist of international negotiation scholarship.

William Zartman, Professor Emeritus at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University begins with a common academic approach to negotiation in the international context. He argues that, “if one adopts a rational choice definition of war or violent conflict as bargaining failure....then successful bargaining or negotiation is the means of preventing or resolving violent conflict” (Zartman, p.322, 2007). It is important not to confuse Habermas’ “rational actor” within normative bases of argumentation with rational choice theory. Zartman’s statement contains two key components which are very telling for the analytical parameters afforded the study of international negotiation within the body of conflict resolution; for him, resolving violent conflict is restricted to a common theoretical thread in international relations. Rational choice theory analyzes information narrowly within the lens of the “special interests” of states. Moreover, this approach places states as the sole actor in international affairs, therefore creating a vacuum of subjective agency which would need to be filled to compensate for this reductionism. Moreover, this approach tends to be purely Machiavellian, as these special interests harnessed to ulterior motives dominate any agenda to be worked through by state actors (Sterling-Folker 2006).

Secondly, can violent war or conflict simply be reduced to bargaining failure? My thesis disputes that negotiation is necessarily effective as a “means of preventing or resolving violent conflict,” considering the multiple factors associated with trauma, identity, narratives and collective memories. Surely these factors need to be addressed at many levels of society if there is any hope of reaching reconciliation. This is not to say that negotiation at the upper echelons of power does not bear fruit. Resolving conflict could not be realized without a framework in place to provide the structural support required for other grass roots resolution approaches to take place on a wider

scale. Still, without culturally specific grassroots bridgebuilding initiatives aimed at alleviating differences between groups, any peace framework established is not worth the effort made at the negotiating table.

## ***Mediation***

Mediation can be viewed as a direct branch of the practice of negotiation where an outside party has the responsibility of interceding with only partial (if any) commanding executive power. This factor differentiates the mediator from the authority wielded by a judge for example. Mediation can take place in commercial, legal, labour and international conflict related settings. The mediator's role can be defined as that of a facilitator, helping guide parties to a dispute to autonomously reach a decision. In this way, a mediator can help each party reflect on their positions and ease communication to create a more clear understanding between disputants. Perhaps most importantly, a successful mediator can help each side reach an outcome that is consensually agreeable (Moore 2003, MacFarlane 1997).

This notwithstanding, it is important to consider how the practice of mediation as an extension of negotiation replicates the normative limitations of the latter. In other words, to what extent does mediation perpetuate a similar dynamic between politicians who are jockeying to dominate one another as opposed to setting the foundation to heal the root causes of conflict for the population at large? It is the attempt to bridge misunderstanding and animosity between groups through agencies in civil society, such as PIT, which I have argued can be the most transformative contribution to alleviating conflict.

The first category of studies of international mediation is predominantly prescriptive and is committed to offering recommendations as to what "good conflict management in real world situations" is comprised of. This research builds on the foundation of writing authored by Roger Fisher and William Ury and has proliferated through Harvard University's Program on Negotiation. It should be noted that such work has spawned a virtual industry of literature accessible to the general public on the appropriate conduct of mediators and negotiators and the necessary means leading to the resolution of conflicts (Bercovitch 2009, Bercovitch and Jackson 2009). I will return to



the broader significance of Fisher and Ury in the context of their renowned writing, *Getting to Yes* (Fisher and Ury, 1991), below.

Apart from this, another category of studies describes specific cases of mediation, often using empirical methods to validate the research. What comes out of this, for example, are theoretical assertions and principles based on detailing those aforementioned cases and a “contingency framework” that is dependent on broad “systematic” assessments. While examining some detail of specific cases may be valuable to mention here, of particular importance is the contingency framework. This framework emerged out of social-psychology theories developed in the 1960s and 1970s. These studies are permeated with power dynamics as they take into account dominant positions and are related to the political maneuvering used by parties to a conflict. The psychology examined is based on such power-laden interpersonal relations at the highest levels as it attempts to determine “the individual influences of personal, role, situational, goal, interactional and outcome variables.” All of this must be viewed within the normative structure of most international mediations. These processes are infused with politics, highly strategized and based in rational decision approaches (Bercovitch 2009, Bercovitch and Jackson 2009).

There is a direct overlap here with examinations of international diplomacy of which negotiation and mediation are certainly a part. A thorough exploration of this requires a clear understanding of the world in which states operate. We can return to the reference earlier regarding the dynamics emerging out of the Cold War. State behaviour today, however, is just as divisive, as various countries simply have chosen other binaries to position themselves within. A realist posture where national interest and security dominate are therefore no less relevant to the contemporary world where states vie for power than it had been in earlier decades. It is important to reinforce what was said above about negotiation and mediation processes in the context of how scholars Harvey Langholtz and Chris Stout capture the dynamics of diplomatic relations. For example, Langholtz points to such relations taking place in settings in which, “nations meet in a zero-sum game, where diplomats maneuver on behalf of their own nations for advantage, and where a gain for one nation can only come at the expense of another” (Langholtz, 2, 2004). In this case we see diplomats conducting themselves within a pre-set paradigm. All of their efforts are designed to reap the most benefits from the other side. Such clear contexts of these and related dynamics are necessary in order to

accurately capture how scholars and practitioners have explored conflict resolution fields such as negotiation and mediation.

### ***Additional Contemporary Critiques of Conventional Approaches of Conflict Resolution***

Here we return to the highly influential philosophy which emerged from Fisher and Ury's book, *Getting to Yes*. This book had a significant impact, both in North America and internationally, on the thought and practices of negotiation and mediation. Scholars have characterized Fisher and Ury's work as problematic when considering that their conflict resolution metaphors seem to counter the purpose of sitting down with another party and working through differences. Encouraging people to "attack the problem" for example seems to incite more animosity than cooperation (LeBaron, p191, 2002). The use of such conflict-laden metaphors directly counters what LeBaron and Schirch outlined in the last section in terms of groups using "relational processes" to work through those expressions which exacerbate the conflict narrative between them.

Alan Tidwell (1998, p. 26) offers additional critiques of Fisher and Ury's approach. He argues that such strategies as "separating people from the problem" ignore fundamental areas that must be taken into consideration. This orientation pushes aside the personal affective makeup of each person involved. A closer consideration of emotions may actually propel the process forward, rather than being counterproductive. Affectivity is certainly salient in the context of my research when one evaluates any component of the constellation of factors which explore identity development in conflict zones. Successful bridgebuilding work found in my case study and organizations with similar orientations confirm the value of delving into underlying feelings informed by collective cultural patterns. Tidwell goes on to critique a later work written by Fisher and other colleagues conveniently titled "Beyond Machiavelli" (1994). He (1998, p.26, 27) points out that while the authors concentrate on matters of perception related to parties attempting to settle a disagreement, they then emphasize an approach that is completely dismissive of the person sitting across from them. The authors argue that those involved in mediation should listen to what the other person has to say, not for the value of the content itself, but to simply superficially absorb and reconfigure it as a means of persuasion. Instead of recognizing key points expressed to work through differences and

potentially lead to mutually beneficial outcomes, the process is damaging from its very early stages.

These points directly relate to the environments in which most mediation sessions take place. This applies to both an international political dispute and others involving less significant matters. Lisa Schirch (2001, p. 153) describes such a setting as “sterile,” as “tables and chairs are usually the central focus of the room.” The atmosphere is pronounced with formality, which lends itself to parties to a conflict having monolithic conceptions of one another.

Whether it is international negotiation, mediation or the diplomacy frame in general, when considering the “power posture” reviewed above, what is the real potential for reaching an equitable settlement? When such a settlement is reached, what trends would indicate that related benefits will trickle down to the population most detrimentally impacted by conflict? For example, if we were to see diplomatic progress in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – where contentious state-centred issues such as territory and population relocation were addressed – would support for community-led programs also be considered? Very often rather, we see a game of manipulation and coercion rather than confidence building through a genuinely respectful negotiation process. Israeli-Palestinian diplomatic negotiation seems to be more of a game of posturing through power and discourse more than anything else. Both side’s politicians seem to want to “demonstrate strength” to their populations rather than make the necessary sacrifices to reach an equitable agreement. Very often the Israelis incomprehensibly threaten to build, or actually go ahead with building, new settlement quarters when they are dissatisfied with what the Palestinians offer them at the negotiation table. While this example is somewhat dated, former Palestinian National Authority leader Yasser Arafat was often accused of using concessionary language with Israeli leaders while inciting the general population to rise up against their oppressors. These are just two small examples of many which find their way into very fragile relations at the top levels.

Rather than alleviate conflict, these leaders seem to compound it, by bringing their entire populations down with them. This point is very much in line with my earlier exploration of Daniel Bar Tal’s and Gavriel Solomon’s (2006) exploration of the functions of conflict narratives. Leaders often use dominant national narratives as a tool for justification. At the centre of this is the perpetuation of a discourse which portrays their

side as victims and the other side as perpetrators. Here we see an exacerbation of the constellation of factors constraining identity, rather than a contribution to alleviating such dynamics.

We can place this in a broader context by returning once more to Herbert Kelman. Kelman argues (2007, p. 67) that the goal of conflict resolution is not to eradicate the conflict as a whole, but instead, to reduce the damaging symptoms of it. I noted at the outset, that Kelman's research on the social psychology of conflict from the perspective of those most affected by it was foundational for me as it contributed to my conceptualization of the constellation of factors encompassing dominant identities in conflict zones. It is important to reiterate Kelman's perspective here in the context of what was just explored in terms of conventional approaches to conflict resolution. Kelman argues that,

If conflict is to be resolved, in the sense of leading to a stable peace that both sides consider just and to a new relationship that is mutually enhancing and contributes to the welfare and development of the two societies, the solution must satisfy the fundamental needs and allay the deepest fears of the affected populations (ibid, p. 67).

It is clear that mainstream conflict resolution areas such as mediation, negotiation and international diplomacy do not adequately address these needs. Civil society NGOs such as PIT, by contrast, attempt to recognize these needs as a foundational aspect of their bridgebuilding work.

## **Conclusion: From Polarization to ‘In-Between Spaces?’**

When I first conceived this project I thought about studying Peace it Together as an organization that used media education techniques to challenge the dominant cultural narratives that play such a powerful role in shaping the identities of Israeli and Palestinian youth. This struck me as an innovative departure from mainstream approaches to conflict resolution, with their more traditional emphases on mediation and negotiation. But, I was unsure initially about how to frame the study analytically. Should I root my analysis in a review of the mainstream literature on conflict resolution? Or, should I situate my analysis in the context of a broad discussion of the role of NGOs involved in bridgebuilding around the world? While I was inclined to focus more on Peace it Together’s pedagogical techniques and situate these in the context of broader discussions of emancipatory pedagogy, especially through innovative forms of media education, I knew I could not limit my research in this way. In the end, aspects of all of these perspectives found their way into my discussion, but none of them became the central analytical focus. Rather, as an entry point to a case study of Peace it Together, I began with a review of the powerful cultural factors that have constituted the polarized subjectivities or identities, and narratives evident in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **Culture, Identity and Polarization**

In earlier chapters I tried to show how culture plays a key role in the depth of attachments that many individuals have to their cultural groups. The more deeply

integrated a person is into dominant cultural norms and relations, the stronger the level of “felt attachment” to those norms and relations. The stronger the level of attachment, the greater the susceptibility to perceived threats to those dominant cultural norms and relations. These perceived threats can be mobilized and amplified through the production and reproduction of stereotypes, often expressed in powerful narratives of victimization and oppression that are routinely expressed in many areas of culture, and especially in mainstream media. What often emerges is an inextricable relationship between the worthy values of one’s own group and the demonized orientation of the group held in opposition. This base of “understood knowledge” about the makeup of one’s opponent is permeated with a “charged affectivity.” In this sense, a collective ego-based oppositional stance directly informs emotions such as fear, shame, honour and revenge which can be triggered at any time through the prevailing dominant collective discourse.

This relationship can be exacerbated due to individual and collective relationships with trauma. Traumatic dissociation, in the many forms discussed earlier, is an ongoing destabilizing experience. Even when one has not had a direct experience with trauma, the vast majority of people in conflict zones experience secondary or vicarious trauma. Such a condition arouses anxiety and can be very damaging. In addition, conflict dynamics associated with trauma are typically fueled by deeply-rooted collective memories, most often articulated in ways that serve the interests of societal elites. As Barry Schwartz has (1996, p.277) argued, the past is often used as a “mask, concealing the interests of the powerful.”

The various shades of constrained cultural identity noted above, led me to develop what I term an “affective spectrum.” By this phrase, I mean the range of emotional responses lying within individuals belonging to collectives. The complex

inheritance of dominant cultural identities – or *hailed* subjectivities – can unexpectedly stimulate difficult emotions at any moment leading people to develop intractable positions in conflict situations that detrimentally alter individual and community life. The socialization process is key here as individuals internalize forms of attachment to destructive cultural narratives within collectivities embroiled in conflict.

In my attempt to appropriately situate the difficult position faced by the Israeli and Palestinian populations, I offered a brief review of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, followed by an exploration of each side's dominant cultural narratives. I then introduced the work of Yaron Ziv and Iris Singer. The former indicated that each population's behaviour is rooted in fear while the latter pointed to an "insecure attachment" prevailing throughout their notions of nationhood. This directly overlapped with the key related components I explored in terms of Israeli and Palestinian collective narratives. The Israelis are attached to their story of victimization stemming out of the Holocaust, while the Palestinians place Al Nakba at the forefront their national discourse.

I then attempted to demonstrate that while the above dynamics are endemic to the vast majority of people living in the region, they can be negotiated and even challenged. It is a matter of beginning to "step back" to evaluate the depth of felt attachments to dominant cultural narratives in a critical manner. I demonstrated through an initial exploration of some key ideas from narrative theory and cultural studies that entering a "non-spoken for" existential reality is clearly possible. The available *sources* of narrative were instructive in terms of outlining the constraints and openings of their composition, both theoretically and practically. When applied to everyday life, I emphasized that it was important to consider the autonomous components of narrative, within the framework of a "site of interaction." Such a space seemed to allow for events

to unfold naturally, thereby humanizing the exchange between people (Holquist, 1981, p. 293; Braid, 1996, p.5).

In the later discussion of PIT dialogue sessions, it became evident that the awareness that one side was carefully listening to the other side's expression of collective anger and pain allowed for a sense of compassion to develop between them. In this way, the Israeli and Palestinian participants at the Peace Camp learned about the other group's suffering, from the perspective of their "enemies." The creative exercises in those PIT sessions also provided an opportunity for identity to be played or toyed with (to use an expression by Dialogue Facilitator Leo Aarons). Participants began to let go of attachments to their collective narratives to a certain extent and began to grapple with the other side's perspective in a new way. For example, during the exercises prior to filmmaking, the youth learned the fundamentals of the storytelling process, which allowed them to find their voice. This enabled them to deal with the challenges of representation during filmmaking. While in some cases the youth were initially adamant about telling a story through the lens of their group's prevailing national perspective, the collaborative nature of the film process encouraged them to compromise and work through their differences. The pressure of tight deadlines and the need for each participant to play their roles effectively contributed to dissolving much of the tension that initially existed between the youth. The working environment provided a deep personal appreciation for one another, while the barriers that initially existed, began to dissolve considerably.

My interviews undertaken after the camp revealed lasting effects. The notion of "entering the space" proved to be salient, as most Israelis and Palestinians rarely have the opportunity to meet. Despite many personal challenges which often overlapped with collective conflict barriers, the youth revealed that they were able to maintain a "new



relationship” with the conflict. They often made clear distinctions between their counterparts at the peace camp and those people on the opposing side who wish to perpetuate conflict dynamics. In one case, one of the Israeli youth from 2006, Barein, was physically attacked, when she returned home after the camp, but still maintained the broad perspective she gained of the other side during her summer with PIT. In another case, 2006 Palestinian participant, Neeha, experienced the devastating loss of a friend during the 2008-9 Gaza conflict. Though the bitterness of that loss lingered, she indicated that if the right opportunity presented itself, she would be involved in future peace-related activities. In many examples, the youth reported to have developed new conflict relationships within their *own* communities, based on what they felt were lingering, outdated perspectives that did not serve the cause of peace. 2008 Israeli participants, Naf and Koef, deliberately chose to do their volunteer service prior to the army working with Israeli youth who demonstrated harsh prejudicial attitudes towards the Palestinians. Despite a lot of resistance from his own community, where he was often referred to as the “co-exister,” 2006 Palestinian youth, Jadhi, would not let the community pressure get to him. His determination paid off, as he actually convinced many Palestinians in Tulkarum and Bethlehem about the benefit of meeting with Israelis and working through differences. These last two examples also represent a commitment by the youth to transfer their experience to the broader community. This point is in line with Kelman’s (1999) belief in a ripple effect, where the benefit of peace activities expand beyond initiatives of the immediate parties involved.

When attempting to situate and to explore the significance of PIT, I considered the work of many scholars in cultural theory. I was especially struck by Homi Bhabha’s examination of “interstitial spaces,” and Victor Turner’s concept of “liminality” as concepts that described alternative “sites” that allowed for an opportunity for growth

beyond the rigidity of cultural norms. I then explored some of the literature on polysemy, and resistant readings, developed in cultural studies. Most notably, I highlighted Stuart Hall's (1979) development of the concept of an "oppositional code," beyond subjectivities which repeatedly echo dominant cultural patterns. I contrasted this with all that the youth have inherited in respect to dominant components of their respective cultures. I argue that PIT created unique opportunities for camp participants to decode much of what had been imposed on them over the years. Without necessarily creating a direct oppositional position, PIT dialogue sessions, in particular, enabled participants to learn from one another and begin to place each other's lives beyond binary frames. The filmmaking process seemed to be especially effective in challenging conventional views, as many of the "noises and marks fixed with meaning" were transcended (Barker and Galasinski, 2001, p.10). PIT staff encouraged the youth to "play with signifiers" in order to create new meaning for themselves and the eventual audience viewing the films.

This was all then heightened through the deep affective connections the PIT youth were able to make with one another. I considered these connections by drawing parallels with the broader literature on "relationality." For Martin Buber, simple "beingness" in the presence of the other can be transformative. This presence, when coupled with an utterance, for Levinas gives expression a unique quality. In this sense, an encounter, "touches before it offers knowledge, it provokes before it makes sense, it makes contact before meaning..." (Pinchevsky, p.220, 2005). These points seem to be echoed in Bakhtinian philosophy with the notion that "the self is dialogic" or "a relation." The discovery of another individual is inextricably linked to one's personal evolution or the "becoming" self. According to Calvin Schrag, the multilayered nature of interactive texts can be of such value that he deploys the term "texture" to capture their

significance. Schrag brings to life the embodied living quality of human interaction, evoking possibility and perhaps lasting change.

While there is much value in describing and analyzing the efforts of PIT through the languages of cultural theory and philosophy it is always important not to focus on culture to the exclusion of relationships of power. Notably, the asymmetrical power differential held by the Israelis, in contrast to Palestinians, cannot be ignored. The Palestinians are victimized by the physical restrictions of the checkpoints and security wall, both of which make their lack of freedom of mobility a brute fact of existence. This dissertation is based on the challenge of moving beyond the constellation of factors which restrict the development of fresh perspectives and new forms of identification. That is why I have focused on the dominant psychological constraints on each side, which are lived out as recurring affective patterns. I argue that the shifting perspectives of PIT youth are a demonstration that identity is never fixed, if one is given the chance to understand and to consider one's social conditioning. The PIT youth provide us with a window to see how the power of agency can be used to rise above prevailing subjective identity constraints.

However, this is both a non-linear and iterative process. The non-linearity I have argued is related to the fact that there is no telling how affectivity will influence an individual in any given moment. This principle is equally applicable to peacemakers involved in bridgebuilding as it is to Hawks who articulate patterns of dominance in the population as a whole. As a result, attempts to build new subjectivities can be fragile and haunted by a degree of indeterminacy. At any moment, the progressive attempt to resolve conflict through face to face interaction, dialogue and media education can be overwhelmed by the pressure of dominant cultural forces. A particular trigger emanating from something introduced to one's space might bring that person into a resolutely

defensive posture. This is usually connected with an exasperated expression of, “how could they do that?” “They” of course is a monolithic archetype in the moment of tension.

In the case of the Israelis and Palestinians, an individual from one side might be exposed to a politician’s rhetoric from the other group through the local media. In that given moment, this person may have already been agitated, making their position on the affective spectrum harden. This reaction might be exacerbated by the frame used by a broadcaster which may be inflected with the most charged expressions of victimization emanating from the dominant national discourse. In another moment, a particular situation may bring one directly back to the loss of a family member or close friend. The pain that this memory elicits may be overwhelming and heighten the potential for this person to react against those in proximity who are part of the oppositional group. The extent to which this person reacts may result in further tragedy, ruining more lives and perpetuating cross-cultural conflict in personal and collective ways. In yet another moment, an individual may be more detached, recognizing that the information relayed is “more of the same.” In this case, their affective spectrum is not negatively affected as they acknowledge the message without internalizing it.

When we recognize these patterns, the significance of PIT youths’ personal transitions is striking. There is also no telling where PIT’s efforts as a whole will lead. The films have been shown at film festivals around the world, and it is possible that audiences viewing them may be inspired to become involved in their own projects, seeking to ameliorate the situation in the Middle East. Similar effects may be extended to the classroom as PIT has provided an educational package, which includes the documentary *Peacing it Together* (based on the 2006 camp), to many high schools. It is well beyond the scope of this dissertation to analyze the impact of this film festival and educational exposure. Still, I did learn through PIT’s regular Facebook updates, that

many of the films produced by the youth have won prizes for “best short film” at several festivals. Of course, this leads to wider exposure and recognition which may inspire more people to become involved in their own peace-related activities. Exposure can also lead to more donor funding which can be funnelled into future PIT program activities. PIT did not do an extensive study as to the impact of its educational package on students. They simply reported receiving comments from teachers indicating that the youths’ films were “well-received” or the follow-up discussion was “constructive”<sup>6</sup>. Based on my own participation in the 2008 camp, and on my interviews with 2006 and 2008 camp participants, I am convinced that integrating the youth films into a curriculum lesson plan would be valuable for high school students. The films would provide an opportunity for students to see what people their own age must deal with in conflict zones. In the case of the Middle East, this personalized perspective has the potential to cut through the monolithic binary that pits Palestinians against Israelis in the most simplified terms. The PIT films provide alternative perspective to the Palestinian-Israeli binary by introducing a discourse of “inbetweeness.” This demonstrates that there are other stories to be told which reflect the common humanity, curiosity, hope and personal interests of youth on both sides.

Following the 2011 peace camp, the Peace Research Institute of the Middle East (PRIME) – explored in some depth above in Chapter 5 – has agreed to be a partner in the region, assisting PIT implement its goals vis-a-vis the young participants back home. While my research did not cover the 2011 camp, it is important to note PIT’s general organizational direction. PRIME has Israeli and Palestinian regional coordinators in

<sup>6</sup> Teachers Feedback Document emailed to me by Peace It Together, July 2, 2011

place to play supportive roles in a number of ways. Two important areas where the youth require guidance are in respect to the screening of the films and contribution to peace-related activities in their communities. The hope is that the 2011 youth can be involved in similar diverse peace-building activities as the 2006 and 2008 cohorts have been. With the PRIME regional coordinators in place, PIT has expected an easier process of project creation and development for their former participants. To this end, the PRIME staff were asked to establish a “communication system” for the youth through Skype, Facebook or over the telephone. This is designed to alleviate any challenges the youth might face in the implementation of their initiatives. Based on previous experience, PIT expected such challenges to be related to all types of fears that would naturally arise when being involved with such demanding work. As of April 2012, a thorough study of PRIME’s work with the youth has not been completed. Once this is done, there will be a clearer sense of how the 2011 youth fared in the activities they were involved with, compared with the earlier cohorts. In other words, PIT will be able to assess how much of a difference it makes to work with an organization based in the region, with a history of assisting groups in peace-related activities<sup>7</sup>.

## **Community of (Moderate) Radicals? Creating Democratic “In-Between” Spaces**

It is useful to borrow from Clemencia Rodriguez’ research on citizens’ media to situate the work of Peace It Together and likeminded organizations. When the vast majority of people in Israel and Palestine are caught in the web of dominant cultural

<sup>7</sup> PIT/PRIME Organizational Plan Document, emailed to me by Peace it Together on November 24, 2011

narratives, would it not also be beneficial to situate the work of “progressives” into a parallel sphere, labeled, “community of radicals”? While an in depth assessment of this idea is beyond the scope of this dissertation, there is arguably some value in concluding with an initial exploration of it. The value lies in two areas. First, it invites readers to evaluate the “progressive” nature of Middle East peace related work, in an overwhelmingly divisive atmosphere which seems to counter such peacemaking efforts at every turn. Second the idea of a ‘community of radicals’ helps to characterize PIT’s innovative use of media – in this case filmmaking –as an attempt to transcend imposed identities and dominant narratives. Rodriguez’ academic exploration of what has also been referred to as ‘alternative’ or ‘radical media’ (Downing, 2001), is founded on the argument that any use of media independent of the main centre of power can be considered an enactment of citizenship. While a conventional conception of citizenship is more passive, where the majority of people tend to simply belong to a given society and periodically use their agency through voting in electoral politics, Rodriguez emphasizes autonomy and action on a regular basis in a participatory-framed paradigm.

Rodriguez argues that reaching one’s humanitarian capability:

Implies having the opportunity to create one’s own images of self and environment; it implies being able to recodify one’s identity with the signs and codes that one chooses, thereby disrupting the traditional acceptance of those imposed by outside sources; it implies becoming one’s own storyteller, it implies reconstructing the self-portrait of one’s own community and one’s own culture...it implies taking one’s own languages out of their usual hiding place and throwing them out there, into the public sphere and seeing how they do, how they defeat other languages (Rodriguez, 2001, p.3).

Rodriguez’s position emanates from the use of alternative media in the development community context. My earlier theoretical application of postcolonial thought to highlight the significance of PIT lends itself well to including her perspective

here. We see the manifestation of her statement above through the work of communities that challenge dominant cultural narratives with their own use of media, such as PIT through filmmaking. This is also realized within the overlapping creative bridgebuilding processes captured in the last chapter. Autonomy is the key element here as Rodriguez speaks of using one's agency to engender a true representation of subjectivity. To "recodify one's identity with the signs and codes that one chooses" directly speaks to the process of working through inherited dominant cultural narratives. This involves intrapersonal, interpersonal and/or community actions which re-position binary relationships, potentially leading to transformation on all of these levels. Rodriguez' use of the term 'imposition' is key as we can understand how delicate the process is to negotiate what has culturally constrained expression at the expense of voices which can grasp and articulate change. This overlaps with her allusion to the re-working of the content of community imagery through reclaimed self-affirming and potentially transformative language.

Rodriguez's research captures forms of media production which is considered both radical and alternative. While PIT's use of filmmaking clearly falls under the category of "using one's own media," the other organizations explored above may also be viewed as making a "radical contribution," by working through dominant cultural codes in a variety of ways and trying to articulate new spaces 'in-between' more established polarities. With this in mind, I have gone to great lengths to outline how the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians "live out" polarized identifications of fear and delegitimitization of the other side. In this highly polarized and conservative environment, perhaps we should consider the community conventionally known as a "moderate" as radicals as well. Moderates who search for spaces in between established polarities in the Middle East have incredible strength in their ongoing push toward "radical shifts in



identification” in an environment which perpetuates physical, emotional and symbolic pain. Virtually every cultural message relayed to peacemakers provides them with exactly the opposite message of what they are motivated to articulate themselves. Would it not also be valuable to situate these radicals in a broader regional context in the wake of the recent Arab Spring? While citizens in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, among other countries, have demanded greater democratic rights, after living for decades under autocratic dictatorships, perhaps their counterparts in Israel-Palestine demanding freedom from repressive conflict rhetoric, policy and structural inequity might be placed on a parallel footing? Those marginalized in this case, are people who can contribute to a vision of a life unshackled by mutually exclusive cultural polarization and hatred. This is especially important considering that those people who have reached out to the other side and have experienced personal changes as a result, know that another way forward is possible. While some Israeli Jews and Israeli-Palestinians have opportunities to continue to see each other, such as in the School for Peace at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (explored in chapter 5), others cannot, yet still remain in touch within expansive “electronic borderlands” through email, Skype or Facebook. In the case of the PIT youth films placed online, on the PIT website, former participants also always have a reference of “documentation” of their experiences.

It is important to place the transitions experienced by PIT youth in a proper context. There is no question that the collective structural and cultural constraints in the Middle East will remain an ongoing challenge for anyone interested in contributing to conflict resolution in the region. There are many opportunities to shift polarized identities, however, as individuals actively seeking understanding on both sides begin to see that there is a mirror between the internal challenges they face and the external realities of the conflict. These challenges require self-reflection and an acceptance that collective

and individual historical patterns that are often exacerbated by the frequent use of destructive cultural narratives can be transcended. Continuing efforts to respect this altered stance, and to re-orienting behaviour to *the other*, may eventually lead to a sustained transformational shift and alter public discourse. Peacemaking efforts at the political level have failed in the past, surely, because there was insufficient change in the lived cultures, identities, and narratives that continue to reproduce an irrevocably polarized public culture in both Israel and Palestine. That will require more 'communities of moderates' to engage in bridge building exercises and forms of pedagogy with the potential to create new subjectivities and new narratives. In my view there can be little political settlement in the region until there is enough popular support for new thinking and new initiatives to change the current posture of most decision makers. In this sense, I see the work of the NGOs discussed in the last chapter as a key element in moving the peace process forward. If the actions of these groups enter into the public domain and are more widely disseminated, a new model of co-existence could perhaps be created. Leaders might draw on the successes of bridgebuilding groups and reformulate them within societal institutions. This could potentially inform the way negotiations are conducted at the highest levels. While altered narratives within "in-between" spaces have contributed to a move beyond an older "colonization of consciousness" among some progressive Israelis and Palestinians, can those in power seize on this momentum?

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A.

### Methodological Appendix

The research outlined in this dissertation draws on a survey of secondary sources, a participant observation study, and a set of follow up interviews. My approach to participant observation followed standard field research techniques involving such actions as building contacts with key individuals in the organization I wanted to study, joining the group, and keeping field notes (for a discussion of such techniques in detail see John Lofland and Lyn Lofland, *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*, New York: Wordsworth, 1994.) More notably, my research drew heavily on the work of Breeze and Feldman (2008), of the organization Seeking Common Ground (SCG). Their study, titled, "Building Bridges for Peace: An Intergroup Intervention for Israeli, Palestinian and American Teens - A Report on Theory, Best Practices and Evaluation after Fifteen Years," provided me with a set of working concepts and categories for the analysis of my fieldwork.

This included the importance of identifying new relationships in the camp and the extent to which camp experiences "transfer" more broadly. SCG draw attention to the question of how new relationships in peace camp settings provide considerable substantiating information about the personal transitions of camp participants. Notably, SCG explore how new relationships developed through their program led to, "a sense of a common identity, a sense of dual identity, changes in self-identification, new conflicts with ingroup and outgroup members, communication and leadership skill acquisition..." and "ways participants influence others as a result of their experience." (p. 57) The aforementioned emphasis by SCG on the related concept of transfer (p.12) essentially means the ways that the PIT youths' experiences "transfer" to broader collective peaceful transitions back home. Herbert Kelman defines transfer as "the 'multiplier' or 'ripple' effect whereby the outcome/impact of an intervention extends beyond its immediate recipients" (Kelman, 1999). In order to thoroughly explore the impact of the new relationship and transfer evaluation criteria, I applied two additional often interwoven components.

I borrow further from SCG's evaluation techniques to assess how the PIT youth may have considered the political climate at a given point following the camp as a determining factor contributing to altering their relationship with the conflict (p. 12). In line with what I explored earlier, does a particular political phenomenon draw the youth back into a dominant frame or do they have the resiliency and perspective to "detach themselves" from collective dynamics and maintain their altered new relationship with the conflict? Within this, I also consider how personal incidents (if applicable) related to collective political phenomena also play a role in impacting the youths' relationship with the conflict.

More broadly, I delve deeply into a concept that emerged through my interview with Leo Aarons, found in the dialogue section. As I mentioned, the degree of attachment between a personal story within a conflict, and an old perpetuated collective conflict story, often constrain potential transcendence. For this reason, Aarons pointed to the significance of intense moments of dialogue where youth essentially develop a level of trust to test one another in terms of the most contested areas of the conflict. If we

consider that most Israelis and Palestinians never have the opportunity to meet in neutral settings, let alone transcend their respective dominant narratives, such opportunities cannot be understated. For this reason, I have further applied the term “entering the space” (which I developed through my interview with Aarons), to highlight important moments in my discussions with the youth where there is a clear effort to grapple with dominant discourses. This led me to focus my research and interview questions on the youths’ personal explanations of how they have been able to begin the journey of challenging their relationship with the collective; how openly listening to people held in an oppositional position catalyzed this process. Within this, we learn about the extent to which the youth are prepared to accept the mirrors that are continuously held up to themselves following their camp experience. We also learn about the stages of working through related internal conflicts that are an inherent part of this journey.

Entering the space often begins to shed light on how perceptions of collective narratives erode when the youth directly engage with them. If such narratives do not serve the cause of growth beyond destructive relational dynamics, what purpose do they have? The youth wonder why they should not contest them, review them, or attempt to understand the context in which they were formed.



## Appendix B.

### Questions Used in Interviews with Former Peace It Together Participants

- 1) Has your perspective of the conflict and the other side changed (Prior to, just after peace camp and now)?
- 2) Have you remained in touch with your friends from the peace camp? In what ways have you tried to continue to contact them?
- 3) Are you currently active in promoting the cause of peace? How would you like to do so in the future?
- 4) Are you hopeful for peaceful co-existence in the future?
- 5) Was there something about the PIT program that makes you more hopeful?
- 6) You grew up hearing your own side of the conflict – how do you now relate to everything you have learned about the conflict growing up (school, media, political, religious leaders, community)? Has something changed for you?
- 7) Has your perspective about your own side's political views and policies changed? If so, what has caused this change for you?
- 8) How has your perspective of the people on the other side changed?
- 9) How do you feel when you hear that an act of violence occurred on the opposite side? (Palestinian-Israeli - - Israeli-Palestinian)?
- 10) Do you now feel that you can create change on your own or with other people who believe in peace in the Middle East (beyond PIT)?
- 11) What steps would need to be taken for more people to pursue the path of peace? How can people overcome beliefs which centre on their own side's view of the conflict?
- 12) Are there ways that the core PIT camp programming (dialogue facilitation, filmmaking) transform your perspective? Did the programming change your relationships?
- 13) What did the filmmaking achieve for you that you wouldn't have gotten if another peacemaking tool were used?<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Questions developed from "Building Bridges For Peace: An Intergroup Intervention For Israeli, Palestinian And American Teens - A Report On Theory, Best Practices And Evaluation After Fifteen Years." Denver, CO: Seeking Common Ground.