



Center for Research on Peace Education
المركز لدراسات التربية للسلام
המרכז לחקר החינוך לשלום

Recent Research Findings by the Center for Research on Peace Education

Gavriel Salomon

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The mission of the Center for Research on Peace Education (CERPE) is to advance the field of peace, reconciliation and partnership education through conceptual development and empirical research. CERPE is supported by an initial grant by the Stronach family in Canada and by grants from the Spencer Foundation, United States Institute of Peace, the Slifka Foundation, the Fohs Foundation, and private donations.

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By way of an introduction:

This is an informal and brief description of recent studies carried out by members of the Center for Research on Peace Education at the University of Haifa, Israel. These are not the only findings we have. There are more elaborate and complex ones, but not everything can be included in a brief summary. We want to share the findings and the conclusions that follow such that colleagues who are active in the field of peace education or study it can, as we hope, benefit from the reported studies. A more formal presentation of some of the studies can already be found or will soon be found in the professional literature. The descriptions are in English so that Israelis, Palestinians and interested parties abroad can read the material.

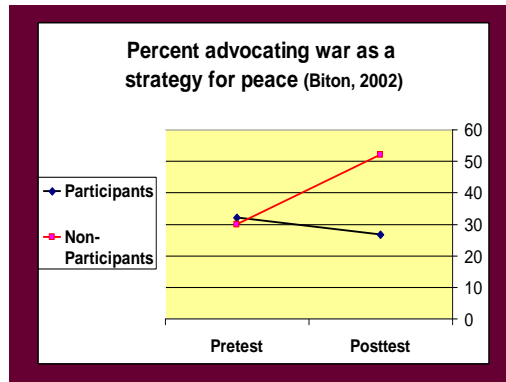
Comments and questions are most welcome.

1. Peace education can prevent the deterioration of feelings and attitudes

A study by Yifat Biton (Biton & Salomon, 2006) examined the effects of a school-based year-long peace education program ("Pathways to Reconciliation") carried out in Israeli and in Palestinian schools with 818 Jewish and Palestinian high school students, divided into program participants and non-participant controls. The program was administered during the 2002 Palestinian uprising (The "El Aksa Intifada"). Despite the overall belligerent atmosphere, the program had positive effects mainly on the participants' conception of "peace" – moving from a conception of "negative-" to "positive peace". Interestingly, while the program did not significantly affect attitudes it led to an increase in Israelis' willingness to engage in negotiations, and to a decrease in Palestinians' willingness to engage in war. Most importantly, the participation in the program served as a lid on the boiling pot of belligerence: While willingness to engage in war **increased** among

Palestinian non-participants it **decreased** among participants (See Figure 1). These findings suggest that participation in peace education can prevent further deterioration of negative feelings towards the other side.

Figure 1: Percent of Palestinians who advocated war as a way to make peace



2. Friendships can generalize

What effects do friendships that develop during a 3-day intergroup dialogue between Jewish and Palestinian participants have on the way they relate to each other's nation (the people) and to its collective narrative? Bar-Natan (2005) examined this question with 216 Jewish and Palestinian peace education participants and non-participants. Measures taken right after the completion of the encounter showed that friendships developed during the encounter did indeed generalize in both groups to the way the other side's members were perceived and to willingness for contact with them. The Jewish group manifested also increased legitimization of the Palestinian collective narrative. Not so the Palestinian group. For them, the collective narrative of the Jews is, as they see it, the narrative of the majority that deprives and discriminates them and thus cannot be given any legitimacy (see also No. 6 below).

3. Not all attitudes to be changed are born equal

A study by Yigal Rosen examined the possibility that some conflict-related attitudes and beliefs are more amenable to the impact of peace education than others. Some attitudes and beliefs occupy a more central place in one's cognition ("convictions") while others are more peripheral, and are held with less certitude and strength ("attitudes"). A pilot study with items derived from the Jewish and the Palestinian collective narratives, respectively, were given to Jewish and Palestinian university students to rank for importance and centrality. The top of the list for each group was defined as conviction items. In a subsequent study it was found that for both Jewish and Palestinian peace education program participants the convictions were not affected while the attitudes were significantly changed. The study suggests that we should aim at what is possible, some sort of 'good enough peace education', without aspiring to change convictions which serve as the backbone of a group's collective belief system (Rosen, in press).

4. The short life of the effects of short peace education programs

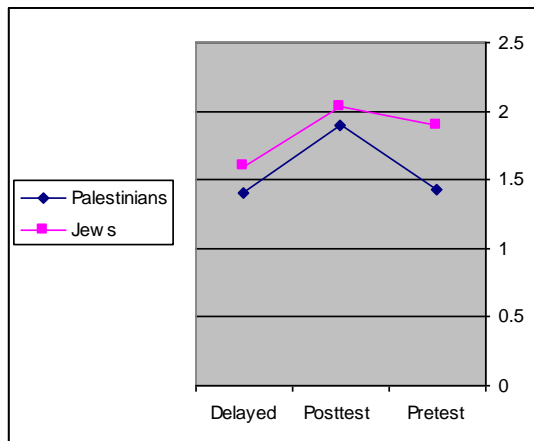
Peace education programs are all too often relatively short – a few days, a weekend, a week-long seminar. While such programs have a positive impact on many of the participants, it is still an open question whether the perceptual and attitudinal changes last over time given the socio-political forces that negate them. For after all, peace education programs are often carried out in a social environment where an "ethos of conflict" and a belligerent atmosphere appear to dominate. However, all too often evaluators are satisfied with measures taken "the morning after" the completion of a program.

Irit Bar-Natan in the study mentioned above (No. 2) in which the question of friendships' generalizations was addressed, found that measures taken a few months after the completion of the program showed that the changes all but disappeared. The same finding emerged in the study by Rosen (No. 3 above) and in a study by Husseisi (2009). It needs to be said that the programs

were indeed carried out in an overall social context of fear, belligerence and distrust of the other side. The peace education programs moved in this respect against the grain of the general ethos and collective narrative.

In sum, those changes that can be brought about by a relatively short-term intervention can as easily be changed back by the prevailing socio-political forces.

Figure2: The erosion of legitimization effects:



5. Eroded changes can be restored

We called the the decline of measured changes "erosion" assuming that they did not totally disappear but left at least some cognitive or emotional residue. We tried out three methods to restore the eroded changes. all of which yielded the same positive results.

Rosen (2006) worked with 120 Jewish and Palestinian high school students two months after their participation in a year long peace education program in which changed attitudes, stereotypes, social distance, and feelings toward the other side were measured. However, measures taken two months later showed a significant decline of the changes observed earlier. At that point the intervention was administered. It was based on the activation of cognitive dissonance brought about by the procedure of forced compliance: A person role-plays the adversary's perspective in front of others. Half of the program graduates were asked to present in front of their classmates the Jewish (Palestinian) point of view and

defend it. The other half served as a non-intervention control group.

Measures of the study's dependent variables taken three months after the intervention (that is, five months after the program) showed that the eroded measures were greatly restored (see Figure 3).

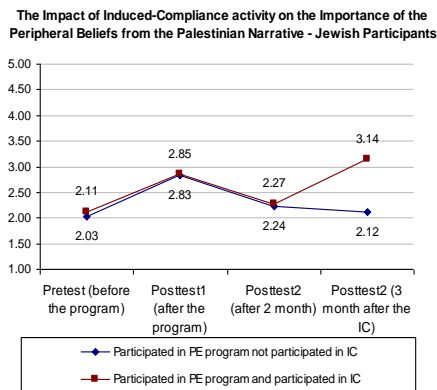
This finding was replicated in two additional studies: Peer teaching whereby program graduates share with their younger peers what they have learned in the program (Jausi, 2009), and reflection on what was good or bad in the program (Arnon, in preparation). In these studies, very much like in the Rosen study, the interventions led to the restoration of the changes, as measured three months later.

Thus, attitudinal and perceptual changes that become eroded by external socio-political forces can be restored.

Yet, the restored changes applied in all three studies to only the Jewish participants. Forced compliance, peer teaching and reflection did not restore

any of the previously changed attitudes and perceptions, of the Palestinians. The reason may be the different needs that each side arrives with. As found by Nadler and Shnabel (2008), the Palestinians, for reasons of being and feeling a discriminated minority in Israel, need to assert themselves and be empowered. Not so the Jews who are the majority that is perceived as the perpetrator and needs others' moral justification. The Palestinians, it appears, do not actually take the other side's position but rather use either one of the three intervention methods to re-assert their own position (see also No. 2).

Figure 2: The impact of induced compliance on restoring previous changes



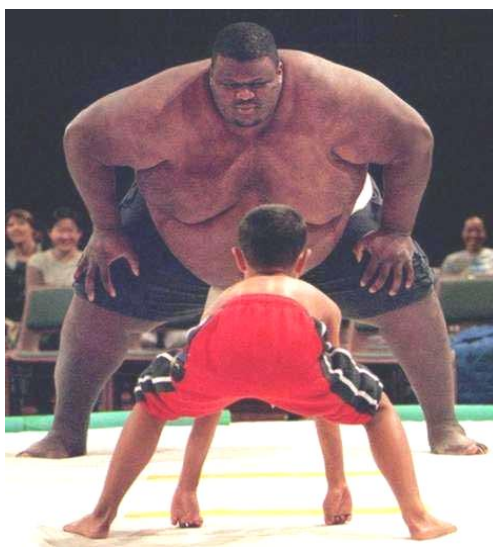
6. One size does not fit all: It appears as if one kind of program ought to fit all sides in a conflict, particularly when dialogues are based on one or another version of the contact hypothesis. But different groups have different conceptions about peace, co-existence and such (see No. 1 above), understand and process peace education activities very differently, and thus come out with very different lessons and effects. For example, The Palestinian minority tends to bolster its adherence to **its own** collective narrative while the members of the Jewish majority are more willing to change their attitudes toward the minority (Husseisi, 2009). Maoz (2000), at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, found that while the Jewish participants rely on formal power which emanates from institutionally provided power, the Palestinians rely on informal ones – their knowledge of the local history of the conflict and their sense of deprivation and injustice. As reported above, Rosen (2006), Jausi (2009) and Arnon (in preparation) all found that while their

interventions affected Jews, they did not affect the Palestinians.

There are other findings that support the same point. In the study by Biton & Salomon (2006), involving about 800 Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian youngsters, we found that while the former entered the program with a conception of peace as absence of violence ("negative peace"), the latter assumed that peace means independence and freedom ("structural peace"). The effects of that year-long school-based program, were far stronger on the Jews than on the Palestinians since it dealt mainly with the psychological aspects of reconciliation, not with any political solution. And as other research shows, the Jews, being the majority, shun the political and prefer the interpersonal (Suleiman, 2004). It becomes clear that one size definitely, does not fit all.

The implication is that different sides in a conflict need to participate in programs that are specifically tailored to their needs, culture, political status and social

background. The challenge is to find ways to implement such a differential approach, given the desire to also have the participants meet each other and engage in common activities.



7. Contacts between members of conflicted sides require a common and **important** goal:

Research tells us that intergroup activities ought to be rooted in a common goal towards which all participants contribute, regardless of national or ethnic identity. However, when the two sides come with different agendas, needs and aspirations, having a common goal may not be enough. As mentioned above, the Palestinians, for example, tend to demand acknowledgement of what they see as the evils done to them, while the Jews, being the accused majority, would rather turn to the cultivation of interpersonal relations. Although nominally they may have a common goal, satisfying their differential needs may be far more important to them.

Baha Zuabi (2008) studied the interactions between (N=76) Jewish and Palestinian youths playing in bi-national soccer clubs as compared to those playing in uni-national ones (N=114), in terms of changed attitudes,

perceptions, desires for contact, stereotypes and negative feelings. (Youngsters went to one or another club merely on the basis of the club's accessibility). Very large changes took place in the bi-national clubs and none in the uni-national ones. There was of course much interdependence among the bi-national players, much parental support, and a common goal of winning. **But the crucial element was the importance of that goal – to jointly win games.** It was not just a common activity demanding cooperation; winning a game was the most important goal relative to which national identity was totally insignificant.

The challenge then is to design activities – jointly playing music, staging plays, scouting – that not only demand cooperation and interdependence but that set goals which in the eyes of the participants are of utmost importance. It may well be the case that joint activities that set such important common goals are an interesting and possibly effective alternative to dialogue groups for younger age groups (Zuabi, 2008).

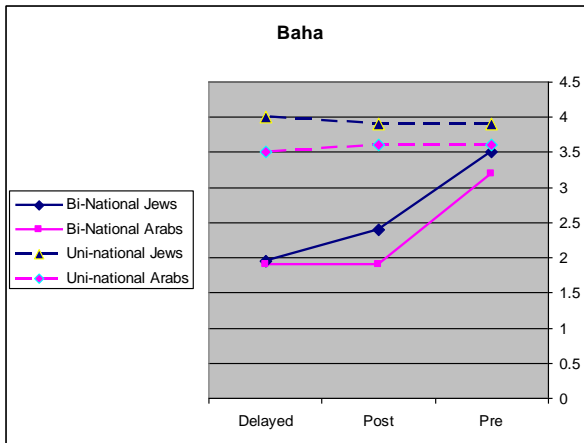


Figure 3: Changes of negative feelings by bi- and uni-national soccer club participants

8. Strong negative emotions may interfere with peace education

Ayelet Roth (2004) had a number of Israeli and Palestinian pairs of volunteers, all experienced teachers, communicate with each other via the Internet. The pairwise communication consisted of a version of induced compliance: Each pair of teachers wrote a chapter of the other side's collective narrative as the other side sees it,

submit it via the Internet to the other pair for their scrutiny, and receive feedback and corrections. The beginnings of the exchanges worked well, but then began the Israeli military operation against the Palestinian town of Jenin (the "Defensive Wall" operation). It was an emotionally wrenching operation and extreme feelings of anger, frustration, shame, despair, even hatred emerged full force. The teachers involved in the project started to stall, and gradually ceased to carry on with the project. No urging, tempting, or persuasion restored the interactions; the two sides, each for its own strong feelings, refused to continue. The project came to its sad end.

It became evident that peace education and strong negative feelings of fear, anger, hatred and hopelessness do not go well together. Political events such as the Jenin bloody incursion may well arouse in each side its own painful historical memories which intensify the negative feelings and reduce (for the time being) the chances for any mutual understanding, mutual legitimization and

reconciliation. The negative feelings need to be alliviated first.

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